

Spokes Action-Update 22 April 2020

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First, we hope you are keeping safe and well. Thank you if you are supporting the pandemic efforts in whatever way, particularly if you are a key-worker, whether employed or voluntary. Section 2 below tells you what Spokes and other bike organisations are doing locally.

1. Covid-19 - urgent need to reallocate roadspace – *please help*

The pandemic has highlighted the need for rapid major improvement to walking, cycling and wheeling conditions in Edinburgh and indeed in cities and other settlements around the world. Moreover, the drastic decline in motor vehicle use has released huge areas of roadspace which could be reallocated, at least whilst the pandemic lasts and in some cases permanently. Pandemic-related problems include...

- ◆ Although there is much less motor traffic on the roads (and much more bike use) police say that there is more car speeding, some excessively so. Whilst the roads are far quieter in general, Spokes has also had feedback about what feels like deliberate close passes, speeding or other 'road rage.'
- ◆ Many footways are too narrow for 2m social distancing, so you either walk too close to other people or risk walking in the road – possibly on the outside of parked cars
- ◆ Some offroad paths, such as the canal and Porty Prom, are even busier than usual as people take their recommended exercise – and full social distancing is difficult or impossible.

Yet there is now a major opportunity rapidly to reallocate roadspace, given that traffic levels are low and there are acres of vacant roadspace. On **arterial roads and shopping streets** - coning off kerbside parking spaces and/or bus lanes to create cycle lanes and/or wider footways. In **residential areas** - 'modal filtering' i.e. using bollards to close rat-run or speedster roads and to create walk/cycle-friendly streets and places.

The Scottish Parliament Information Service, SPICe, has produced [this excellent report](#) on what is happening in cities around the world, and how Scottish Councils can use existing powers (temporary and experimental Traffic Orders) to achieve rapid change without the fear of long delays caused by objections.

Spokes (and other organisations such as [PoP Scotland](#) and [Sustrans Scotland](#)) has contacted relevant politicians. There seems considerable interest in rapid roadspace reallocation by Edinburgh and Glasgow Councils - and even the Scottish Government. However, there is also caution by some politicians/officers and so encouragement and constructive support from the public is vital.

Action is urgent. Many bus and car users are trying out cycling - the roads are far more welcoming now. However, once restrictions start to lift, former bus users may change to car – making the roads less attractive, particularly to people who only started cycling recently. We could end up as before – or worse!

Low cost measures, such as described above, can be rapidly implemented at relatively low cost, and easily modified or even removed if problems arise. We do appreciate there are potential difficulties, for example at bus stops, junctions, etc – but other cities around the world, and increasingly in England, are already implementing and planning such schemes, so rapid action must also be possible here.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- ◆ **Email your MSPs** – ask that the Scottish Government publicly *encourages councils* to rapidly implement physical measures to provide safe and attractive conditions for walking and cycling – including to enable social distancing. They must also ensure there are no *legal obstacles* which might deter councils or cause delays. Also, ask for *a fund which councils can use* to pay for schemes.
- ◆ **Email your councillors** – tell them *what you would like to see* in Edinburgh, or your town or city. Explain why the pandemic emergency makes this so important and urgent, and ask them *to tell you* what actions they will take and what is the outcome.
- ◆ **Find your MSPs and councillors** at www.writetothem.com.
- ◆ If you use twitter, reply to [@SpokesPorty](https://twitter.com/SpokesPorty) here with any examples of road rage you experience.

2. Covid-19 – advice, info and support for key workers

Thanks to the kind annual donations from Spokes members (plus the fact that we have no employees!) Spokes has been able to donate £1000 each to the Bike Station and to [Bridge8Hub/BikesForRefugees](#) who are both running schemes to donate or loan bikes to key workers who need them. On a smaller scale we also have a [cheap map offer](#) for key workers.

Bridge8Hub/BfR were very quick off the mark, loaning out their 25-bike fleet within a few days. They have now set up [a website scheme](#) where individuals can loan or donate a bike to a key worker. The [Bike Station Hero Bikes scheme](#) is now up and running too, offering free refurbished bikes.

Through these schemes, we reckon over 100 bikes have already been loaned or donated to key workers, and demand remains so high that Hero Bikes has had to temporarily close to new applications.

Additionally several local bike businesses have special deals for key workers. *These include:* [Edinburgh Bicycle](#), [Belhaven Bikes](#) and [West Lothian Bike Library](#) – full list in our website article linked below.

Lots more detail in these articles on our website...

- ◆ [Covid-19 Bike Support for Key Workers](#) – more details on the above. If you're on twitter, please retweet [our tweet](#) about this article.
- ◆ [Covid-19 Cycling Advice and Info](#) – everything from government advice to cycling policy issues raised by the pandemic. Here's [our tweet](#) about this article.

3. Cargobike member offer

There is still cash remaining in the fund to assist **Spokes members** who need to buy a cargo-bike (thanks to a kind large anonymous donation for this purpose). We are again offering up to 50% of the cost or £1500 (whichever is least) towards a cargo bike and we can support up to three Spokes member households.

◆ *The following conditions apply...*

- a) It must be bought from a local bike shop in Edinburgh/Lothian (not mail order or a major chain store)
- b) Our grant will be paid to the shop, not to you
- c) Your choice of model must be OK'd by David Gardiner of Laidback Bikes as being suitable for the purpose you wish to use it for [but you need not buy from his shop]
- d) You don't need to tell us make, model, costs etc at this stage, but please only apply if you are definite about purchasing.
- e) Within 3 months of purchasing you send us 2 or 3 photos and a few paragraphs about your use of it.

◆ **To apply**, email spokes@spokes.org.uk stating that you accept the above conditions.

Quite separate from the above offer for members, our offer for **local community groups** is ongoing. For details (and pictures from some groups we've helped) see spokes.org.uk/documents/advice/cargo-bikes.

4. Midlothian Spokes map – cover picture needed! - **by end April**

Our new map is nearly complete and we expect to publish it in early summer. Many thanks to all the local members who helped over the winter with a complete survey of the area, to Andy our mapping expert, and everyone else in our maps group who has helped with organising.

We are still on the lookout for the perfect cover picture – can you help (by the end of April)? [Details here](#).

There's also a special advance-purchase offer. Details in section 3 [here](#).

5. Holyrood Park

Car parking is now prohibited at the parks controlled by the Council, as part of the Covid-19 restrictions. However, Holyrood Park, which is controlled by the government via Historic Scotland, has kept its car parks open. What is more, *its car park charges have been scrapped, as has the ban on Sunday car use.*

There have been many complaints on social media, as this should be a quiet and safe area for exercise and relaxation, whereas it is now suffering from speeding traffic and so much car parking that it sometimes even overflows [picture].



Now Council Leader, Adam McVey and transport convener Cllr Macinnes, together with their Labour coalition partners, [have written to Historic Scotland](#) asking them to think again. If you agree, ask your MSPs to raise this with Historic Scotland and with the relevant Minister. Find your MSPs at www.parliament.scot.

6. Current consultations

Please respond to any of these consultations which concern you - and Spokes would welcome a copy of your thoughts. Click the titles below to go to the consultations. Note that there is a Spokes website consultation page which will take you to our responses when available, as well as to the consultation websites – click the [consultations tab](#) at spokes.org.uk.

- ◆ **[OnStreet secure bike storage TRO/20/10](#) – ends 4 May [was 6 April but extended due to virus]**
This is the Order which legalises roadside spaces for installation of the long-awaited secure bike shelters (known as 'bike hangers') which will each provide 6 bike spaces. The Traffic Order is needed where these replace existing car spaces. The Order itself is massive, partly because it includes maps for every location. There is also a list of the streets affected under the '[Advert](#)' link, so it might be worth seeing if any are in your area and checking those plans if so. *Send your response to trafficorders@edinburgh.gov.uk, with TRO/20/10 in the subject line of your email.* Even if you don't have time to look through the Order, a brief email supporting the principle of installing the secure onstreet storage would be worthwhile.
- ◆ **[New Filmhouse on Festival Square](#) – ends 3 June.** See our report and suggestions in the [March 20 members' email circular](#). The official Spokes response is nearly complete, and there will be a link to it on our website [consultations page](#) once it is submitted.
- ◆ **[National Planning Framework, NPF4](#) – closing date extended to 30 April due to Covid-19.** The NPF is a long-term plan for Scotland's planning policies, including *where* development should take place. See our report and suggestions in the [March 20 members' email circular](#).
- ◆ **[Little France Park, Management Plan 2020-2030](#) – ends 1 May.** This is the huge new park, still under development, to the south and east of the BioQuarter and Royal Infirmary. The main cycle route running through the park NW-SE is good: wide, lit and surfaced, but is mainly a leisure route. However the desire lines for local travel (commuting etc) are SW-NE! - connecting Bioquarter and Infirmary to residential communities the other side of the park - Craigmillar, Niddrie, Milligan Drive and possibly Cauldoats if Midlothian's plans for developing that area go ahead. Where the SW-NE paths do exist, they are mainly grass-surfaced. If you use the area please send in your views. There will be a link to the official Spokes response on our website [consultations page](#) once it is complete.

7. Other consultations – *Check council, government & some other consultations here*

- ◆ Edinburgh consultationhub.edinburgh.gov.uk
- ◆ Edinburgh [Edinburgh traffic orders](#)
- ◆ East Lothian www.eastlothianconsultations.co.uk
- ◆ Midlothian www.midlothian.gov.uk/consultation/open
- ◆ West Lothian www.westlothian.gov.uk/consultations
- ◆ Scottish Govt consult.gov.scot
- ◆ Transport Scotland www.transport.gov.scot/consultations
- ◆ Just in case... Transform Scotland keeps an updated page of current transport-related consultations... transformscotland.org.uk/whats-new/action-alerts Check it out in case there's anything important that doesn't appear in the website addresses above (there often is!)

8. Getting back to cycling

Do you know any retiree who would like to return to cycling but is feeling nervous or doesn't know where to start? They can get help from the Council's Ageing Well project, though this will presumably be in abeyance until the lockdown permits it to re-start.

Details and contact email/phone are at... edinburghleisure.co.uk/assets/contentfiles/pdf/Cycle-Skills.pdf

9. Adventurous cycling

If you are the adventurous type, you may enjoy some of the podcasts at alwaysanotheradventure.com.

These include Lee Craigie, Scotland's Active Travel Champion, and Prof Chris Oliver, the 'Cycling Surgeon' – who is now back from retirement and working in the NHS to assist during the pandemic.

10. Help the Bike Station

[The Bike Station](#) does a fantastic job collecting and recycling redundant bikes – so they don't go to waste or lie unused in sheds, and so that people on low incomes or wanting to try out cycling can get going without too much expense. They also run many other bike-related services, such as DIY bike repair sessions, running Dr Bike sessions for community events, bike training, and much more. They are a charitable company with some paid staff and many volunteer helpers.

However, the lockdown is having a major effect on their finances, with many of the operations for which they get income now closed or restricted. If you can afford a donation (of cash or an unwanted bike!) it would be greatly appreciated. There is a prominent cash donation button on their website.

Note: bike donations are temporarily not accepted – check their website for when this resumes.

11. Keeping in touch

- ★ Remember to check out our **website** every so often www.spokes.org.uk
- ★ We are active on **Twitter** [@SpokesLothian](#). Follow us and ReTweet tweets that you support. Recent tweets also appear on our website in the right-hand column.
- ★ If you use **Facebook**, please like, share, etc the [Spokes Facebook page](#).
- ★ To campaign effectively Spokes needs as many supporters as possible. If you are not already a member, you like what we do, and you'd like to keep in touch with developments, please join Spokes. For details of membership and how to join, go to www.spokes.org.uk/membership.