

Mar street, Clackmannanshire  
Credit: Julie Howden/Sustrans

# Lessons from a national emergency Active Travel programme

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## Introduction

Spaces for People was a Scottish Government funded programme launched in 2020 to enable people to safely make essential journeys during the COVID-19 pandemic. Managed by Sustrans, the £33 million fund introduced temporary infrastructure across Scotland for walking, wheeling and cycling.

- 105km of temporary cycle lane and cycle lane upgrades
- 41km of footpath widening
- speed limit reductions at 373 locations
- cycle parking at 228 locations
- 83 streets closed to motorised vehicles, including 24 school streets.

## (Some of) what we learned

While the Spaces for People programme in Scotland was introduced to ensure safe physical distancing, it has also provided valuable lessons for the Active Travel infrastructure sector.

A risk with infrastructure and policy changes when not implemented with the right engagement, communications and local political support is that the project takes one step forwards and two steps back. In a few cases infrastructure was delivered as part of Spaces for People and then almost immediately removed, due to local pressure.

Although the programme was successful on many fronts, this talk is about what we can learn from the experience for implementing Active Travel infrastructure.



Old Dalkeith Road, Edinburgh  
Credit: Neill Hanna/Sustrans

## Programme impacts





**2 million**  
people lived within a  
**10-minute** walk of a  
Spaces for People measure.



agreed measures should be made permanent. **29%** said they should be removed.

## Lessons learned

The lessons learned study aimed to understand **how well the programme was implemented** and **what lessons Sustrans can learn for active travel and temporary infrastructure initiatives** in the future. Spaces for People provided a unique opportunity to learn from different local government approaches across Scotland, some of which were successful and some faced challenges.



Old Dalkeith Road, Edinburgh  
Credit: Neill Hanna/Sustrans

# Key successes



**Improved collaboration and communication within and between organisations partly due to new ways of working**



**Partners valued the flexibility of how funding could be used**



**Provided opportunity to use temporary measures as trials**



# Challenges

Rapid rollout and limited implementation timeline impacted ability to carry out **consultation and communication**



**Engage local communities & Consider consultation after trial infrastructure**

## Recommendation

## Engage local communities

A minimum standard for engagement and consultation. Some places might benefit from more thorough engagement based on past experiences of delivering infrastructure and working with communities. Engagement can include in-person and online events, consultation surveys, and design workshops.

## Consider using temporary measures as trials

A full consultation process may not always be appropriate for delivering rapid programmes. Another option is to focus on public consultation after installing trial measures. Post-implementation consultation can help engage users to understand what is and is not working, and the feedback gathered can be used to make improvements to designs.



George Square, Glasgow.  
Credit: John Linton/Sustrans

# Challenges

Getting **political approval** for prioritising space for active travel over motor vehicles in town centre streets was difficult in some areas.



**Develop a robust communication strategy**

**Share information with communities prior to implementation**

# Recommendation

## **Develop a robust communications strategy**

Alongside local communication, national programmes need an overarching communications strategy that makes clear the broad principles and intentions behind the programme and makes the case for why the changes being implemented are needed. This strategy should include multiple communication channels, including local and national media, posting information direct to people's homes, information through local structures such as schools and community councils, online and accessible formats.

## **Share information with communities before implementation**

Even if a measure is temporary, communities should be provided with clear information about changes in their area. This should include reasons for the changes, clear timelines for delivery where possible, and information about mechanisms for providing feedback. As above, this communication needs to be delivered via multiple channels to reach as many people as possible. This communication is separate from engaging directly with communities about the measures.

# Challenges

Less than two-thirds (61%, 20) of partners reported completion of an EqlA for Spaces for People measures



Ensure accessibility for all through high quality Equality Impact Assessments

# Recommendation

## Ensure accessibility for all through high quality Equality Impact Assessments

Feedback collected also highlighted that improved engagement with disability groups in addressing their concerns could have increased the overall success of the programme. In Scotland there is a duty on public bodies to assess whether proposed policies or practices will have an adverse effect on people with protected characteristics, and how potential impacts could be mitigated. Equality Impact Assessments evidence this process and should be conducted early when planning new projects.



Planter and road closure sign outside Catrine Primary School.  
Credit: H Underwood, Ayrshire Roads Alliance

## How to do better?

Many parts of the Spaces for People programme went well. However, for anyone thinking about implementing active travel infrastructure or policy changes there are some lessons which have been useful in Scotland:

- Have a communication plan, and think widely about forms of media, including through people's letterboxes, online, and in person.
- Plan engagement considering the local population demographics and particular interest groups such as disability groups or local businesses in order to ensure a wide range of voices are heard.

If this feels resource-intensive it could be done centrally if a lot of small projects are being implemented.



Bollards outside a school in Clackmannanshire.  
Credit: Julie Howden/Sustrans

# Questions?



Feel free to be in touch with additional questions:

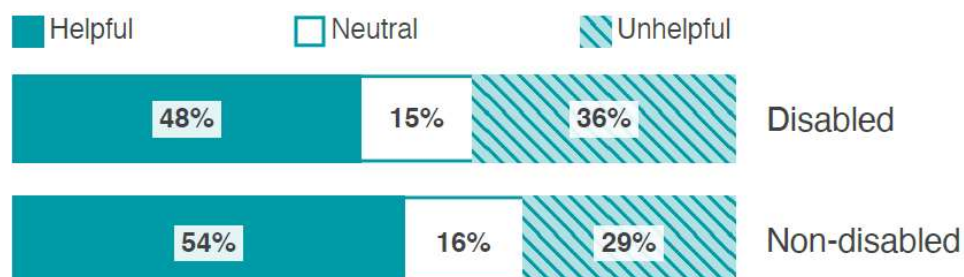
**Heid.Jerstad@sustrans.org.uk**

**<https://www.showcase-sustrans.org.uk/news/spaces-for-people-reports/>**

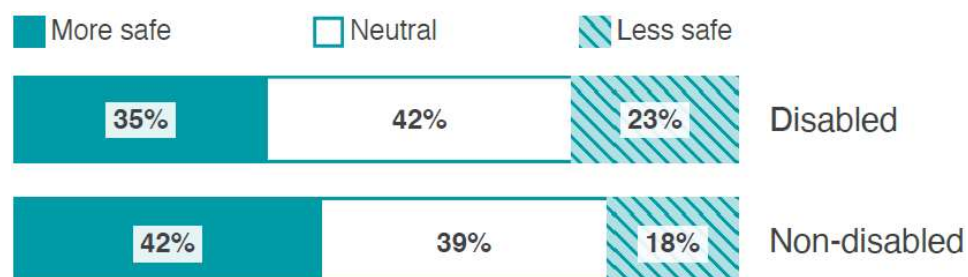


# Disability – in case of questions

## Helpfulness of measures



## Feeling of Safety



# Income Deprivation – in case of questions SUstrans

## Measures installed

24% of Spaces for people measures were installed in the 20% most deprived locations.

## Support for permanence

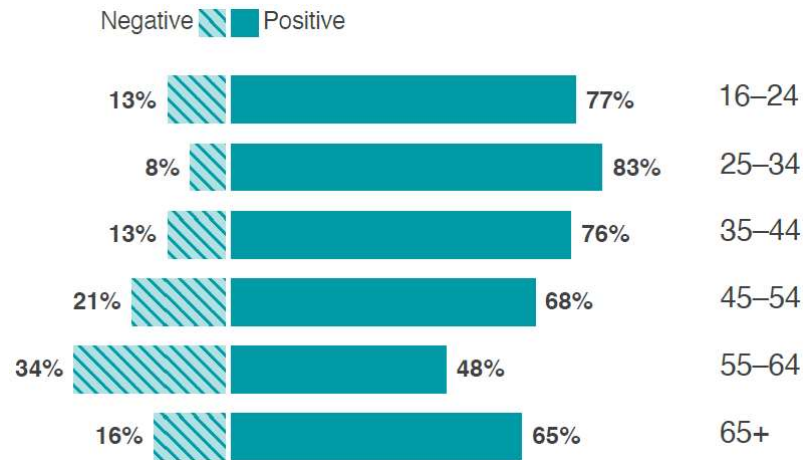
57% of people living in low-income households supported making measures permanent which was proportionally higher than middle earners.

## Helpfulness of measures

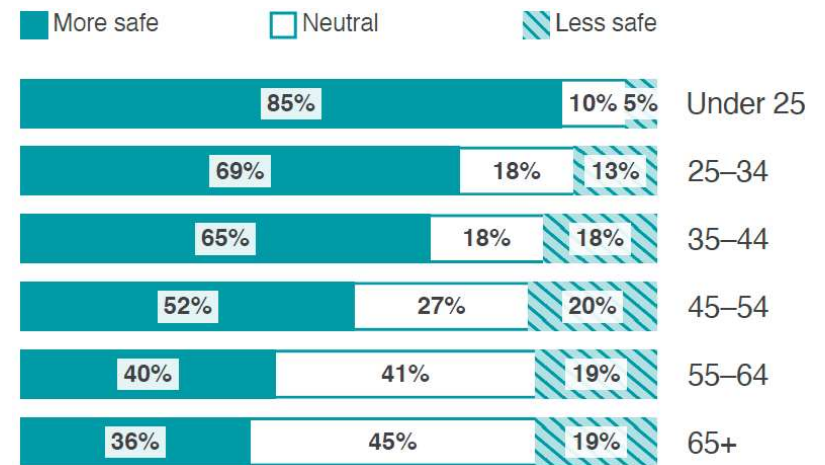
66% of people living in low-income households found Spaces for People measures helpful. This proportion was higher than for those living in middle-income households and similar to those living in higher-income households.

# Age – in case of questions

## Opinion of Spaces for people measures



## Feelings of Safety



## Gender – in case of questions

### Opinion of Spaces for People, Helpfulness and Safety

- Women (72% positive) and men (74% positive) had a similar opinion (positive, negative, neutral) of Spaces for People.
- Women and men found the measures similarly helpful (both just over half positive).
- Women (54%) and men (56%) responded similarly positive when asked if they felt “more safe” walking, wheeling or cycling as a result of the Spaces for People measures.

### Support for permanence

Men (75%) were more likely than women (68%) to say that the measures should remain.