

Call for Leith Walk bollards amid fatality fears

Safety bollards need to be installed along the length of Leith Walk as a matter of urgency, a city councillor has warned, as she is “genuinely concerned there is going to be a fatality”.

Susan Rae said ‘rampant’ pavement parking and drivers ignoring the ‘no left turn’ onto London Road was increasingly putting pedestrians at risk of injury or even death.

The Scottish Greens councillor, who represents Leith Walk in the City Chambers, said after previously being “reluctant” to back the introduction of bollards on the street she now believes they are the only way to “force a shift in behaviour”.

Council transport convener Scott Arthur, Labour, confirmed a meeting had been arranged between Leith Ward councillors and Trams to Newhaven project managers to discuss the matter – but said it was unlikely plans could be altered this late in the day.

He added the bollards would cost “hundreds of thousands of pounds” and stressed the need to “talk about everything” which was creating problems on the Walk “including interaction between pedestrian and cyclists”.

It comes as bike lane defenders are being partly reinstated along a section of Drum Brae North road just weeks after they were removed following concerns for cyclists’ safety.

Responding to news they would return this week after reports of motorists driving in the cycle lane and mounting the pavement, Councillor Rae said in a Tweet that Leith Walk needs “all the bollards”.

"We're exhausted by drivers eating pavements and cycle paths with illegally parked cars," she wrote.

However, speaking to the Local Democracy Reporting Service, she said "plastic bollards" such as the ones used for the Spaces for People scheme are "of absolutely no value".

"People just drive over those," she said. "I don't want any old bollards. If we're going to have bollards I want them to be aesthetically pleasing. They have to be decent, part of the infrastructure and nice."

She added: "Pavement parking is a huge problem – and it really is a huge problem on Leith Walk – so the more we've done to try and stop pavement parking, the worse it's got to be honest and the same reaction has happened with the London Road left turn. The more we did to help people not turn left, the more people came there just to turn left, we put bollards up. "

Cllr Rae said the council's move to ban traffic from turning left from Leith Walk onto London Road elicited the same response from drivers and added bollards were a simple solution to force them to obey the new rules.

"I was very reluctant to put bollards up. I was quite opposed to them – I didn't want to put bollards there but to be honest I've come round to thinking it's the only way we're going to stop this.

"I am hopeful this meeting will get us a way forward because I'm genuinely concerned there is going to be a fatality. I think we're looking at that – I'm surprised we haven't had it."

Councillor Arthur said: "This has been discussed extensively. A number of the Leith Walk councillors have been in touch about it.

"We know what the issues are, in that the current contract

can't be changed plus everything is in a state of change right now in terms of the works aren't complete yet, we're still trying to come to terms with the situation and we've got the pavement parking ban powers coming in at the end of the year – so it's a state of flux just now.

“Everybody knows this and if Susan Rae had been engaging with people she would know it as well.

“It would come at a cost but you're probably looking at hundreds of thousands of pounds.

“If we're going to talk about public safety on Leith Walk we have to talk about everything, including interaction between pedestrian and cyclists – we can't just look at the bollards.

“I've inherited a situation on Leith Walk which nobody is happy with – cyclists, pedestrians and some of the businesses.

“I've organised a meeting of ward councillors and the Trams to Newhaven team to talk through some of these concerns.

“What that meeting is going to say is it probably can't be done in the scope of the current contract.”

by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter

The Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) is a public service news agency. It is funded by the BBC, provided by the local news sector (in Edinburgh that is Reach plc (the publisher behind Edinburgh Live and The Daily Record) and used by many qualifying partners. Local Democracy Reporters cover news about top-tier local authorities and other public service organisations.



Leith Walk: Susan Rae

