

PE1595/WW

Karl Farrell Email of 21 January 2016

I wish to add my support to the above petition about the proposed streetscape changes in Kirkintilloch, and give permission for this submission to be circulated electronically or via any other required method or format.

I have been blind since birth and I have experience of navigating streets where the kerbs have been removed and the carriageway has been raised to the level of the pedestrian pavement. If these streets don't have a controlled crossing, they tend to have the effect of forming a barrier that discourages me from wanting to try and cross from one side to the other. Where these streets have through traffic, I have found that it is difficult to get someone to stop because each motorist seems to feel that someone behind will be willing to give way.

I have used a white cane all my adult life and feel able to walk in unfamiliar places provided that I move with care. I don't feel the streets I refer to above (shared spaces) are safe for me to negotiate. Most blind people are probably not as confident as I am and, many other people also feel intimidated by those streets. Many older people and others don't want to have to skip across the road when there's a gap in the traffic. As a result, I and all these others will stay away from these uncomfortable, dangerous areas, we won't show up on local surveys or in video monitoring and that will be another no-go area for us. Pedestrians shouldn't be used to slow down traffic in towns and we, like all members of the community, should be freely able to shop on both sides of the street.

Karl Farrell