

Braid Road – a response from a resident

This is an opinion article written by reader Paul Bailey who lives on Braid Road by way of comment on an article which we published earlier in the week.

In an earlier article, Kirsty Lewin, a member of Spokes, asked a few questions about the Greenbank to the Meadows QuietRoute. She first asked why is it being 'compromised by traffic', referring to Braid Road with the pejorative term "rat run".

I object to the terminology because Braid Road is a main road intended for traffic. When it was closed to allow people to exercise during Covid, it did indeed help to reduce traffic in the area considerably. Post-Covid it was clear that keeping it closed affected bus services, caused congestion on Comiston Road and forced many motorists on detours which in itself cannot be helpful for air pollution. Gradually following advice from Lothian Buses, councillors sensibly voted to reopen the road; we had been promised that it would be temporary but Spokes, Blackford Safe Routes and some councillors fought to keep it closed.

Kirsty's final point was very sensible "What name do you give to a QuietRoute that isn't quiet? The fact is that the chosen route past the old mini roundabout at Braidburn Terrace is totally unsuitable for a QuietRoute. Guidance explains that there needs to be less than 1,500 vehicles passing by per day. The very maximum is 3,000 and we now have about 6,000 vehicles passing by in the latest statistics in March. Also Braidburn

Terrace is too narrow for a Contraflow cycle lane, and the council pointed this out years ago.

Then there is the question whether cyclists actually use the zigzag QuietRoute. Data shows that the majority do not and that many prefer the route via the wide Braid Avenue. For instance this March on average 14.4 eastbound cyclists per day (12 hours) travelled along Braidburn Terrace and turned left towards Morningside (and may have used the zig zag QuietRoute), 36 cyclists carried straight ahead on to Hermitage Drive.

But [Kirsty wrote](#) that she wants it to be protected. Spokes make deputations at almost every Transport and Environment Committee meeting and don't seem to consider the negative effect some of their proposed measures have on the general public. In January 2021 when the closure both ways of Braid Road was affecting southbound bus timetables, Spokes came up with the ludicrous suggestion that buses could use Braid Road instead of Comiston Rd – which is rather hypocritical because Kirsty and others regard Braid Rd to be a 'rat run'. Buses on a rat run are ok when it suits their argument.

Kirsty's final question is intriguing:- "Should we call it a deception?"

I accept that the QuietRoute is no longer quiet. But who is responsible for the deception? There is a clear feeling that when councillors who opposed SfP measures were being told by its supporters in 2021 that all the Covid measures were temporary, there was a strong suspicion that those in power knew that they intended to extend them by means of dubious ETRs – as has occurred. The Spokes photographs of large numbers of people at the Hermitage on Braid Rd on Jan 24 2021 were intended to deceive as they had requested members to arrive in large numbers; my friends have many pictures showing the true picture of a completely deserted Braid Road on a weekend afternoon.

Perhaps the most significant deception was back in November 2021 when the QuietRoute was being proposed; there was opposition mainly because of the modal filters at various places; Cllr Main explained in the TEC meeting on November 12 2021 that "Those who had concerns...the vast majority have gone because the modal filters have been removed which was their concern."

But the filters returned following a deputation allegedly from Spokes. Councillors were not told and officers just listened to the deputation and put them back in. Lots of people suspect that Spokes, Blackford Safe Routes and supportive councillors were using Covid as a pretext for closing Braid Road with a view to then be able to say that returning to normality would be a backward step. No, it is just a return to what the majority want, not what lobby groups want.

Do I have an answer? Only a partial one. With traffic running both ways, the route is unsuitable as part of an official QuietRoute. The significant problem is for cyclists coming south from Cluny Gardens as any of the routes they choose involve right turns. I propose removing the modal filter on Braid Avenue which is wide enough to cope with both cyclists and motorists; allow cyclists to choose their preferred route; if they choose to cycle up Braid Avenue, give them (and motorists) priority at the southern end of Braid Avenue; install traffic calming measures as speed is noted in the audit as being significantly high.

Residents on side roads matter too. Recent data shows significantly higher traffic figures on side roads like Hermitage Gardens and Midmar Gardens and motorists matter too.

We need a balanced inclusive plan, not just one for cyclists.



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