

Are Leith Walk improvements moving at last?



The council decided on Thursday to bring forward the date for appointing a contractor to carry out improvement works on Leith Walk by around six weeks. They had put out an invitation to tender for the works some time ago but the closing date had to be extended to 20 March (the date of the Finance Committee meeting) to allow for 'maximum competition' in the bid process.

This meant that the award of the contract would have to await the next Finance Committee meeting which is not for another six weeks, so the council have agreed to delegate the decision to the Director of Services for Communities, Mark Turley, along with the Convener and Vice-Convener of the Finance and Resources Committee. These three will now appoint the contractor to carry out Phase 2 of the Leith Programme.

The council has recognised in the reports produced for the Finance Committee meeting that the local community wishes the works carried out as soon as possible, although many locals will tell you that the council has already been delaying this work for some time. In Spring 2013 the council invited local organisations to comment on the consultation dealing with the design of the improvements.

Leith Walk has been described as an important street in the past, as the most dangerous street for cyclists, and a mess by those viewing it after the tram works there were completed.

Phase 2 of the Leith Programme involves around £9 million worth of road, footway and cycle improvements along the whole length of Constitution Street and Leith Walk, which the council hope will transform the character of these streets.

The council is particularly keen to improve the street layout in the northern section of Leith Walk 'for the benefit of all road users'.



The Programme is being delivered in a number of phases in the next three financial years and Phase 1 which involved works in Constitution Street was completed in November 2013.

Phase 2 covers the section of Leith Walk between Pilrig Street and Duke Street and the contract is to be awarded and then reported back to the Finance Committee at the beginning of May 2014.

Councillor Adam McVey who is the newly appointed Vice Convener of Transport and Environment supports the work to be carried out in Leith:-“The Council has taken action to speed up the awarding of the Leith Walk improvement contract. This will allow users of the street to enjoy the new public realm between Duke Street and Pilrig Street to do their Christmas shopping.

“The Council took action at the Finance committee to bring forward the awarding of the contract by 6 weeks. This means work will be able to start in May and crucially be complete by the end of November.”

Meanwhile our chums at [Greener Leith](#) believe that this all means that trams will roll down Leith Walk sooner than had been thought. We think they are probably right, but there are also other areas in Edinburgh where it is clearly marked on the Local Development Plan that roads, streets and pieces of land are reserved for future tram development. It is certainly the case that other cities which have introduced trams have all extended the lines within a short time. However, given the history of disruption and the effect that this had on Leith Walk businesses, perhaps there is no more deserving extension to the tram line than Leith Walk.

