

Deputation to the Transport and Environment Committee Meeting on 30 January 2025 regarding item 7.2 City Centre West Edinburgh Link (CCWEL) to George Street Active Travel Connections

The New Town and Broughton Community Council (NTBCC) has serious concerns about several aspects of the work that is proposed in our area and specifically the plans to introduce contra-flow exemptions for cyclists to use various city centre one-way and pedestrianised streets. Given that a final decision on what work will be undertaken for the George Street and New Town project has yet to be made, it is premature to progress contingency plans to establish temporary cycle routes while there remains uncertainty about the need for such routes. Any traffic management including diversions that are required for the George Street and New Town project should be included in the costs for that project, as was the case for the Trams to Newhaven project. We also have concerns that the temporary infrastructure that is being proposed does not properly consider the impact on the safety of pedestrians or the heritage of the World Heritage Site.

- **Charlotte Square Interim Scheme** - it is not clear what the interim solution is intended to achieve and whether the money that has been spent on this work represents good value for the city and its residents. As has been reported in the media recently, the temporary ramp has been constructed in materials and to a design that is completely out of place in Charlotte Square within the Edinburgh World Heritage Site. **Why has this been rushed in when there are no approved plans for George Street without proper engagement with the relevant heritage bodies?**
- **Queen Street** – It is stated that this temporary segregated cycle route is intended to provide a contingency for the construction phase of the George Street and New Town project. The scope and timing of this project is far from certain. No further work should proceed on this new cycle route until the need for such a route is clear. Although it is stated that Queen Street is designated as a primary cycle route in the Circulation Plan, it is also designated as a part of the primary road network for other traffic. We have yet to see the modelling or the work that has been done to address the identified road space conflicts along this road. Also, as this is the primary route for traffic to the north of the LEZ there is a concern that removal to road space for vehicles will increase congestion and thus atmospheric pollution for those living and working along Queen Street. **Again, we should not be spending further money on a temporary segregated cycle path until strategic decisions are taken on its future use.**
- **Cycle Contra-flow Arrangements** - it is reported that the introduction of cycling contra-flow arrangements for Young, Hill and Thistle Streets is underway and seeks approval to include Rose Street in this phase of work. As with Queen Street, this work is being progressed to provide a temporary contingency route in the event that construction work on George Street makes its continued use by cyclists impossible. No further work should proceed on these new cycle routes until the need for them is clear.

We have recently been made aware that a TRO will be advertised shortly seeking approval of the cycling contra-flow arrangements along these four streets. It should be noted that this exemption would apply to all cyclists including those working for delivery companies using electric bikes. **We strongly object to these plans.**

- **Young, Hill and Thistle Streets** are relatively narrow with pavements well below the expected ESDG minimums so requiring pedestrians to step into the street to avoid other pedestrians or obstacles with parking along most of the south side of these streets. The one-way nature of the streets reduces the risk to pedestrians when stepping into the road. The setted road surface is in poor condition in many areas, which creates additional hazards for cyclists using the narrow streets in the opposite direction to the remaining traffic. **The proposal is contrary to the travel hierarchy and fails to recognise the adverse impact of these plans on the safety of pedestrians and cyclists.**
- **Rose Street** is a largely pedestrianised area. It is designated in the Circulation Plan as a primary place location and part of the primary walking network. It is not designated in the Circulation Plan as being part of the primary or secondary cycling network. Although vehicles are allowed to use the street at certain times, the one-way nature of access to this street reduces the risk to pedestrians. We also note that the surface of much of Rose Street is in very poor condition creating hazards for cyclists and pedestrians seeking to avoid potholes. **The introduction of a two-way cycle route in a pedestrianised area is increasing the risk for pedestrians in a very busy pedestrian area and is contrary to the travel hierarchy.**

We believe that it is important that the Council focusses its resources on the maintenance of the existing pedestrian and cycle infrastructure rather than develop plans for projects which may never be needed or have the necessary funding to proceed. Also, the cycling contra-flow proposals will have an adverse impact on pedestrians using the streets for which this scheme is proposed.

Thank you, Councillors, for your consideration of our deputation.

Mike Birch
Transport and Environment Convenor – NTBCC
27 January 2025