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date: 11 Nov 2020, 17:22

subject: **GEORGE ST AND FIRST NEW TOWN PROJECT (GTN) AND  
THE CITY CENTRE WEST TO EAST CYCLEWAY (CCWEL)**

I am writing on behalf of SPOKES about very serious concerns we have in relation to this project following the Stakeholder meetings held earlier this month.

The Council has always been clear that the GNT project was the means by which the City Centre West to East Link (CCWEL) would be delivered across the city centre itself. For some time, it has been agreed that this would take the form of a bilateral cycleway of 4.5m width on the south side of George St. Indeed the Initial Impact Assessment for the project updated in March 2020 includes the following statement amongst its recommendations : *“Cycleways and footpaths to be segregated for the safety of both users”*

Although important design details had still to be determined, this was the basis on which we had agreed not to continue to campaign for a unilateral cycle way on each side of the road which would have been a far more attractive option from the cycling point of view.

We were, therefore, very concerned to discover at the Stakeholder meetings that the design team, with I assume the agreement of Edinburgh Council, were now thinking of resiling from this agreement and abandoning the proposal for a cycleway along George St. Unfortunately, we were not given any advance warning or indication that this was in prospect and it was with some dismay that we discovered that the consultants had developed ideas for how this “spare” space might be reused and were canvassing these ideas at the stakeholder meetings.

Your consultants at the stakeholder meeting argued that it would be fine for cyclists to use the main carriageway because of the reduction in traffic expected on George St. Indeed, we were shown a very misleading visual of the carriageway with a few cyclists and nothing else. When pressed on how much traffic will be taken off George St and how this will be achieved, the consultants could only comment that no decisions had been taken. In fact, the only proposal that has been widely canvassed is the removal of the centre road carriageway car parking spaces. This may remove some of the traffic but there are still unanswered questions about buses, taxis, loading for shops and hotels, resident access, access for blue badge holders and general access by motorists using the space as a rat run.

We think that it makes sense to continue to develop the previous design proposals including the bidirectional cycleway until these questions can be authoritatively answered. The Council made a commitment in December 2016 to go ahead with the CCWEL and the abandonment of the George St cycleway would undermine the viability of the project as a whole.

I would be grateful for your response to these comments.

I have copied this email to SUSTRANS who I believe are match funding the whole project - a decision that was no doubt influenced by the fact that it incorporated a significant part of the Council’s flagship cycleway

Best wishes

Richard Grant

On behalf of SPOKES Planning Group