

PE1595/J

Jamie Cuthbertson Letter of 4 January 2016

Dear Sirs,

I wish to add my support 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 safety concerns have been addressed.

I whole-heartedly support Mr Taylor's petition for the following reasons:

I find it incredible that, despite enormous public opposition, East Dunbartonshire Council has gone ahead with approval to the proposed Balanced Street Approach scheme in Kirkintilloch. How a council can blatantly ignore the expressed opinions of so many of its own residents is utterly incomprehensible to me!

Else where 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 am a totally blind resident of Bearsden who has for years managed to successfully and confidently navigate my local area with the use of a white cane. Street features such as kerbs, tactile pavement markings, controlled crossings with audible beeps and tactile cones have proven to be an invaluable aid in my ability to get about safely and independently.

The concept of having a shared space with none of the above features, and in particular one where use of 'courtesy crossings' is the norm, is one which fills me with dread. Fundamentally the level of courtesy on the roads these days is so poor that schemes such as these are only likely to cause injury or worse. It is naive to contemplate that schemes of this sort will bring harmony and increased safety to our communities. The unfortunate fact is that if drivers are not forced to stop to allow others to cross roads, they are unlikely to stop.

In recent years, East Dunbartonshire Council has introduced raised strips at the ends of many local streets with the intention that they slow traffic exiting side streets and provide a more level crossing point for those with prams etc. This is perhaps, on the surface, a laudable idea, however, it completely overlooks the fact that it makes the crossings far more difficult to detect for people who cannot see. I have already had several near misses when I have inadvertently strayed onto a crossing as there was no proper kerb to define the location of the edge of the road. The implementation of shared spaces in Scotland (and elsewhere) is only likely to create

more areas in which blind and partially sighted people are going to feel unsafe and at risk.

All the major organisations of and for blind and partially sighted people are against this kind of development. Surely it is utterly clear to anyone with any degree of common sense that these schemes are not safe and need to be halted immediately.

Please do not let any more people get injured or killed by your unwillingness to take the right action now!

Yours faithfully,

Jamie Cuthbertson