

The long and winding tale of Braid Road

The City of Edinburgh Council describes its QuietRoutes as walking and cycling routes that are 'perfect for exploring the city'.

It claims that it designed these routes for users of all abilities and that they're a great way to avoid busy main roads. So why are we seeing a QuietRoute that was suitable for all being compromised by traffic?

The Greenbank to the Meadows QuietRoute was developed during the Covid pandemic as part of Spaces for People, creating a relatively safe and pleasant active travel corridor. Along its length lie several schools and green places making it attractive both for everyday travel and leisure trips. Extending south to Fairmilehead with protected cycle lanes on Comiston Road, it was, for a while, transformational. Sadly, for the many adults and children who used it, it now seems it may have just been a pipe dream, not fully supported by either the previous or the current council administration.

In the south, the key entry point into the QuietRoute was enabled initially by the closure of Braid Road to vehicles. However, the previous administration responded to pressure to reopen this former rat run to southbound vehicles. Then, just before Christmas, the current administration reopened it to northbound traffic, too. As a result, the only link into the QuietRoute from Greenbank and Fairmilehead is no longer considered safe for all cyclists.

Because of this new two-way traffic, it is now too dangerous and confusing for many people to cycle through the key junction at Braid Road and Braidburn Terrace, particularly those cycling with children. Temporary measures are in place at the junction, and the Council has proposed a permanent scheme. However, local families who had been using the QuietRoute in this area believe this scheme will not be any safer than the current arrangements and don't know how they are going to be able to cycle their children to school.

For active travel to grow in this part of the city, the QuietRoute must be valued and protected, as it is further down the route towards the Meadows. Many families in the south took up cycling when the route first went in. Now they are considering driving again. What name do you give to a QuietRoute that isn't quiet?

Should we call it a deception?

Kirsty is a member of Spokes Porty and a cycling campaigner.

All photos courtesy of Stella Thomson.



