

Spokes Maps Group Report – January 2025 - September 2026

In the first few months of 2025, our excellent volunteer cartographer, Andy Follis, finalised minor updates to the Edinburgh map. The new maps were received from the printers in May and we began promoting and distributing them.

Peter Hawkins had intimated that he wanted to reduce the amount of work he did on distributing maps, so we revised the role of shop 'hustlers' so that they would take on a more active role in contacting shops and delivering orders. Robert Simpson wrote new instructions for hustlers; the process has been evolving over the course of the year. Unfortunately, the changes have led to some shops not being visited as frequently as they should and we will start emailing shops as well to ensure they know how to order our maps.

We also put out an appeal at the Spokes Public Meeting on 30 April 2025 for more hustlers and for volunteers to assist with admin work. Celia MacIntyre volunteered to assist Anne Douglas in the Spokes office - which was extremely fortuitous as things turned out.

Meanwhile, Andy Follis finalised the full revision of the West Lothian map, implementing the changes identified by our volunteer surveyors during 2024, and information on new developments from West Lothian Council. We held a launch event on 11 October at the West Lothian Bike Library in Livingston, attended by Kirsteen Sullivan, MP for Bathgate and Linlithgow, and Deputy Provost of WLC, Councillor Peter Heggie, plus local volunteers and Spokes members. It was a lovely event, with great scones, and got good coverage in the local press.

When the West Lothian map came out we still had a few hundred copies left of the previous edition. Rather than pulping these, Resources Group offered to dispose of them usefully by donating bulk supplies to a number of community organisations, schools, etc, in West Lothian. We also trialled placing piles (with a poster about the new edition) on the Linlithgow towpath, resulting in nearly 100 taken by passers-by. To encourage sales of the new map we also trialled a '£1 off' voucher in the Linlithgow community magazine, resulting in some 20 sales at the local bookshop.

Sadly, shortly after this, Peter Hawkins suffered a stroke and had to cease the many tasks he had been performing for Spokes maps. We held an emergency meeting in November 2025 to agree how to deal with map orders, manage the stock, the maps bank account, and set up a common method of issuing invoices, using an improved invoice form developed by Eric Ingram.

In February 2026, we held another meeting to discuss further financial arrangements and processes. It was agreed that the 'Constitution of Spokes (Maps)', drawn up in 2002 in response to specific financial circumstances at that time, was no longer relevant. Dave du Feu, Ian Maxwell and Peter Hawkins signed a document to state that the Constitution was ended. The Maps Group is now part of Spokes as a whole, as the other groups have always been. We also dropped our VAT registration as it required quite a lot of work and we only recovered around £200 per year.

We considered closing the Maps bank account and having all transactions go through the main Spokes account, but decided to retain the separate account to make it easy to identify payments made (or not made). Some funds from the current account have been moved to a deposit account that earns a higher rate of interest. Many thanks to Ian Maxwell for dealing with the banking, constitutional and administrative issues.

Charles Wallis, the Spokes bike/rail representative, arranged for a new Edinburgh map to be installed near the cycle parking at Waverley Station, replacing a 2016 version. This had been on the list of things to do for some time, and many thanks are due to Charles for getting it done and establishing links with Network Rail.

We have discussed the possibility of enabling Spokes to sell maps online. This would involve changes to the website to make it compliant and Ian Maxwell has been looking into what would have to be done and the likely cost.

This summer, Martin McDonnell has started the process of creating a digital archive of all past Spokes maps. This could be useful for Spokes' 50th Anniversary in 2027. We are also moving the map stocks from Jenners Depository to the Spokes office on Dalry Road which will save storage fees.

Future maps – Midlothian may need updating first as it was published in 2020. Andy feels that it will not require a major survey. Edinburgh is always the best seller – we need to keep an eye on sales and may have to update/reprint in 2028.

Generally, there is a downward trend in the sale of maps, although sales at festivals and other events have been strong. We have discussed the potential for Spokes to produce digital maps, but feel that our paper maps satisfy a particular need and help people to plan trips across geographical areas. The view at present is that other suppliers already provide good digital mapping and Spokes does not need or want to go into competition with them.

There was a healthy amount of £42,320 in the Maps bank account on 31 March 2026. This has built up largely because Andy Follis, the cartographer, is working entirely voluntarily. Some of the surplus maps funds have been used to provide grants towards cargo bikes. We welcome proposals for other valid uses for the funds.

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