

Cycle route declared officially open

It was a fanfare moment just along the road from Haymarket Station on Wednesday when Patrick Harvie, the Active Travel Minister, accompanied the Transport Convener Cllr Scott Arthur on a cycle along the newest segregated cycle way in the capital.

School pupils from Roseburn Primary School and St George's School for Girls joined the politicians on a short ride from the Old Colt Bridge in Roseburn to declare the newly completed route officially open.

The project was finally approved in December 2016 and will eventually provide a largely protected cycle route through the city centre from QuietRoutes which were then in place in north and west Edinburgh and around Leith Walk. The city has changed considerably since the scheme was first approved.

The council also proposed in 2016 "to make changes to the streetscape or public realm along the routes to encourage

active travel and improve air quality as a result". Then came the Trams to Newhaven with the cycle lanes designed as part of that scheme, admittedly not by the council's own team, and which are absolutely nothing like the cycleway from Charlotte Square to Roseburn by way of Bishop's Walk.

The cycle lanes on Leith Walk are not fully open even now, some months after the tramline opened to passengers, and the pièce de resistance – a lamppost in the middle of the cycle lane in Picardy Place now has its own Twitter account. We were told by Cllr Arthur it will be moved sometime soon. The cycle lanes are one thing but the planting of the beds on Picardy Place is hardly worthy of the capital city as you can see below.



Picardy Place where the planting appears quite patchy and woeful

Construction of the £23m CCWEL route began in February 2022 and was principally funded by The Scottish

Government through Sustrans' Places for Everyone programme. There have been hiccups, with some stretches opened and then closed again for resurfacing during the project.

There were contentious times when work arrived in Roseburn and the traders there demanded compensation. (They had already tried this before the CCWEL was approved with many of the same arguments promoted. One of the most ingenious was that traders on the westbound carriageway did not want to lose parking spaces outside their front doors as the parked vehicles "protected" them from fumes and pollution.) This support was denied them, and now the shops on Roseburn Terrace largely remain the same businesses, despite claims that the works would cause closures and bankruptcies to local businesses.

The resignation of former Lord Provost Frank Ross over the lack of compensation for the traders led to a by-election which was mainly fought over the issue, but all three Liberal Democrat councillors who now represent the ward failed to win compensation for the businesses. The delays in the project caused by these objections led to a massive rise in the cost of the project originally estimated somewhere under £10 million.

Spokes the cycle campaign have always said that the project was not perfect and they would have preferred a direct connection to and along Princes Street, but it is a massive step forward to "reallocate car space to active travel". If you would like to [read the whole tortuous history of the route then Spokes have this here](#) relating the story from the very beginning when the Active Travel Action Plan agreed in 2011 made no mention of CCWEL but did talk of cycle routes to the city centre.

In 2016 there was a cycle ride led mainly by Green group councillors (including Alison Johnstone who is now Presiding Officer of The Scottish Parliament) to try and sway the imminent decision being made by the council on CCWEL.



Alison Johnstone then Green councillor led the cycle ride from Charlotte Square to Roseburn PHOTO © The Edinburgh Reporter
The scheme connects Roseburn to Leith Walk via Haymarket and the West End with what is considered a safe and direct cycle route, as well as significantly improving streets (especially Melville Street for example where there are cycle lanes in each direction) for those walking, wheeling and spending time there.

This route will in time connect to a new George Street cycleway which will be part of the [George Street and First New Town project](#).

Cllr Scott Arthur, Transport and Environment Convener, said: "Today we celebrated a major development for walking, wheeling and cycling in the capital, with the completion of CCWEL. This major scheme is not only one of the largest pieces of active travel infrastructure delivered in Edinburgh, but it has transformed spaces along the route for the use and enjoyment of people who live, visit and work here.

"I'm pleased that that the community and all those involved were able to share in celebrating the occasion today – we really want them to benefit from the route. I'd like to thank local residents and businesses for their patience throughout

construction, which I know has been disruptive at times.

“Now it’s open, [CCWEL](#) will form a key section of our growing walking, wheeling and cycling network, connecting with Roseburn to Union Canal, George Street and First New Town and other key routes. This kind of joined-up project delivery is essential for helping people to choose clean, sustainable modes of transport, in turn supporting our net zero 2030 goals, as well as improving air quality and reducing congestion.”

Cllr Arthur recorded a video message on the cycle path after the opening.

<https://twitter.com/CllrScottArthur/status/1770495769856094460>
Former Transport Convener, Lesley Hinds, who began the process of making it easier to use active travel in the city said: “It was fantastic to witness the official opening of the first finished link of the West/East cycling project.

“It is an important link to the Roseburn cycle/walking path and I am looking forward to the finished link to Leith Walk and beyond. It is nearly ten years since the decision was taken to agree this project and there must now be a serious look into how we can speed up the process, while ensuring consultation is carried out. Thanks to Cllr Scott Arthur for the opening event invite and to everyone who made this project possible.”

At the opening of the works in 2022 The Edinburgh Reporter asked Mr Harvie about how to speed up transport projects such as these. He said then that “the government needs to cut through the processes and make these projects easier to deliver”. On Wednesday he told the assembled audience that “more had to be done to ensure there were fewer barriers in future so that “similar projects can get off the ground more quickly”.

We have asked Mr Harvie’s office if any progress has been made

in this regard in the last two years.



20/3/2024

Picture Alan Simpson

Patrick Harvie MSP Active Travel Minister officially opens

The new £23 million City Centre West to East Link (CCWEL) walking, wheeling and cycling route at Haymarket.

Patrick Harvie, Minister for Active Travel said: “I was delighted to attend the start of the work on the City Centre West to East Link two years ago and even more so to see it open today. This new active travel route forms a key part of the growing network across Edinburgh, providing another safe and sustainable option for people to move about Scotland’s capital.

“This ambitious investment in active travel infrastructure was made possible through grant funding from the Scottish Government administered through Sustrans Scotland’s Places For Everyone Fund. I am grateful to City of Edinburgh Council for working so closely with all partners, not least the many communities set to benefit from this investment.”

Karen McGregor, Scotland Director for Sustrans said: “The City Centre West to East Link is an absolute game-changer within the world of active travel. For the first time ever in Scotland, we’ve delivered a fully segregated walking, wheeling and cycling connection that cuts through the heart of the city centre. In doing so, this fantastic new route gives the people of Edinburgh a safe and accessible driving alternative, allowing people to get to where they want, how they want, regardless of age or ability.

“I would like to thank all those involved for their support and keen involvement in its delivery.”

Cllr Joanna Mowat told the Local Democracy Reporting Service that she believes many of the issues predicted when the project was first mooted “have come to pass”. She criticised the quality of workmanship, but the council has confirmed that any remedial work was done at the cost of the contractor.

Cllr Mowat said: “I think it’s really difficult to know if it’s been worthwhile... the proof of the pudding will be when we monitor it and see if there are there more cyclists using it.

“In a country where we have little control over the weather actually from October to March – so for at least six months of the year – I just don’t think it is pleasant to cycle because it is dark and it’s wet and splashy. Is that a realistic option?”



20/3/2024

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