

The Causey – 17 year campaign hits a road block

A community project to turn a city centre street into a public square has almost ground to a halt after 17 years of local activism. In 2007 the campaigners turned the triangular traffic island at West Crosscauseway into a tropical island to show how it could be used as a public square.

In the intervening years there have been light shows, gatherings of cyclists and projections on the surrounding buildings all hoping to draw attention and support for the project, and make it into a permanent installation.

Causey Development Trust (CDT) simply want to create a safer place to walk or cycle, which would also improve the area for any wheelchair users. Their plans include reversing the traffic flow, resurfacing the street and realigning the pavements to help locals be more neighbourly, adding trees and seating.

The project is split into two Phases. The total cost of the plans to complete Phase 1 and progress Phase 2 is around £2.1 million – although the cost of the initial scheme when drafted several years ago was a fraction of that.

Phase 1 covers the bulk of the scheme and Phase 2 covers the

on-street changes in Chapel Street.

The Causey Development Trust (CDT) has support and interest from people who live and work in the area. But despite an approved Traffic Regulation Order (TRO), and not one, but two, offers of funding to make the plans come to life, no progress has been made.

A public hearing was held in 2021 when the Reporter decided that any objections to the TRO "could not be sustained". Scottish Ministers recommended in June 2022 that the order should be confirmed without modification.

The various awards of funding have now been clawed back as the work has not begun. Monies were originally allocated through the government's Place Based Investment Programme (PBIP). That government funding has now been withdrawn by The Scottish Government except for projects already under construction.

Sarah Drummond, Chair of the Causey Development Trust, said: "It was hoped that The Causey project would find its place in The Council's Active Travel Investment Programme (ATInP). However, despite there being no formal decision by Transport Scotland, who support the Council's ATInP, The Causey has not been noted for funding at this point."

The TRO which came into effect on 1 March 2024 now requires to accommodate bigger buses in the Lothian fleet, and new communal bin hubs, which mean changes to the layout. This aspect of the proposals would come under the second phase covering Buccleuch Street and Chapel Street.

A new TRO and RSO will have to be drafted and the council has not yet initiated that work (although it could have started this in March this year).



Sarah and Gordon Drummond supporters of The Causey © 2024 Martin McAdam

Sarah Drummond said: "The Causey is about more than augmenting existing and planned Active Travel networks (which it does) – it is about creating an attractive, useable space that prioritises people.

"It's about making a place for cultural events, outside of the high and overcrowded festival seasons, it's about putting community first and promoting wellness. We are not some big developers, we are local people who volunteer because we think The Causey really could make people's lives better – it already has – and we appeal to the Council to find a way of funding the works that will see these long laboured plans come to fruition."

Transport and Environment Convener, Cllr Stephen Jenkinson, said: "The future of The Causey project is likely to be dependent on external funding from The Scottish Government and this is currently unavailable. I acknowledge that delays on this project have been frustrating, chiefly due to the

pandemic.

“We’ll continue to explore all available options but unfortunately we are unlikely to be in a position to be able to move forward with the project in the current climate.”

Meantime if you wish to support the campaign go along to West Crosscauseway on a Saturday morning. Campaigners gather there most Saturdays to have a coffee and a chat.



Visuals by Ironside Farrar



