

New tactile paving set-up to be trialled in Morningside

A new tactile paving set-up to help people struggling with sight move around the city more safely is to be trialled in Morningside.

The trial was approved by councillors after charities for sight impaired people raised concerns over “continuous footways”, or raised pavements at junctions, in the city due to inadequate accessibility provision.

Their main concern is that tactile paving – bumps or strips in the ground that help sight impaired people understand if they are near a road or another hazard – often either don’t exist near junctions or are installed in a haphazard way.

Liberal Democrat councillor Jack Caldwell told the Local Democracy Reporting Service that one of his blind constituents has been afraid of leaving his home since continuous footways were installed on Leith Walk.

Caldwell said: “My constituent told me, ‘I’m too scared to leave the house because of the location of these tactiles’.

“So it’s completely thrown a spanner into the works. It’s been a number of years that this blind resident has been raising this.”

Where tactile paving does exist next to continuous footways, it is often set back from the edge of a cross street by several metres, being placed in line with the edge of the nearest adjacent building.

This reduces its usefulness for sight impaired people, as it is usually placed right before the start of the road.

The study would see this pavement placed directly at the edge of the crossroads at the junction being modified.

Caldwell also said that his constituent was struggling to navigate on his own after the continuous footways were installed.

Many sight impaired people keep track of how many tactile pavements they encounter on a known walking route in order to know where they are.

But along Leith Walk, where some continuous footways have no tactile paving, this can become difficult.

Council officers said that a trial would take place in Morningside, but that further trials could be conducted elsewhere, including Dalmeny Street and Leith Walk.

The main objective of the trial will be to understand the impact of tactile paving on how drivers and pedestrians alike interact with the continuous footways.

Of interest to officers will be how the tactile paving impacts pavement parking in the area.

By Joseph Sullivan Local Democracy Reporter