

STREETS FOR EVERYONE:

INCLUSIVE APPROACHES TO STREET DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT



ABOUT THIS CASE STUDY: This case study describes recent work facilitated by Living Streets Scotland to help make streets in Perth & Kinross more inclusive and walking friendly. It describes a programme of Community Street Audits carried out by local disabled people and community groups, in partnership with Perth & Kinross Council and the Centre for Inclusive Living Perth & Kinross. The case study is intended to be a resource for other groups and agencies who want to make 'Streets for Everyone'.



BACKGROUND

In 2015, Perth & Kinross Council (PKC) wanted to explore a new way to prioritise requests for street improvements from people with a range of disabilities and mobility impairments. Typically these requests were to install dropped kerbs, to deal with street clutter or other barriers to walking. The volume of such requests had reached a level that dealing with them on a 'case by case' basis no longer seemed appropriate. The council approached Living Streets Scotland to work with the Centre for Inclusive Living Perth & Kinross (CILPK) to develop a programme of Community Street Audits (CSA). These would identify barriers to disabled people using the streets and form the basis of a system for prioritising the use of available budgets.

Community Street Audits involve a guided walk through streets by local people with some professional support to critically review how they can be improved for everyday walking. Living Streets has extensive experience of leading this kind of activity in order to improve local streets throughout the UK. (1)

(1) <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/what-we-do/projects/community-street-audits>



“THROUGH ISSUES RAISED BY CILPK MEMBERS, ROUTES WERE CHOSEN FOR THE AUDITS TO BE COMPLETED, MEMBERS THEN PARTICIPATED IN THE WALK AROUND GETTING THE CHANCE TO DEMONSTRATE WHY CERTAIN AREAS ARE ISSUES AND DISCUSSING THIS WITH COUNCIL OFFICERS TO SEE HOW THEY COULD BEST BE IMPROVED. OUR MEMBERS ENJOYED BEING GIVEN THE CHANCE TO PASS ON THEIR EXPERIENCE AND ALSO LEARN FROM THE OFFICERS REASONS WHY THINGS ARE DONE IN CERTAIN WAYS. THE AUDITS WERE VERY BENEFICIAL FOR ALL AND THE KNOWLEDGE SHARING HAS ALREADY BENEFITED NEW PROJECTS IN THE AREA WHICH HAVE BEEN MORE ACCESSIBLE DUE TO THIS.”



WHAT HAPPENED?



An initial Community Street Audit was organised in Perth city centre, with many members of CILPK (which also acts as the local Access Panel) keen to be involved. This led to the preparation of a list of potential improvements and discussions with CILPK on how best to tackle them, taking a route-based approach, rather than seeing each problem in isolation. A dedicated budget (initially £10,000) was allocated to such works by PKC from within existing capital allocations.

The audits provided a new opportunity for disabled people to meet with a range of council professional and technical staff - for example staff involved in road design, maintenance, lighting and road safety - and discuss the impact of street problems. The wider benefits of involving disabled people and organisations in helping to shape priorities became apparent and generated a desire by the council to roll this approach out more widely across the city and to other towns in Perth & Kinross including Crieff, Blairgowrie & Rattray, Coupar Angus, Aberfeldy and Kinross.

Not all the actions resulting from the audits were the responsibility of Perth & Kinross Council. CILPK organised a training session, which around 30 professional staff and disabled people took part in, providing an opportunity for disabled people to explain face to face the impact of various barriers on their mobility. CILPK also produced a number of short videos which help bring access problems to life: <http://cilpk.org.uk/equality-issues/>

CILPK and the City Centre Team at PKC also collaborated to tackle problems that street clutter can cause disabled pedestrians, especially on busy, narrow pavements. Disabled people spoke directly to retailers on problem streets and this has helped raise awareness of the difficulties that 'A-boards' can cause, and led to a more responsible approach by many local shops. However, this needs to be sustained, not just a one-off action.

The audits also provided an opportunity to engage with Transport Scotland, the authority which is responsible for a number of trunk roads running through towns in the area, especially over safe places to cross major roads.

LEARNING OUTCOMES



KEY LESSONS

The chief lesson from the case study is the value of enabling street users to meet and share their experiences across a range of professional and technical transportation staff. This enables staff to understand access issues directly from the consumer point of view. It also helped disabled people understand some of the practical reasons why streets may be designed as they are and where there are constraints in the scope for change.

The process of getting community members together, including disabled people, also helped to stimulate group 'problem-solving' - for example, discussing alternative routes to the Post Office, swapping knowledge about how people get around and overcome barriers.

Another outcome reported by CILPK has been that the disabled people involved become more aware of how streets are designed and managed, more critical in spotting problems and more confident in reporting faults which need to be addressed to the Council.

Both PKC and CILPK felt that it was good to have the programme led by an external body (Living Streets Scotland) rather than the council: this was seen as more independent and neutral.

One factor that was central to the success of the process was establishing good personal relationships between key partners - especially PKC and CILPK. This led to good communication and high levels of trust each way. The disability group knows that that issues raised by disabled people will be treated seriously; while the council staff know that street faults will be communicated responsibly, without unnecessarily resorting to media or political pressures.

**Brian Cargill, Senior Engineer
(Traffic and Road Network team),
Perth & Kinross Council:**

“THE STREET AUDITS GAVE BOTH THE ENGINEER AND THE VULNERABLE ROAD USER AN INSIGHT INTO EACH OTHERS POSITIONS. HAVING IDENTIFIED THE POSSIBLE MITIGATION MEASURES THE PROCESS THEN EMPOWERED THE CENTRE FOR INCLUSIVE LIVING TO DECIDE THE PRIORITIES WITHIN AVAILABLE BUDGETS. HAVING TAKEN PART IN THE STREET AUDITS OUR ENGINEERS ARE NOW BETTER PLACED TO PROVIDE PROJECTS THAT TAKE COGNISANCE OF THE VULNERABLE ROAD USER AT THE DESIGN STAGE.”



Penny Morriss, Project Manager (Communities),
Living Streets Scotland:

“WORKING WITH CILPK MEMBERS HAS BEEN FANTASTICALLY USEFUL FOR LIVING STREETS, AS IT HAS ALLOWED US TO ASSESS OUR STREET AUDIT PROCESS AND CONSIDER HOW WE CAN ENSURE WE ARE INCLUDING A DIVERSE PERSPECTIVE IN THE ACTIVITIES WE TAKE FORWARD. WE’VE BEEN ABLE TO DRAW LEARNING FROM THIS WORK, WHICH HAS REALLY INFLUENCED THE WAY WE ARE PLANNING AND DELIVERING OTHER PROJECTS, MAKING SURE WE ARE WORKING WITH PARTNERS TO SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS AT EACH STAGE. WORKING WITH THE TEAM AT PERTH & KINROSS COUNCIL WE’VE BEEN ABLE TO SEE UP CLOSE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES CONFRONTING OFFICERS AND TEAMS IN TACKLING BARRIERS ON OUR STREETS. TEAM WORKING, AND MAKING SURE THE RIGHT INTERNAL PARTNERS ARE INVOLVED FROM THE START IS KEY TO ANY SUCCESS. AND, YOU HAVE TO BE PATIENT. MANY OF THE TEAMS YOU’LL BE WORKING WITH ARE WORKING ON A RANGE OF PRIORITIES, AND COUNCIL PROCESSES TAKE THE TIME THEY TAKE. ENSURING EVERYONE UNDERSTANDS THIS IS KEY TO SETTING REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS UP FRONT WITH STREET AUDIT PARTICIPANTS.”

CHALLENGES

Inevitably, challenges are encountered in such a process, which have produced some insights for future learning.

An important element stressed by both the council and Third Sector participants is the importance of managing expectations carefully. There are not sufficient funds available to introduce major changes, in the immediate future at least. A balance needs to be struck between encouraging people to participate while ensuring that expectations are realistic.

The longer-term sustainability of the process is also an issue; attendance in the later CSAs has decreased and CILPK attribute this largely to a sense that participants have as yet seen few tangible improvements to show for their efforts. This sense is compounded by a general 'consultation fatigue' - disabled activists are often asked to comment on a wide range of services and policies but frequently get little feedback on what, if anything happens as a result of their input. This can encourage cynicism. To counter this, it is suggested that some practical improvements "on the ground" should be introduced as soon as possible after an audit. This will demonstrate that the process has not been all talk.

It is good to complete reports from street audits and circulate them to participants quickly. This reduces the risk of the participants' energy being dissipated. It may also be useful to produce two styles of report for each audit - a detailed one with full technical and geographic details for the roads authority, and a shorter, more simple and accessible version for the public and participants.

While a route-based approach is recommended, it was found that Perth's street pattern presented some difficulties in carrying out audits. The grid layout means that 'pedestrian routes' are seldom linear, with a choice of routes available for most designations (eg train station to city centre).

Some feedback on the process suggested that the focus can sometimes be too much on what is wrong with the street environment. There may also be opportunities to give credit and acknowledge where good practice in access is evident.



SUMMARY OUTCOMES AND LESSONS



KEY OUTCOMES

- Increased staff **appreciation of disabled peoples' mobility needs** - and consequences of barriers;
- **Improved understanding for disabled participants** of how streets are designed and managed, and the processes and timescales to deliver improvement;
- Some short-term '**quick wins**' identified, eg: provision of dropped kerbs, tactile strips, relocation of street furniture, and an "A" Frame guidance note;
- Helped create more **responsive, accountable system** for prioritising individual requests/complaints about streets;
- **Wider appreciation** of how individual faults impact on important pedestrian routes;
- Formation of **dedicated budget** for access improvements for PKC.

KEY LESSONS

- **Manage expectations** honestly: be frank about the scope for change;
- **Establish trust** and honesty between key individuals in roads authority and disability group(s);
- **Involve a wide range** of engineering and technical **staff**: an opportunity to widen professional horizons;
- Adopt a **route-based approach**: eg train station to town centre, access to Post Office;
- **Follow up audits** with some tangible action “on the ground”;
- Establish a **dedicated budget** if possible;
- Give **feedback to participants**: share the report(s) and let them know of successes.





CONTACT INFORMATION

Living Streets Scotland
Thorn House
5 Rose Street
Edinburgh
EH2 2PR

Telephone: 0131 243 2645
Email: Scotland@livingstreets.org.uk
www.livingstreets.scot.org

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Living Streets Scotland is working with Paths for All to deliver the Scottish Government's National Walking Strategy Action Plan. Particular thanks are recorded to Brian Cargill (Perth & Kinross Council), Gillian Edwards (Centre for Inclusive Living Perth & Kinross), and everyone who participated in the audits.

Living Streets (The Pedestrians' Association) is a Registered Charity No. 1108448 (England and Wales) and SCO39808 (Scotland). Company Limited by Guarantee (England and Wales), Company Registration No. 5368409. Registered office: 4th Floor, Universal House, 88-94 Wentworth Street, London E1 7SA

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

