

THE ROSEBURN ROUTE SUPPORT GROUP

CITY CENTRE WEST TO EAST LINK (CCWEL)

A scheme for the cycle route from Roseburn to Leith Walk via central Edinburgh was passed by the Transport and Environment Committee (TEC) in October 2015. In the Roseburn section the plan was to join the route through Roseburn Park and travel along Roseburn Terrace and the A8.

The first public consultation was in November 2015. Local opposition was fierce, and expressed via the Murrayfield Community Council. The Antis organised a petition and held a vehement public meeting.

Some like-minded people, living in the area and/or in favour of safe travel generally, met to form the Roseburn Route Support Group. The Group was formalised in May 2016 and launched a [website](#), as well as a [Facebook page](#) and [twitter account](#). We kept our members and followers informed and urged them to respond positively to the consultations and contact Councillors, as well as attending the Murrayfield CC meetings. These meetings could get very noisy and unpleasant, with a lot of shouting down of those who supported the route.

In July 2016 the results of the Consultation showed strong support for the route, but now offered 2 Options, A (the main-road route) and B (a back route which avoided Roseburn Terrace). People at the City Cycling Edinburgh forum organised a [Ride the Route](#) demonstration of cyclists from Charlotte Square to Roseburn Terrace which was met with shouting and placards by the antis.

Henry Whaley, the Chair of the Roseburn Route Support Group and another member, Rosie Bell, together with Richard Grant from Spokes, gave evidence at the TEC meeting in August 2016. The principle of the route was passed unanimously. However, Labour and Greens supported option A, Tories and Lib Dems option B, with SNP tending also towards option B, so had a vote been taken Option B would have won. Instead, Transport Convener Lesley Hinds proposed stakeholders' groups to examine Options A and B in detail.

After some very tense stakeholder meetings, the decision between the options was made in December 2016 for Option A, on a narrow margin. Lesley Hinds deserves great credit for getting this through. The detailed design process then began in February 2017.

As an officially constituted group, the Roseburn Route Support Group could have a member on the Murrayfield Community Council Committee, and Henry joined this in spring of 2017. The antis had not given up and spent the next couple of years trying to find new lines of attack eg on air pollution or traders' compensations and endlessly repeating old ones at Community Council meetings. Sustrans ran a Rejuvenating Roseburn scheme which included moving some car parking to make the area pleasanter. Though refurbishment of the area around Roseburn Terrace was approved in general, the Sustrans and Council officials presenting these at CC meetings often got a hard time. The information boards for Rejuvenating Roseburn were vandalised in April 2019.

The Group held a [traffic count](#) in May 2019 through Roseburn Park and on the parallel A8 which showed that 23% of private vehicles were bikes and 82% of cars on the road were single occupancy cars, suggesting that a route on the road would be well used.

Now came the necessary legal Orders for the route, TROs and RSOs, and the consultations for these were ended in May 2018. The nature of the objections though meant they had to be taken to a Scottish government hearing and they were submitted to the government in August 2018. The actual hearing did not begin until November 2019! The TRO was agreed by the Reporter of the hearing in May 2020 and the RSO by the Ministers (on advice from the Reporter) in July 2020. The objections, which had already been met by the Council, had held up the project for another 2 years.

Construction is supposed to begin in mid 2021.

It had been a long battle to get a very short piece of cycling infrastructure. It used up a considerable amount of the Council's cycling officers' time that could have been spent on other projects. Also, it should not be part of their remit to be so aggressively and rudely confronted by the public, as was often observed at various meetings. This can only be an encouragement for skilled professionals to seek posts outwith the public services.

The process itself was far too long and tortuous, especially having time and money wasted by having the consultation going to government level, to pass which had already been decided at Council level.

The present Covid emergency) has seen a lot of "[Spaces for People](#)" cycle lanes installed throughout the city. Instead of the endless traffic modelling and consultation, it has been done on a "try and modify" method, which means that the infrastructure can be tried out, and if necessary, changed after feedback.

Interestingly, one of the Councillors for the area, Frank Ross, who had initially not supported the route, came out for a protected cycle lane along the A8 to Corstorphine.

We now await the actual construction.

Rosie Bell

October 2020