

On 28 October the Communities, Housing & Infrastructure Committee of Aberdeen City Council considered ACF's petition over the Westhill cycle path. Those of you with long memories may remember that this is the third (at least!) council committee to consider the matter. After an initial foray with the Environment, Planning & Infrastructure Committee, our 700+ signature petition then went before the newly-formed Petitions Committee in April, and their decision was that officials should prepare a new report to go to the now-renamed Communities, Housing & Infrastructure committee.

Still with us?

So on 28 October, Councillors on the C, H & I committee considered a report submitted by a Senior Engineer in the Road Projects Team.

In our view, the report is nothing more than an object lesson in delay and obfuscation. You can read it for yourself here

<http://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/documents/s41559/EPI-14-210%20A944%20Lang%20Stracht%20to%20Westhill%20Cycle%20Route.pdf>

but in short it recommends that improvements to the route be carried out at some unspecified future date, paid for by 'developer contributions' when further office or industrial developments take place on site.

At first this might seem like a flicker of light at the end of the tunnel for our campaign, because previously the obstacle hasn't been money but the design limitations of the route and the presence of some protected trees (of course not so protected that the adjacent trees couldn't be cut down to allow the access road to Prime Four to be built). But as the report goes on it's clear that no solutions have been identified to any of the Council's previous problem issues with upgrading the route – these are merely referred to as 'future risks' with the Council's preferred solution being that of doing absolutely nothing meantime.

With the exception of Councillor Ian Yuill (Airyhall & Broomhill) who had the good sense to ask what the Council's 'Plan B' was, the other members of the Committee accepted the report without question, and the conclusion is that there will be no improvement to the sub-standard sections of the path for the foreseeable future. Again, only due to Councillor Yuill's intervention was there agreement that if there has been no progress within 12 months, the matter should be brought back to the Committee again.

With no hint of irony, the report concludes that its recommendations are fully in line with the Council's plans and policies in support of cycling and "*meets with the local Community Plan objectives to continually improve road safety and maximise accessibility for pedestrians and all modes of transport*"

So there we have it – after campaigning on this issue for more than 2 years, ACF has been on a circular journey through several Council committee meetings, and we are pretty much back where we started with no prospect of improvement to the route anytime soon, and the Council having kicked the issue as far as it can into the long grass and deflected responsibility onto developers without any indication of how the technical problems will be solved.

In the meantime two-way cycle and pedestrian traffic will still be expected to use a sub-standard path which in places is only 1.5 metres wide and is adjacent to a busy dual carriage-way, with no barrier or other protection whatsoever.

It's not clear where ACF can go next with this, but we will continue to work towards getting a better path, delivered on a definite timeline. The safety of the path's users should not depend on a 'maybe'.

We will of course be raising the issue with Cllr Jenny Laing, Leader of the Council, when she attends our next monthly meeting on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> November.

If you are a user of the path who is frustrated by the complete lack of progress with this and the Council's avoidance of responsibility– please come along and make your voice heard.