

# **Seven week consultation on Spaces for People comes to an end tonight – a few hours left to have your say**

**The consultation on making temporary Spaces for People measures permanent has been running since 22 February 2021. It was extended for a few weeks to allow for more people to have their say – principally as there were a couple of technical glitches at the beginning.**

The council applied for and got a huge proportion of the Scottish Government funding which Transport Secretary, Michael Matheson announced in parliament last year. They have used a lot of the £5m of funding to create safe spaces in the city's town centres such as Morningside, Bruntsfield and Corstorphine – where they have also installed safety measures around the primary school. The measures on Whitehouse Road next to James Gillespie's have been welcomed by parents and the school, but objected to by local residents. The areas where Spaces for People measures have been used include from Leith and Silverknowes to Braid Road. The full list can be viewed [here](#).



Whitehouse Road on the Greenbank to the Meadows Quiet Route  
Photo: © 2021, Martin P. McAdam [www.martinmcadam.com](http://www.martinmcadam.com)



Not all of these measures are perfect. But they are a way of avoiding lengthy consultations and Traffic Regulation Orders – which can take years to pass. Roseburn is one of the areas where a cycle lane was planned many years ago now, but we have yet to see any construction take place. Not only is the red tape easier to navigate, but the council can put something in place under the emergency Covid rules and then make changes to it whenever it becomes apparent that change is needed. Residents have complained about lack of consultation – but the government did not stipulate any requirement for consultation. The council has however agreed – in the face of opposition challenge – to submit decisions to the Transport Committee.

Even now when over half of adults in Scotland have been vaccinated, there will be a continuing need to observe social distancing – particularly when more businesses open.

Campaign groups such as [South West Edinburgh in Motion](#) have been vocal in their opposition to the Spaces for People changes.

Opposition parties on the council have fought the Spaces for People measures on many fronts, and in particular the Conservative councillors – fighting against policies which are actually promoted by their colleagues on the UK Government.

It was only last summer that Boris Johnson's government issued this document:

- **The Government published [Gear Change: A bold vision for cycling and walking](#) for 2020-25** in July 2020. This plan was described by the Prime Minister as “most ambitious plans yet to boost cycling and walking”. Some of the key policies to deliver on this ambition are:
  - £2bn of ringfenced funding for walking and cycling overseen and administered by Active Travel England

a new inspectorate, which will ensure projects meet new design standards, and be delivered on time.

- The creation of a 'national e-Bike programme' – this will enable the elderly, or those who travel far to take to bikes as part of journeys.
- A new approach on health will be piloted in selected places with poor health rates to encourage GPs to prescribe cycling, with patients able to access bikes through their local surgery.
- Improvements to the National Cycle Network
- Making streets safer by consulting to strengthen the Highway Code to better protect pedestrians and cyclists; improving legal protections for vulnerable road users; raising safety standards on lorries; and working with the police and retailers to tackle bike theft.

Speaking in the Scottish Parliament on 28 April 2020, Transport Secretary, Michael Matheson asked for councils to apply for funding for bold plans. He said then: "My officials are working with Sustrans and local authorities to help to ensure that people are able to walk, cycle and wheel safely during lockdown, including key workers who travel to work and people visiting shops for essential items or taking daily exercise. Doing that is important to support people's health and wellbeing, and we need to provide more space for people to keep physically distancing in a safe way. Therefore, I am today writing to Scotland's local authorities to detail a package of support to implement temporary measures so that people can be active while physically distancing, safe from traffic.

"The package consists of 100 per cent funding for local authorities to put in place temporary measures, such as pop-up cycle lanes and wider walkways, through a new spaces for people fund of £10 million that will be administered by

Sustrans; guidance to support local authorities on the use of existing legislation that gives them powers to quickly implement temporary road reallocation measures; and access to a range of advice and support from Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government on topics including construction, public health, equalities and communications.

“I very much hope that local authorities will come forward with bold, ambitious plans to implement temporary active travel measures, following the example of cities, towns and places around the world.

“Transport has a crucial role to play in the recovery of the economy and we need to be clear about what we are thinking of doing differently in the future to aid that recovery. We must be bold in our actions to reset the system to meet our climate change ambitions, reduce inequalities, improve our health and wellbeing and deliver sustainable economic growth. We are working with partners to identify issues and to understand how to support organisations through the current crisis, maintain capacity, skills and expertise, and recover swiftly.”

Following the initial round of £10 million, Mr Matheson increased the funding to £30 million.

Now the council want to know which of the measures they should retain and which they should either change or scrap all together. And contrary to what Edinburgh Live has said in their article earlier today the window for comment has been running for seven weeks, not just 24 hours.

It was Sarah Boyack MSP who asked this about the way councils will deal with potholes. She asked: “I welcome the cabinet secretary’s announcement on speeding up the process of increasing space for walking and cycling in order to enable safe social distancing in the weeks and months to come. Will the investment be able to address the specific issues of poor surfaces on our pavements and potholes on our roads, which

make walking unsafe—in particular for people with disabilities—and roads unsafe for cyclists? I welcome the fact that the process will be speedy, but will the cabinet secretary monitor the speed at which the £10 million is invested?”

**Michael Matheson responded: “Local authorities already have funding to deal with potholes on our existing road network. I encourage every local authority to undertake that work if it is appropriate and essential, which is for them to decide. The fund that I have announced is not for that purpose, but is specifically for creation of temporary cycleways and walkways for members of the public, including cyclists, in order to support physical distancing in a safe way.”**

This is what the council say on the page which introduces the consultation:

*“The Council is considering whether to keep some ‘Spaces for People’ measures in place, either on a trial basis or more permanently. This is because many of the measures may to help achieve Council objectives unrelated to the Coronavirus*

*pandemic, including:*

- *encouraging more people to switch to more sustainable ways of travelling such as walking or cycling*
- *supporting high streets and city centre businesses by providing more space for people*
- *improving road safety*
- *improving health*
- *reducing carbon dioxide emissions, to help Edinburgh achieve [net zero carbon by 2030](#).*

*Before deciding whether to go through the legal processes necessary to keep projects in place, we want to hear people's views."*

The consultation is [here](#) and is open until midnight.

