

Council votes to retain Manse Road bus gate

Edinburgh's councillors have voted to retain a bus gate set up as part of Corstorphine Connections, the measures to reduce through traffic in the area.

A camera installed to catch drivers using Manse Road at peak times, which has been vandalised twice since it was installed earlier this year, will remain in place for the rest of the scheme's 18-month trial.

A Liberal Democrat motion was tabled at the Transport Committee calling for its removal, but it was rejected after being put to the vote.

The meeting heard from residents who are supportive of the "divisive" Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN) and also those against – with both sides urging each other to tone down the rhetoric.

Local councillor Euan Davidson, who brought the motion, said afterwards the views of the community were "being ignored once again".

Cllr Kayleigh O'Neill said it would be "premature" to get rid of the bus gate before the end of the trial.

The camera went live in May, only allowing buses, taxis and cycles to turn onto St John's Road Monday to Friday 8am to 10am and 2.45pm to 6.30pm and issuing £60 fines to any drivers who break the rules, reduced to £30 if paid in two weeks.

Fines from the bus gate camera raised more than £100,000 in the first two months of operation. Vandals first cut the camera down and, once reinstated, the camera's wire was cut, causing thousands of pounds of damage. The council then covered the pole with 'anti-climb paint' as it was turned on again last month, and installed a separate CCTV camera to watch the bus gate.

Cllr Davidson's motion "unequivocally" condemned the "small minority" who had caused the damage and said the amount raised from fines suggested there was "significant confusion amongst the local community regarding the times of operation of the bus gate".



David Lowe speaking at a meeting held in St Margaret's Park in June 2023. © 2023 Martin McAdam

David Lowe, from local anti-LTN group Accessible Corstorphine for Everyone (ACE) told councillors there was a "mountain of evidence" which showed the bus gate and the wider project had "failed to meet their own objectives".

He said: "The LTN is causing serious disruption and lacks local consent. Anecdotes claiming some local support are not backed up by evidence."

He said data gathered by the council showed residents "on the edge of the LTN" have seen a far greater increase in traffic than those within the zone.

He added: "Traffic from Manse Road has simply moved to neighbouring roads and the total volume is higher."

Mr Lowe said any benefits delivered to "30 or so households" on Manse Road "come at the price of making life worse for a far greater number of people".



Chris Young PHOTO ©2023 The Edinburgh Reporter
Speaking in favour of the scheme, Chris Young from Low Traffic Corstorphine said the trial data so far was "inconclusive".

He said: "Conclusions are being made on data that isn't conclusive which makes no sense. The trial needs to run its course for the full 18 months with the Manse Road bus gate in

place.

He added: "Development in west Edinburgh means existing infrastructure is not sustainable going forward and community engagement and consultation shows that there is demand for change.

"We believe that this motion puts the voices of those who wish to prioritise motorised vehicles above and beyond all other modes of transport and our health and well-being of the wider community by pushing for the removal of this key element of the project."

A written deputation in supporting of keeping the bus gate was submitted by Corstorphine Primary School's parent council but was withdrawn at the last minute, which Mr Young said highlighted "just how divisive this has become".

He added: "The overwhelming anger on local social media means that people want to support vocally won't because they're intimidated by the rhetoric and the aggressive (sic) – and the fact we've had now three instances, more than that, of direct vandalism in Manse Road. That is intimidation."



12/09/2023 Picture Alan Simpson A replacement bus gate camera was vandalised for a second time on Manse Road Corstorphine. The first time the pole was cut down in July

2023. In September the cables were cut.



Jackie Connor. © 2023 Martin McAdam

But ACE member Jackie Connor said those who support the LTN are “just as guilty as everyone else” adding that “vile abuse on social media” has also been directed to opponents of the measures.

Councillors voted 7-4 in favour of the bus gate camera remaining in place, with Lib Dem and Conservative members outvoted by councillors from the Labour, SNP and Green groups.

Cllr Davidson said after the meeting: “We are disappointed that the views of the community are being ignored once again. We think that the bus gate should be removed.”

Fellow Lib Dem ward councillor Alan Beal added: “I think that the whole process of the LTN is flawed – we still don’t have suitable data to base an objective decision on, and it is very frustrating that despite being elected to represent the people of Corstorphine, I cannot represent these views to change the direction or scope of the LTN.”

Cllr O'Neill said: "Restricting car access is often controversial with a small and highly vocal minority. However, in any scheme designed to deliver safer and more pleasant streets it's important to listen to all those impacted, and not just those who shout loudest. People should also avoid speaking over disabled residents and assuming that we all need cars when actually many studies show that active travel and car reduction schemes massively improve accessibility and well-being.

"It's essential that the council properly evaluates these projects, and not simply rush to judgement on incomplete data. We certainly need to analyse the evidence and evaluate whether the bus gate has been effective, but the time to do that is towards the end of the process, not at the start. Removing the bus gate at this stage would have been premature."

by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter



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Corstorphine. The first time the pole was cut down in July 2023. This time the cables were cut.