

Leith low traffic neighbourhood cuts traffic but walking and cycling data 'mixed'

Leith's low traffic neighbourhood (LTN) has been hailed as a "massive success" after the council released findings on its first six months in operation, but it has been urged to provide more "comprehensive" data.

The scheme saw a "a reduction in traffic since pre-pandemic levels and also a reduction in traffic levels post implementation of the changes made in 2023," the council said, with vehicle numbers down between 65% and 88% on roads closed to through traffic.

Monitoring also showed slight increases in traffic turning into and out of four out of five junctions on the boundary of the LTN, and walking and cycling decreasing in some areas.

Traffic counts were carried out a week prior to the introduction of the changes in October 2023 and repeated in June 2024.

Green councillor for Leith Chas Booth, a vocal supporter of the changes, said it was "absolutely astonishing the success in driving down traffic levels on the vast majority of roads" within the LTN.

However he admitted the data on walking and cycling was “much more mixed”.

Baltic Street, the boundary road monitored as part of the post-six-month data collection, saw a 17.3% decrease in vehicles. The council said an 18.7% increase on Duncan Place was due to Wellington Place being closed to through traffic.

“The total of two-way traffic on Duncan Place and Wellington Place together has seen a drop in traffic of just under 14% suggesting that not all traffic previously using Wellington Place has diverted via Duncan Place,” the council said.

The Conservatives said the findings ‘masked’ an ‘overall increase of 3.8% traffic turning into and out of those boundary roads at those junctions and does so by using total junction data rather than just the boundary routes’.

Officials said the data for turnings at junctions was only at peak times whereas data for average weekday traffic flow was measured over 24 hours. They added some 24 hour counts on boundary roads would be included in the 12-month report.”

Conservative group leader Iain Whyte said the data was “not comprehensive”.

He said: “I think we need to be absolutely clear with data that we bring to committee and full impacts that data is having.

“The data we’ve been given about changes in traffic from automatic traffic counts surveys, we’ve heard it’s only in one spot around the boundary of this particular LTN.

“We’ve been told some other things about traffic through junctions increasing or decreasing but it’s not really telling us anything about the direct impact on the specific boundary roads, which if you look in the data there from the counts shows some increases, some of them which are quite a bit above

the 9.5% reduction in one place and a 5% increase in another.”

Councillor Booth accused the Tory amendment of being “selective” in its use of data and said it was “ironic” they had been “critical of officers” for doing the same.

Interim director of place Gareth Barwell said: “I do think it’s important that there are more modern data sets we can use than traditional traffic counts and I think understanding the city-wide impact of these schemes and the regional impact is something we give members in this committee. It helps make decision-making a bit clearer.”

Commenting after, Councillor Booth said: “I await with interest the publication of the 12-month monitoring report, but if it shows the same results, then it would appear the LTN has been a massive success at cutting traffic. I will be urging the council to make the scheme permanent.

“The figures on walking and cycling within the scheme boundary are much more mixed, with some streets showing increases but others unfortunately showing a decrease, so I’ll be exploring what more the council can do to rectify this. In particular I hope the council will look at wider footways, more greenspace, and completing the missing link in the cycle network from Sandport Bridge to Leith Links in an effort to increase walking, wheeling and cycling throughout the area.”

By Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter