



DEPUTATION Written Submission – 24 June 2021 - Spaces for People

Spokes, with over 1000 members, has campaigned since the late 1970s for improved cycling conditions, in the context of a city transport system built around public transport, active travel and accessibility for all. BEST – Better Edinburgh for Sustainable Travel – is a recently formed collective of community groups and businesses from across the city seeking an Edinburgh where everyone can travel easily by sustainable means, whoever they are and wherever they need to go.

Spaces for People is a national initiative funded by the Scottish Government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are not alone. Similar interventions have been made in many other locations in the UK and the rest of the world including: Berlin, Paris, Athens, Bogota, Madrid, Sydney and Budapest. It achieved – in a very short space of time – a significant change to the overall transport infrastructure of those places, supporting more people to walk, wheel and cycle. Evidence from SPOKES shows that many of the individual schemes in Edinburgh are already well used. **We are pleased to see the report recommends most schemes for continuation post-pandemic, either through TROs or ETROs, and that all are to stay in place so long as public health guidance requires social distancing.**

Many cities are intending to make permanent the temporary pandemic measures, recognizing the benefits of expanding cycling and walking infrastructure to support public health goals (increased physical activity rates, lower body weight, improved air quality) as well as climate and carbon reduction targets.

Retaining Edinburgh's Spaces for People scheme would bring the city in line with other capital cities worldwide. Combined with other Council existing and planned cycle routes, the SfP on-road cycle lanes form the basis of a hugely valuable future network connecting local communities to the city centre, local town centres, schools and workplaces by sustainable and active means. [This is covered in much more detail in a Spokes website report^[3]. **Spaces for People has been a leap in the right direction.** We ask you to retain the schemes post-pandemic, prioritise accessibility for all, and build on the work achieved to date to create a travel and transport network that is genuinely inclusive and sustainable.

It is important to recognize that Spaces for People installations were designed and implemented quickly, using materials that would not normally be used or considered. Retaining them does not mean leaving them as they are but upgrading and improving them in discussion with communities and other stakeholders. This is already beginning under existing TTROs and can continue through ETROs. We agree with many of the detailed comments and concerns from others about crossing points, dropped kerbs, level access, bus stops & bus priority measures, and we are supportive of initiatives to resolve these issues through enhanced design and best practice reviews.

As noted in the officers' report, the Spaces for People schemes in Edinburgh contribute to other policy goals, including Council priorities on net zero carbon and wellbeing, the City Mobility Plan, Active Travel Plan and City Centre Transformation programme. The potential policy interactions go further, and we

note the obvious links to the city's air quality objectives, the Low Emission zone, Vision Zero Road Safety Plan[1], 20 minute neighbourhoods as well as national outcomes in the National Performance Framework[4] including: health – we are healthy and active; and, community – we live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe.

There is extensive evidence that women are disproportionately discouraged from cycling by traffic conditions. High quality infrastructure is also essential for adapted cycles (e.g. handcycles, trikes, wheelchair tandems) and those with children as passengers (e.g. cargobikes, or child trailers). And, according to Edinburgh and Lothian Regional Equality Council, cycling on our roads can be particularly daunting for ethnic minorities, migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. Improved infrastructure, including segregated bike lanes, pavement extensions, controlled junctions, traffic filters and road calming, increases equal access to active travel as it makes it safer for **everyone** to ride.

Although there has been a high volume of consultation responses to the SfP scheme, **none of this feedback explicitly** includes the voices of any of the 80,000 children who live in the city, and the impact on children was not considered within the report. We think it is important *that children's views are taken into account*[5], and we were delighted to see and hear from children in the deputations made to TEC on 17 June 2021. Spokes and BEST are pleased to see broad support for the School Streets schemes and a wider programme of retention and development in the report. We **strongly support** extended measures around individual schools, as well as safe (low-traffic) routes through each school catchment **and beyond**, and see this as a key intervention in children's safety, well-being and education. We welcome the proposed amendment to seek the views of young people/children in future reports.

In the SfP report, the technical assessment of impacts on businesses focusses on the arrangement of customer parking and delivery bays. We note that a growing number of businesses in Edinburgh use bikes and cargobikes for deliveries/servicing[2] and this possibility is not mentioned either as a potential benefit of SfP measures or within potential future delivery/servicing options. This is particularly pertinent to the arrangement on George IV bridge where servicing difficulties have been noted. We ask you to consider additional managed logistical hubs like those utilised for the Trams To Newhaven project. This would support businesses as they adapt and align themselves to the sustainable transport hierarchy.

It is very disappointing that most of the shopping street measures are suggested for removal. Many footway widenings are well used, as are the few cycling measures in shopping streets, such as the uphill cycle lanes in Broughton St and Morningside Road. We urge the Council to give officers flexibility to assess and retain those shopping street measures which are useful. These should be seen as stepping stones towards broader policy goals for place-making in those locations, with SfP viewed as interim/temporary intervention rather than a final design.

The report notes some locations where there are practical challenges for wheelchair users when parking or using taxis, for example where it is not possible to gain direct kerb access. We agree that this is an important issue and suggest that workable design solutions (that do not involve removal of safe cycling infrastructure) should be sought based on best practice from other cities and input from relevant partners. We expect to see detailed and specific engagement with disabled people, including disabled cyclists, on all schemes to ensure access for all. Of course, blue badge holders should be able to park easily in shopping streets and we expect the council to work with disabled car users to ensure their needs are met.

As the Spaces for People installations evolve, all redesign must be done in line with the sustainable transport hierarchy and best practice. Protected cycle lanes are more effective if people can rely on them to be clear of parked vehicles, and obstructions are a particular issue for nervous cyclists or people

cycling with children. Where possible, redesigns should physically prevent obstructive parking. When not possible, visible and regular enforcement must be increased.

To enable modal shift, protected cycle lanes must be along roads people use for commuting, allowing them to make *everyday* journeys to work, school and the shops. Those cycle routes need to be direct and well lit. Schemes like the ones on Lanark Road are fantastic examples of this, as it relieves pressure on alternative leisure routes which can put different path users in conflict and are deemed unsafe by some cyclists at night, especially many women. We were very disappointed to see the Coalition Amendment voted through to remove the Lanark Road scheme, and we are calling on the Council to retain it and progress it through the ETRO process as with other schemes. We would also urge councilors to be robust in the implementation of the travel hierarchy when considering the proposed reports are undertaken on schemes such as Comiston Rd and Braid Rd.

Finally, SfP is greater than the sum of its parts. It is not just a list of individual interventions, it is part of a strategic reshaping of our streets towards the inclusive and sustainable future the city wishes to become. Losing any significant part of the scheme will delay the transformation of Edinburgh into a low carbon place. The Council must now be bold and ambitious. Retaining schemes and moving them to the next stage of the process is essential for a modern sustainable inclusive city with ambitious climate change, economic, and public health objectives.

Notes

[1] Full council voted unanimously (25 August 2020): “that a new Edinburgh 'Vision Zero' Road Safety Plan - which aims that 'all users are safe from the risk of being killed or seriously injured' on the City's roads - is developed to replace the existing plan and is reported to the Transport & Environment Committee.”

[2] Farrout Deliveries offers a cargobike service for businesses in Edinburgh, and works with a diverse range of clients across the city. Uber Eats and Deliveroo use bike couriers to deliver food/takeaways. And, ZedifyUK – a cargobike business have secured investment of 50K to set up an Edinburgh delivery hub (March 2021).

[3] www.spokes.org.uk/2021/05/growing-edinburghs-cycle-network-beyond-spaces-for-people/

[4] <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/national-outcomes>

[5] Under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have rights to participate in decisions which affect them, and to be protected and kept safe from danger. These rights are now enshrined in Scottish law.

Spokes Response to stakeholder consultation on SfP

<http://www.spokes.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2104-Spokes-SfP-supplement-to-stakeholder-consultation.pdf>