

Spokes Action-Update 17.02.26

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0. Finding your councillors

In Edinburgh, find your ward & councillors by typing your postcode on [this page](#) [or edinburgh.gov.uk : Council & Committees : Find your Councillor]. Everyone has either 3 or 4 councillors, usually from assorted parties. For any Council, and to find MSPs, you can use writetothem.com.

1. Holyrood 2026 Election Hustings, Mon 16 March

Spokes and Cycling UK are holding a public election hustings on March 16, for the 2026 Scottish Parliament election, to hear from candidates on cycling and related policies.

Rather than the usual hustings approach, which can be rather boring, our meeting will comprise several sections, with speakers undertaking Initiation, Interrogation, Combination, Clarification and Education, as in the provisional agenda below.



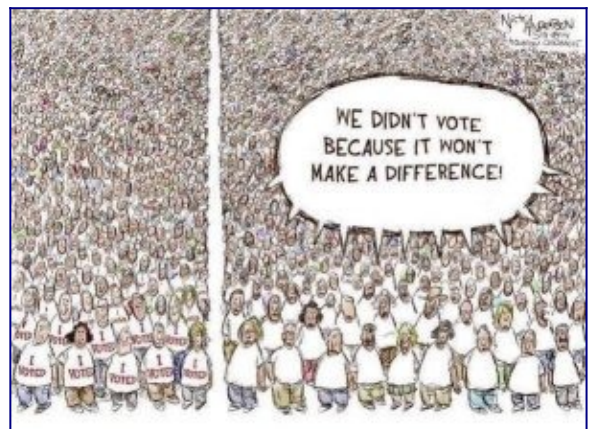
Speakers

All the main parties currently represented at Holyrood have been invited to send along a candidate for an Edinburgh, Lothians or Lothians List seat. So far, we have...

- **Conservative** – [Jo Mowat](#) [councillor; candidate for Edinburgh Central]
- **Green** – [Chas Booth](#) [councillor, candidate for Lothians List, councillor, Spokes member]
- **Labour** – [Daniel Johnson](#) [MSP, standing again in Edinburgh Southern]
- **LibDem** – awaited
- **Reform** – awaited
- **SNP** – [Kate Campbell](#) [councillor, candidate for Edinburgh Eastern, Musselburgh & Tranent]
- **Chair/Maestro** – [Brendan Paddy](#) [Spokes member, Director of [Ramblers Scotland](#)]

Provisional agenda

- **Initiation** – each candidate speaks for up to 3 mins on what they and their party would do for cycling and its wider policy context
- **Interrogation** – each candidate in turn is questioned by the audience & chair for 5 minutes, on what they said
- **Combination** – two or three important questions are put to all candidates
- **Clarification** [if time] – audience follow-up reactions or questions to any candidate
- **Education** – each speaker has 2 minutes to say what they have learned and will take away with them



Arrangements

- **Where** [Augustine United Church](#) 41 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1EL
- **Date** Monday 16 March
- **Time** Starts 7.30, Ends 9.30. Doors open 6.45 for coffee, stalls and chat, including a special stall to join Spokes or renew your membership, and Spokes maps on sale at special stall prices
- **Online** We hope to live broadcast on our [youtube channel](#) and make the recording available later
- **Queries** If you have any queries, email spokes@spokes.org.uk or phone Emma, 07982 278936.

What you can do

- **If you have a question for all candidates** ("Combination" section above) please email it in advance to spokes@spokes.org.uk with the subject line *hustings question*. Note that *questions to individual candidates* ("Interrogation") can only be asked in person at the meeting, after their Initiation speech.
- **Check out the [Holyrood 2026 manifesto](#)** issued by over 60 Scottish organisations, including Spokes. Commitments we'd like to see from parties include 10% of the transport budget going to active travel, and reorganised street space with well maintained, accessible networks of walking and cycling routes
- **See [this article on our website](#)** for updates and further info
- **Help publicise our meeting** by reposting our Bluesky post, liking our facebook post (due soon) and passing on the link for this article to friends and relations

2. Foot of Walk to Dock St - *official opening 10am Wed 18 March*

The new cycle route, which extends the Leith Walk cycle lanes to Dock Street (with a later connection to Ocean Terminal) will be officially opened at 10.15am on Wednesday 18 March at Sandport Place bridge.

The Spokes cargobike stall will be there (maps at special stall prices!) along with a Dr Bike and cargobikes to try at a [Porty Community Energy](#) stall. Please come along, see the ribbon-cutting, and say hello at our stall!

Either come direct to Sandport Bridge, or meet at 10a.m. at the junction of Henderson Street with Yardheads, where there will be a walking party arriving at Sandport Bridge by 10.15 for the opening.

The route (dashed blue line on the drawing below) is part of the wider [Leith Connections project](#) which aims to provide a more pleasant area to get about. It also will provide an alternative to the tramlined roads between Foot of Walk and Ocean Terminal.

Leith Connections – project area



3. Dates for your diary

- Feb 24 [Climate & Nature election hustings](#) 6-8pm [please book as space may be limited]
- March 16 [Spokes public meeting](#), *Hustings for the May Holyrood election – see page 1*
- May 30 [Pedal on Parliament](#) Is back!! Show the newly elected MSPs what is needed.

COUNCIL CYCLE FORUMS [generally open to anyone interested, living in the council area]

- **East Lothian** [usually in-person] For next date email cmilne@eastlothian.gov.uk
- **Midlothian** [usually online] For next date email Thomas.Quayle@midlothian.gov.uk
- **West Lothian** [usually online] For next date email jocelyn@wlcanscot.org.uk

REGULAR EVENTS [*please check before attending, in case of any changes*]

Tuesdays 5-6.15pm UK cycle campaigners '[Active Travel Cafe](#)' via zoom. News, speakers & discussion

Tuesdays & Thursdays [Edinburgh Dawn Patrol](#) Markus Stitz, founder of [BikePacking Scotland](#), runs regular early-morning rides, leaving at 5.40am from the west gate of St Andrew Square, and ending at Wellington Coffee.

Wednesdays 3pm-9pm [Bike Kitchen](#) Fix your bike with help from qualified volunteers at [Edinburgh Tool Library](#)

Thursdays 5-8pm [Bike DIY repair](#) at the Wee Spoke Hub [tools and advice provided; book in advance]

Fridays 1-3pm *First Fri of month* (but Jan 9) Easy rides from Bridgend Farmhouse. admin@bridgendfarmhouse.org.uk

Saturday 2pm – *last Sat every month except December* – [Critical Mass community fun ride](#), also making a point.

4. Princes Street / George Street – shock changes

The Council is expecting more than £90m income (over 3 years) from the new Visitor Levy, and it had been expected that some £30m of this would go towards the promised major George Street project, incorporating a 'cycle street' which would also form the crucial central link of CCWEL.

However at the [full council meeting on 21.2.26](#), an [amendment proposed by the SNP](#), supported by Labour and the Lib Dems, won the day, defeating two (very different) alternatives from the Conservative and Green parties.

The victorious amendment scrapped George Street funding, basically on the grounds that Princes Street is in more urgent need, and allocated £200K towards drawing up plans for Princes Street and the Waverley Valley.

The relevant section of the SNP amendment said...

"the George Street and First New Town project, in its current iteration, should be reprioritised to consider improvements to Princes Street which has a larger footfall and for officers to consider how active travel initiatives could be developed across the city centre.

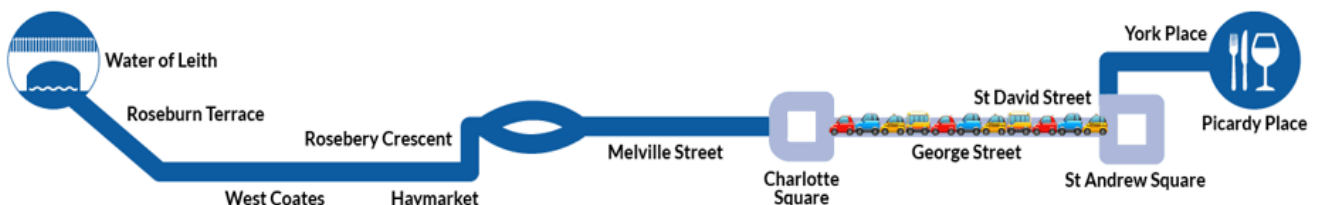
In the compromised form which it has ultimately taken, we are concerned that the George Street and First New Town project risks pleasing no one – not enough economic development opportunity for businesses affected, yet too much vehicular access to deliver the active travel benefits hoped for. We still believe that radical changes to George Street and its cross streets are needed for it to serve properly as the lynchpin of the City Centre West-East Link, but we believe that, in the project's current diluted form, it should be delayed to allow VL income to focus on Edinburgh's most important and iconic (though currently sadly ailing) thoroughfare – Princes Street.

This would include public realm interventions to improve pedestrian and active travel experience and dealing with public transport congestion. Most importantly, it would involve delivering a more ambitious and transformative vision than the rejected Princes Street and Waverley Valley Strategy. Retaining the £200,000 allocated by officers to developing a new master, our plan commits to retaining the EVL funds which would otherwise have been spent on George Street instead to implementing this new vision – a fitting restoration for the true centrepiece of our city centre."

This decision marks a huge change in expectations, with both plusses and minuses for cycling.

Disappointingly

- Unless other funding is found, George Street could remain car-dominated for years to come
- CCWEL could remain bisected for the foreseeable future. Ben from [Edi.Bike](#) did this entertaining modification of the Council's CCWEL drawing...



Positively

- The agreement does include positive words on active travel, though somewhat open to interpretation
- The existing George Street plans have been, bit by bit, watered down, so that more vehicles would be allowed in at more times. Although we think the proposed 'cycle street' remains a just about acceptable option, if properly controlled with physical measures, it is a step down from the segregated bike route originally included. Can we now return to a proper protected bike route to complete CCWEL?
- It repeats the need for an *ambitious and transformative vision* for Princes Street and includes funds to develop proposals, following the Council's [rejection last year of proposals widely seen as 'unimaginative.'](#) In our view such a vision can only be achieved by reducing traffic lanes, which would then allow wider footways and largely protected bike lanes, as for example in the proposals by Richard Murphy.

What you can do – Please contact your councillors (see page 1, section 0 to find them). Give them your views on these developments. We suggest in particular to ask for...

- Bold thinking on Princes Street, including serious consideration of Richard Murphy's ideas to reallocate part of the roadscape to wider footways and protected bike lanes
- A protected cycleway along George Street as an urgent interim priority, along with substantial removal of car parking, given that it may now be many more years until a major George Street revamp. This is essential to complete CCWEL and make it attractive to potential as well as existing cyclists, and could be done at relatively low cost.

5. Snippets

5.1 Holyrood Low Road – the future

Article from the Historic Environment Scotland (HES) Holyrood Park stakeholder newsletter...

We have been working with independent geotechnical engineers to finalise the design options that will allow us to increase the area accessible to the public on the Duddingston Low Road.

We expect that the subsequent works will take between 12 and 18 months, however, this is also dependent on resources as well as scheduled monument consent and planning permission.

No decisions have been made on what type of access will be permitted, and any future decisions on access will be taken in line with our Strategic Plan for Holyrood Park and our Movement Strategy for the Park which is currently underway.

We are grateful for the continued feedback that we receive from members of the public on the impact of the closure and would encourage people to get in touch to share their views on the future.

Note the invitation to comment in the final para!

Send your views to holyroodparkcorrespondence@hes.scot ... especially if you think the road should remain closed permanently to private motor traffic!

5.2 Ghost Bikes

You may know of the worldwide tradition, where concerned friends or members of the public sometimes install a white-painted 'ghost bike' at the site of a cycling fatality – a memorial to the victim and also a reminder and warning to other road users, not least motorists. A member of the public contacted us about the Kings Road Portobello junction ghost bike ([Stuart Elliott](#) & [Heather Stronach](#)), which was deteriorating, and [Infrasisters](#) kindly gave it a great refresh – after which Rosanna of Infrasisters then did the same at the West End ([Zhi Min Soh](#)).

Meanwhile, years after these deaths, interim safety improvements have been made at Portobello, but permanent solutions are still awaited here and at the West End. Speak to your councillors if this concerns you.



The Portobello junction ghost bike - before and after refresh by Infrasisters

5.3 North Berwick trains – with bike

Beware if getting on or off (or trying to!) at intermediate stations. Here is a cautionary tale from a local Spokes member, who is not the first to be caught in this way. She has now emailed her MSP as responses from ScotRail were not very helpful.

On the North Berwick to Edinburgh line, some of the stations have shorter platforms, so when a six carriage train is running the doors of the end coach don't open. You are asked to move up the train to alight. If you have a bike (or possibly a wide buggy etc.) you can't move that up the train!

I had this problem when trying to get off at Musselburgh station for work. Ultimately, there was no option but to go into Edinburgh and wait on the next train back. This was confirmed by the guard. I now know not to get on at that carriage (which was marked for bikes) but am thinking of other travellers.

The guard confirmed that an announcement is made that these doors won't open when 'longer' trains run - but only at North Berwick and Waverley! So anyone getting on at another station is unaware. This could easily be improved by the announcement being issued at each station. And perhaps flagging the issue to train staff so they could alert relevant travellers who hadn't /couldn't hear an announcement.

6. Spokes news & help needed

6.1 Spokes SCIO - trustees sought

Spokes is considering becoming a [SCIO](#). If anyone has suggestions for possible trustees, please get in touch. We envisage the day-to-day operation of Spokes, with working groups, continuing to operate much as at present, but the SCIO umbrella would help with long-term issues such as succession, give increased credibility, and have some financial advantages. We anticipate the trustees would probably normally only need to meet 2 or 3 times a year, either online or in person.

6.2 Edinburgh Accessibility Commission

We are delighted to say that Ken Talbot has joined Spokes Planning Group and will represent Spokes on the [Accessibility Commission](#). Let us know if you have any issues for him possibly to take up.

6.3 Bike/rail

We are delighted that Spokes member Charles Wallis is to be our new rep, following long-serving bike/rail expert Ewan Jeffrey. Ewan was influential in getting the flexible bike space provision on the class 385 trains now used on the Edinburgh-Glasgow and many other central area services.

6.4 Spokes Working Groups – please volunteer

Most Spokes activity happens through working groups which meet roughly monthly online.

Please do get in touch if you'd like to try joining Planning or Resources, our two most central groups. Both meet online roughly monthly and have very-well-used email lists to keep in touch with ongoing issues between meetings. At meetings, don't be shy to butt in with your thoughts or asking anything that is unclear; groups are friendly and everyone starts by not really knowing what is going on!

Don't feel you don't know enough – it is by doing that you learn - and you would normally share with other members. For example, on responding to a [consultation](#) in Planning Group, someone might draw up initial ideas, others could then comment and perhaps add useful references, leading to a final complete response. Or if you are helping at a Resources Group stall at a community event, you'd not be alone.

6.5 Peter Hawkins, cycling bio...

Peter, a long-time stalwart of Spokes Maps Group, Planning Group and former Pathways Group, has had to hand over his main Spokes responsibilities due to recent health issues. He intends to continue his involvement and promotion of bike travel, but we'd anyway like to take this opportunity to mark and celebrate his major and longstanding contribution to Spokes and to the cause of encouraging more people to cycle for their everyday travel. Not least because this also introduces some interesting [Spokes Maps](#) history.

Peter sees getting about by bike not just as an issue of health, safety and enjoyment, but also, increasingly in recent years, as a vital contribution to tackling the climate crisis: he did not hold back in his tough words on this when responding to government consultations!

The success of the Spokes Edinburgh map, first produced in 1987, led Spokes to consider extending our coverage. Peter made a successful application to the Scottish Office Cycle Challenge in 1998. This provided a grant of £25,000 to support the production of a cycle map of Midlothian along with an innovative promotional scheme to publicise the new map and encourage cycling.

The map covered not just the (mainly rural) county of Midlothian but also included town maps with street names. Rather than using contour lines the gradients were shown by marking every crossing of a contour with an arrow pointing downhill, so that cyclists could easily see the steepness by the closeness of the arrows.

Map promotion involved a questionnaire issued to **200,000 households** via Royal Mail. It asked about household travel patterns and views on cycle usage. Respondents were sent copies of the Midlothian or Edinburgh Spokes maps. A total of 7400 maps were sent out, a response rate of 3.7%. A second questionnaire assessed whether people cycled more due to receiving the map, with a prize draw to encourage replies. 26% of the 1800 replies to this second survey reported that at least one member of the household had started cycling thanks to the map.

Following the success of this project, Peter played a key role in researching and producing subsequent Midlothian maps and developing similar maps of East and West Lothian, partially funded through the Landfill Tax and from the local authorities in these areas, and working in conjunction with graphic designer Tim Smith.

As well as administering these projects Peter did a lot of the research, cycling along rural roads and the towns and villages of the Lothians, and collating information from other cyclists. Latterly, he had responsibility for our map stocks and distribution to bike shops and other retail outlets.

Peter's involvement with Spokes extends well beyond mapping. As a member of Planning Group he prepared comments on many planning applications and council and government consultations (the group sometimes had to tone down his heartfelt but perhaps impolitic phraseology!) For many years he also scrutinised the weekly lists of all planning applications, so that Planning Group did not miss any developments which merited comment.

Peter also co-ordinated our former Pathways Group which resurfaced or upgraded many offroad links in Edinburgh and Lothian, including Christian Path in Portobello, a long path in East Lothian (Fa'side Castle to Macmerry); West Lothian's Camps to Uphall Station; and, in outer Edinburgh, Newbridge to S. Queensferry via Kirkliston. He undertook other clearing tasks with colleagues or individually, as with his pictured A71 footway clearance, which featured in the Daily Record ("Bike Mad Grandad") and is further described in [Spokes Bulletin 131](#) (page 5)

Big splash in the Daily Record of Peter Hawkins of the Spokes Planning Group clearing the pavement running alongside the A71, starting at Curriehill Road (April 2018). The Council had scheduled to start maintenance in the summer.



Like many members, Peter of course also joins in the more regular Spokes activities, such as at public meetings and newsletter stuffing/delivery sessions.

In his entry to the 2024 Spokes [Cycling and Sustenance competition](#), Peter summed up his approach: "*I've been cycling since the age of 4. I didn't know anything about health benefits, development of aerobic capacity, increase of stamina, importance of deep breathing, and all the other medical benefits. I just did it, loved it, wanted more.*"

Please respond as an individual to all consultations that concern you. And copy to Spokes, to aid our central response. We'd also appreciate volunteers to do an initial draft Spokes response to consultations. Whilst someone in Planning Group usually takes this on for location-specific consultations, it is harder to get contributors for the more general consultations such as the City Plan (7.3 below) or the draft Scotland Climate Change Plan (8.1).

7. National Consultations

7.1 GB Road Safety Strategy [Consultation site](#) – closes 31 March

The UK government's [Road Safety Strategy](#) (much of which affects Scotland) was launched today, 8.1.26. Whilst we'd always like to see more, this seems potentially quite significant towards reducing deaths and injuries. It includes 5 separate consultations, covering major areas in the new strategy. There are already calls from some to water these down, so please do consider putting in your own views...

- [motoring offences](#)
- [introducing a minimum learning period for learner drivers \(category B driving licence\)](#)
- [introducing mandatory eyesight testing for older drivers](#)
- [improving moped and motorcycle training, testing and licensing \(AM, A1, A2 and A driving licence\)](#)
- [mandating vehicle safety technologies in GB type approval](#)

8. Edinburgh & Lothians Consultations

Unusually, there appear to be no relevant Council consultations at present for Edinburgh or any of the Lothians councils! Just the one consultation below, by a developer.

8.1 Cameron Toll redevelopment – **drop-in 26 Feb, 2-7pm** – [website](#)

A further drop-in on the proposals for the redevelopment of Cameron Toll will take place on **26th February 2026, 2-7pm, at Cameron Toll Shopping Centre, 6 Lady Rd, Edinburgh, EH16 5PB**. The consultation is not yet an active planning application but is intended to gather public views to inform a future planning application.

"The proposals for Cameron Toll Shopping Centre focus on creating a mixed-use neighbourhood centre with housing, a hotel, and leisure destinations, whilst retaining and reconfiguring the existing retail offer, aiming to create a vibrant place to live, work, and play, alongside strengthening connections with the wider community by improving access, encouraging public transport use, and building on the aims of creating a 20 minute neighbourhood concept. This is the first of two public consultation events, with feedback from this session being used to refine the plans for a more detailed presentation at the second event."

You can also see a pdf of the proposals by clicking the downloads tab [here](#).

Whether or not you attend the drop-in, please do submit your comments online [here](#).

This is a very major development right next to the planned [Cameron Toll to Bioquarter bike route](#), construction of which is planned to start late this year, so cycle provision is vital both within the site and links to routes outside. Spokes Planning Group has not yet made a submission, but one member has sent us his submission, as follows...

It is good to see that you are paying some attention to active travel, but I think the bike opportunities need improved, including the following...

- 1. Looking at the consultation drawing, surely there should be a bike route along the south edge of the site, past the service area and linking through to the route at the cinema.*
- 2. The dotted orange path leading to the cinema needs to be open to cycling - it is not clear if this is intended.*
- 3. The site must be linked safely and conveniently to the planned Cameron Toll to Bioquarter cycle route*
- 4. Signage on the site should make clear when paths are open to people with bikes, to avoid unnecessary confusion*
- 5. I noticed 'double-height' bike parking when I was there. This is inappropriate for a shopping destination where you are only there for a short period and have luggage - it is only suitable for all-day parking, e.g. at a rail station.*
- 6. Bike parking needs to cater for bike trailers and cargobikes, which are rapidly growing in popularity*
- 7. Several forward-looking stores are offering bike-trailer hire, which is also common in Europe*

9. Local councils - Active Travel websites + Cycle/AT Forums

- **Edinburgh** – [main page: Cycling & Walking page](#) / there is no Cycle Forum
- **East Lothian** - [main page: East Lothian on the move](#) / [AT infrastructure](#) / To attend the occasional council AT/Cycle Forum [usually held in-person] email cmilne@eastlothian.gov.uk
- **Midlothian** – [main page: Walking, cycling, horse riding](#) / [active travel map](#) / To attend the (new in 2026) online council AT/Cycle Forum, email Thomas.Quayle@midlothian.gov.uk
- **West Lothian** - [Enquiries and comments about new roads, footpaths, cycle routes](#) / [current projects and completed consultations](#). To attend the online AT/Cycle Forum (which is run by WL Climate Action, but includes a council officer), email jocelyn@wlcan.scot
- **SEStran** (South East Scotland regional transport partnership) – [People & Place, projects & grants](#)

10. More & future consultations – *Check council, government, and other sites*

- ◆ Edinburgh consultationhub.edinburgh.gov.uk
- ◆ Edinburgh [Edinburgh traffic orders](#)
- ◆ East Lothian www.eastlothianconsultations.co.uk
- ◆ Midlothian <https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/directory/33/consultations>
- ◆ West Lothian www.westlothian.gov.uk/consultations
- ◆ Scottish Government consult.gov.scot
- ◆ Transport Scotland www.transport.gov.scot/consultations
- ◆ Scottish Parliament consultations yourviews.parliament.scot/consultation_finder
- ◆ Scottish Parliament petitions petitions.parliament.scot
- ◆ Just in case... Transform Scotland keeps an updated page of current transport-related consultations... transformscotland.org.uk/whats-new/action-alerts Check it out in case there's anything important that doesn't appear in the website addresses above (there often is!)
- ◆ Spokes website We have a page of particularly relevant consultations www.spokes.org.uk/consultns

11. Keeping in touch

- ★ Remember to check out our **website** every so often www.spokes.org.uk
- ★ We are active on **Bluesky** [@spokes.org.uk](https://bsky.app/profile/spokes.org.uk) Follow us, and repost posts that you support.
- ★ If you use **Facebook**, please like, share, etc the [Spokes Facebook page](#)
- ★ To campaign effectively Spokes needs as many supporters as possible. If you are not already a member and you like what we do, go to www.spokes.org.uk/membership.