

Some Spaces for People measures to be revisited

The “most controversial” Edinburgh active travel measures brought in under the UK Government funded Covid measures, Spaces for People, are to be put to the public for further consultation.

Councillors said it would allow improvements to be made along routes based on feedback from residents, although it is feared removing segregated bike lanes and re-opening roads would be a backward step in terms of safety and climate action.

Spaces for People, subsequently called Travelling Safely, introduced various measures which had been rolled out under emergency powers during the pandemic to make walking and cycling easier across the city.

In April errors were discovered in the advertising of plans to the public to collect feedback on making the remaining 42 schemes permanent, meaning the process had to be begun again.

But now the four which “elicited the most negative feedback” in a previous consultation will be revisited, following calls from Liberal Democrat councillors to explore redesigning projects and re-opening some roads to traffic.

In particular Braid Road and the Greenbank to Meadows Quiet Route and the measures introduced on Comiston Road, Silverknowes Road North and Silverknowes Road South will be looked at separately

again.

The move was backed by six votes to five at the Transport Committee by the Labour administration and the Conservative group, who initially supported removing them altogether but withdrew their motion at the last minute.

However it was agreed the aims of the individual schemes “should not be diluted”.

SNP councillor Finlay McFarlane said it felt like “death by a thousand consultations”.

Local parent Neil Kemp, who helps to organise James Gillespie Primary’s bike bus, said the plan caused alarm and concern as the Greenbank to Meadows Quiet Route had “undoubtedly reduced the amount of car journeys through the area, making our children safer”.

He told the committee there was “no appetite for rolling back measures” but rather support for expanding them.

Cllr Kevin Lang said: “I remember being told that once these schemes are in place people get used to them, it’ll all be fine.

“And that’s not the case – that is simply not the case. In Silverknowes we still have the road closed down to the promenade that forces people to take a much longer diversion, it has not reduced traffic down to the promenade.

“And we also still have this, as I described it, solution chasing a problem of the Silverknowes quiet route scheme which few – if any – people use because it takes such a ridiculously complicated and convoluted route through the Silverknowes estate.”

Green councillor Jule Bandel said: “Encouraging people to walk, wheel and cycle is absolutely essential to reaching our target of 30 per cent reduction in car kilometres by 2030 and

our climate targets and Travelling Safely is one of the key projects that will deliver that.

“I acknowledge that some of the designs are not perfect and will need adjustment before they are hopefully made permanent.

“But I am concerned that this motion has singled out schemes because of negative feedback without mentioning that many people have expressed support for these schemes.

“We need to provide infrastructure that makes cycling a safe option for cyclists of all ages and abilities and if that infrastructure is removed or even just weakened, some people will simply stop cycling because they don't feel safe enough.”

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.



Cllr Jule Bandel PHOTO ©2023 The Edinburgh Reporter