

To: Members of City of Edinburgh Policy and Sustainability Committee, 20 August 2020

Paper 6.11 - Spaces for People (SfP) Programme Update – Spokes comments

Spokes strongly welcomes the SfP programme and this update. We wish to draw certain points to the attention of the Committee. Obviously we submit many detailed comments on individual schemes, but this paper is purely to highlight some top issues that either encourage or concern us.

Spokes responses to all consultations, along with the consultation documents themselves can be found on our website at

www.spokes.org.uk/documents/members-campaigning/edinburgh/edinburgh-covid-schemes

Segregated Cycle Lane schemes

These schemes generally provide conditions which are safer and, equally important, look and feel safer - encouraging people to travel from A to B by bike, thus also reducing pressure on public transport and taxis. We strongly support them, albeit we have detailed comments on all schemes. We are however disappointed that the **A8** is not included: this should be reconsidered as a bus/taxi alternative on this major commuter route, and as a future feeder into the flagship CCWEL route.

School Schemes

We support most of the measures consulted on so far, but have identified four primary schools (**Queensferry, Echline, Sciennes** and **James Gillespie**) where the proposals are significantly too timid, and road closures (full or partial) are needed to achieve necessary benefits.

Town Centres

We fully support footway widening where footways are too narrow for the numbers of existing and potential local shoppers and residents. However we are concerned that too little attention has been paid to cycling safety and the need to encourage people to get to shops and other local destinations by bike. Indeed, many schemes turn existing cycle lanes into footway and force cyclists into the often-narrowed main traffic stream - thus traffic builds up behind slower cyclists creating an intimidating and dangerous situation, deterring rather than encouraging people to use bike. It was said that 'Phase 2' will address cycling, but there is no indication when, or what this means. Spokes [has emailed](#) the Transport Convener and Vice Convener with more detail on these issues.

We are disappointed that several schemes have been disrupted by a few antisocial people, and indeed several of our members have taken to replacing cones and wands to assist the Council. Some businesses have also assisted – for example [Civerinos Pizzas](#) in Forrest Road. Maximum attention is needed to enforcement, but we hope the situation is settling down as experience grows.

Low Traffic Neighbourhoods

There is no experience of LTNs in Edinburgh, though they are common and popular in many cities. We therefore support the Council's approach of “try then modify”, where the “try” is based on existing early feedback (rather than a lengthy mass consultation), the initial implementation is low-cost, and the “modify” is a genuine and clear commitment to consult and adapt (or even abolish) on the basis of real experience. We believe this is a more effective form of consultation than the traditional abstract paper-based or computer-based consultation to which we have become conditioned. It allows people to comment on real experience rather than speculation and it has several other advantages. This will be discussed in more detail in a paper we will shortly publish.

Enforcement

The worst problem for people walking, wheeling and cycling is lack of enforcement to safeguard the new spaces - insufficient enforcement is of course also a recognised non-covid problem.

Town centres were mentioned above, but some segregated cycle lane schemes (notably George IV Bridge) and some pedestrianised streets (e.g. Cockburn and Victoria Streets) have also suffered badly (albeit the Cockburn Street rules appear unclear). We stress that the best form of enforcement is to have clear and prominent signs and yellow/white lining accompanied by physical measures which design out antisocial opportunities (e.g. infrastructure which is hard to move or drive over). Where this is not working, strong and visible enforcement measures are vital, accompanied by a communications campaign to explain the SfP rationale and that enforcement is now happening.

As we write, we hear of improvements on George IV Bridge, including double yellow lines outside the cycle lane; and a rumour that two parking wardens have been allocated to Leith Walk full time. We hope these are signs of increased attention to passive and active enforcement.

Omission – Leith Street

We could of course list many schemes that should be added as Spaces for People projects.

However in order to emphasise its importance, we choose to specify just one - Leith Street. Here the new uphill cycle lane which ends at the Calton Road junction absolutely must be extended to the Princes Street/ North Bridge junction. The footway is also narrow for social distancing, and Living Streets and ourselves are in agreement that one traffic lane should be removed and the space given over to a wider footway and an uphill cycle lane. SfP funding is available (4.14 of the report).

Leith street is a crucial and heavily used link between Leith Walk (which before long will have segregated cyclist routes its entire length) and North Bridge/Princes Street, yet the cyclist is faced with a steep and narrowing uphill gradient, whilst mixing with buses and other traffic. There is no direct alternative - both Calton Road and York Place entail detours with added junctions and other danger points, and lead to even steeper gradients. The proposed bridge across Waverley Station, whilst extremely welcome, is probably years in the future and will not serve all destinations.

This issue was debated at length at TEC on 25 Jan 2018. Paul Lawrence, Director of Place, said he “*absolutely understands*” the importance of this uphill lane, and officers had made every effort to enable it – but that it was impossible until traffic was reduced - and that the Council would revisit this if and when traffic was reduced. That time is now!!

Furthermore, an [early SfP drawing](#) showed measures proposed for the uphill side of Leith Street – albeit the drawing has no key, so its meaning is unclear. However Living Streets and ourselves are clear that one traffic lane needs removed and the space given over to a wider footway and an uphill segregated cycle lane (which initially would end in a deep advance stop line at the East End junction, but might continue segregated in future years, depending on City Centre Transformation).

Finally, we note that the Leith Street uphill lane, and wider footway, received many supportive entries in the Council's Commonplace consultation ([one of the entries](#) being 'agreed' 43 times), making it even odder that this scheme is not included in today's Committee paper.

Funding for additional schemes

Para 4.16 states that further government funding may be available. We urge the Council to apply, implement further Commonplace ideas, and enhance existing schemes on the basis of experience.