

Fund to fight Low Traffic Scheme in court reaches target in one day

Opponents to an Edinburgh low traffic scheme have raised £5,000 in just 24 hours as they prepare to mount a legal challenge against the council.

It comes after transport officials backed making Corstorphine's low traffic neighbourhood (LTN) permanent, following an 18-month trial which has proved controversial in the community.

Councillors had been expected to make a final decision at the traffic regulation orders sub-committee on Tuesday, September 24. However it has now emerged that report was pulled just hours before the meeting over concerns objections "weren't clearly being articulated in the report," according to transport convener Stephen Jenkinson.

Ahead of the meeting Accessible Corstorphine for Everyone (ACE) has launched a crowd funder to continue their fight against the measures introduced, which include traffic restrictions to stop drivers taking short cuts through residential streets.

After being set up last week a fundraising target of £5,000 was reached in one day, and donations are continuing to be collected.

ACE said the money will go toward obtaining legal expertise on

the LTN and whether a court challenge against the local authority could be successful. Anything raised above the target “will be used either for further legal action/advice or donated to Corstorphine Community Centre,” it said.

Soon after the pilot commenced in June last year anti-LTN campaigners told the Local Democracy Reporting Service they were looking at “going down a legal route to see if the council has done this illegally and if there’s a legal fight to be had”.

The plan is not without precedent in the city. In 2021 East Craigs locals raised thousands to fund research and legal advice, which found use of certain traffic orders for the area’s LTN would be unlawful, and the scheme was scrapped.

Having since lost a further three costly judicial reviews, which challenged the local authority’s regulation of strip clubs and short-term lets, council chiefs will be looking to avoid any more legal battles that could undermine their authority or drain resources.

As well as shutting three roads to through traffic, the trial in Corstorphine – which sought to address long-running concerns over the level of non-residential traffic passing through the area – has introduced wider pavements, bollards, new crossings, and temporary traffic restrictions around schools at drop off and pick up times.

The most contested feature has been a ‘bus gate’ at the end of Manse Road, which bans general traffic from turning onto St John’s Road at peak times. A camera set up to watch the junction and fine rule-breakers has been cut down three times.

Monitoring of the LTN showed that during operational hours of the bus gate the volume of traffic on Manse Road fell by 956 vehicles, while an increase of 1,875 vehicles was recorded in the whole project area.

Over the 18-months overall traffic increased across the LTN and its boundary roads by 6.5 per cent – which is similar to the average rise in car journeys in the whole of western Edinburgh over the same period – but the streets around Corstorphine Primary saw a 9.2 per cent decrease.

Critics have argued the results demonstrate the scheme has not been a success and that, with 556 people objecting to it out of a total 776 who responded to consultations, it lacks local support and should now be scrapped.

However the council suggested more were in favour than against, after market research indicated that “50 per cent of residents support the project and 24 per cent oppose”.

It also said the overall increase in traffic in the area “are beyond what could reasonably be attributed solely to traffic rerouteing due to the traffic management measures introduced by the project”.

Pupils walking, wheeling or cycling to school rose in the LTN by three per cent, it added, while those being driven fell by seven per cent. “It appears the that the traffic reduction measures around Corstorphine Primary School have been most effective in assisting cycling and scooting whilst potentially also encouraging more park and stride and less driving,” a report stated.

Officials have recommended making the measures permanent but reducing operational hours of the bus gate to align with the start and end of school days.

The council has not yet said when the sub-committee responsible for deciding the future of the scheme will be rescheduled for.

Commenting on the move to pull the report at the eleventh hour, Cllr Jenkinson said: “I had a concern that all objections weren’t clearly being articulated in the report

being considered by the sub committee on Tuesday and therefore I agreed with officers that this report should be pulled.

“This is obviously very disappointing for everyone with an interest in this project. I won’t apologise for setting a high bar for officer reports and I expect a new report to be presented at the very next meeting of the sub committee.”

By Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter