

**Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> March, 10am**

**Edinburgh's Transport and Environment Committee today looks set to vote through plans costing an estimated £400,000 that will effectively see the quiet route south of the city dismantled – contravening several Scottish Government social and environmental policies.**

The move comes following a public consultation which offered Edinburgh residents three options to review measures brought in during the Covid-19 pandemic to provide safer spaces for walking, cycling and wheeling and to promote active travel. The Greenbank to Meadows Quiet Route was established in 2021 and involved preventing traffic from travelling unhindered throughout Morningside's Braid Estate by inserting modal filters.

At the meeting on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> March the committee is expected to vote in favour of removing these measures despite the council's own report stating that plans to reopen Braid Avenue and Braid Road are likely to result in increased traffic throughout the area, additional risk to pedestrians and cyclists and additional pollution which will negatively impact air quality and greenhouse gas emissions.

These proposed actions are in direct conflict with Scottish Government ambitions to reach Net Zero Emissions by 2045 and with Edinburgh Council's ambitions to become a Net Zero Emissions City by 2030.

In January this year the Scottish Government incorporated the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into domestic law. This law states that every child has the right to the best possible health and that governments must provide a clean environment so that children can stay healthy.

According to the Air Quality Report, the Braid Estate already exceeds the recommended World Health Organisation levels of PM2.5, PM10 and Nitrogen Dioxide – pollutants that cause asthma, respiratory inflammation, reduce lung development and increase mortality rates even at low levels of exposure over long periods of time. These levels will inevitably rise with the reintroduction of heavy traffic to the area – putting the health and safety of the children living, playing, walking and cycling to and from school within the area, at greater risk.

In addition, the committee's report states that the option to reopen the roads will have the greatest negative effect in terms of equality and poverty. Motorists and commuters are the main beneficiaries of the plans, while those without access to private vehicles, such as low-income households and young people, will be disproportionately affected by the increased risk to safety and the negative impact of increased greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution.

Although the option to remove all modal filters from the area was the most popular choice amongst the wider community (the consultation was open to residents throughout Edinburgh) it was by far the least popular amongst those residents living on the affected roads. Only 4% of residents on Braid Avenue and 21% of residents on Braid Road voted for option 3.

Residents were not offered the opportunity to retain the current system when councillors drew up the three options, however 88% of Braid Avenue residents and 47% of Braid Road residents did vote for option 1 which was the only proposal to retain filters along both streets.

Despite requests from residents, there has been no evidence as to how these options were formulated, as undocumented meetings appear to have taken place behind closed doors. Two out of the three options involve reopening roads, removing parking spaces from Braid Avenue and Hermitage Drive, and installing segregated cycle lanes at a cost of £400,000. The council has stated that it will delay, cancel or re-scope existing projects to accommodate this cost.

One resident said: “I live on Braid Avenue and see hundreds of cyclists, particularly families, use the route every day in both directions. It provides the perfect conditions for younger, less confident cyclists to learn how to use the roads in relative safety. I can’t see how any child or parent would feel comfortable being confined to a narrow cycle lane with trucks and heavy traffic thundering along beside them.

“I feel it was irresponsible of the council to even put forward an option that enables and encourages increased vehicle use as part of the consultation. Climate Change is at crisis point, we know that fossil fuels are the biggest contributor, and we have limited time to change our habits and make a difference. The council has a duty of care to steer its residents towards living a more environmentally responsible lifestyle and these plans do exactly the opposite.”

The report states that under the existing road system there has been a 40% reduction in traffic throughout the Braid Estate – surpassing the council’s own target of reducing traffic across the city by 30%. It goes on to acknowledge that “if options which re-open these roads are selected this reduction may disappear.”

With the Low Emission Zone coming into effect in June, it is difficult to understand how the council can justify restricting vehicles in the city centre while simultaneously encouraging traffic back into a residential area that was previously well known as a rat-run for commuters seeking faster routes into the city.

Edinburgh City Council has set ambitious plans to become a net zero city by 2030 with a long-term vision for a “greener, cleaner, fairer Edinburgh”. However, the decision to effectively dismantle the Greenbank to Meadows Quiet Route will, by the council’s own

admission, promote greater use of vehicles, increase greenhouse gas emissions, risk the health and safety of all residents but particularly those children using Braid Avenue as a route to one of three schools located at the end of the street, and will disproportionately affect low-income households and young people.

Council Report –

[https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/documents/s67770/Item%207.3%20-%20Travelling%20Safely%20Greenbank%20to%20Meadows%20QC.pdf?fbclid=IwAR01ah0MwyMO454m9Mrn3sa2bsQ6H7IEE7rtsrXoMMfo43Y7QIXKAVJngh0\\_aem\\_AaPgbLqDz4Doe1ke4rVnvV6C\\_aknuTq0q2xkzMYK5cxvsKGECMXwS3cSKofQxSDgYFA](https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/documents/s67770/Item%207.3%20-%20Travelling%20Safely%20Greenbank%20to%20Meadows%20QC.pdf?fbclid=IwAR01ah0MwyMO454m9Mrn3sa2bsQ6H7IEE7rtsrXoMMfo43Y7QIXKAVJngh0_aem_AaPgbLqDz4Doe1ke4rVnvV6C_aknuTq0q2xkzMYK5cxvsKGECMXwS3cSKofQxSDgYFA)

Useful Links:

[www.addresspollution.org](http://www.addresspollution.org)

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/united-nations-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child-incorporation-scotland-bill/bill-becomes-an-act#topOfNav>

Article 24 (health and health services)

Every child has the right to the best possible health. Governments must provide good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food, and a clean environment and education on health and well-being so that children can stay healthy. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

[https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/UNCRC\\_summary-1\\_1.pdf](https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/UNCRC_summary-1_1.pdf)

<https://airqualitynews.com/health/un-acknowledges-childrens-right-to-clean-air/>

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/local-air-quality-management-policy-guidance/>

11.2 Road transport is a major source of local air pollution, particularly in our towns and cities. In urban areas, road traffic accounts for a major part of the total emissions of nitrogen dioxide and particles – the objectives of most concern for human health. This has been borne out by the fact that, with one exception (the Grangemouth industrial complex, declared on the basis of sulphur dioxide), all the AQMAs currently in place in Scotland are based on nitrogen dioxide and/or particles concentrations related to transport activities.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/cleaner-air-scotland-2-towards-better-place-everyone/documents/>

<https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2021/07/cleaner-air-scotland-2-towards-better-place->

[everyone/documents/cleaner-air-scotland-2-towards-better-place-everyone/cleaner-air-scotland-2-towards-better-place-everyone/govscot%3Adocument/cleaner-air-scotland-2-towards-better-place-everyone.pdf](https://www.gov.scot/document/attachments/cleaner-air-scotland-2-towards-better-place-everyone/cleaner-air-scotland-2-towards-better-place-everyone/govscot%3Adocument/cleaner-air-scotland-2-towards-better-place-everyone.pdf)

[Edinburgh's net zero target – The City of Edinburgh Council](#)