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Subject: PORTOBELLO Town Centre - consultation response

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Dear Spaces for People team (and local councillors).

Spokes Party strongly welcomes Phase 1 Portobello Town Centre *Spaces for People* proposals. These are necessary to enable local businesses to operate outdoors where feasible, and to assist in social distancing - reducing infectivity and helping local businesses recover from lockdown.

The proposals, once implemented, should also contribute to cleaner air, reduced pollution, and a more friendly walking and cycling environment. This should increase footfall on Portobello High Street and encourage more people to support local businesses. A thriving high street is also essential for those without cars who are unable to travel further afield, for example elderly people with mobility challenges. We urge that the proposals are implemented as soon as possible.

### **Phase 1.**

- The intention to ban roadside parking (other than disabled and loading) is critical and should not be watered down. Disabled parking should be clearly signed and accessible.
- Footway widening must be done in such a way as to improve cycling conditions as far as possible. It should not worsen cycling conditions.
- We do not want people cycling on the footway. If the new extended footway occupies the entire existing parking lane, the remaining single lane all-vehicle roadway will feel and be more dangerous than at present for cycling – with traffic pressure behind and no ‘escape’ on the left because of the new kerb line. Some cyclists may then be tempted onto the new widened footway. Therefore, the new temporary kerb line should not extend right up to the new temporary traffic lane, but should leave sufficient width for cyclists to use the space in safety and reasonable comfort when overtaken, and for a potential cycle lane in Phase 2.
- Loading. We want to ensure that local businesses recover and business interests should be taken into consideration for loading times. Once this is established, times could be revisited in Phase 2 with a view to reducing them.
- Loading and parking restrictions should be strictly enforced, including in side streets. Many people in Portobello have visual and other impairments. It is vital that they are not impeded by dangerous parking.
- We welcome guardrail removal. Assessment will need to be made whether more bike parking is required in the High Street as cycle numbers increase. New bike parking should not impede pedestrians or take up pavement space, and ideally should be put in space previously occupied by parked cars.
- Signage should be put on the Promenade to encourage beach visitors to visit the High Street and support local businesses.

## **Phase 2.**

Phase 1 is likely to benefit existing confident cyclists if implemented as above, but will not attract new or novice cyclists. We are getting regular reports that new (and existing) cyclists are being frightened off the roads in and around Portobello by dangerous and aggressive drivers. We strongly welcome the promised Phase 2, with specific measures to assist cycling (including adapted bikes/trikes etc) and public transport. This stage should be brought forward as soon as possible, and should be commenced within weeks rather than months.

For the High Street to thrive, we need to enable and encourage people to walk, cycle and wheel safely there in a non-threatening environment. Brighton Place is particularly hostile and we have had several reports of dangerous driving. Safe routes are required for: Brighton Place - Duddingston Road - Duddingston Road West (also captures three schools and a nursery); Portobello Road; Portobello High St itself (speed management/traffic calming would help); and Portobello High St to Joppa.

With this in mind, the following should be considered in preparing Phase 2.

- Segregated/protected cycling provision. The use of wands in Old Dalkeith Rd has been welcomed by many people as a way of encouraging novice cyclists onto the road. Where the road is of limited width, there may be a case for separating pedestrians and cyclists using only a white line but this must be a last resort.
- Cycle parking should be assessed again – both on the High Street and on Portobello Promenade.
- Loading times should be assessed to ensure they work for local businesses and reduced where possible.
- Slower speeds should be considered for Portobello High Street. We note that the entire of City Square Mile (London) is being considered for 15mph. This would benefit both pedestrians and cyclists.
- We know it would be controversial locally but a bus gate should be considered for Brighton Pl if there is no other way to make the street safer. It could be trialled for a few hours at weekends initially (and over a long enough period to understand impacts).
- Again, it is controversial but consideration of the significant challenges faced by people with disabilities, pushing buggies etc from pavement parking, would be welcome. Alongside this, there should be consideration of one way systems through Bath St, Straiton Pl, Marlborough St, Regent St, Bellfield.

Regards, Spokes Party