

**PE1595/QQ**

National Federation of the Blind UK (Leeds & District Branch) Email of 16 January 2016

Public Petitions Committee  
The Scottish Parliament

Moratorium on shared spaces

Ref PE 1595

Date: 16th January 2016

To Whom It May Concern

Alan Oldroyd – (Chairman) and Victor Jackson – (Campaigns Coordinator) of Leeds & District Branch of the National Federation of the Blind UK wish to add their support to the campaign presented to the Scottish Parliament by Mr Alexander Taylor for a moratorium on shared space, otherwise known in East Dumbartonshire as 'Balanced Street Approach' scheme in Kirkintilloch.

It seems that shared space schemes are being installed and roads and areas where the pavements, kerbs, traffic lights and legal mandatory controlled crossings currently in place are being removed by councils and local authorities nationally. This causes us much concern where it is likely to result in serious consequences for the groups of vulnerable people such as the deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, blind and partially sighted, mothers with pushchairs, the elderly with limited mobility, wheelchair users, guide dog owners (guide dogs are taught to use pavements who are liable to become disorientated where there are no kerbs or pavements) and children who are taught to stop at kerbs to check for cars before proceeding to cross the road.

It is not always understood by some planners and architects who tend to overlook the fact that blind people find it almost impossible to integrate with moving traffic coming from all angles and directions on a shared surface street or area. A blind person cannot navigate in a straight line on a shared space without any reference point to guide them to reach their destination whilst negotiating alongside moving and stationary traffic. As a result there are no uniform systems for a blind person using a long White Cane or a guide dog once they have been trained to use one. A guide dog user and a White Cane user and anyone else who has difficulty using pavements should be part of an inclusive society and be free to navigate through all environments to the same standards wherever they are in the country. This exacerbates extra mental strain which is already difficult enough for even sighted

pedestrians, let alone for someone with limited or no sight at all. This same analogy could be applied to the case where a ship in the Atlantic Ocean loses its navigation system when it would be impossible for the captain of his ship to set a course for his destination without using a compass and sextant.

The Department of Transport does not collate accident figures separately from general accidents and as a result, in theory, the only way this can be proved is by way of reports in the press and media detailing such accidents arising from shared space use. Recommendations are only made with guidance for local authorities which is not mandatory.

The National Federation of the Blind in Leeds, on 25th August 2010, took the shared space concern to Leeds City Council Executive who placed a permanent moratorium on shared space schemes in the Leeds Metropolitan area. Since then we are pleased to announce that so far no-one has suffered any accidents, injuries, vehicle collisions, as has been the case in other cities and towns, arising from shared space areas. It is pertinent to note that in 2015 the Isle of Man government abandoned plans to adopt a shared space approach amid concerns raised by charities for the blind (article on Isle of Man Today, *Brakes slammed on shared space promenade scheme*, 4 August 2015).

It has to be noted that with the advent of electric and hybrid vehicles, including buses and heavy commercial vehicles, these are virtually silent on certain road surfaces which the blind, partially sighted and deaf-blind people cannot anticipate the presence of. This, combined with cycle tracks and mobility scooters on pavements and roads, creates a potential toxic cocktail of silent traffic and unaware pedestrians using shared space schemes. Some 40,000 electric vehicles currently use the highways and no compulsory legislation requires that an external sound generator be fitted on new vehicles until 2018 and for used vehicles in 2022. At the current time there is no requirement or obligation for cyclists and mobility scooters to use a warning bell or to obtain insurance to use the highways. One can appreciate how such a scenario could create mayhem with the addition of shared space schemes.

We will be most grateful if this matter is given your utmost consideration to prevent such shared space schemes being installed. Addressing the above issues would enable the aforementioned vulnerable people to integrate within society and go about their daily lives with greater confidence.

We give our permission for the submission of this petition to be published.

Yours sincerely,

Alan Oldroyd  
Chairman of National Federation of the Blind UK (Leeds & District Branch)

and

Victor Jackson

Campaigns Co-ordinator for National Federation of the Blind UK (Leeds & District Branch)

Trustee of Independent Disability Council (Leeds)