

Green space in Gorgie – campaigners say it is under threat

**by Cllr Ashley Graczyk Independent
Councillor for the Sighthill-Gorgie
ward asks does green infrastructure
come at the expense of green space?**

Trees of Edinburgh, a local environmental campaign group, has alerted the public to the imminent destruction of Sauchiebank Wood in Dalry as a result of the planned creation of the Roseburn-Fountainbridge cycle link (Edinburgh Council planning application [20/03561/FUL](#)). The campaigners say that over 800 trees are set to be felled under the Council's current plans.



They write: "Paths could be routed through this wood with the loss of very few trees: in fact, there are already paths in place, with good hard standing, running the length of the wood. The old railway base is the perfect foundation for a cycle path, and requires minimal work."

The campaigners hope that the plans can be amended to preserve more mature woodland.

Eleanor Harris, Trees of Edinburgh Co-Founder stated, "We appreciate that on this old industrial site there are difficult site constraints including level changes and uncertain ground conditions. We are not engineers, but the impression on the site is that greater use could be made of existing paths and gradients at the front of the site, including the road at Sauchiebank, to reduce destruction of trees further back. At the very least we would like reassurance that these options were fully explored before recommending the destruction of the woodland."

I fully support increasing active travel in local communities and protecting our green infrastructure. The recent pandemic has emphasised the value of our green spaces. I recently met with Trees of Edinburgh activists and heard their possible recommendations on how to create a cycle path through the woods while protecting more of the natural habitat. I also attended the HAGSA 'Save Sauchiebank Wood' campaign meeting where I engaged with local residents who shared their concerns and discussed their desire to start a Friends of Sauchiebank Wood group and for a new welcoming public notice board to be installed. We even did a litter pick to tidy up the area.

I have received many emails of objections from constituents with similar concerns. My hope is that full consideration will be given to how this much needed cycle path route might be created through the woodland without destroying a large proportion of the existing trees. It should be possible to strike a better balance. At the very least, I would like reassurance from the Council that these options have been exhausted before destroying this precious woodland in the heart of Dalry. It would also be interesting to know how the destruction of a woodland is compatible with Edinburgh's Million Tree Strategy.

HAGSA (Housing and Green Space Activism) believes more safe routes to cycle are needed while also looking after our woodlands as both are great assets to local communities. Gorgie Dalry is one of the most densely populated area of Edinburgh and needs as many green spaces as possible.

Katriona Gillespie, Chair of Gorgie Collective, a local community arts and cultural group, said, "To create high-quality public spaces, we should be preserving and enhancing natural habitats; increasing biodiversity; introducing inspirational and high-impact public art; and ensuring that community benefits are integral and a meaningful community co-design process is initiated. None of these things is currently happening with this proposal so there is significant room for

improvement. Obviously, the cycle/pedestrian link is a good idea, but with more ambition and vision it could be a really brilliant intervention.”

Editorial comment

The path and wood in question are close to the route of the [City Centre West to East Link \(CCWEL\)](#) which has so far taken around five years to put plans in place for this major cycle route. It is hoped that eventually the two might link together. The plans for the CCWEL have taken longer than they might have owing to the matter being referred to the Reporter on the basis of an objection about the part of the route around Roseburn. The start date for construction has been put back to May 2021 owing to Covid-19.