

PE1595/E

Vaughan Rees Email of 23 December 2015

Ref.PE 1595 "Moratorium on shared spaces"

I refer to and wish to add my support to the petition submitted by Mr Sandy Taylor requesting that the Scottish Parliament urge the Scottish Government to place a Moratorium on all Shared Space Schemes until all safety concerns have been addressed.

I wish to support Mr Taylor's petition for the reasons that follow:-

I have read with dismay the decision by East Dunbartonshire Council to give approval to the proposed Balanced Street Approach scheme in Kirkintilloch. Else ware in the UK these types of road layouts are referred to as shared spaces or courtesy crossings, which have gained an appalling record of near misses, and injury to pedestrians and fatalities.

I write to you in a private capacity regarding all proposed schemes, and Kirkintilloch in particularly. Although I am resident in England I have an association with the town and vicinity. My eldest grandchild having been born in the Vale of Leven hospital.

I am registered as blind. Use a guide dog as my mobility aid and I have had first-hand experience of the negative impact of shared spaces.

These shared space schemes are in effect vanity projects where it has become fashionable by many local authorities to acquire them.

I think East Dunbartonshire Council have been ill advised regarding the merits and positive benefits of shared space and their advisors have declined to declare the negative impact of shared spaces on certain user groups and present a full picture.

The majority of these schemes are "No Go" and non-inclusive for blind and partially sighted people who cannot use them independently in safety, or confidence. I would add that currently there are a number challenges to the legality of these schemes in other parts of the UK.

They are inherently dangerous. In Germany legislation has been introduced recently placing a ban on all shared space schemes.

To date the DfT at the Westminster Government do not require local authorities to record accidents that specifically occur in shared spaces. Therefore official data that maybe accessed in my opinion is flawed and indicates that there are very few

accidents, which is far from the truth, simply because accidents that do occur are not recorded.

As I stated earlier I have first-hand experience of the negative impact of one of these schemes. I live in rural Warwickshire close to the towns of Warwick and Stratford on Avon, and the City of Coventry. All 3 having had shared spaces introduced in recent years.

The 3 examples below are only the tip of the ice burg all occurring within 12 miles of my home. If my examples are expanded throughout the UK there must be hundreds and possibly thousands of accidents that go unreported.

The shared space concept in the majority having kerbs and controlled crossings removed and are reliant on eye contact between motorists and pedestrians. I think it should be obvious to most people that this is something blind people can never achieve.

Generations of mothers have told their children to "Stop at the kerb before crossing the road". If kerbs have been removed, obeying this instruction cannot be achieved either by children or in my case by my Guide Dog.

To date priority has not been given to pedestrians in shared spaces, and it is not mandatory for motorists to stop in them. Unlike controlled crossings where it is mandatory for motorists to stop. So it becomes a survival of the fittest situation. In which motor vehicles or cyclists win in all cases.

The following all involved pedestrians, and have not been recorded as occurring in shared spaces.

The first incident involves myself when I was injured when a car collided with me in Swan Street Warwick.

Seven (7) people were seriously injured when a car collided with them in Henley Street Stratford on Avon. One (1) victim still receiving treatment for severe brain injuries some years later.

Two (2) people seriously injured and One (1) fatality when a bus collided with the victim in Hale Street Coventry, within 36 hours of the scheme opening.

I think you will find it almost impossible to access information on these accidents via official data and will have to rely on press reports.

In conclusion.

May I make the following suggestions and if a moratorium was introduced, it would earn the gratitude of all blind and partially sighted people and all other vulnerable user groups.

By placing a ban on Shared Spaces and Courtesy Crossings (speed tables) but retaining controlled crossings which have a proven safety record. Thus allowing all vulnerable groups of people to enjoy and engage in an inclusive society.

Sincerely,

Vaughan Rees