

# **SOS Cockburn Street – a local campaign**

**Anyone watching Twitter and this particularly local campaign will know how much work has gone into keeping the social media feed alive with photos and videos of heavy goods vehicles and cars travelling up and down the pedestrianised street, parking and crossing over the pavements.**

The pedestrianisation has not been a success as vehicles still access the street, and the campaigners say that the temporary dining structures introduced during Covid have made matters much worse.

The council responded by saying they will have a traffic warden attend the street regularly, but some of the traffic has continued to use the street for deliveries right in front of the enforcement officer. Businesses are not supposed to accept deliveries until after 6.30am but some suppliers have been seen delivering before then in an effort to get round the rules.

Cockburn Street is one way south to north and as a result of the bollards at the City Chambers, traffic should be kept out for most of the day. We spoke to the group trying to make their street safer and cleaner.



Parking on Cockburn Street PHOTO ©2022 The Edinburgh Reporter

## Who are you?

We are a group of Cockburn Street residents (mainly) and businesses.

## What do you hope to achieve?

We want Cockburn Street returned to a street worthy of World Heritage status. When Covid arrived, the street was “pedestrianised” apart from a small window (6.30am-10.30am) to allow for deliveries to local businesses. Residents who had paid for a parking permit lost the ability to park, and the disabled spaces disappeared, but the pedestrianisation made up for the inconvenience.

Then the Council allowed ugly huts to be built – seven in all – and all without planning consent. This was a Covid measure to allow businesses to trade and maintain social distancing.

They were also allowed to set up pavement cafes. These sheds and cafés created bottlenecks on the pavement and actually made social distancing impossible for pedestrians, and we were now unable to step into the road because of the sheds. And the traffic, which is allowed in during pedestrian hours and parks on the pavement so as not to clog the road (as the sheds occupy one carriageway).

Most recently followers brought to our attention that planning, licensing and other Council rules are being flouted. The Council website is not user-friendly so it is hard to understand what the status is for various applications, but it would appear that there are no consents in place for the tables and chairs in Cockburn Street (and, of course, planning consent has already been denied for the sheds).

So it would appear either that the Council website is incorrect, or that these businesses are operating many more covers without any consent. Furthermore, many are using barriers (as required) to define their seating areas but these have advertising banners (which is in contravention of the Council rules). All advertising is for alcohol. Some businesses opposite the City Chambers are doing this too. Clearly no one cares about enforcement.

## **Why is this important?**

The sheds attract vermin and night time revellers who keep residents awake. They have created a pavement parking problem, which is a safety issue and damages pavements too. We love how the street used to look, but these unsightly huts have ruined a once beautiful street. Most are not even in use, and while all have been denied planning consent, the Council has no plans to take enforcement action. This street is a public space and the Council has given it away free of charge to private business – and lost parking revenue that would have been spent on vital public services. Bins have been left

unemptied and seagulls have started to get aggressive. The stress is a mess and it breaks our hearts.

## What form does your campaign have?

We are just a group of people who love the street, who have coalesced around this Twitter account and share photos and concerns. We support each other in trying to get things improved for the greater good.

## How can people reading this article help?

Please follow us on Twitter, write to those in power, take photos of the street and record your concerns on social media (and tag us please, and the relevant councillors). This is the only way we can bring about change.

Follow the campaign on Twitter [@sos\\_street](https://twitter.com/sos_street)

