

# **£1.5m project to make stretch of A7 more pedestrian friendly will start in July**

**A £1.5million project to make a stretch of the A7 more pedestrian friendly will start work in July after it was given the final seal of approval by Midlothian councillors.**

The first phase of an A7 Urbanisation project will see new bus stops, footpaths and crossings installed on the busy main road between Melville Dykes Road Roundabout to the west of Dalkeith to Eskbank Road Roundabout.

A meeting of Midlothian Council today approved the first phase of work to improve active travel on the major road using £1.496m of funds which councillors stressed came from developers contributions rather than the council's own budget.

The project includes resurfacing on 12,000 square metres of road and creating two new Toucan crossings, four new bus stops with lay-bys, shelters and Real Time Passenger Information signs.

Low energy LED lighting will be installed along a shared use footpath for pedestrians and cyclists along with a buffer zone between the road and the path itself. The road currently has no pedestrian path at all.

It is also expected to see the speed limit reduced to 30mph

over the section.

Councillors were told the work would start on July 7, the first Monday of the school holidays, with plans to complete it before schools go back.

Councillor Colin Cassidy moved a motion to approve the work telling the meeting it was “well overdue” and stressing that it would be funded by contributions from housing developers “at no cost to the council”.

He said: “I hope it will bring improvements to the bus services and the people using it.”

Councillor Dianne Alexander, who seconded the motion, added: “This is an important step forward in our efforts to create a more sustainable, affordable and attractive Midlothian.

“This is not just about infrastructure, it is about creating better ways for us to move around. This project sets a precedent for active travel across Midlothian.”

Councillor Derek Milligan said questions would be asked about why the decision had been taken to start the project at the Melville Roundabout when the nearby Tesco one, which has five separate junctions, was of more concern to people.

However officers said the Melville to Eskbank section had been chosen because it was the “simplest” to get underway.

And they said discussions were underway about how to tackle the issues at the Tesco roundabout including looking at introducing traffic lights or a slip road which could alleviate the traffic pressure.

Councillors were told a report on option for future work would be brought to them once completed.

The first phase project was approved unanimously by councillors.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter