

# Leith Walk cyclists must stay off the pavements!



*Leith Central Community Council held their AGM and ordinary monthly meeting last night.*

The community police officer announced to the meeting that an action day is planned for 23 May 2012 when as many cyclists as possible using Leith Walk will be stopped and offered advice on cycle registration, as well as aspects of cycling safety. It depends on final funding being made available, but PC Simon Daley said he is hopeful that it will definitely take place. The council agreed to provide match funding of £50 to help with costs.

The plan is that during the two peak commuting periods between 8.30 and 9.30a.m., and again from 3 to 6p.m., all cyclists will be offered advice on bike security, which the police are already offering at various locations around the city, as well as advice on safe cycling. For example, anyone using the pavement will be asked not to, as it contravenes The Road Traffic Act.

The meeting was told that there will be around 10 police officers involved in the exercise, and they will also be offering information on ways to keep bikes secure, particularly in tenements. There will be leaflets handed out which also contain the advice. PC Daley is to source a stencil depicting a cyclist with a line across it. This will then be used to paint a 'No Cycling' sign on the pavements along Leith Walk and Great Junction Street, in an attempt to try to dissuade cyclists from using the footpath instead of the road. Some residents have highlighted this as a problem, but it is also seen as an opportunity for the police to

identify stolen bikes too.

Leith Walk was in the news in March when [Sustrans](#) named it among their top ten worst roads to cycle on, stating:-  
“Edinburgh has done, and is doing, loads for cyclists, but Leith Walk remains a problem. It’s a very popular route for cyclists as it links the Albert Dock and the city centre. But its shocking condition with potholes and rough road surfaces makes it a nightmare to cycle on. The traffic is busy and fast between junctions making the smallest swerve or stumble potentially lethal.”

The community council minutes from last month recorded the discussion in April, which apparently sparked this move, as follows:-“A resident noted that cyclists on pavements showing insufficient consideration to pedestrians are increasing. Some pedestrians don’t feel safe. However, there have been several deaths of cyclists on roads, many cyclists are now not prepared to take the risk of cycling on roads. In Europe some countries like the Netherlands there are dedicated cycle lanes on roads that keep cyclists safe.

“UK legislations says that cyclists cannot ride without due care and attention on the road, or disobey street signs, but no legislation applies to cyclists on pavements.. Charity Sustrans (Routes for People) actively promotes ‘shared use’ paths, average 3 metres wide, which enable cyclists and pedestrians to use the space together. Sustrans is working with Local Authorities all over the UK to promote the National Cycle Network. The body has also developed a Good Cycling Code, which urges giving way to pedestrians, using cycle bells instead of surprising people and maintaining modest speeds near pedestrians). See [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk) (information sheet FF04). “

Then two weeks after the action day, on 6 June 2012, the police will be back on the streets for an enforcement day to ensure that lessons have been learned, and that no-one is

still cycling on the pavements. There are no fixed penalties which can be given to cyclists, so any who are caught will be charged and reported to the Procurator Fiscal for any further action to be taken. But the officer confirmed to The Edinburgh Reporter that they will also be on the lookout during the enforcement day for any drivers who flout the law too. Anyone seen encroaching on an Advance Stop Area at a junction, for example, might be charged.

Following the meeting The Edinburgh Reporter was chatting to local MP, Mark Lazarowicz and MSP, Malcolm Chisholm, discussing whether this was indeed such a problem, when, rather prophetically, a cyclist approached at speed along the pavement in Macdonald Road almost hitting Mr Chisholm! No harm was done but a bell would certainly have helped to give advance warning.

✘ It had taken a mere half hour to get the AGM out of the way, although clearly a lot of ground had been covered by the community council during the year. The planning sub-committee was praised for its work in dealing with the planning issues which have come up in Leith over the last year, although regret was expressed that there is a dearth of real development in the area. One thing that the council will do in its new year is to write to the council planning department suggesting that allowing residential planning permission to be passed in the west of the city is not conducive to any future developments in the Leith area. One member commented:-“It is worrying that so many sites in Leith are being by-passed in favour of others elsewhere in the city.”

The council's Culture and Leisure Committee, under convenor, Councillor Deidre Brock, a Leith councillor, has approved monies which might assist in the development of the Leith Theatre Trust. The building is thought to have been empty for about 20 years, and although the plans are at an early stage, there is now great hope that this will come to fruition.

The Community Council have also been instrumental in the proposed establishment of the Pilrig Conservation area and they will make a report to the council on this later this year.

The council's financial balance was noted at just over £600, which was down on last year's balance of around £1,100, but some of the funds which came from the Neighbourhood Partnership had to be repaid as they were unused.

Former chair, the late Stewart Blaik, is still sorely missed. It was he, Roland Reid said, who had singlehandedly run the Leith Gala last June, as he called for volunteers for the smooth running of this year's event. He asked for people to come forward to help put up the marquees needed for the Gala, which takes place on 9 June 2012.

And this is the kind of detail that the ordinary monthly meeting last night dealt with. The community council are calling for one of their number to represent them on the Edinburgh Association of Community Councils for the next year. [The Leith Business Association](#), meanwhile, have been co-opted as a member of the Leith Central Community Council.

Charlotte Encombe from Greener Leith reported that her organisation is arranging a consultation on 29 May, probably at Out of the Blue Drill Hall on Dalmeny Street at 7pm (but worth checking on the Greener Leith website nearer the time). The purpose of the consultation is to run a facilitated event to identify what people want in terms of a Vision for Leith. This is completely separate from the council's own proposed consultation, and the community council agreed to pay £100 towards the cost of posters and other stationery required during the day.

Mark Lazarowicz, MP for Edinburgh North and Leith talked to the meeting about the problem that the new VAT scheme on alterations might bring to the owners of listed buildings in

Edinburgh. This is a particular problem for buildings like churches, and there are, he said, 23,000 listed buildings in Edinburgh. Mark wrote about this matter in some detail for The Edinburgh Reporter [here](#) but asked the council to write to HM Treasury to support his call for the UK government to think again about their proposal.

The community council came in for some praise from Malcolm Chisholm, MSP for Edinburgh North and Leith, who said there are many matters which are brought to his attention by the council which he might otherwise miss. He also mentioned the future of Leith Docks as a Renewable Energy Hub which now seems to be in some doubt. He referred to a Sunday Herald article which he had read in the print edition of the newspaper last Sunday. The article highlighted the basic problem with Leith Docks which appears to be that any alterations to the lock gates are probably going to be abandoned owing to the cost. The dock will as a result be too small to admit the boats needed in the production of wind turbines. As an alternative the plan seems to be that an outer berthing will be provided, but quite who will provide the funding is as yet unclear. Malcolm said that he is to meet with Spanish wind turbine manufacturer, Gamesa, soon to discuss their proposals in relation to Leith. He was also able to confirm the the traffic lights outside the library where we were sitting had been resequenced following his request to the Council's Transport Department, to allow more time for traffic exiting from McDonald Road which had caused difficulty to some of his constituents.

Councillor Deidre Brock, who is the SNP nominee for the position of Deputy Lord Provost, was also present at the meeting (although none of the other councillors for the Leith area were) and explained that there will be carriageway and footway repairs in many streets in the Leith area over the coming weeks starting off in Montgomery Street.

And finally, this Saturday, 19 May 2012, there is to be a

memorial service at the Rosebank Cemetery for the Leith residents who perished in the worst UK rail crash in history, the Gretna Quintinshill Disaster which happened on 22 May 1915. Five trains were involved in the accident, and many of those killed were members of the Leith Battalion of the Royal Scots who were heading for Gallipoli. There is a mass grave in Rosebank Cemetery where some of the bodies are buried, although there is no definitive roll of the dead as the list of soldiers travelling was lost in a fire which consumed the trains after the series of collisions. The meeting heard how the Drill Hall was used as a temporary morgue. There is a researcher coming to Edinburgh at the beginning of June, and anyone with any family connections to the accident is asked for their help.

There is information about how to get involved with your local community council on [The City of Edinburgh Council website](#).