

# **Low Traffic Neighbourhood support based on 'skewed data' campaigners say**

**Edinburgh Council has been accused of using "skewed" data to suggest more people support than oppose a controversial Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN).**

Corstorphine locals were approached at random in the street and asked their views on the measures introduced, which include road closures and widened pavements.

The latest survey – the third carried out externally by a market research company since the £800k trial LTN was rolled out in the area last year – collected responses from 311 residents and 330 shops and business users, with the results showing that "50% of residents support the project, and 24% oppose it".

Campaigners calling for the scheme to be scrapped said the sample used was unreliable as some of those impacted by the changes, such as housebound residents and carers, were not asked for feedback.

The LTN has seen three roads shut to through traffic in a bid to stop drivers taking short-cuts through residential streets, as well as footway and crossing improvements and traffic restrictions around primary schools at drop off and pick up times.

However this has sparked “division, pain and anger within the community,” councillors were told ahead of a meeting later this month where they will decide if it should be made permanent.

A ‘bus gate’ only allowing buses and taxis to enter St John’s Road from Manse Road at peak times has proved so controversial that a camera set up at the spot to fine drivers who break the rules has been repeatedly cut down by vandals.

Monitoring has showed the measures resulted in a 9.2 per cent fall in traffic on streets around Corstorphine Primary School – a key aim of the LTN.

But critics say an overall 6.5 per cent increase in traffic in the neighbourhood – slightly above the average rise in the whole of western Edinburgh – shows the project has failed.

Local resident Peter Roberts, from the Accessible Corstorphine for Everyone (ACE) group, said it was “not working, not wanted and not democratic” at the transport committee on Thursday, September 12.

He said the “street clutter” introduced including signs and bollards “blights Corstorphine” and some had tripped over them.

“The LTN has not made Corstorphine safer, it has made it more dangerous and less accessible.”

Mr Roberts said the 68 per cent reduction in traffic using Manse Road recorded during hours when the bus gate was operational “has been more than offset by increases on nearby streets”.

Accusing the council of “sampling bias” when presenting the survey results, he added: “Some councillors and officials are claiming support from a survey of pedestrians only, no motorists, housebound residents, businesses, carers

etcetera were allowed to take part.”

Corstorphine councillor Euan Davidson said: “How could that market research reach the housebound population in our community?

“It was entirely done speaking to pedestrians on the street. It excluded many elderly people, disabled people and it didn’t talk to the carers working in our community.”

While Lib Dem group leader Kevin Lang said there was “significant concerns about how that market research was carried out and whether that led to a skewed response”.

Project manager Martin Lings responded saying between 70 and 80 per cent of those surveyed also drove a car and between 80 and 90 per cent used public transport, while interviewers also spoke to “people who identified as disabled or having serious health conditions”.

And a report stated: “In order to ensure a good spread of residents from Corstorphine within the sample, quotas were set on interviewing based on gender and age.”

In a letter to the committee pro LTN group Low Traffic Corstorphine said the research showed the measures had made a “positive impact,” and that there was “strong community support” for them.

It said: “These results demonstrate that the scheme is successfully achieving its objectives of creating a safer and more comfortable environment for active travel and community engagement in a residential area.

“We urge you to continue and expand this successful scheme, which is improving safety, health and quality of life in our neighbourhood while contributing to Edinburgh’s and Scotland’s broader sustainable transport goals.”

Kirsten Olverman from Neilsons Solicitors and Estate Agents,

which has its head office on St John's Road said the low traffic neighbourhood meant a journey that previously took 10 minutes "is increasingly likely to be twice that time when trying to avoid the LTN or the bus gate".

Warwick Campbell, who lives in the LTN at Oswald Terrace, said it had "trapped us and forced thousands of residents to have only one option to leave the area".

He said: "We are essentially trapped. Think of pensioners who cannot walk or cycle, think of disabled people who cannot walk or cycle.

"The LTN has already cost £800k and people don't even want it. It has caused nothing but division, pain and anger within the community."

Mr Roberts, who has lived in the area for 32 years, told councillors his group "stand ready to be constructive, if you are prepared to take a step back and acknowledge things haven't worked".

He said: "We don't want to live in a terribly traffic congested area either, heavens no, but you've got to listen to local people."

The council's traffic regulation orders sub-committee will meet on September 24 to vote on whether the LTN should be made permanent.

By Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter