

2019 correspondence copied to Spokes on traffic and cycling in Holyrood Park

From: Steve M

Sent: 20 January 2019 10:43

To: Gray M (Martin) <martin.gray@hes.scot>; C&T - Ranger Service <Rangers@hes.scot>

Subject: Holyrood Park: Vehicle speeds

Hi,

I work at Holyrood (Rockstar North), cycle to and from work, and Holyrood Park / Queen's Drive is on my regular commute. While the 20 mph speed limits have made the park more pleasant to walk and cycle through, many (At rush hour, I would say the majority of) drivers do not follow the speed limit unless there is a ranger van or marked police car on the road. My average cycling speed on Queen's Drive is around 20-25 mph, and I am regularly overtaken by drivers, and am sometimes shouted at to "get on the cycle path", "get off the road" and similar. I have reported these incidents to the police in the past (I have a camera for my safety), but have been told that there is "nothing wrong" with this behaviour.

Very rarely I drive through the park at 20 mph on a weekend, and am *always* overtaken by other vehicles. Of the past 4 times in the past 2 years that I have driven through the park, I have been overtaken 4 times - once by someone driving at easily 50 mph.

I spoke to the police at St. Leonard's police station about this last week, and they told me that they don't have the resources to constantly patrol the park, and understandably, I imagine it's the same for the ranger service. I have been advised to contact Police Scotland on 101 every time I witness speeding in the park. At around 9:00am I will witness speeding that appears to be above 30 mph perhaps 4 days out of every 5, so I expect to be contacting Police Scotland quite regularly.

Occasionally I will cycle through the park at the weekend when Queen's Drive is closed to traffic, and this is immeasurably more pleasant. I really do not see the reason why Holyrood Park is open to vehicular traffic at all, when there are alternative routes on public roads (The Pleasance and Dalkeith Road / Peffermill Road).

Considering that drivers seem unable or unwilling to follow the speed limits, that the park is supposed to be just that - a park, not a "rat run" - and that there are several alternative routes, I would strongly support the park being permanently closed to all motor traffic.

Is this something for HES to decide, or would it be a matter for the council?

Thanks,

Steve M

On Thu, Feb 7, 2019 at 3:38 PM Gray M (Martin) <martin.gray@hes.scot> wrote:

Dear Mr M

Thank you for your email of 20th January 2019 highlighting your concerns around vehicle speed and driver behaviour, as well as Park road use. Your email has been passed on to me as one of the Park Managers to review and respond.

Firstly I can only apologise for the unacceptable delay in responding to your enquiry.

It is disappointing to read of your experience and unfortunate that not all vehicle drivers are as courteous or law abiding as they should be.

As you are likely aware Holyrood Park is a Royal Park owned by Scottish Ministers, managed by Historic Environment Scotland and regulated by The Holyrood Park Regulations 1971 (as amended). The roads within the Park are classed as Crown Property, therefore private, and do not form part of the city managed road network. Access is permitted to these roads subject to a number of conditions laid down in The Parks Regulations Act.

Speeding vehicles (including cyclists) are certainly a concern on all routes within Holyrood Park and are a growing concern as the volume of traffic increases year on year. A key part of our Park Management Strategy is cross-agency collaboration involving, amongst other, the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) and Police Scotland. There is a clear responsibility for Police Scotland to apply their traffic enforcement policy across the city, including Holyrood Park. I am aware that Police Scotland, who have overall responsibility for enforcement of all the Park Regulations, exercise regular vehicle checks and stops within the Park which has resulted in a number of prosecutions. This is of course in proportion to available resources.

Historic Environment Scotland are exploring options with the City of Edinburgh Council, with funding from Sustrans, regarding the potential for path infrastructure changes to be made that will benefit all users, while minimising their impact upon the Park. These potential changes in the Park would include wider, shared paths with increased and improved raised table road crossing points, coupled with road narrowing at points along the line of the existing cycleway and potentially beyond. These proposals aim to improve access, change priorities and have the additional benefit of slowing vehicle speed. Both organisations have an aspiration to have a draft design in the public forum for comment in the near future. It should be stressed however that the funding available for this project is solely for the design phase at present. Once completed we will explore what funding options may be available to achieve such improvements.

While Holyrood Park roads are classed as 'private' it has to be recognised that they provide a key arterial route at peak travel times around our City. Unfortunately as the City has developed around the Park vehicle capacity has not been built into the City road network to accommodate its growth. This has resulted in the City becoming reliant on the Parks roads to disperse vehicle traffic. Having had to close the Park roads at various times to manage incidents or road works I can vouch, first hand, to the grid lock that usually ensues in the surrounding streets/routes.

Holyrood Park is not unique in having a road network running through it. Indeed Hyde Park in London and Central Park in New York, to name but a few, all have some form of arterial road network within their boundary.

If HES were to close the Park roads on a permanent basis it would have a severe impact on the residential streets immediately surrounding the Park. I would anticipate that HES would come under serious pressure from a number of interested parties to maintain vehicle access. Indeed even current short term closures cause a flurry of enquires and concerns from various groups and organisations over how long any particular road section will remain shut.

While a permanent closure of the road network in the Park is one option to consider our internal discussions, through our Holyrood Park Strategy Group and our work with the City of Edinburgh Council and Police Scotland continues to explore various options including extending weekend closures, introducing off peak road closures, etc. all linking into wider City aspirations. The key is around striking the right balance, ensuring that we provide the right infrastructure that enables all user groups to utilise and enjoy the Park safely.

Historic Environment Scotland is committed to maintaining Holyrood Park as a safe and enjoyable resource for all and always welcomes comment from our varied users. Through regular reviews of our management practices and feedback from users, like yourself, we strive to keep Holyrood Park as a pleasurable oasis of relative calm at the heart of our lovely city.

Once again thank you for your letter and if you have any further queries regarding this matter the Ranger Service will be happy to advise.

I can advise you that your complaint has been addressed at stage 1 of our complaint procedure, a copy of which can be found on our website (<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/complaints/>).

If you are unhappy with my response you can request a further investigation of your complaint. If you wish to do so please contact me at the address below.

Yours sincerely

Martin Gray

Martin Gray | Ranger & Visitor Services Manager | Ranger Service

Historic Environment Scotland | Àrainneachd Eachdraidheil Alba

Holyrood Park Education Centre, 1 Queens Drive, Edinburgh, EH8 8HG

T: 0131 652 8150

M: 07824476135

E: martin.gray@hes.scot

www.historicenvironment.scot

Historic Environment Scotland - Scottish Charity No. SC045925

Registered Address: Longmore House, Salisbury Place, Edinburgh, EH9 1SH

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[**Take part in the consultation for our Corporate Plan 2019-2022**](#)

[**Let us know your views on our draft Historic Environment Policy**](#)

From: Steve M

Date: Mon, 11 Feb 2019, 10:20

Subject: Re: Holyrood Park: Vehicle speeds

To: Gray M (Martin) <martin.gray@hes.scot>

Cc: C&T - Ranger Service <Rangers@hes.scot>

Hi Martin, thank you for your reply and don't worry about the delay in getting back to me!

It's a little frustrating that a park is considered an arterial route for private vehicle traffic when there are roads that are wider, that are also 20 mph limits, and that run parallel to the park roads. I've also seen the traffic problems that occur when the park roads are shut, but in my experience (though I'm sure sure you know better) this seems to be from motorists who aren't aware that the road is closed until they reach it - if the park roads were closed on a more permanent basis, I'm sure the resulting traffic problems would be considerably less. My feeling is that the park's primary purpose should be to be "a pleasurable oasis of relative calm" as you aptly put it, and not to convey motor traffic around the city centre.

While there are other parks that have roads running through them, Holyrood Park appears to have the smallest provision for non-motor vehicles of those you mentioned - the combined width of paths on both sides of Queen's Drive (where there even are paths on both sides) is only slightly wider than a single lane of traffic, and the downhill section from Holyrood Park Road to Holyrood Gait has a cycle path which is too narrow for two cycles to pass (Which is one reason I always use the road when cycling downhill - it's unsafe to use the cycle path at more than ~10 mph, and there's no way to get onto it from Holyrood Park Road in any case).

I look forward to the park improvements you mention; the raised table crossing points in particular sound like they would greatly improve vehicle speeds.

Thanks again,
Steve