

# Roseburn air study petition to be considered by council

After the Transport and Environment Committee meeting on Thursday morning I spoke with George Rendall a shopkeeper on Roseburn Terrace and John Yellowlees who is the chair of Murrayfield Community Council.

They had just addressed councillors at the meeting about the petition demanding a new study into the levels of nitrogen dioxide which councillors agreed to consider.

Their petition begins : "Traders and residents want an air study, for we have just learnt from a recently retired local air quality expert, John Lamb, with 17 years at SEPA under his belt, of a potential risk to public health by the CCWEL.

Roseburn Terrace is a text book example of a street canyon, where traffic pollution becomes trapped between buildings. This effect is exacerbated by prevailing wind conditions, leading to nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) concentrations that are around 34% higher on the south side, as CEC's passive diffusion tube measurements show. The expert noted stationary cars keep the traffic away from the shop fronts, creating a space in which NO<sub>2</sub> dilutes naturally. Dundee City Council recently moved traffic one lane from homes to reduce pollution in this way."



George Rendall left with supporters Photo courtesy of John Yellowlees

The council has already approved the City Centre West to East Link CCWEL cycleway subject to a public hearing on the Traffic Regulation Order for Roseburn next month. There has been opposition to the route along past shops in Roseburn Terrace converting one traffic lane into a segregated cycle lane.

During the meeting George Rendall one of the petitioners explained to councillors : "You propose removing one lane on the north side of the terrace – this means there will be 15,000 vehicles a day squeezed into three lanes. It is bound to increase the pollution levels. All we are asking for is that our expert can oversee the study – it would take 3 or 4 weeks to do the survey – and it must be done before meeting before Reporter in November."

Cllr Nick Cook (Cons) thanked Mr Rendall for his contribution but went on to say : "I have been relatively sympathetic to all of this but I have to say I am a bit uncomfortable about what you are asking for. You are questioning the professional integrity of those who would conduct the survey. Even any new person would be contracted to the council so I am deeply uncomfortable in prejudging the work. Regardless of who undertakes it we may still be back in this position again."

The Convener stated : "I support Cllr Cook – the council has a responsibility to undertake these surveys properly. We are willing to absorb comment, but we are now at the end of that process." The Convener concluded that she hoped they would be bringing this to a close quickly after the next stage.

During his address Mr Rendall replied : "If we are wrong we will not argue the point. We want this done properly in the first place so that we don't have to come back. Your experts are wrong sometimes. Our guy would oversee this survey. If you move all the cars nearer the kerb it is difficult to see how it would not increase pollution. The busiest part of the road is the junction turning right onto Russell Road." Mr Rendall explained to The Edinburgh Reporter that he believes changes to be made to the traffic light sequencing will mean that vehicles are stationary for longer on Roseburn Terrace thus adding to the problem. It also seems that the two stage pedestrian crossing near the Colt Bridge will become a one stage crossing and Mr Rendall also thinks this will mean traffic being stopped for longer adding to the pollution.

Council officer Ewan Kennedy explained that the expert referred to in the petition, John Lamb, had been invited to a meeting when council officers delivered a detailed presentation along with considerable round table discussion. He said : "Since last discussed has been a lot of activity and engagement. As your expert was not able to come to the arranged meeting there was an invitation to another meeting – that has not taken place. Following that concerns about the

methodology of air quality monitoring have been raised but this is underway and will be complete by the end of September.”

We talked to Mr Rendall and Mr Yellowlees after the meeting about what they thought they had succeeded in doing. Mr Rendall agreed that the council are already undertaking air quality monitoring but he said they want the council to do this properly.

He said : “We are trying to get them to allow us to have our expert to oversee the input they put into the modelling – what you put in determines what you get out. The council or their experts are not quite getting things correct. According to our expert, and as they admitted during the meeting, the council’s figures are incorrect relating to the quality or height levels of the air quality in Roseburn Terrace. They are making it lower than it actually is. They removed one of the air diffusing tubes and it disappeared for over nine years before it was put back. These things are tested monthly so you are talking about 100 months in a row when nobody noticed it was gone.”

Mr Yellowlees explained the community council’s position : “The shops on Roseburn Terrace are vital to our community and they are pretty important to the city of Edinburgh on match days at BT Murrayfield. We are concerned to see that this city council should give the maximum support to the shopkeepers during and after construction of the CCWEL. In particular air pollution is a threat to our community. We want to see any studies of the impact of the cycle track on air pollution to be not only independent but also be seen to be independent.”

We asked Mr Yellowlees how the cycle track would have any effect on air pollution?

He replied : “By removing the barrier of parked vehicles polluted air will circulate more widely and impact on cyclists

and pedestrians. That is the plume in the canyon.”

With one lane of traffic less we asked Mr Yellowlees if there would not in fact be less pollution in the area. He replied : “Well if as the optimists believe there will be less pollution then there is nothing to worry about and nothing to hide and therefor all the more reason why studies should be independent and seen to be so.”

George Rendall believes the loss of parking will diminish the trade of the shopkeepers in Roseburn Terrace as people will not be able to park and so they won't shop. He believes that 50% of the parking is being removed.

Mr Yellowlees is optimistic that the council will engage further with them. He said : “I think there will now be some contact between the expert John Lamb and the council – either by email or in a meeting.”