

The Portobello Cycle Campaign

Spoken deputation to the Transport & Environment Committee meeting on 22nd April 2021.

Hi, I'm James Lewis, from Spokes Party. I'm here to speak about the proposed Portobello to Musselburgh segregated cycle route. I believe this is point 4.6 of paper 7.1.

I would like to point out, to start with, that I have submitted a pdf to accompany this deputation – which provides web links and quotes from local cyclists.

Spokes Party are disappointed to learn that the Porty to Musselburgh segregated cycle route, part of the SfP program, which was voted through by Committee in November 2020, has been cancelled. This is a vital link between Edinburgh and East Lothian.

Although there are long-term plans for this route, it takes on added urgency because of covid and the requirement for social distancing, as the two Councils recognised by including it in the SfP programme. A safe and attractive cycle route **slide change** will encourage people to cycle and therefore leave better distancing for others on the buses and pavement between PB and Musselburgh. Even for car users, it gives the option to travel by bike in the open air rather than with other people in an enclosed metal box. A quick glance at the current state of the route shows very narrow pavements alongside the pumping station and along the Eastfield houses through to Musselburgh shell sculpture. At the very least, these two sections should be dealt with under SfP.

The importance of this route, and that it is likely to attract many people, and thus promote social distancing, is shown by the fact that the link has been in gestation for a long time now. You will have seen on social and traditional media the huge upturn in visitors to Portobello during Covid. This will only – SIGNIFICANTLY – increase now that the Covid rules have been relaxed and as the summer approaches and the weather gets warmer. Spokes Party has receive many reports of close passing by cars, in some case leading to tears. This is extremely dangerous and leads to cyclists using the pavement, causing congestion there, preventing social distancing. Again, vehicle use on this road will only increase with the recent relaxation of cross boundary travel.

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In 2017, SESTRAN completed an initial detailed appraisal of the route. This report can be viewed following the links in the accompanying literature. It provides an overview, plus detailed section drawings through the carriageway of the proposed road, cyclelane and pavements. This would be an excellent starting point for the first stage SfP intervention.

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Further, SESTRAN's 2020 publication "SESTRAN Strategic Network – Cross boundary active travel routes connecting people and places", using a multi-criteria assessment methodology, scored the Musselburgh to Newhaven route, with fours and fives (five being the highest possible) in the following categories:

- Volume of potential users
- Anticipated level of modal shift
- Added health benefits
- And importantly, Deliverability

It gave an overall score of four out of five.



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It is currently possible to cycle, off-road, all the way from Leith Links to the Joppa end of the Prom. It is also possible to cycle from Fisherrow Harbour in Musselburgh to Prestonpans, and at low tide all the way to Cockenzie, on off-road routes - other than a very brief section on a very quiet road along the Esk in Musselburgh.

The Porty to Musselburgh section is the missing link.

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To cycle from the Prom to Fisherrow you need to be a very confident cyclist. Children are actively discouraged from cycling on the pavement by the presence of large “No cycling on footway” signs such as the examples shown in the accompanying document.

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These signs mean that young and vulnerable cyclists are either having to flout the law and risk confrontations with pedestrians (not a good example to set for our children – I’m sure you’ll agree), or have to risk a 30mph road, with cars parked bonnet to boot on both sides, **Slide change** leaving no room to avoid irresponsible drivers or suddenly opening car doors. In recent years Portobello has tragically experienced three deaths and serious injuries to cyclists on the roads. Please let’s do something to prevent this happening even one more time.

Illegal footway cycling is likely to be reduced once the road feels safer, thus giving more space (and less hassle) to pedestrians to practice social distancing.

The Just Eat bike station on King’s Road is one of, if not the, busiest in Edinburgh. With the recent addition of an eBike hire scheme in East Lothian, bicycle travel, especially by less experienced cyclists will surge over the summer. This is huge win against Covid and means people who do not wish to travel by bus will have alternatives.

To further emphasise the need for adequate segregation for cyclists and pedestrians, which in turn will lower the risk of Covid transmission, Fisherrow harbour have recently created a car free zone. SfP infrastructure is spreading outwith Edinburgh and we need to encourage it further it by joining up with it.

This cycle route is vital to link up the communities of Portobello and Musselburgh, and more broadly, to provide safe commuting and leisure space on a vital core route. A segregated cycle route, and giving more pavement space to pedestrians for social distancing will allow more active travel and encourage people from East Lothian to come and shop in Portobello. The current 30mph speed limit should be reduced to 20mph, in line with the rest of Portobello High Street, and the segregated cycle route installed as a matter of urgency.

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Thank you for your time today.



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The Spokes Party proposal was supported by Spokes members from Musselburgh, and **Donald Mitchell** from Musselburgh spoke briefly at the end of James's speech to give that perspective.

Time for deputations was very limited, hence only time for these few words, but important to show that this is a 2-way project – both for users and for Councils!!

I am very grateful for the opportunity to contribute - from East Lothian.

I agree absolutely with James when he speaks of a missing link.

The section from Portobello Prom to New Street in Musselburgh is only 1 mile. It links two off road/ quiet street cycle friendly routes which are ideal for commuting and leisure cycling both of which are greatly on the increase and should be supported by installing appropriate infrastructure.

Cooperation with Sustrans and East Lothian Council is established and funding in place which begs the question what is the obstacle to carrying out the planned works.

Finally, why is this section not a 20mph zone ?