

Council delay decision on East Craigs LTN for two weeks

Although a considerable time was spent discussing the proposed introduction of the East Craigs Low Traffic Neighbourhood this morning, and a decision was taken by the committee to put it in place, the final decision will now rest with the full council who meet in two weeks' time.

A last minute point of order raised by Conservative transport spokesperson, Cllr Susan Webber, means that the final say will take place at the full council meeting scheduled for 15 October 2020.

Although the committee decided to proceed with the scheme – along with plans for two others in Corstorphine South and Leith – by 7 votes to 4, a procedural delay will now follow. The political make up of the committee is largely the same as the entire council so it is likely to be approved in two weeks' time, unless anything new arises before then.

The LTN proposals set out ways to introduce road closures by means of modal filters (things like planters such as those used on Waverley Bridge), reduce the amount of traffic in the area, making walking, wheeling and cycling safer in the area. There were [four written deputations](#) before councillors today

most of which objected to the plans, saying that the area is not prone to rat running traffic or indeed too much traffic, and that these plans were simply not needed.

Cllr Scott Arthur commented on the fact that these plans are being brought in under Covid-19 funding measures and asked what the Covid related problem is that the council is trying to fix. Gavin Barwell one of the council officers said that the council is mindful of the impact of future unlocking of restrictions on the Gyle area which is a major employment area. If people return to offices, then traffic is expected to increase.

The council officers confirmed that the plans will be temporary, that there is plenty of room for tweaking any measures which do not go well – the so called Try and Modify approach. But the Convener, Cllr Lesley Macinnes admitted that it will be necessary to introduce a line of communication with the community in the months ahead. She also said that she has received a lot of letters supporting the LTN and that some people ask the council to go even further. But she confirmed that there is a clear commitment to monitor and change the arrangements if required, and she envisaged a review at the next Transport & Environment Committee on 12 November. She also reminded all members of the committee that all parties except one had agreed to this approach at a meeting of the Policy and Sustainability Committee, including the proposal to introduce an LTN in East Craigs, at the meeting of the committee on 14 May 2020.

Kevin Lang the Liberal Democrat councillor for the Almond Ward said: “This is a sorry mess. I have never seen such a level of frustration and resentment as there is over this scheme.” He also commented that the way the council has behaved is both dismissive and condescending.

Green councillor Gavin Corbett regretted that the atmosphere in this area is so charged and he is aware of people who are

scared to speak out in support of the scheme. He also said that such measures almost always bring benefits and he looks forward to many more LTNs in the city.

Cllr Iain Whyte the Conservative Group leader said that the issue was whether the council wants to listen to residents or not. He also mentioned there was a last minute legal issue thrown up within the last 24 hours which may yet affect whether this project is within the council's gift or not. He also said: "There is no data to back up the suggestion of more traffic, and the emergency is not real without data to back it up. This report conflates the LTN proposal with the West Edinburgh Link too. Traffic has not resumed to the same levels as they were previously, and residents feel it is a quiet neighbourhood already."

The proposals for Featherhall have been trialled already and all Ward councillors are supportive of the measures.

The news that the council approved the East Craigs scheme has not been met with universal approval.

Kenny Wright Chair of Drum Brae Community Council (DBCC) told us: "I was unsurprised. It went as I expected given the numbers game. DBCC would still maintain that this current proposal (which most people would agree may have had many positive merits) was an unnecessary, untenable, damaging and unacceptable approach to our communities.

"However it apparently doesn't matter if the legality of the process has not been confirmed, it doesn't seem to matter in the numbers of concerns raised and it also apparently doesn't seem to matter that the necessary disability requirement is to hand.

"The City of Edinburgh Council are currently working on these and they can be added or dealt with later, we are told. So the result is that The City of Edinburgh Council will move on without them, by utilising the Covid-19 pandemic to

provide rationale for this unseemly haste in application of contentious proposals, and in the manner they always wanted anyway.

“It is also just as clear that The City of Edinburgh Council has not changed one iota. In watching this committee today it is so very clear that they play the political party before the resident game and party politics being the priority wins again.

“The result is that we now see them bulldozing these proposals through regardless, without actually listening or as it seems even caring if they take the communities with them on the journey. It will no doubt lead to the loss of even more valuable and hardworking community activists who can't see the point in carrying on. We've lost many in Edinburgh recently which is why our Community Councils are having difficulties. They give up when the Council machine continues to ignore their input.”



Cllr Lesley Macinnes Transport Convener At the public meeting in Gyle Park 28 August 2020 ©2020 The Edinburgh Reporter
Transport and Environment Convener Councillor Lesley Macinnes said: “We are disappointed that the decision on introducing a Low Traffic Neighbourhood in East Craigs under Spaces for People has been deferred to full Council, despite full scrutiny, transparency and a decision in favour at the Transport and Environment Committee. Our officers have worked hard to address the community's concerns in the updated proposals, which would still deliver a safer environment for walking, cycling and wheeling.

“It's important to stress that these are temporary measures, meaning we can tweak and improve upon layouts where necessary. However, these proposals do build upon research and feedback received from the community as part of the West Edinburgh Link project, which demonstrate the need to address rat-running in

the area.”

Transport and Environment Vice Convener Councillor Karen Doran said: “Our proposals for East Craigs are for emergency measures to help people travel safely by foot, bike or wheelchair while maintaining physical distancing. Unfortunately, this postponement will only delay the benefits that this scheme would bring to the area.”

Green councillor Claire Miller said: “I supported temporary proposals to reduce rat-running and other traffic pressures in both East Craigs and other neighbourhoods in the city. We have been through a unique six months and we are still in a very unusual time and, briefly, in the spring, we glimpsed what city streets with reduced traffic could be like. But traffic speeds and volumes are starting to rise again, and will rise still further. Without bold steps to reduce pressures, there is a risk we will lose all those people who have found the confidence and pleasure in walking, wheeling and cycling short journeys.

“Like everyone else I’m desperate to see Edinburgh get back to normal. But it needs to be a new normal.”