

Holyrood Park: Report on Responses to City of Edinburgh Council's Spaces for People Consultation

Executive Summary

1. Of 4,000 comments made by Edinburgh residents in a recent consultation, **all top 5 most-agreed comments** across the platform were about Holyrood Park, and 9 out of the top 10 most-agreed comments were about Holyrood Park. The Park received 99 comments and nearly 2,000 agreements, **showing vastly greater public engagement than the areas where CEC have implemented Spaces for People measures**. This reflects both huge public interest in Holyrood Park and a great need for improvements for walking, wheeling and cycling.
2. The most frequently reported problems in Holyrood Park are the speed and volume of traffic.
3. **Closing the park roads to vehicles is the most popular proposed solution** to these issues, with 3 in every 4 contributions either suggesting or agreeing with this idea.

Context

During the coronavirus lockdown, City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) held a public consultation online between 29th May and 29th June 2020 through the Commonplace platform (a comment mapping tool). Members of the public were instructed to drop a pin in the areas where they felt physical distancing was difficult to maintain while walking, cycling and wheeling.

Over 4000 comments were submitted through a dedicated CEC email address and the Commonplace platform. CEC has used the feedback from the consultation as justification for many of the street changes as part of the Spaces for People programme funded by Scottish Government.

Despite the comments remaining public on the Commonplace platform, it is impossible to easily download the data for further analysis or use any search function to better understand what the consultation results were. At time of writing, CEC has not released any findings or report.

In the absence of an official report, Car-Free Holyrood, a group of residents local to Holyrood Park, has extracted the public data and produced the following report. [All raw data referenced in this report is available here.](#)

Public Consultation Response

1. Holyrood Park: Area of Notable and Significant Public Engagement

Edinburgh residents logged **99 comments and 1951 agreements** pertaining to Holyrood Park in the CEC Spaces for People consultation. CEC has implemented a number of Spaces for People measures following this consultation -- Portobello High Street, Forrest Road to the Mound, Great Junction Road, etc. -- all of which had significantly lower comments and agreements than Holyrood Park. At time of writing, Holyrood Park has had no changes or measures implemented since the close of the consultation. **The public response to the consultation provides a clear mandate for improving walking, wheeling and cycling in Holyrood Park.**

Holyrood Park received nearly twice as many comments as the most-commented on [implemented Spaces for People measure](#).

Holyrood Park vs. Spaces for People Measures: Comments

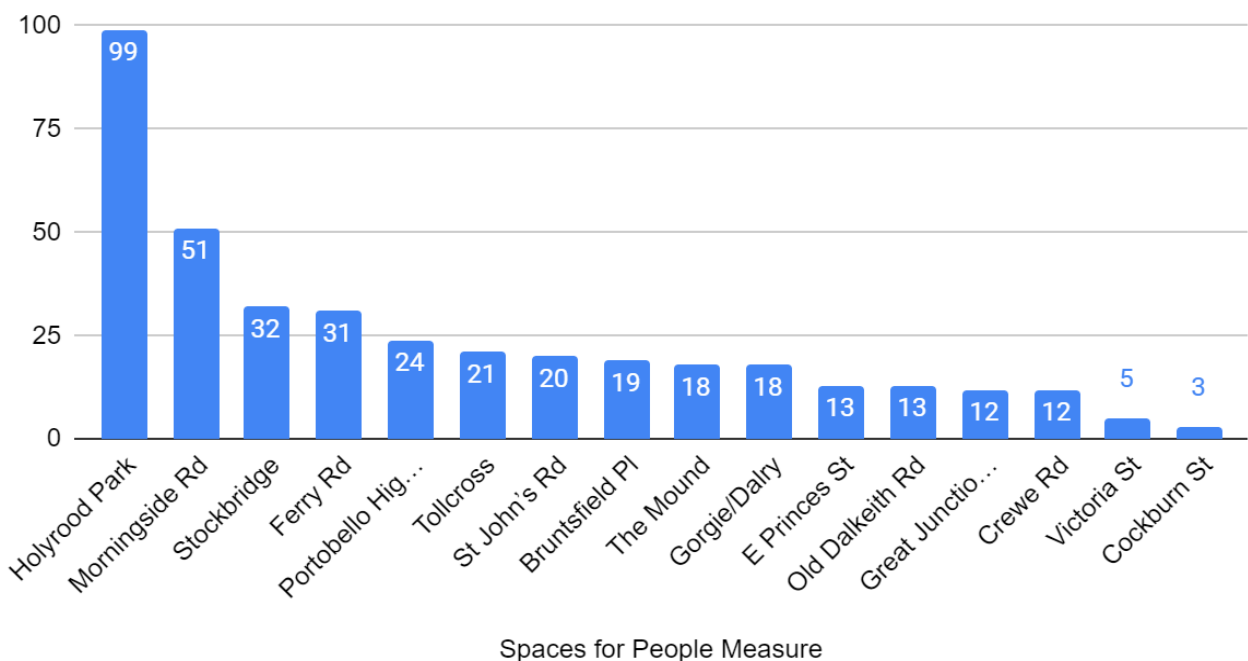


Table 1: Comments on Commonplace platform for Holyrood Park compared to implemented Spaces for People measures. Refer to Appendix A for more information.

Holyrood Park had nearly four times as many agreements as the most-agreed implemented Spaces for People measure.

Holyrood Park vs. Spaces for People Measures: Agreements

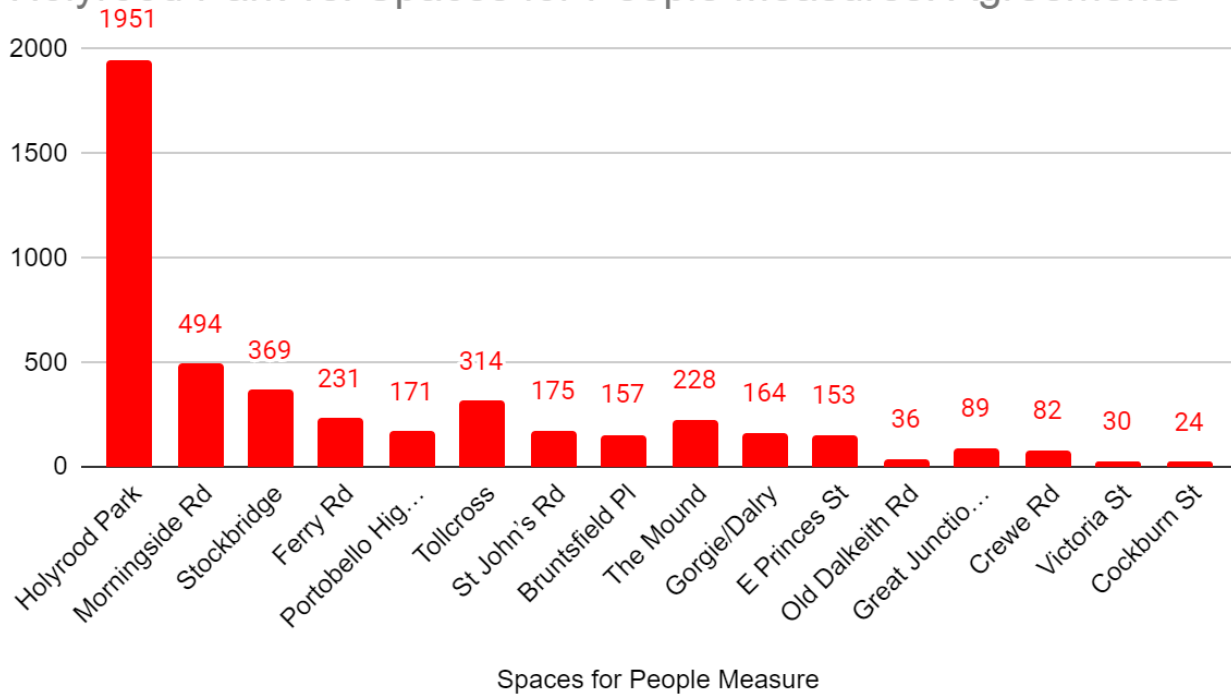


Table 2: Agreements for comments on Commonplace platform for Holyrood Park compared to implemented Spaces for People measures. Refer to Appendix A for more information.

2. Barriers

Each commenter was asked to answer: **Which barriers are preventing you from walking, running, cycling and wheeling while observing physical distancing?** Commenters were given a number of barriers to choose from or the option to write in their own barriers. In Holyrood Park, the top reported barriers were **Speed of Traffic**, followed closely by **Amount of Traffic**:

Top 9 Reported Barriers	
1	Speed of traffic
2	Amount of traffic
3	Sharing paths with other users
4	Pavement too narrow
5	No safe place to cross
6	Path too narrow
7	Limited/no cycle parking
8	Pavement parking/clutter
9	Gate/barrier

The issue of **speeding** also featured in a number of comments:

Some vehicles fly down this stretch of road overtaking cyclists at 40mph (it's supposed to be a 20 zone). It's only a matter of time before a cyclist is seriously injured or killed.

Queen's Drive (the low road) is by far the most dangerous section within the Park. The 'rural' feel to the road promotes reckless driving, with many people far exceeding the 20mph limit and even committing some dangerous overtaking. The roadway is quite narrow, and due to the lack of centreline markings encourages increased speeds and recklessness. It also means that vehicles are less inclined to pass cyclists safely. There are numerous blind corners and crests, making the experience of being overtaken as a cyclist terrifying. -Comment 49

3. Temporary Measures

When commenters were asked 'Which of the following temporary measures would help you to walk, run, cycle and wheel while observing physical distancing?', they were given the option to choose from a list of suggested measures or to write in their own proposed measures.

3 out of 4 contributions either commented or agreed with 'Close Street to Vehicles', while less than 1 in 3 contributions commented or agreed with 'Add protected cycle lane to main road'.

Top 5 Popular Measures Suggested for Holyrood Park	
	% Comments/Agreements
Close street to vehicles	74%
Add protected cycle lane to main road	30%
Slow vehicles	27%
Extend pavement	27%
Improve crossing	15%

Closing the roads to vehicles was seen as a solution to a number of barriers: narrow pavements, built in conflict between pedestrians and cyclists, speeding vehicles and unsafe crossings. Those suggesting closing the road to vehicles mentioned air/noise pollution, the benefits to wildlife, that parks shouldn't have vehicles, and its capacity to encourage sustainable transport as an active travel link from eastern Edinburgh.

Queen's Park should be closed entirely to motor traffic as open space for pedestrians and cyclists...Air quality would improve greatly and wildlife increase. Park is a vital lung of the city. -Comment 69

What's a park for if not to listen to the birds and breathe the air? Close the road to cars, simple :) -Comment 15

Importantly, **closing the road to vehicle traffic was seen as not just for lockdown, but a measure that should be permanent.** Many comments explicitly responded that the roads in Holyrood Park should be closed to vehicle traffic permanently.

It would be great if Queen's Drive were permanently closed to cars. There are already lots of cyclists using the park, and with such a narrow path for pedestrians, in order to maintain social distancing, stepping on to the road is often unavoidable. -Comment 71

Queens drive should stay closed to traffic when things go back to normal. Its a vital space for accessible outdoor activities and you can see the community embrace it. If cars return, it will go back to a racing ratrun, unsafe for many users. - Comment 65

4. Popularity of Comments

The consultation also allowed the public to agree with comments to show their support. Comments about Holyrood Park received far more engagement than any other street or area: **all top 5 most-agreed comments were about Holyrood Park** and 9 out of the top 10 most-agreed comments were about Holyrood Park.

The top 8 most-agreed comments pertaining to Holyrood Park explicitly supported closing the road network in Holyrood Park to vehicular traffic. These comments indicate support for road closures throughout the entire park road network, with popular comments calling for Queen's Drive, Duddingston Low Road, and the High Rd to be closed:

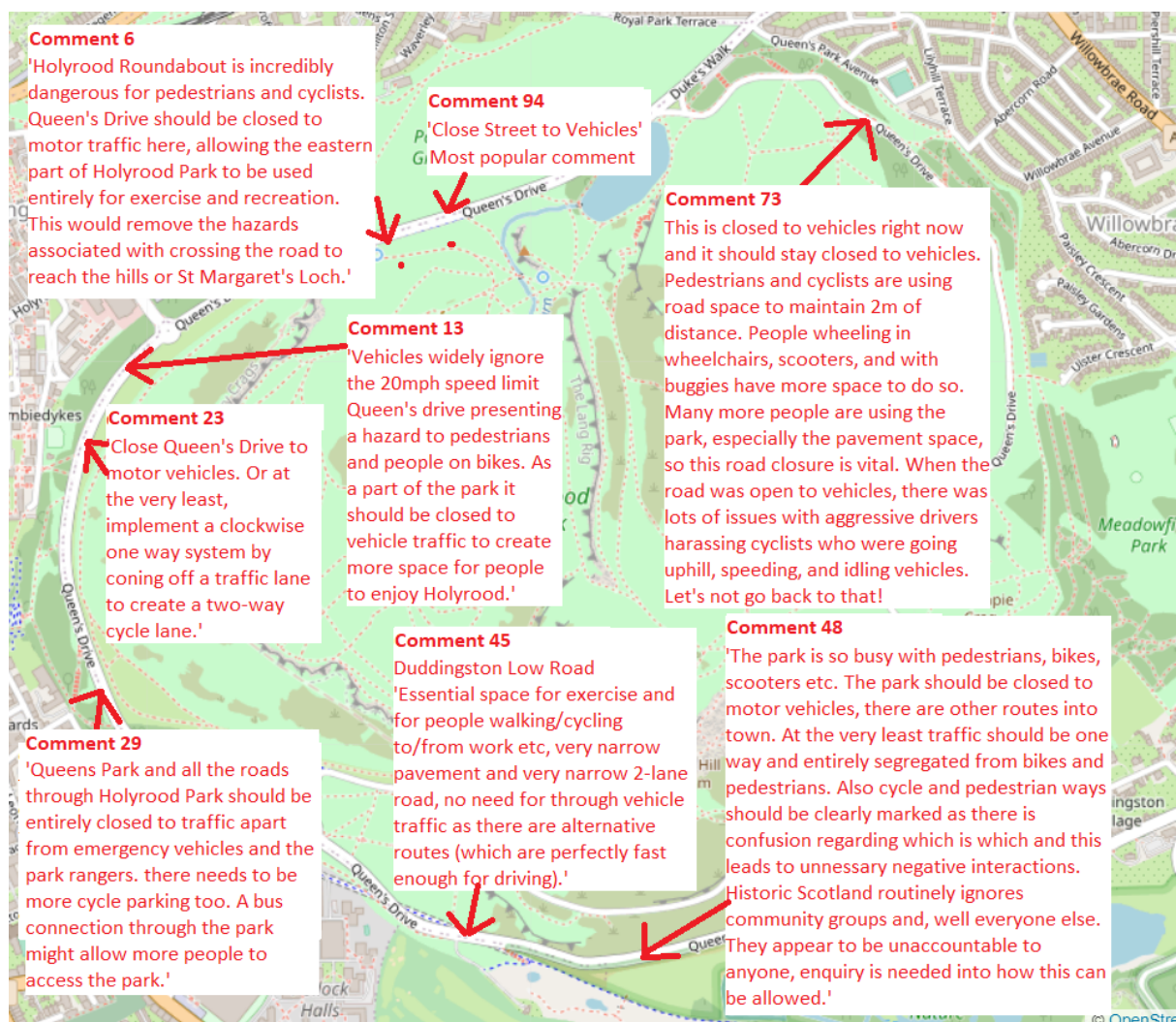


Figure 1: Top 8 Most-Agreed Comments and Positioning on Map (Source: OpenStreet Map)

5. Other Themes

A number of other themes emerged in the consultation:

- **Dangerous crossings:** a number of comments asked for pedestrian crossings, particularly by entrances. There is only one pedestrian crossing in Holyrood Park which connects Broad Pavement car park to Salisbury Craigs. It is clear that many park users are forced to cross dangerous, busy roads with no infrastructure support and poor sightlines.
It's crazy that there is no pedestrian crossing to allow safe access into Holyrood park from the southside. Cars speed along Queens Drive, and there are often clumps of people, pets and cyclists waiting to cross. -Comment 37
- **Poor pedestrian entrances:** whether it's a lack of crossing infrastructure at Meadowbank, the inaccessible steps from Dumbiedykes, or inconsiderate parking at St Leonards, Milton St and Waverley Park Terrace, the pedestrian entrances are of poor quality that is preventing easy access for those walking, wheeling and cycling.
- **Inadequate cycle lanes:** Comments mentioned an inability to join the cycle path safely, incredibly narrow paths that end prematurely with built in conflict with pedestrians and confusion about whether it is one-way or two-way; the cycle lane on Queen's Drive isn't fit for purpose.
The worst place to commute through in Edinburgh on a bike. And in a park! Terrifying. -Comment 47
- **Dangerous for Children:** several commenters noted the lack of crossings and complete cycle lanes as dangerous for their children:
[referring to Commonwealth Pool Entrance] this is a critical entrance to Holyrood park and it's impossible to cross safely. Also despite being very wide, there is no safe route to cycle into the park, and speeding cars make it terrifying with children. -Comment 27
- Lack of **cycle parking** noted.
- Historic Environment Scotland were seen as ignoring residents and mismanaging the park and its roads.
Historic Environment Scotland's continued unwillingness to manage Holyrood Park effectively is putting lives at risk. So many people have complained about this for so long, that frankly HES's approach is wilful negligence. -Comment 49
- **High Road closure:** this was overall very popular. Several comments focused on the gate currently closed 24/7 which creates a bottleneck on the pavement and suggested it be upgraded or opened with barriers placed elsewhere. There is also a lack of clarity about whether it is one-way or two-way, with benefits of both approaches highlighted in different comments.

Future Actions

This consultation clearly shows that business as usual in Holyrood Park is dangerous for those walking, wheeling and cycling with the near complete lack of pedestrian crossings, inadequate cycle paths, and relentless speeding and traffic volumes. **These problems have been exacerbated during Covid-19, but all were present before the pandemic.**

Closing the road to vehicle traffic is a popular and justified measure, that should be implemented imminently by Historic Environment Scotland who manage Holyrood Park and its road network on behalf of the Scottish Ministers.

The following actions are suggested:

1. **Historic Environment Scotland should organise online workshops with local disability groups and release Equality Impact Assessment** Access for disabled people to this space was brought up in some comments and Historic Environment Scotland must immediately consult with local disabilities groups to fully understand how Holyrood Park can be compliant with the Equalities Act 2010 and maintain access.
2. **Historic Environment Scotland should commit to engaging the local community around Holyrood Park and formally bring representation of the local community into decision-making.** It is clear from the engagement with this consultation in both the quantity of comments and their popularity in the platform, that the local community is incredibly engaged in the future of this space. However, some comments also viewed Historic Environment Scotland as unaccountable and ignoring the community. Historic Environment Scotland should commit to local community engagement and establish mechanisms for the local community to be represented in decision-making.
3. **Historic Environment Scotland should commit to monitoring walking, cycling and wheeling in Holyrood Park** including qualitative interviews. Sustrans have been collecting feedback on the High Road closure since May (<https://tinyurl.com/y8hrtmdc>) and should be contacted to release the full dataset to add to any monitoring and reporting.
4. **Historic Environment Scotland, alongside the local community and in partnership with City of Edinburgh Council, should present a plan to end vehicular access through Holyrood Park,** taking into consideration Historic Environment Scotland's Climate Action Plan and Transport Scotland's Transport Hierarchy.
5. **Historic Environment Scotland should act to increase car parking charges at Broad Pavement Car Park and introduce car parking charges at Duddingston and Meadowbank car parks,** bringing in line with other city centre car parks. Permit parking will soon be brought into adjacent neighbourhoods by CEC, making management of free parking spaces untenable. **Revenue generated from car parks should be directly invested in measures which improve access, walking, wheeling and cycling.** As a priority, the stepped entrance to Dumbiedykes should be made accessible, disabled parking bays should be demarcated at Duddingston and Meadowbank carparks, pedestrian crossings near all vehicle entrances should be brought in/re-instated, and the gate to the High Road should be replaced to increase accessibility for those wheeling and cycling.

Appendix A

Car-Free Holyrood investigated the following implemented Spaces for People measures on the Commonplace platform in order to compare to the comments and agreements received for Holyrood Park. **Holyrood Park received 99 comments and 1951 agreements.**

Spaces for People Measure	Comments	Agreements
Forest Road to the Mound	18	228
East Princes Street and South St David Street (A1 from North Bridge to South St David Street)	13	153
Victoria St (Entirety)	5	30
Cockburn St (Entirety)	3	24
Portobello High Street (Opp Fishwives Causeway to Portobello Surgery)	24	171
Bruntsfield Place (Merchiston PI to Barclay Terrace)	19	157
Morningside Road (Merchiston PI to Canaan Lane)	51	494
Great Junction Street (Bangor Rd to Leith Walk)	12	89
Stockbridge (Raeburn PI to St Stephen St)	32	369
Tollcross (Earl Grey St, Home St, Leven St)	21	314
St John's Road, Corstorphine (Templeland Rd to Station Rd)	20	175
Gorgie/Dalry (Dalry Rd from Orwell PI to Murieston Rd, Gorgie Rd from Murieston Rd to Robertson Ave)	18	164
Old Dalkeith Road (Cameron Toll to Royal Infirmary)	13	36
Ferry Road (Entirety)	31	231
Crewe Road South (Entirety)	12	82