

**PE1595/LL**

Douglas Gilroy Email of 20 January 2016

Members of the Petitions Committee  
Scottish Parliament  
Holyrood  
Edinburgh

Dear elected members

Reference Petition - PE 1595.

I hereby write to advise that I fully support and endorse the above petition and the petitioner in his attempts to have a moratorium placed on the proposed shared space work in Kirkintilloch High Street, until adequate and full research has been undertaken into the likely impact on all users.

It is an acknowledged and conceded fact, that for shared space schemes to work, they require "eye to eye" contact between drivers and pedestrians and an unspoken understanding of who is going to do what. blind people cannot achieve eye to eye contact with drivers.

I am a blind person who is totally opposed to the introduction of shared spaces for a wide range of reasons i.e. in order to exercise my right to a safe freedom of movement in the built environment, this needs the provision of a pavement which is clear and obstacle free; the provision of controlled road crossings e.g. "puffin" crossings with "infrared sensors", bleeping noise and a rotating knurled knob for deaf-blind users. I have been a member of Transport Scotland's "Roads for all Forum" since its inception and have been working with them recently on traffic signals for the 21st century. Seeking to return to "uncontrolled crossings", flies in the face of this forward thinking research and defies logic. As a Forum member, I have also had input into the content of the "Good design Guide" publication produced by Transport Scotland. This guide calls for a "Access champion" to be appointed to any proposed project and this is something East Dumbarton Council have consistently failed to do to date, despite me raising the matter at several meetings of their most inappropriately named "Equality design forum".

In addition to the foregoing points we now have the added problem of silent hybrid or electric vehicles to contend with. Not only are we unable to see the approaching vehicle but we cannot hear them approach - a double danger, which reinforces the need for controlled crossings. I consider the introduction of shared spaces to be an inappropriate and improper use of public money.

On 7 October 2015, myself and Mr Alexander Taylor met with Scottish Government officials on behalf of the National federation of the Blind of the UK to discuss the Kirkintilloch proposals. At this meeting, in response to a question from myself, "how do you teach a young child to cross a shared space road safely using the green cross code i.e. look right, look left , look right again and when safe to cross - cross", your road safety officer could not answer this question.

It is quite clear, that when a Council or other body installs or provides an uncontrolled crossing, they are providing a service to blind people at a lesser standard to that being provided to sighted people - a clear breach of their equality duty. thus potentially leaving them open to a court case being taken against them.

I am writing this letter in a twin capacity:

1) As an individual blind person, and

2) As President of the National federation of the blind of the UK (NFBUK). The NFBUK is an independent, non-political, self-help group and registered charity. We strive to improve the overall quality and welfare of daily life for all blind, deaf-blind, partially sighted people and whose sight impairment is part of multi disability, in the UK. NFBUK is totally opposed to the introduction of shared spaces anywhere in Scotland or the UK.

i therefore appeal in the strongest terms, to all members of the committee, to adopt and pass this petition and introduce an immediate moratorium on the introduction of shared spaces.

I hereby give permission for this submission to be circulated electronically or via any other required format/method

Yours Faithfully

Douglas Gilroy