

PE1595/HH

# Petition PE 1595: Shared Streets

## Written Submission

### 1 **Background:**

- 1.1 Inclusion Scotland is a network of disabled peoples' organisations and individual disabled people. Our main aim is to draw attention to the physical, social, economic, cultural and attitudinal barriers that affect disabled people's everyday lives and to encourage a wider understanding of those issues throughout Scotland.
- 1.2 Inclusion Scotland has recently engaged with disabled people about issues of current concern to them. At two of these events, in urban areas, the issue of Shared Space Street design was spontaneously raised by participants.
- 1.3 This has added to existing concerns about Shared Streets which Inclusion Scotland members had raised in the past. We are therefore writing in support of Petition PE 1595 on Shared Streets

### 2 **Concerns:**

- 2.1 Inclusion Scotland has serious concerns over the implications of the Shared Surface and Shared Space design for disabled, blind and partially sighted people.
- 2.2 Shared space eliminates street signs, road marking and pavements in favour of a space which is shared by pedestrians and vehicles. By doing so planners aim to take priority away from cars and vehicles, and create equality between vehicles and pedestrians.
- 2.3 It is claimed that the heightened perceived risk of the shared space means that car, bus, van and lorry drivers will drive more cautiously, considerately and slowly which in turn reduces the number of accidents.
- 2.4 Whilst this may be the case for the great majority of pedestrians we believe that some impairment groups may be put at increased risk of injury and death by the adoption of Shared Street design.

### 3 **Eye contact:**

3.1 Shared space relies on eye contact between road users - pedestrians and drivers to enable safe crossing. However blind, visually impaired and other disabled people may, for a variety of reasons not be able to make eye contact with drivers.

- Blind and visually impaired people are extremely unlikely to be able to make the eye contact with drivers which assists in their safe crossing.
- Wheelchair users, by being below the eye-level expected, can become “invisible” to drivers until their vehicles are in very close proximity, in turn making collisions with and injury of wheelchair users more likely.
- Disabled people with autism, dementia or learning difficulties may not realise or be unable to make the necessary eye-contact with drivers to enable them to cross safely.

### 4 **Crossing points:**

4.1 Navigating the street without designated crossing points also means depending on drivers to notice and stop when a blind, partially sighted or other disabled person wants to cross. However whilst many drivers are considerate, some are not.

4.2 In addition blind & visually impaired people and people with dementia or learning difficulties may rely on the cues provided by pedestrian crossing lights (i.e. both visual and auditory). If they are denied these they may be confused or feel unable to safely cross the road. Therefore we want to see safe crossings continuing to be included in shared street design.

### 5 **Kerbs:**

5.1 The kerb is essential for safe street navigation by blind and partially sighted people. For example long cane users identify the boundary between the safe pavement and dangerous road via this boundary and guide dogs are trained to navigate by them. Kerbs are thus a vital part of street layout yet shared street/shared surface schemes often mean that kerbs are removed.

5.2 Whilst we understand that a small kerb has been retained in the East Dunbartonshire shared street design it remains an issue of concern for blind and visually impaired people in the area.

### 6 **Conclusion:**

6.1 A number of very pertinent issues seem to be going unaddressed including the Public Sector Equality Duty e.g. are Equality Impact Assessments and consultations with disabled people occurring before such schemes are adopted? We hope that the Petitions and Local Government Committees will use this opportunity to examine the issue of Shared Streets and their implications for disabled people in greater detail.