

City of Edinburgh Council 27 July 2010

The Edinburgh Reporter was at the executive committee meeting of the Transport, Infrastructure and Environment Committee at the City Chambers this morning.

There was a full public gallery today in light of the fact that there were three deputations to be heard. A deputation is a small group of local people who want to put forward a case for (or indeed, one has to presume, against) a measure about to be voted upon by the committee. They are allowed ten minutes within which to put their case.

The first deputation was very slick indeed. This was the **Moray Feus Residents Association** who were putting forward their case that pollution levels in **Great Stuart Street** are now so bad that instead of being the 4th cleanest street in Edinburgh when it was measured 10 years ago, it is now the 2nd most polluted street in the city. The reason for the increased pollution is the closure of Shandwick Place which means that the traffic has to find alternative routes. One of the most obvious is the diversion by way of Randolph Crescent and Great Stuart Street.



The problem was neatly encapsulated by Ashley Lloyd who represented the Association, along with his powerpoint presentation making it easy for those of us in the public gallery to follow the various graphs and figures which he used. The issue of pollution is that these are residential streets which have a W formation (with gullies and gutters at the sides) and this formation encourages the heavier polluted air to hang about, even after dark. This means that the residents are exposed to pollution 24/7 whereas the more

commercial streets are only exposed to such pollutants intermittently. The problem is compounded by the heavy air falling into basement areas where people are asleep. One of the little nuggets of information which The Reporter caught onto was that there is apparently a continuous monitoring station on Queen Street...we will have to look out for that! Also the baseline is estimated from India Street which was closed during a round of traffic measures and where both the noise and air are reckoned to be of acceptable quality.

According to the study there were 80% of days during February which had higher levels of carbon monoxide at night. The other problem is of noise and in fact as a result of the diversion some streets are noisier than Princes Street is during the day.

tie have estimated that about 600 vehicles an hour are dispersed as a result of this road closure, so it is easy to see where the noise and air pollution is coming from. The Association would like the council to look carefully at the closure of the street and to look at traffic management alternatives to reverse the existing damage.

Several councillors quite correctly congratulated Mr Lloyd on his clear and articulate presentation. He made a powerful case for the permanent opening of the street again. (It is open at the moment on a temporary basis – but then that has to do with the trams...) He was asked if any of the pollution could perhaps have come from central heating in houses, but emphatically denied this as all venting from central heating has to go to the back of these listed buildings.

The Council passed the motion without amendment. The motion was as follows:-

8.9 Shandwick Place – Motion by Councillor Dundas

Committee commends the recent decision to suspend the temporary traffic management arrangements related to the tram

works on many streets around the West End of the city.

Notes that diversions still apply to Shandwick Place; and that the residents of the nearby residential streets of Randolph Crescent, Great Stuart Street, Ainslie Place and St Colme Street continue to experience increased traffic on their streets as a result of this closure.

Calls for a report in one cycle (for the next meeting of the Committee on 21 September 2010) on the potential costs and benefits of reopening Shandwick Place to general traffic until such time as on-street tram works in the area are recommenced; the report should also include the associated costs of reinstating the traffic management arrangements required when work does recommence.

So there will be a report on the permanent measure to be taken in relation to Shandwick Place at the next meeting – scheduled to be a long one given that the trams debate will be back on the agenda then too.

The next deputation was equally clear and concise. Two ministers from **Murrayfield**, Rev Brown and Rev Kirkbride, were in attendance to explain that the church had in recent years refurbished the community centre attached to the church in **Ormidale Terrace**. This accommodates a dementia group, called the Murrayfield Club, on three days during the week when about 30 people attend. 10 of these places are council places. The City of Edinburgh Council have recently entered into a contract with the Murrayfield Parish for the provision of the daycare facility by the church. The problem is that there are now parking restrictions as far out from the city centre as Wester Coates. This means that commuters have started parking on Murrayfield Avenue and Ormidale Terrace during the day, and taking the bus to the city centre.

As there is no provision for disabled or other parking right outside the church, the cars and buses dropping off people attending the club have to double park. “It’s an accident

waiting to happen,” said Rev Brown. In fact there have already been several near-accidents. So the proposal is to have either a single yellow which would allow for dropping off of disabled people, or a white box restricting access to those in real need of it. A petition has been signed in recent days by 200 parishioners. 30 residents had objected to the proposal, although it was not clear who they were or why they objected. Then the chair of the Murrayfield Club Rev Kirkbride played the ace card. If there could be nothing done about the parking then the Kirk Session will have to consider the future of the Murrayfield Club in September. In other words the problem of dealing with 30 people with dementia would then become the responsibility of the council in some other guise. Bravo! The problem has existed for about 20 months without resolution. Suddenly there is a time constraint imposed. After all said Rev Kirkbride:-“It is not a huge ask.”

We believe that it was agreed to have a report on this within 6 months and that the council was urged to look into the overarching matter of restricted parking on Ormidale Terrace and surrounding streets. We only say that we think this is the case as some of the councillors and officers present at the meeting were guilty of forgetting to switch on their microphones, making it difficult to follow all proceedings.

The third deputation was from **Duddingston Village Conservation Society**. The problem here is road rage in the historic village owing to the narrow roads and the traffic using the village as a main thoroughfare from Holyrood Park. Although the villagers don't want the route closed all together they put forward a good case for the road to be controlled in some way so that there are no more head-ons resulting in shouting, bad tempers and possibly fisticuffs. But their case was put very delicately and they were invited to restate some of it by Councillor Aitken who said:-“You may have understated some of the traffic issues.” The problem was then elucidated by explaining that there is a school nearby and actual physical

assaults have taken place between drivers!

According to Malcolm Windsor and Roger Mercer of the Society, part of the issue relates to Historic Scotland and the Police not engaging sufficiently for a resolution to be found. It seemed that these two bodies were a bit scared of either getting involved or taking any definitive steps. So the Council was invited to give some back-up to the villagers.

One solution of putting double yellow lines down Old Church Lane was discounted at an earlier date as it might simply mean that the street would become a racetrack. Instead it was thought a little preferable to have parked cars acting as a kind of chicane. The Police seem to be reluctant to enforce the speed restrictions in the village and it was said that there have not been any convictions for speeding among those driving through Duddingston. It was then said that this is not simply a village problem and that it forms a part of the larger issue of East Edinburgh and the traffic strategy for the whole area.

One sensible question raised was that of the emergency services and whether they had been contacted about any possible dangers owing to the bottlenecks here. It seemed that they might not have been.

The following motion was passed:-

Duddingston Village – Traffic – Motion by Councillor Ewan Aitken

The following motion by Councillor Ewan Aitken was remitted by the Council on 27 May 2010:

‘Council notes: the considerable traffic issues in Duddingston Village caused by the use of Old Church Lane and the low road through Holyrood Park as a de facto arterial route for the city;

the fact that this route is totally unsuited to play this role in the Edinburgh traffic network;

*that discussions on these issues go back over 20 years ;
that Council officers had been able to make some small
adjustments through, for example, signage and road adaptation
but have not had the authority to make significant strategic
input into the discussions;
that all these discussions have concluded that this issue
needs to be set in the context of a wider, strategic
discussion on arterial routes in the city.*

Council agrees:

*to call for a report on the consequences of changing Old
Church Lane and the Holyrood Park low road from a de facto
arterial route into the city;
that this report needs direct input from Director level in
the relevant departments in partnership with the Police and
Historic Scotland. This input should involve residents
meeting with the relevant directors."*

One of the other important matters raised at this meeting was the issue of a surface crossing on Calder Road where there is an existing underpass already offering a safer alternative. The committee was told however that the local residents are reluctant to use the underpass owing to the levels of crime which occur there. There have been 26 muggings in a 12 month period. It seems that the painting of the underpass, lighting and CCTV cameras had not deterred any of this.

What amazed The Reporter was the cost of installing a crossing on the road surface. Without any work done to the underpass to render it redundant, the cost of installing the mechanised crossing was calmly estimated at £150,000. We are speechless. But the cost of the feasibility study into providing such a crossing was an equally staggering £30,000. One of the cost-conscious councillors questioned the need for that, particularly as the Neighbourhood Partnership was calling for the surface crossing, so presumably an expensive study might come to the same conclusion. There are about 800 plus

pedestrians – presumably that might be daily but it was not clarified.

One of the other points discussed about the underpass was really very good indeed. Councillor Mowat asked if there was any evidence of any other council dealing with such an underpass in an innovative way to deter criminals, and still allow the majority of residents safe use of the facility. There is apparently some similar situation in London where the police and council have combined to make it a safer environment. So someone from the council is to be immediately despatched to London to find out exactly what...

Much of the rest of the business was agreed on the nod and dealt with very swiftly. Ship to ship oil transfers in the Forth for example:- The council must make their strong objections to this known to the UK government.

The Allotments Strategy was welcomed. The committee recognised that it may not actually manage to meet the demand for allotments even though 50 plots a year may be formed over the next few years. Councillor Mowat asked if the possibility of renting private land to form allotments had been investigated, and it seemed it had not, and the committee agreed that it should be more proactive in this regard.

Sustainable transport – taxi trips for officers and members have been reducing although there is still a sizeable number of trips taken. We are encouraged to note that the council staff usage of buses and public transport has gone up by 8% – but apparently not cycle usage, which has reduced. Have they never heard of the tax-efficient Bike to Work scheme? We wrote about it [here](#).

The meeting was over by quarter to one. The Agenda for the meeting and eventually the minutes and any reports are all available on the City Council website [here](#). The next meeting on 21st September promises to be rather longer and perhaps a

little more lively....trams, trams and more trams....oh and something called domestic air travel protocol....