

Opinion – Cllr Macinnes on keeping active this winter

by Transport Convener Cllr Lesley Macinnes

The world around us may be in a state of flux but in October, as always, the nights are fair drawing in. As winter draws closer, and Covid restrictions continue to impact our lives, it's more important than ever that we keep active, for the good of our mental and physical health.

One small positive to have come out of the last six, difficult months is a renewed enthusiasm for walking and cycling. At the end of September Cycling Scotland reported a surge in cycling across the country, with a 43% rise in journeys by bike compared to the same period last year.

During the early days of lockdown, many of us were part of the big increase in people heading out to enjoy quieter streets on foot, bike and wheels and to take daily exercise in our parks and on off-road paths. These changes in habits have pushed us to take action.

We've introduced a really ambitious package of measures to

help people get around the city safely and easily while physically distancing. Under Spaces for People funding from The Scottish Government we're implementing a whole range of temporary improvements, including more than 30km of segregated cycle lanes, widened pavements in nine local shopping streets and more space outside schools across the city.



Forrest Road segregated cycle lane. Photo: Martin P. McAdam
www.martinmcadam.com

We want to give people room to confidently exercise, to travel to work where necessary and to visit local shops and cafes. Lots of people in Edinburgh (around 40%) don't have access to cars and this pandemic is still very much with us – we want to support everyone getting from A to B safely as road traffic begins to creep up.



It's also all about the city's green recovery. Earlier this year we saw so many benefits that fewer cars on our roads brought, with reduced congestion, cleaner air and a more pleasant environment on our streets. This reflects our long-term vision for a people-friendly, healthier capital city.

We know our aspirations are shared by the public too. Last month we published the results of a wide-ranging consultation on our draft [City Mobility Plan](#) and the consensus was clear – people want to see change.

Two thirds of respondents supported our ten-year strategy for a transformed city, where mass commuting by bike is truly possible and our city centre is largely car free, while proposals to improve cycling and walking infrastructure and enhance our public transport system received overwhelming support.

This plan, along with the many innovative schemes we're progressing, from City Centre Transformation to Low Emission Zones, Trams to Newhaven and a range of exciting active travel

projects connecting the city, is central to a clean, connected and carbon neutral future.

Our love of cycling and walking can outlive lockdown – now is the chance to seize the opportunity to make it last.



Braidburn Terrace. Photo: Martin P. McAdam
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