

Conservatives say council needs to put pedestrian needs first

The Policy and Sustainability Committee meets on Thursday to decide upon the way forward to allow for social distancing on our city streets.

We met with the Transport Convener, Lesley Macinnes to discuss these plans and proposals and also met with the new Conservative transport Spokesperson, Cllr Susan Webber to hear her views.

Since 30 April several streets have been affected by a temporary traffic restriction order. Usually these take years to put in place but owing to the unusual circumstances, the council is able to invoke emergency measures. It has closed all or parts of Braid Road, Braidburn Terrace, Silverknowes Road, Cammo Walk and Links Gardens. All of these were chosen as council officers or Police Scotland had identified them as popular areas for walking and cycling.

If these proposals are passed tomorrow, the council will now apply to The Scottish Government for a share of the £10 million funding which the Transport Secretary, Michael Matheson announced recently. The administration also confirms it will continue to speak with the transport spokespeople from various groups.

While the report says that any schemes will in future involve the local ward councillors, it is not entirely clear if they were consulted in relation to the changes already made.

We asked Cllr Macinnes if she just wanted to close all city streets. She replied: "No, no, not at all. Because clearly, the city still has to function, but what we're trying to do is provide people with good alternatives. At the moment, people are finding there's quite often pinch points as we call them, where there's a bit of conflict between people getting safe space to walk, to cycle and where there's vehicle traffic as well.

"And we obviously also have to take into account public transport the buses and trams, and so on have to free passage as much as we can. I'm particularly concerned about what comes next during the transition to recovery period, when people start to go back to work."

Cll Webber is only a couple of weeks into her new position as Transport spokesperson for the Conservative Group. She believes that there is too much emphasis on exercise, on cycling and not enough on pedestrian safety and people getting about the city. "It is very difficult to understand the one line of text around each of these road changes. There is so much detail around that which ought to be discussed, but given the number of proposals it would take a long time. It is all a bit vague, I would love to see how each of these plans fits the criteria. I couldn't agree to that amount of change without more scrutiny."

During the lockdown the council says that cycling has increased by 16% and there is congestion on walking and cycling routes. At Silverknowes the number of cyclists has gone up fourfold, while the use of public transport has decreased dramatically.

It is also recognised that transport will be central to recovery when the Covid-19 restrictions are relaxed, so alternatives to using the car have to be encouraged and supported.

The potential schemes are included in the appendix to the report which is embedded below. The committee meeting can be watched on the council website [here](#).



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