

Spokes Planning Group: 2020–2026 Review for AGM

Over the last six years, the Spokes Planning Group has maintained a constant level of advocacy, submitting 156 formal consultation responses across local, regional, and national transport frameworks. The sheer volume of our output - peaking at 35 submissions in 2022 - reflects a period of unprecedented opportunity for active travel in Edinburgh and the Lothians. This statement provides an overview of our recent interventions and the overarching trends that have defined our campaign work from 2020 to 2026.

However, first of all I'd like to take the opportunity to thank all volunteers (past and present) for their help in collating these responses. We have currently 30 members of the group mailing list but only have around 10-15 active members who contribute. We have a reasonable geographic spread across Edinburgh and the Lothians, however we do lack representation from other groups who cycle. Support in addressing this would be much appreciated.

The Pandemic Catalyst (2020–2021)

The beginning of this decade forced a rapid pivot. In 2020, we submitted 13 responses, heavily weighted toward emergency interventions, speed limit reductions, and the initial rollout of temporary cycle infrastructure. As emergency measures transitioned into longer-term strategies in 2021, our workload more than doubled to 30 submissions. We engaged heavily in the early iterations of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) in Corstorphine and Leith, as well as the overarching City Plan 2030. This period was characterised by defending pop-up infrastructure against swift political backlash, ensuring that the temporary "Spaces for People" measures could be evaluated for permanent retention through Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (ETROs).

Peak Consultation and Policy Overhaul (2022–2023)

Our campaigning reached its highest intensity in 2022, with 35 submissions encompassing both grassroots infrastructure and macro-level national policy. This year marked a crucial turning point where active travel was embedded into broader legislative frameworks, requiring our input on the national STPR2, the Cycling Framework 2022–2030, and the Route Map to a 20% car-kilometre reduction by 2030 as per the then Scottish Government's stated target.

Simultaneously, we were fighting granular local battles, influencing permanent masterplans for Leith Links, Inch Park, and the West Edinburgh Link. By 2023, our 18 submissions reflected a strategic shift toward major corridor delivery. The focus of PG submission was also on essential, high-impact routes such as the Meadows to George Street (MGS) project and the Union Canal Strategy, alongside the emergence of 20-minute neighbourhood consultations in Portobello and Gorgie/Dalry.

Strategic Corridors and Regional Expansion (2024–2025)

Over the last two years, our 48 combined submissions demonstrate a campaign operating simultaneously at the micro-design and macro-strategic levels. In 2024, our 22 submissions

heavily scrutinised detailed designs for Leith Connections and the permanent alignment of the City Centre West-East routes.

By 2025, our 26 responses tackled some of the city's most ambitious structural challenges. Coordinating the detailed response to the Granton to BioQuarter tram extension required meticulous scrutiny to ensure that tram rail safety and active travel space were not sidelined no matter which route option is chosen. Applying a rigorous architectural lens to these masterplans ensures that Edinburgh's complex historical streetscapes are adapted safely for modern transit. Similarly, the ongoing debate over the Princes Street and Waverley Valley Strategy demanded our firm pushback against compromised footway-only upgrades in favor of a complete, segregated active travel rethink.

This period also saw our footprint expand decisively beyond the city bypass. We submitted extensively on East Lothian and Midlothian infrastructure - ranging from the Musselburgh Active Toun routes to the A7/A701 relief roads - ensuring that regional cycling corridors receive the same advocacy as our usual Edinburgh patch. Tracking and safeguarding these rural and suburban routes remains essential for linking our wider commuting and leisure cycle networks.

Recent Submissions and the Road Ahead (2026)

In the first three quarters of 2026 alone, we have already filed 12 strategic submissions. Recent focus has been directed toward localised connections in North and West Edinburgh - such as the Barnton and Dundee Street active travel projects - and resisting the dilution of established routes, such as the Gilmerton Road footway build outs into a primary cycle route.

There has also been continued focus on the safety of cycle users through roadworks. We also now collaborate with Edi.Bike regarding the publication of consultations and disruption.

The overarching trend from 2020 to 2026 is a maturation of our responses to consultation responses. We have moved from planning application responses given Edinburgh Council Planning Department's relatively high level of design guidance for cycle users in planning applications and instead expend more time into demanding technical integration of cycleways and quiet routes. However, this progress is currently colliding with harsh financial realities. Our recent engagements underline a stark rollback in national active travel funding, threatening the delivery of the very networks we have spent six years commenting on.

While the blueprints for a cycle-friendly Lothians is more comprehensive than ever, translating those masterplans onto the tarmac requires our continued vigilance.

Summary of Planning Group meeting notes here;

<https://www.spokes.org.uk/documents/internal-documents/spokes-planning-group/>

& consultation responses summary is here;

<https://www.spokes.org.uk/consultns/>

Year	Consultation Submissions by PG
2020	13
2021	30
2022	35
2023	18
2024	22
2025	26
2026 (<i>to September</i>)	12