

Spokes Party Deputation for Agenda Item 7.4.

Short term improvements at Portobello High Street/Inchview Terrace/Sir Harry Lauder Road Junction

1. Thank you for allowing Spokes Party to make this deputation in relation to the Portobello High St Sir Harry Lauder Road Junction.
2. We want to start by saying that every member of this Committee should be conscious of the impacts of every decision you make on those who walk, wheel and cycle in this city. Will your decisions improve the safety and comfort of those in the priority levels of the sustainable travel hierarchy? Or will they make life more difficult, or, worse, more dangerous? Vision Zero must not only be an ambition, it must be followed through in practice.
3. We are fortunate that there is now plenty of evidence and technical guidance to draw on in regards to cycle safety and the type of infrastructure and conditions we need in order to ensure people feel comfortable and safe when riding their cycles. That evidence needs to be at the forefront of your minds.
4. As you know, two people have recently lost their lives simply for riding their bikes on a road in Portobello, Heather Stronach and Stuart Elliott. And, when the junction was previously a roundabout, a woman was also killed on her bike by an HGV.
5. This is an appalling record, and one that has shaken not only the local community but also people from across the city who just want to get around safely by bike. I have been run over by a lorry myself on Seafield Road, almost exactly twelve years ago. To see other people still losing their lives from HGVs is devastating.
6. We welcome the fact that short term proposals are now finally being considered but we are frustrated and saddened that it has taken almost a year after Heather's death to get to this point. We are also disappointed to see that the short-term improvements will not be in place until February 2022. This means cyclists will continue to face real dangers through what can be the most difficult months of the year. Action must be taken to bring this date forward where possible, and to mitigate against further delays.
7. In Spokes Party, we are not qualified engineers. We can comment on proposals, drawing on our experience and local knowledge, and we can analyse data that the Council provides, but it is not up to us to design interventions in detail. We are reliant on the Council to come up with designs, and we need the Council to reassure us that these designs are optimal in terms of cycle safety. Unfortunately, when the Council proposed Option 1, we were not reassured. We have made our concerns clear from the start of this process that we could not and cannot accept Option 1.
8. We recognise Option 2a, which temporarily closes the left slip lane, is not perfect and there are risks associated with it, both locally and on the wider network, for example around Northfield. We have been clear that these risks must be mitigated wherever possible, particularly around schools, and we are pleased to see that the actions we previously suggested are mentioned in the paper.
9. No short-term intervention can be perfect in a junction of this complexity. This is why we are calling on the Council now to move urgently on both the medium-term improvements (which must also improve conditions for pedestrians) and the long-term improvements to further mitigate any risks associated with Option 2a.
10. We do not understand why work on the medium-term improvements is not well underway given that discussions have been ongoing for almost a year. We hope that the eighteen-month period mentioned in the paper is from now, rather than February

2022. It must be possible, for the most dangerous junction in the city for cyclists, to prioritise resources, and run the three workstreams in parallel.

11. Detailed work on a permanent redesign must start now and must not be predicated on the junctions review which could be subject to delays and slippage. The redesign must implement the sustainable travel hierarchy, including decreasing the crossing times for pedestrians. It must also take account of the Scottish Government's traffic reduction targets and other relevant policy commitments, as well as proposed residential developments in the area.
12. We welcome the work that has been done to date on alternative routes to the junction but, for those councillors not familiar with the area, it is important to understand that they are not ideal. Fishwives Causeway is isolated at night and many people, particularly women, may be uncomfortable using it. In addition, if coming from Portobello Road, it is difficult to see the signage, and cyclists who are unfamiliar with the area are unlikely to be aware of its existence. Please can we have improved signage!
13. In summary, we are asking you to do everything you can to speed up the process of the medium-term interventions, and the final permanent scheme. We are also asking again for regular updates on the Council's website to reassure the local community and cyclists across Edinburgh that progress is being made, and that the Council remains committed to taking rapid practical action on cycle safety.
14. We appreciate that this process has been difficult for everyone involved, particularly Council officers, and we'd like to thank them for engaging with us to discuss our concerns over the last year. Spokes Party has engaged in this process to date in good faith, and we will continue to do so. We owe it to those that who have lost their lives just for riding bicycles.

Photograph of Junction

This photograph was taken on a site visit (looking down towards Portobello High St). The drivers are stopped at the lights. This is just one example of what cyclists have to deal with when negotiating the junction.



Spokes Party is a local Spokes Lothian group. We are working to make walking, wheeling and cycling safe, easy and fun for everyone in and around Edinburgh East. Contact us at Spokesparty@gmail.com