

Response to Spaces for People Retention - BEST (Better Edinburgh for Sustainable Travel)

BEST is a new coalition of local community groups, individuals and campaign groups supportive of active travel, reducing congestion, improving air quality and generally making our streets and spaces safer across the City of Edinburgh for all non-motorised modes of transport (walking, wheeling, cycling etc).

As such we will all have submitted our own responses to the consultation: however, as a group we would seek representation in the consultation, as all members of the coalition feel strongly that all successful schemes Spaces for People (SfP) schemes should be retained but modified on the basis of experience. They should:

- take into account the nature of the area,
- be specifically designed to fit with existing road materials and settings and include a strong element of placemaking in the process to ensure most benefit and aesthetic for all road users.
- consider all groups that will be affected locally by each of the interventions, especially those with mobility challenges and visual impairments which can make new features in a roadscape more difficult to navigate.
- be fully communicated to the residents of Edinburgh via a range of communications, including full details being listed and available on the CEC website so as to avoid conflict that comes from a perceived vacuum of information or decision making processes (as has often been the case with the initial SfP interventions).

There is good evidence demonstrating considerable demand for active travel infrastructure. SfP has played a significant role in highlighting what can be achieved as well as pointing to improvements that should be made when the schemes are made permanent.

Overall, we view the project extremely positively, and feel that it has considerable synergy with other CEC projects, such as the City Mobility Plan, in its direction of travel towards substantial improvement in sustainable travel infrastructure.

Covid-19 has changed travel behaviours substantially over the last year, but we must undertake to “build back better” in order to address transport inequalities, the climate crisis, air pollution and the physical inactivity epidemic.

Retaining (and enhancing) SfP measures will undoubtedly be a significant step forward in addressing all of these challenges and more.

Chris Young (on behalf of BEST).