

## **Main concerns and objection**

Spokes strongly objects to the imminent closure of the Leith Walk bi-directional cycleway which has been constructed to provide a safe cycling route during the tram extension works. We are also extremely concerned over the way this has been communicated, the short notification timescale and the absence of adequate consultation.

We believe that cycle facilities must be maintained on Leith Walk for the duration of the Trams to Newhaven (TtN) construction. We urge councillors and officers to ensure this.

Short, local diversions, as are already in place, are inevitable, however no suitable diversion seems to be possible between Balfour St and the Foot of the Walk and between McDonald Rd and Pilrig St. A route has been proposed to the TtN Active Travel Forum, but this takes people too far from Leith Walk, does not provide accessibility along Leith Walk and would need a lot of work to make it safe - work that would need to be completed before the cycleway could be closed. Alternative provision must therefore be made on Leith Walk itself.

Cyclists can accommodate flexible arrangements more easily than motor traffic – eg several phases of local diversions, or changes of on-street provision. This is much preferable to complete closure with a single phase of diversions, as has been the case for Northbound motor traffic and is now being planned for cycling. We have not been given sufficient detail of the proposed schedule of works to be able to discuss what phasing is possible.

On a separate point, we also have concerns about what will happen when the East cycleway is constructed, particularly whether the West Cycleway will be able to temporarily accommodate bi-directional cycle traffic. Indeed, we have still not even been shown the final designs for the West cycleway, even though construction is imminent.

## **Further detail**

- Leith Walk is an essential artery for cycling, encouraging local people of all ages and abilities to cycle for their day to day requirements and for those passing through the area to do so safely and to take the opportunity to shop along the Walk
- During the last year there has been a significant increase in people cycling, due to the need to socially distance, thereby avoiding the use of private motor vehicles and public transport. This has also been encouraged by the availability of the Edinburgh Bike Hire scheme, which has been very popular along Leith Walk.
- There has also been a massive increase of cycle delivery services, with many now being used by local restaurants and other businesses and residents on Leith Walk and in neighbouring streets.
- Many new cyclists have little experience of cycling on busy roads and Leith Walk became a haven for such cyclists, and has been used by people with mobility scooters etc – alternative routes on busy roads would not be attractive to these people and they are likely to stop using their bikes or other means. This is contrary to both national and local ambitions to support and increase active travel and contrary to all the work that has been done to develop Spaces for People
- Spokes does not believe that there is a suitable alternative route for safe cycling in the area. Inexplicably, the newly proposed diversion route to the West of Leith Walk has been approved by the Active Travel Team. It takes people a long way out of their way, along some highly unsuitable roads with dangerous crossings and severe constrictions and would need

civil works in order to provide even the most basic of facilities and probably could not be put in place before the cycleway is closed. We understand that the diversion has not been proposed by TtN themselves but via the Sr Interface Manager. We do not know to what extent it is supported by TtN. Without a suitable alternative, cyclists will be tempted to continue to cycle on Leith Walk, causing conflict with pedestrians. (We do not have details of the width that will remain for a footway but understand that in places it may only be 2m – too narrow even for pedestrian usage.) The cycleway must not be closed until suitable safe alternatives are in place.

- Spokes has been a stakeholder in the TtN project since it started and has contributed significantly to the development of supportive active travel infrastructure along the route. At no time has it ever been suggested that the entirety of Leith Walk would be un-cyclable for a period of months. Support for cycling should have been included as a requirement in the scheduling of the works. Furthermore, the short notice (2 weeks) of the closure with little detail on the circumstances leaves very little opportunity to consider what alternative opportunities there might be. We have been told that rescheduling “would have the potential to have a serious delay to the end date of the project and at some stage closure of the cycleway would be required to install a fully segregated cycleway”. We challenge this statement.
- The closure has not been well publicised. There is no advance warning signage on Leith Walk.

## Comments on the proposed Diversion Route

(see Flickr album <https://flic.kr/s/aHsmVCeJ2Y> – best viewed in “Full Screen (F11) Mode” to see the comments in the image titles.)

1. The diversion route down Annandale Street involves a right turn at a busy roundabout, used by many buses, into Hopetoun Crescent. Hopetoun Crescent is currently one-way southbound so would need contraflow facilities. Drivers may find it difficult to see oncoming cyclists due to the curvature of the crescent. The available space for cycling is quite narrow due to parking on both sides of the road. The surface is cobbled – a poor surface for cycling. Cyclists joining from the North, will need to make a right turn in an exposed position on a fairly busy road.  
**Recommendations:**  
Installation of a cycle contraflow on the North side of the road, inside the car parking spaces. Annandale Street Lane is part of the current Leith Walk cycle diversion and may be a more suitable alternative.
2. McDonald Road is a fairly busy road. There is an advisory cycle lane, but the surface is very poor, some cyclists avoiding it – and is often blocked by delivery vehicles. There is an exposed right turn into Dryden Terrace.
3. Dryden Terrace is a poor, cobbled surface. There is end-on parking with inherent risk from reversing vehicles in addition to danger from construction traffic for the Tram Depot site. The access point to the path over the bridge is unclear and could be hidden or blocked by parked vehicles. The path through to Dryden Street (Dryden Gait) is very narrow (too narrow for 2 bikes to pass), with a blind corner and tight turn on the ramp in Dryden Street (too tight for a tag-along, tandem or large cargo bike to get around). We would not recommend cycling on this path.
4. In Dryden Street, the ramp down from the bridge leads onto a pavement with a dropped kerb that is often blocked by parked vehicles as there appear to be no restrictions on waiting.

The space for cycling is fairly narrow due to parked vehicles on both sides of the street and vehicles entering and leaving the parking presents a hazard.

5. Crossing Pilrig Street to Cambridge Avenue looks extremely hazardous. The road is busy and the junction is off-set. A local experienced cyclist who crosses here daily, told me that she often has difficulty crossing here even at quiet times of the day.

Accessing Leith Walk via Pilrig Street involves a hazardous turn and cycling on a busy, restricted width road for quite a distance.

**Recommendations:**

Install a signalised crossing.

6. Cambridge Avenue is one-way northbound and vehicles are parked on both sides, leaving little room for a contraflow lane.

Arthur Street Southbound is part of the current Leith Walk cycle diversion and is closer to Leith Walk so may be a more suitable alternative, although again requiring a contraflow.

**Recommend** that if there is room for a contraflow cycleway, that it is installed between the vehicular parking and the footway.

7. Balfour Street seems to be a reasonably quiet road but has end-on parking that can be hazardous to cyclists. The access to Pilrig Park at the North end of the street is partially blocked by bins and parked vehicles. There is no dropped kerb.
8. The pathways in Pilrig Park are quite narrow (2m) and can get busy, especially containing a playground and a school. There is little space for shared use cycling.
9. The access to Stanwell Street and Gretna Mews is via a narrow path with a tight turn to a gated exit.
10. The exit from Gretna Mews involves a level difference into a parking area. Vehicles could block the access.
11. Tenant St provides access to Leith Walk – although at some distance. Crossing Tenant St to access Jane St directly involves a road that is marked as "Private" and is gated at the Jane St end, where loading of large lorries occurs, that can obstruct the exit. The alternative would involve cycling along Jane St and 3 sides of a square.
12. Jane St provides access to Leith Walk, but is fairly busy and involves quite a distance from Leith Walk.
13. Crossing Jane St access through to Pirrie St is blocked by a wall and what appears to be private commercial parking.
14. Pirrie Street has haphazard parking, garage access and cobbles, with some in bad need of repair. It is not accommodating for cycling.
15. Exiting out of Pirrie Street onto Great Junction Street, it's not clear how cyclists will resume their journeys. Great Junction Street is very busy. There is a nearby signalised pedestrian crossing.