

# **Cole Hamilton raises South Queensferry issue in parliament**

**Alex Cole- Hamilton MSP for Edinburgh West kept his promise on Thursday to raise the issue discussed at length at a public meeting on Wednesday in parliament with the First Minister.**

**The people who turned up at the public meeting all called for a solution to the anti social behaviour which has been going on in the town for years.**

It was standing room only in a hall set for 20 – and the heating was on full blast. Such was the interest however that nobody moved during the two hours it lasted.

The issue they had come to discuss is the so-called “boy racers” who continue to unnerve locals by using Newhalls Road in the town as a racetrack. The situation there has become worse, this year in particular. But, as the audience heard during the evening, the problem is not confined to one road. The illegally altered cars backfire their way from Winchburgh through Kirkliston to South Queensferry and back again. The

meeting heard that some of those who drive their cars to join in live in South Queensferry.

The stories which locals told had a similar theme – sleepless nights, fear of going out when these drivers congregate, the mess left behind and the danger which it causes to other road users. Some sleep with ear plugs in, while others count themselves lucky to have triple glazing which reduces the noise from car horns and backfiring exhausts. One woman is said to sleep in the bath as her bedroom at the front of the house is just too noisy.

The local hotel, the Hawes Inn, has lost customers over the noise and commotion outside its front door.

Local SNP councillor, Norrie Work, said that what he was “hearing is that road traffic offences are being committed” as he called for the speed bumps and for more police action. The Chief Inspector in attendance at the meeting took notes. Cllr Work also said that residents at Scotstoun have been waiting for longer for speed bumps on their streets to slow traffic.

A member of the audience called for the police station to be reopened which would at least they felt give them hope of some kind of quick and effective response. The Chief Inspector said it is not the nature of policing to have officers in a station waiting to attend to calls within a mile.

One woman said: “We shouldn’t have to come here and beg for something to happen

“I’m expecting a response to deal with these things in our area.”

## **First Minister’s Questions on**

# Thursday

Local MSP, Alex Cole Hamilton, was one of four Liberal Democrat politicians who attended the meeting which he convened and then chaired. He raised the matter in Holyrood on Thursday as he had promised to his constituents. He took advantage of his single question to First Minister, John Swinney, demanding a national task force to address the issue which is said to happen all over the country.

Mr Cole-Hamilton said in parliament: "Presiding Officer, last night I chaired a packed town hall meeting in South Queensferry.

"For four years, my constituents have had their quality of life destroyed by hundreds of high performance, illegally modified cars and motorbikes racing around their beautiful town.

"The drivers of these vehicles will abuse and intimidate anyone who approaches them where they gather, in the car park at the foot of the iconic Forth Bridge. Pets have been killed, hotels have lost trade, nobody is getting any sleep.

"Residents like pensioner Andy Scott are really worried about road safety.

"In fact, just as our meeting was concluding, there was a [collision](#) right outside our venue with a motorcyclist rushed to hospital. Police are appealing for information about that.

"The racing and antisocial behaviour is happening in Inverness, parts of Glasgow, Crail, many other areas.

"Will the First Minister meet with me and agree to establish a national taskforce to establish and examine what more can be done to address this criminal behaviour that is blighting so many lives?"

The First Minister replied: "First, I am very sorry to hear of the circumstances in South Queensferry. It is a beautiful part of our country and an iconic location, and I am sorry that members of the public are experiencing what they are experiencing.

"The Government engages substantively on the question of road safety. The Cabinet Secretary for Transport has been briefing Cabinet on her concerns about road fatalities, which are a very serious and current problem, so that issue is very much on the Cabinet's agenda. I am very happy to have discussions with Mr Cole-Hamilton on the subject and to determine what further action can be taken.

"The incident last night that Alex Cole-Hamilton raised will have involved police interaction, and I am sure that the police will have been involved in other instances of that kind. I am happy to host discussions to see what more can be done to address the situation.

"There may be some legislative issues that may be worth considering. I fear that some of those will not be within our areas of responsibility because they are road traffic issues, but I am happy to explore all possibilities."



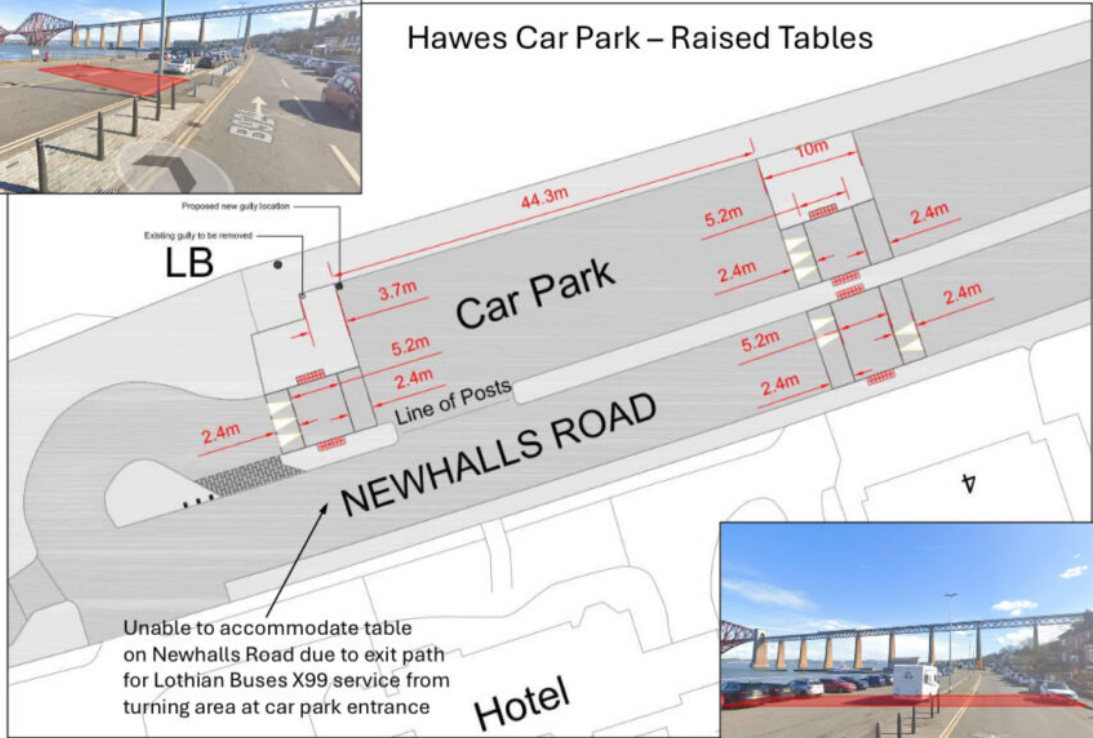
## **SOLUTIONS**

**The only practical immediate solution on the table on Wednesday was building speed bumps or raised tables in the car park at Newhalls Road.**

The drawing below prepared by Edinburgh council officers (who attended the meeting), shows it is not possible to add traffic calming to Newhalls Road as it would obstruct the X99 bus service. But speed bumps in the car park will be welcomed by local residents living nearby.



Hawes Car Park – Raised Tables



# Crash



After the two hour long public meeting about anti social behaviour involving cars and motorbikes in Newhalls Road, (but which also discussed the same behaviour all over the town), those attending emerged onto Kirkliston Road where a police car was blocking the road with its lights flashing. The motorcyclist was taken to the Royal Infirmary Edinburgh with serious injuries. Police are appealing for information. The town was awash with traffic police – exactly what locals had been inside the community centre calling for, while also cautioning that someone will get hurt or worse if police take no effective action.

## **POLICE**

Chief Inspector Trisha Clark attended the meeting to advise what had been done (traffic police, police patrols and police officers using drones) and assured the audience that reports of anti social behaviour are taken seriously by Police

Scotland. She urged everyone to either phone in reports to 101 or use the police website. But members of the audience said they recognised that the police are stretched – and although there have been traffic police in the area previously there can be no assurance of consistent attention in the royal burgh.

Chief Inspector Clark admitted that part of the issue is that the police are not always seen.

She said: “Our officers may be targetting the Hawes and then not dealing with issues in Scotstoun. But our officers will always respond where there is a need for them to attend.” She also highlighted that there are two community police officers who are “hugely invested” in the area and dealing with the problems. And in answer to a question from the floor, she confirmed that the drivers of these cars have been arrested and charged for certain offences, driving and drug related. But that the cars may have passed an MOT before being modified afterwards for the exhausts to backfire or splutter loudly.

One lady said she thought there should be a zero tolerance approach to speeding – and that was something the police could be tasked with.

A council officer from the transport team, Gavin Brown, also confirmed that he can arrange for more CCTV cameras which would collect evidence for the police to act upon. But he explained that speed cameras are for the police to install. He also said that the council had collaborated with the police to provide evidence for a number of cases.

Christine Jardine MP for Edinburgh West said: “I have found it depressing. because for the entire seven years that I’ve been the MP people have been coming to me with this problem and it’s been getting worse.

”It falls into two categories – the first is to solve the problem here on the ground to stop people racing through the



town, and the steps that Police Scotland can take and that the council are trying to take as well to stop it now.”

Ms Jardine said this problem is not unique to Scotland and suggested it will need to be dealt with on a national level. She also said that The Scottish Government must give Police Scotland more funding to allow them to deal with matters like this.

Cllr Louise Young recounted her own experience of living in Kirkliston where she does not allow her children to cross the road after 5pm unaccompanied. She also said that on a visit to the Hawes Brae area when she advised the police she was going there she was advised to remain in her car.

The local councillor Lewis Younie said to The Edinburgh Reporter that he was “pleased with the multi agency response”, but one member of the audience said they are calling for more action and less talk.

