

Response by Spokes to the Spaces for People Stakeholder Questionnaire *This response paper is supplementary to the on-line questionnaire.*

1 April 2021

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1. Introduction

1.1 Spokes has always given a warm and enthusiastic welcome to the *Spaces for People (SfP)* interventions and is pleased to continue to do so.

1.2 The *SfP* schemes were introduced, for covid-related reasons, to enhance social distancing, including freeing up spaces on buses and for safe exercise. However, many if not all, of the schemes also support a wide range of other government and local authority objectives, including to increase the use of active travel for reasons of climate, public health, air quality and congestion.

1.3 *Spokes*, therefore, strongly supports making all *SfP* schemes permanent, unless clearly unsuccessful and then, in the near future, that they be joined up appropriately to form the basis of a city-wide safe cycle-travel network. *Cabinet Secretary Michael Matheson MSP*, who allocated the funding for such schemes, has himself frequently expressed the desire that successful *SfP* schemes should be made permanent.

1.4 Despite its origin in the pandemic, this programme of measures is potentially the most significant move forward ever towards achieving a citywide safe cycling transport network; by rebalancing Edinburgh's travel hierarchy somewhat more in the direction of walking, wheeling and cycling and away from car domination – although the process still has far to go.

1.5 These *SfP* measures in Edinburgh have demonstrated that better infrastructure for walking, wheeling and cycling is popular and has been well used. This increase in active travel should continue, if the schemes are made permanent and further improved on the basis of experience, engagement and consultation. They have certainly not caused the city to grind to a halt as some predicted!

1.6 *SfP* complements earlier important projects, such as the *North Edinburgh Path Network (NEPN)*, the *Meadows/Bruntsfield Links* cycle lanes and the *Innocent Railway Path*. Most significantly and very importantly, however, these *SfP* brings protected cycling facilities onto the street network. In so doing, it has overtaken the timescales of more recent conventionally promoted schemes; such as the *City Centre West East Link (CCWEL)* and *Meadows to Canal*, neither of which is yet on the ground despite seven years hard work by the Council.

1.7 Safe, protected on-road schemes are particularly important for women, both in terms of safety and the feeling of safety. Many of Edinburgh's off-road paths, while attractive during the day, can be unpleasant at night. Some of the routes suffer from anti-social behaviour, and there have been incidents involving serious assault. It is imperative that the Council provides a network of cycle infrastructure that is and feels safe for everyone, including women cycling alone at night. Despite them being lit at night, we know that many women will not use the *NEPN* or the *Innocent Railway Path* after dark, nor the unlit *Water of Leith to Balerno Path*. *SfP* schemes that run parallel to these routes, or are close-by, are accordingly particularly important and must be retained, albeit adjusted if required, even if there is vocal opposition.

1.8 Sadly, our cycle infrastructure across the city is still not suitable for people using adapted cycles, trikes etc and this must be fully addressed going forward.

A cycle network that meets the needs of disabled cyclists - by being step-free, barrier-free and spacious - is, by default, accessible to everyone: two-wheeled bicycle users, as well as individuals, families and businesses who use tricycles, tandems, trailers and cargo-bikes. Equally, any measures enabling cycling by disabled people are likely to support a growth in cycling by novice cyclists, including children and young people, as well as older people. It will also improve conditions for those using mobility scooters.¹

2. Main Road SfP Schemes

2.1 Creating 40km of semi-protected cycle lanes on main roads is groundbreaking in being largely separated from traffic, and given that main roads are generally the most direct and least hilly routes from A to B – exactly what people traveling by cycle need and importantly also avoiding isolated off-road paths, particularly after dark.

¹ [Based on https://wheelsforwellbeing.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/FC_WfW-Inclusive-Guide_FINAL_V03.pdf](https://wheelsforwellbeing.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/FC_WfW-Inclusive-Guide_FINAL_V03.pdf)

2.2 It is transformational to be able to cycle, protected from the traffic, on the likes of the Mound and George IV Bridge, Crewe Road South, Old Dalkeith Road, Duddingston Road, Ferry Road and Comiston Road. These semi-protected cycle routes have made commuting and travel to local shops much safer and more attractive.

2.3 We would like to highlight, as examples, the following routes about which our members have commented to us. This in no way diminishes our support for other main road protected routes not mentioned here:

- The route along Old Dalkeith Road which has been well used and appreciated by staff at the *Royal Infirmary (RIE)* and the *Bio-quarter*. Although some of the original *SfP* infrastructure has been subsequently removed, due to an unanticipated problem for buses, its retention on the uphill sections continues to be highly beneficial.
- The route along Crewe Road South, which provides good access from the north and the south to the *Western General Hospital* between the roundabouts at Crewe Toll and Orchard Brae; albeit further safety measures are needed at these junctions, with their bad safety record.
- The segregation introduced along Comiston Road, which allows safe cycling both to the edge of the Morningside town centre and by virtue of the road closure (along Braid Road) provided a safe route along quiet roads further into Edinburgh towards the Meadows network. Unfortunately, we understand that this road closure is to be modified so that it only applies to traffic travelling in a southbound direction. This will obviously require mitigation to protected cyclists.
- The segregation provided along Forrest Road and the George IV Bridge and on the uphill section of The Mound, which links into the Meadows and provides safe access to the city centre. The omission of any segregation along Bristo Place and Teviot Row, unfortunately, does limit the overall benefit for cyclists travelling southwards. (NB We comment favourably in the Low Traffic Neighbourhoods section how this and the Comiston Road schemes are beneficially connected by the Whitehouse Loan/ Canaan Lane/ Woodburn Terrace/ Braid Avenue/ Hermitage Drive *SfP* scheme.
- The *SfP* segregation along the Gilmerton Road, from Liberton primary school to Morrisons supermarket, linked to a resurfacing project, has provided a much safer commuting route for cyclists from the south-east of the city together with safer routes to school for children cycling to school at Liberton High and Liberton Primary.
- The *SfP* segregation along Fountainbridge and Dundee Street (soon to be extended along Slateford Road) should help to divert some cyclists from the canal towpath although a number of improvements are required to make this fully effective, particularly at the dangerous Dundee Street / West Approach Road slip-road.
- The Duddingston Road and forthcoming Duddingston Road West segregation, and the A1 links, are very valuable for journeys to two primary schools and two high schools, as well as providing better access to other destinations such as the *RIE*, Craigmillar Castle Park and Holyrood Park.

2.4 We keenly await planned *SfP* schemes not yet fully on the ground, such as Lanark Road, Mayfield Road, Queensferry Road, Joppa to East Lothian, and other main routes, which will hopefully be very valuable to commuters, when fully in place.

2.5 We also welcome the Council's preparedness to use bus gates to restrict city centre traffic volumes. The bus gate at the east end of Princes Street, in combination with the Waverley Bridge restrictions has been beneficial for cycling; as will be the proposed bus gate on the Bridges.

2.6 Financial and officer time constraints no doubt meant that some routes were unfortunately not included, such as:

- the A8/Corstorphine corridor (key radial route and High Street),
- Colinton Road/ Polwarth Terrace (parallel to the Union Canal),
- Liberton Brae (steep) or
- Dundas Street (steep)

while others have interventions over shorter distances that we would have hoped for, but hopefully their time will come.

2.7 Noting above the steepness of such as Liberton Brae and Dundas Street, protected cycle lanes are particularly beneficial up-hill, so we do welcome, for example, The Mound and Rodney Street /Broughton Street schemes' use of uphill protected lanes.

2.8 We are disappointed to see the reopening of Braid Road southbound and of Warriston Road, as both these streets were well used for safer cycling, walking and wheeling. Safety, and possibly numbers, are likely to decline in consequence.

2.9 Although there are variations in the effectiveness of the temporary interventions, we are hopeful that the guiding principle of *try then modify* will see further improvements.

2.10 There remain issues to resolve about bus stops. We keenly await the recommendations from the promised *Sustrans* study and we urge that improved solutions are then implemented on existing *SfP* schemes, as well as in new and permanent schemes.

2.11 As mentioned above, we have particular concerns about *SfP* schemes

- omitting difficult junctions,
- where there are pinch-points caused by traffic islands
- in maintaining safety when crossing side roads;

but these can all hopefully be addressed when schemes mature into permanency. We have commented in more detail on suggested improvements in the Appendix.

3. High Streets

3.1 In reality, these interventions have mostly been to increase valuable safer circulation space for pedestrians; although some very limited sections of protected cycle lanes have helpfully been fitted in, for example in Morningside Road in Bruntsfield and at the northern end of Dalry Road. We particularly welcome the late addition of the northbound protected lane on wide and busy Earl Grey Street, something we had asked for in our response. We are also pleased to note the southbound cycle lane in the proposals for Broughton Street, although would prefer it to continue to Picardy Place.

3.2 In the future, however, there is scope to provide further town centre protected cyclist routes. Firstly, where footway widenings are replaced by permanent kerbed footways, as these will often not require the full width used by the temporary schemes. Secondly, as we come out of lockdown, some of the extra pedestrian circulation space may be no longer required. Thirdly, and perhaps most important of all, Council policies should mean that motor traffic will be increasingly restricted in town centres.

3.3 High Streets have been challenging, because most are still in use as part of cross-town routes for general traffic. Until that is addressed, these will remain compromised places.

For example, while we support the SfP pavement widening in Portobello High Street (per the travel hierarchy), it is, along with inconsiderate driving and parking and heavy through traffic, contributing to significant dangers for people trying to cycle through the area. As the Promenade is now at capacity on sunny days, it is very difficult for people who are not confident, or people with children, to cycle from one end of Portobello to the other. Accordingly, an urgent review of this area should be included in this assessment.

4. Spaces for Walking and Exercise

4.1 Many of these interventions give a welcome taster of the future potential for the *City Centre Transformation Plan*, particularly the closures in Victoria Street and Waverley Bridge. Both areas have literally been “transformed” and contribute to the City Centre becoming far more pleasant overall and less motor vehicle dominated.

4.2 Outwith the City Centre, the Leith Links Gardens, the Silverknowes Road and the imminent West Harbour Road closures effectively extend and connect previously subdivided public green space, to great effect. In Portobello, the Stanley Street/Hope Lane closure to through traffic has not only provided welcome space for leisure activities (particularly important given how busy Portobello Promenade is now), it has also ended the rat running which caused significant difficulties for children walking and cycling to school across the Stanley Street junction with Southfield Place.

4.3 To a limited extent, the SfP projects are helping to divert cyclists away from the “hotspots” (such as the Union Canal towpath and other parts of the National Cycle Network routes) which are also heavily used for recreational walking.

5. Schools

5.1 Road closures and other restrictions around schools introduced for distancing reasons, also bring major road safety benefits and should certainly be made permanent for that reason.

5.2 Very commendably, enormous strides have been made at many schools, towards separating pupils from motor traffic, and significant progress at others – some 80 in total.. The road closures, such as at Sciennes, James Gillespie, Brunstane and South Morningside Primaries are transformational. Smaller detailed interventions, such as parking restrictions to discourage car drop-offs and the creation of safer walking routes, such as by the closure of Silverknowes Road South for pupils walking to Davidson's Mains Primary, are also welcomed. However, most interventions have been at the school gate and not on the route to school. School travel plans should be reviewed to identify key routes to school and identify measures, such as road closures, which would achieve this. Schools not yet included in SfP should also be addressed.

5.3 Road closures near schools can also have the beneficial effect of creating mini-Low Traffic Neighbourhoods in the area around the school, to the wider safer-streets benefit of the local community, as highlighted in the Low Traffic Neighbourhoods section below.

6. Low Traffic Neighbourhoods

6.1 Despite the setbacks at East Craigs, we are sure that the time has come for additional Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs), adding to the many which already exist in the city, albeit not under that term (for example, Craighleith Hill Avenue and Moray Place). We commended the consideration of several in our *SfP Consultation Responses*, such as in Queensferry in conjunction with our Queensferry High Street and multiple Queensferry school responses and in Craighleith in both our Orchard Brae Roundabout and A90/Queensferry Road responses.

6.2 As noted above, LTNs also complement the Schools interventions. Our members have commented particularly favourably about the programme of *SfP* interventions between Whitehouse Loan and Hermitage Drive, via Canaan Lane, Woodburn Terrace and Braid Avenue, which has created a low traffic neighbourhood route serving several schools, as well as creating a north-south alternative to Morningside Road. Importantly, it also contributes to the creation of a long distance Fairmilehead to Princes Street radial route, by linking southwards into the Braid Road and Comiston Road *SfP* interventions and northwards via the Meadows/Bruntsfield Links paths to the Forrest Road, George IV Bridge and The Mound *SfP* interventions!

7. A Permanent Future

7.1 A Citywide Safe and Inclusive Cycling Network

7.1.1 We support making these schemes permanent and see enormous potential for them to become strategic elements of a citywide network. There is the potential to achieve a substantially protected and inclusive network, accessible by all, including those using non-standard cycles (such as hand-cycles, cargo-bikes, tandems, recumbents and trikes), comprised of:

- *SfP* interventions being retained, refined and upgraded to full permanent build standards. From the cycling perspective, fully protected and inclusive cycle routes along main road corridors are an essential requirement.
- existing major off-road facilities such as the *NEPN*, *Meadows/Bruntsfield Links* protected paths and the *Innocent Railway* route (while noting that these routes are avoided by many people at night, particularly women, and safe practical and convenient alternatives must be provided).
- planned but not yet implemented on-road protected schemes, such as *CCWEL*, *Meadows/Canal*, *Roseburn/Canal* and *Meadows/George Street*
- gaps in this network be joined up with protected routes and, crucially, all junctions being remodelled to include protected through cycling.
- Low traffic neighbourhoods.
- further High Street improvements being made, including:
 - measures to reduce traffic volumes, such as bus gates.
 - encouraging cargo-bike deliveries through hubs, to reduce need for vans and lorries delivering to businesses on High Streets
 - cycle parking should be available at all public buildings and High Streets located close to where needed and if possible on-road rather than on the pavement
- public bike hire scheme fully integrated with other public transport modes. with the inclusiveness benefits of:
 - reducing car dependency
 - safer womens' multi modal travel options

7.2 Need for Scottish Government Support

7.2.1 We agree with *The Cabinet Secretary, Michael Matheson MSP*:

*"I do hope that we can see a permanent lasting legacy of active travel infrastructure, as a result of the Spaces for People initiative"*²

The *Scottish Government*, which funded these schemes, have been absolutely clear from the outset that councils may wish to make successful *SfP* schemes permanent, and that the government will help where it can. The schemes are temporary in the sense that their legal validity comes from a TTRO (Temporary Traffic Regulation Order) with a limited life, but they can be made permanent, without interim removal, if the appropriate legal and consultation Traffic Order processes are initiated in time. However, making cycling and

² The Cabinet Secretary, Michael Matheson MSP has made this clear on countless occasions, for example in [this speech](#) (at 4:50)

walking infrastructure permanent will involve significant costs, for which the City of Edinburgh Council doesn't have funding.

7.2.2 *Spokes and Living Streets Edinburgh* have made a joint submission³ to the *Scottish Government* commenting on the *Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 (STPR2)*, strongly supporting investment in walking and cycling and the sustainable movement hierarchy set out in the *National Transport Strategy*. This is essential if the *Scottish Government's* environmental, climate change, social and economic objectives are to be achieved.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions or would like to discuss any the points made.

Spokes Planning Group

³ <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2103-STPR2-letter-from-Spokes-and-Living-Streets.pdf>

Appendix

During the last year, Council transport staff have been under extreme pressure to install very many *SfP* schemes and in very short timescales. We are grateful that, even though this is not a *TTRO* requirement, there has been consultation with stakeholders; but nonetheless many suggested improvements have not been possible within the timescales and resources available.

However, as the Council moves to the stage of making schemes permanent, fuller consultation and permanent traffic orders will be essential, and the improvements which we identify below will all need full consideration:

1. A satisfactory means of dealing with bus stops. Although a variant of “bus stop boarders” has been used on George IV Bridge, in other cases of *SfP* cycling routes used by buses, cyclists have either to wait behind any bus at a bus stop or overtake by moving out into traffic. Neither of these options is satisfactory. We understand that *Sustrans Scotland* is to produce guidance on this problem and progress on finalising this and making it publicly available, and agreeing and implementing acceptable solutions, should be a priority
2. There has been relatively little provision for cyclists in the *SfP* town centre schemes implemented to date. It is understandable that footway widening should have priority, but these alone in some cases have the effect of making conditions worse for cyclists who are forced to share the remaining narrow road width with motor traffic. Where cycling provision has been included, for example in Morningside and Bruntsfield, it is quite limited in extent. The footway extensions in Morningside are not well used and have the effect of making cycling more difficult. The short stretches of cycle lane do not really compensate for this overall, negative impact. In future, we are keen to see protected cycle lanes adopted as standard.
3. Where footway widenings are replaced by permanent kerbed schemes, these will often not require the full width occupied by the temporary schemes. In such cases, and in any cases where existing *SfP* footway schemes are considered to be not worth retaining, the first priority should be to use the space for cycle lanes, rather than for reinstatement of car parking.
4. Many of the arterial road protected schemes include lengthy unprotected gaps. An effort should be made to make the segregation as continuous as possible.
5. In some cases, changes are made to schemes after initial approval. Changes should not be made on a perfunctory basis and the rationale should be publicised. In particular, we are concerned that many changes are made in response to complaints, with no opportunity for comment by those in support of the existing layout. In practice this has often meant removal of cycle or pedestrian provision in order to reinstate car parking, in contradiction to the transport hierarchy.

6. In some cases the *SfP* schemes present problems for experienced cyclists who are confident in traffic. If they use the road, some motorists behave aggressively, wanting them in the cycle lane. However, using the cycle lane can make it less easy to perform certain manoeuvres, including the following (some of which are also problematic for any cyclist, experienced or not), when:
- (a) merging back into traffic at a reasonable speed at the end of a cycle lane
 - (b) held up behind slow cyclists in the cycle lane
 - (c) getting into position for turning right
 - (d) getting into position for pinch-points. This is amplified where the road curves left, tempting traffic to cut the corner.
 - (e) keeping distance from drivers emerging from side streets and encroaching on the cycle lane or very close to it
 - (f) being scared by drivers coming close to the cycle lane. Ideally cycle lanes would be minimum 2m width and have a 50 cm buffer zone between cycle and traffic lanes.

Both temporary and permanent schemes need to be aware of the above issues and make the maximum effort to ensure that facilities are suitable for all users:

- For temporary schemes this may only be feasible through signing, lining and some repositioning of defenders; although assessments should be made to identify likely impediments such as cycle lane access angles and lane width, as well as the presence of steep speed humps and adverse camber.
- Once schemes are made permanent, the designers must be fully aware of these issues and ensure full safety and maximum convenience for all categories of user including not just the confident and the novice, but also those using non-standard cycles (such as hand-cycles, cargo-bikes, tandems, recumbents and trikes).

7. In addition to the points above, all *SfP* schemes should aim to meet the following detailed criteria:

- (a) the surfaces of protected lanes do not contain utility covers with irregular or patched covers or potholes, given that cyclists may not be able to avoid them;
- (b) they are wide enough for sweepers and small snowploughs to get access;
- (c) the stop line for traffic from side roads is set back from the line of the cycle lane;
- (d) the defenders should always be between the cyclists and the traffic – not on the left of the cyclist where they pose a hazard similar to guard-railing when the cyclist is close-passed by motor traffic;
- (e) there should be a clear gap between cycle lanes and any loading spaces
- (f) all defenders have wands and, it should be clear whether the protected space is for cyclists or pedestrians, possibly through the use of different colour wands;
- (g) the base of defenders should be coloured white to reduce the dangers of cyclist collisions and pedestrian tripping.

- (h) Be designed in a manner to make motorist non-compliance harder, as this has been a serious problem with some temporary schemes, mostly around driving along and/or parking in the cycle-lanes.