



*The Lothian Cycle Campaign*

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# Leith Connections – Low Traffic Neighbourhood Consultation

## Response from Spokes, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Spokes is very supportive of proposals for a [Low Traffic Neighbourhood](#) in this area of Leith. We look forward to being involved in the process of defining and planning the scheme. We strongly support the proposed Foot of the Walk to Ocean Terminal (FotW/OT) walking and cycling route improvements.

Spokes approves of well-designed low traffic neighbourhoods, to improve conditions for all forms of active and sustainable transport and to reduce domination by motor traffic.

Specifically on cycling, they provide a range of benefits, including the removal of rat-running traffic, calmer streets and routes that are permeable and convenient to cycles.

Our response primarily frames cycling, and how it is impacted by lack of good quality cycling infrastructure as well as high levels of traffic.

### 1. Travel behaviours

There is already a lot of research and evidence on how people get around Edinburgh. The most recent [Edinburgh By Numbers report](#), [Edinburgh Bike Life report](#) and newly published [City Mobility Plan](#) has plenty of information on typical travel patterns.

The 2011 census also provides useful [benchline commuter data](#) to help understand how people in Leith get around. We also are aware of the Feasibility Study that was undertaken by Aecom into the FotW/OT route and their analysis of key destinations and journeys in the area. These all indicate a large demand for cycling both across the area and within the area. Also, the large number of short journeys made by private and commercial vehicles in the area that could be undertaken more healthily and in a more environmentally friendly way, for example by cycling and the use of cargo bikes, for “last mile” deliveries.

Covid restrictions have also resulted in significant behaviour changes that are likely to have an ongoing effect. People are making far more use of their local neighbourhoods and the walking and cycling facilities in the area are often overwhelmed. People are starting to value their local areas more and to take advantage of local facilities. A Low Traffic Neighbourhood can do much to support this, as well as supporting the proposed introduction of “20 minute neighbourhoods”.

## 2. Issues with transport and travelling in the area

The following issues are relevant to cycle journeys in and around Leith:

- Lots of private motor/car traffic  
Leith has a lot of traffic. Traffic is not only busy on main thoroughfares, but across many of the residential streets with lots of rat running. CEC's own traffic count data will back this up.
- Speeding traffic and roads feeling unsafe  
Main roads and residential streets have many vehicles that are not adhering to 20mph speed limits. [Traffic collision data](#) shows the number of collisions in the area and backs up the argument that roads need to be safer.
- Quiet Route 10 is not very quiet, accessible or safe  
The designated quiet route through Leith from the Links to the Shore is not particularly quiet due to rat-running. Many people do not even seem to be aware of its existence. It is a key cycle commuter route to the Scottish Government building and other destinations, but has some dangerous junctions and risky sections, especially between Queen Charlotte Street and Tolbooth Wynd.
- Poor surfaces for cycling  
Many of the streets are cobbled and are unsuitable for cycling in their current condition. Some street surfaces have also badly deteriorated. Temporary resurfacing could be undertaken whilst streets are upgraded to smooth setts for cycling and maintenance to be scheduled.
- The Trams to Newhaven programme  
The works for the tram extension continue to increase congestion and restrict carriageways, increasing the risk to cyclists. No cycling facilities are being implemented on Constitution Street, cycling will be banned at the South end and some sections of carriageway will have very little room between the rails and the kerb. People will still need to access their homes and businesses on Constitution Street, so it is essential that access is provided at frequent intervals from both the east and the west. A route along the Kirkgate would therefore be necessary as well as for various other local trips, albeit that the main Leith Walk to Newhaven route is via Henderson Street.  
  
More generally, we are concerned that the Trams project is paying less attention than is merited to cycling conditions throughout the tramlined area, on the grounds that the above main high quality route is being provided and that attention will be paid to other points where cyclists may cross tramlines. However, in reality, people need to cycle to and from every local destination in the area, and therefore all streets should be cycle-friendly. A good (i.e. bad) example of this is Stevedore Place, a wide road being converted to a Boulevard with no cycle facilities, and indeed with a cycle pinch point beside the tram stop. We hope that this LTN consultation can make a real difference, ideally now, but certainly in the future.
- Travel to/from school difficult for families going by bike  
The school run is difficult to cycle, due to busy roads and lack of safe route provision, apart from in the immediate vicinity.

- Great Junction St/Leith Walk/Duke St  
This is currently a high risk area for cycling and it is very unclear how cyclists can safely negotiate this junction. The proposal for a bi-directional cycleway to Henderson Street is welcomed. However, there are no clear and safe routes to the North and East .
- Henderson St  
This is a desirable route but is not currently attractive to cycling given the cobble, traffic and difficult junctions. Segregated cycling with a smooth surface is exactly what we need. We have some comments on the proposals for FotW/OT that we will respond to separately.
- Sandport Place Bridge  
The Water of Leith path is a key cycling thoroughfare yet cyclists are forced to make a dangerous turn here. Motorists drive at silly speeds on this bridge. Pedestrian access (narrow pavements) is awful. Closing this to traffic is the single most important thing the LTN can do.
- The Shore  
Our tourist hotspots should not be rat runs. During lockdown the pavements became congested here. Closing Burgess St access is an important part of this.
- Dock St & crossing Commercial St  
This is a very busy area with lots of HGVs. It is also a very popular area for cyclists of all ages and abilities. It is essential that continuous segregated cycling facilities are provided here.
- Parliament St and Coburg St.  
The cramped nature of the Water of Leith path was exposed by lockdown. However, under the status quo, cyclists and pedestrians do not have a better option. Closing access to these streets would encourage cyclists, in particular, to take other routes. These need to be closed in order to extend pedestrian space.
- Portland Place  
This junction is very dangerous for cycling and pedestrians. It is critical to the success of the LTN that there is safe access to and from the area.

### 3. Opportunities for improvement

In addition to identifying in the previous section some problem areas that need to be addressed, we suggest the following range of measures to help improve cycling conditions in the proposed LTN area:

- all streets need to be made safe for cycling by people of all ages and abilities
- reducing the permeability of the area to motor traffic by introducing selective No Through Roads, with cycling exemptions
- lowering speed limits to human speeds
- increasing permeability for cycling by improving road surfaces and introducing cycling cut-throughs
- additional cycle parking including secure cycle storage and similar facilities for tenemented properties etc
- Spaces for People – we urge that local Spaces for People projects are made permanent. In particular we point to the [\*imaginative suggestions\*](#) being made on social media (already 'liked' by 300 people) to repurpose the closed Links Gardens carriageway with local facilities for physical activity or other community purposes (whilst retaining a direct cycle link through the closure).
- introducing a close network of quiet routes through the area – for example: along Mill Sherrif Brae and The Shore; Mitchell St and Maritime Lane; Parliament St and Giles St; St Anthony Place and Laurie St; Kirkgate; Coatfield Lane and Links Lane; Academy St to Leith Links  
and as mentioned previously:  
Coburg St; Queen Charlotte St and Tolbooth Wynd

Our lists are not exhaustive, but a suggested start that we hope we can continue to work on in collaboration with the project team and other stakeholders.