

Five things you need to know today

Today the lights on the Christmas tree on the Mound will be officially switched on, we have F1's Gunther Steiner in town, there is a reminder to have your say on a planning application at Western Harbour Ponds and there will be protests this morning ahead of the Transport and Environment Committee at the City Chambers, and notice of a protest cycle ride later in the month.

We drew attention to this [council committee meeting](#) on Friday but make no apologies for doing so again today. The Transport and Environment Committee has a huge remit under Convener, Cllr Stephen

Jenkinson.

A report is to be considered which results directly from the fatality in the Cowgate at the beginning of the month. Cllr Joanna Mowat raised an emergency motion at the recent full council meeting asking for an update from council officers.

Some traffic has already been stopped between 10pm and 5am on Cowgate. This report recommends taking further steps to reduce or halt traffic there – but the [issue was already considered earlier in the year](#) with plans for an experimental traffic ban in 2024 – and nothing has been done due to lack of funding.

It is this dither and delay which the three written deputations draw to the committee's attention and demand some action.

A deputations is a way of having your say to council committees and these three groups have written to the committee – we include their words in full.

When councillors repeatedly delay road safety improvements with amendments and consultations, whose interests are they serving?

Edinburgh Critical Mass

Edinburgh Critical Mass, a cycling group that holds a monthly mass cycle through Edinburgh, calling for safer infrastructure and space for those on bikes, will hold a peaceful protest outside the City Chambers on Monday morning.

They are asking that councillors on the Transport and Environment Committee “dial down the rhetoric, support the facts and make Edinburgh safer”.

“In a statement Critical Mass said: ““Nine people have already been killed on Scotland’s roads in November alone – six of those were pedestrians. Delays cost lives.

“One fatality could have been avoided if a proposed bus gate on the Cowgate had been implemented. Councillors discussed this proposal at the February Transport and Environment Committee, as part of a wider Our Future Streets plan for Edinburgh. When councillors repeatedly delay road safety improvements with amendments and consultations, whose interests are they serving? Not the majority of residents who elected them, the person going to the shops, the parent walking their child to school or people having a night out.

“Low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs), bus gates and modal filters make everyone 50% safer, whether they walk, cycle or drive. That’s not controversial. Keeping access for cars and adding access for people walking and cycling, by creating safer streets, is not controversial. That bus gates, LTNs and modal filters are low cost and effective is not controversial. This is a win-win-win for Edinburgh residents but councillors aren’t showing leadership.

“People are fed up with culture wars, they want to be safer, they want their loved ones to be safer. So we are taking our protest to the TEC, who are meeting today, to hold them to account and say “Saving lives is not controversial”. These are our streets and Edinburgh’s people deserve the best in road safety design.”

The process

for building the City Centre West East Link route started in 2014, and it is still not finished.

Other major active travel projects, such as Meadows-George Street and Meadows-Canal, are likely to have similar (or longer) timescales.

SPOKES

SPOKES Planning Group have lodged a written deputation which states:

We note that the statistics referred to in the Business bulletin item "Annual update on car kilometres" show that, unless something radically changes, it is now incredibly unlikely that the council will meet the 30% reduction by 2030 target. So it must now be asked how councillors plan to turn this around. What measures to reduce private vehicle use and enable more journeys to be made using sustainable modes of transport? We believe that these figures clearly make the case for increased levels of active travel investment, and much faster implementation of projects in the pipeline. The process for building the City Centre West East Link route started in 2014, and it is still not finished. Other major active travel projects, such as Meadows-George Street and Meadows-Canal, are likely to have similar (or longer) timescales. Councillors need to find ways to fix this. There are also cheaper and quicker interventions which are known to reduce car usage and enable people to walk, wheel and cycle more. These include Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, which should be rolled out citywide. However, we are not aware of any city in the world that has achieved anything close to a 30% reduction in car-kilometres without introducing strong demand management policies, such as congestion pricing or workplace parking levies. We believe the figures referred to in the Business Bulletin make a strong case for revisiting the decision to reject a workplace parking levy. We also believe it is important that the council increasingly

reallocates road space from private motor vehicles to sustainable modes of transport. This should be done as a matter of course in all resurfacing projects, with particular importance at junctions. Doing so is necessary to provide the space needed to create a continuous and coherent network of safe cycling routes.

Edinburgh's target of reducing car-kilometres driven by 30% by 2030 is ambitious, but achieving it will have multiple major health and economic benefits for people who live in, work in or visit Edinburgh. It is now time to make it happen.

A growing population and rising visitor numbers mean more traffic and busier streets in Edinburgh – but with a legacy of some hopelessly inadequate pedestrian facilities.

Living Streets

Deputation by Living Streets Edinburgh Group

We welcome the motion by Cllr Mowat and the subsequent report to committee following the dreadful incident on the Cowgate on 2 November. We record our condolences to Mr Leneghan's family and friends.

While we don't know the circumstances of this incident and wouldn't wish to speculate on them, we do know that the Cowgate have long been recognised as a dangerous street owing to its unique features and uses. This is why the ban of traffic after 10pm was introduced more than 20 years ago.

The council also commissioned Living Streets to review the street in 2016. A participant in that review described the Cowgate as "the worst street in

Edinburgh for pedestrians”

bit.ly/2covj30.

The report highlighted especially the significant problems of road safety and accessibility due to heavy fast traffic and inadequate pavements as well as recommending a number of practical, small-scale improvements.

Since 2016, there have been some welcome improvements – the introduction of a 20mph speed limit, installation of double yellow lines and the ban on pavement parking.

However, the fundamental problems of the street – too much traffic, inadequate pavements remain.

The carriageway was extensively resurfaced in 2020, but no improvements were made to the footways.

Options to improve safety could include major changes such as making the street one-way to traffic, removing through-traffic (using a “filter”) or banning traffic entirely (with appropriate access arrangements for key services). However it would be essential for such

options to be considered in the context of wider traffic plans (‘Future Streets’) for the city

and the Old Town in particular. It is especially important that traffic isn’t driven onto the

Canongate. Traffic and pedestrian comfort and safety is just as important on the Royal

Mile with its primary school and high footfall, as on the Cowgate.

Another option (recommended in the 2016 report) would be to install chicanes under the

Bridges on the Cowgate. This would reduce the carriageway to a single lane which traffic

would use in alternating directions. It would permit the

pavements to be significantly widened (and the big, inaccessible kerbs removed) and would also slow down traffic and remove its appeal as a through-route.

We welcome Police Scotland's recommendation to bring forward the traffic ban to start earlier than 10.00pm. This would be a quick and cheap way to reduce some risks pedestrian-vehicle conflict. We have also long argued for much more stringent traffic restrictions in key Old Town streets including the Cowgate during the summer festivals when the mix of vehicles and pedestrians is often totally unsuitable.

A growing population and rising visitor numbers mean more traffic and busier streets in Edinburgh – but with a legacy of some hopelessly inadequate pedestrian facilities. We hope that the Council will seize this moment to act quickly to ensure that people can use Cowgate and other Old Town streets safely.

Apart from road safety there is the matter of communal bin hubs which people are now exercised about. (there are detailed deputations presented on this today mainly from Morningside).

[Papers for the meeting and a link to the webcast to enable you to watch it live or as a recording are here.](#)

The members of the committee are:

| | |
|--|------------------|
| Councillor Stephen Jenkinson | Convener |
| Councillor Danny Aston | Committee Member |
| Councillor Chas Booth | Committee Member |
| Councillor Sanne Dijkstra-Downie | Committee Member |
| Councillor Katrina Faccenda | Committee Member |
| Councillor Fiona Glasgow | Committee Member |

| | |
|--|------------------|
| Councillor Euan Hyslop | Committee Member |
| Councillor Kevin Lang | Committee Member |
| Councillor Marie-Clair Munro | Committee Member |
| Councillor Kayleigh O'Neill | Committee Member |
| Councillor Iain Whyte | |

Christmas tree lights to be switched on

Later today just before 6pm the Candlemakers will lead a procession of the Rt Hon Lord Provost, Robert Aldridge, Counsellor Dr. Øystein Lund from the Norwegian Embassy and Honorary Consul General Professor Julian D C Jones from the City Chambers to light the Christmas tree on the mound. The tree, which is gifted by Vestland in Norway to Edinburgh, is a tradition that has taken place since 1947.

The county of Vestland and Scotland are close neighbours across the North Sea with a shared history, interests and values.

Upon the invasion of Norway in 1940, more than 7,000 exiles were based in Scotland as the Norwegian Brigade fought to free the country from Nazi occupation. The gift signifies thanks from the people of Vestland for the help given by the Scottish people during this time.

In 2008 it was decided the tree would be sourced from Scotland, but it remains a cherished gift from Vestland County Council.

On arrival at Assembly Hall Courtyard there will be two Christmas Carols performed by a local choir by lantern light and short speeches from Lord Provost Robert Aldridge and Professor Julian Jones.

A piper will play before and after the lights officially go on at about 6pm.



8/11/2024 Picture Alan Simpson Xmas Tree is being decorated on the Mound in Edinburgh.

Planning matters – Western Harbour Ponds

A planning application has been lodged to build 104 flats on what has become known as Western Harbour Ponds – where nature has taken over the site previously earmarked for development. The site was left empty while the developers regrouped after the 2008 crash.

[The public has until 29 November to have their say here.](#)

If you are looking for guidance on how to comment and what a material consideration is then Save Western Harbour Ponds suggest reading the advice on [Planning Democracy here.](#)

The group – which objects to any development on the land – explains more [here](#) on its website.



Courtesy Save Western Harbour Ponds

Gunther Steiner at Usher Hall

For all you F1 fans there is an event tonight that you may like. Former Haas Formula 1 team principal Guenther Steiner, star of Netflix's smash hit docuseries Drive to Survive will tell his story to a live audience.

Reflecting on his decade in charge of Haas, Guenther will offer an unobstructed view of what really takes place behind the scenes. Through this unique lens, Guenther takes us on the thrilling rollercoaster of life at the heart of elite motor racing.

<https://www.usherhall.co.uk/whats-on/evening-guenther-steiner>



Infrasisters ride again

The next Infrasisters cycle will take place on a dark November night designed to make the point that it must be safer for women to go out at night on their bikes. Meet at Middle Meadow Walk on a bike on 29 November at 7.30pm for a mass bike ride round the city centre. The tradition is to decorate your bike with lights.

The organisers say there is no excuse for unsafe infrastructure and no excuse for women having to choose between unsafe roads and unsafe cycle routes when cycling at night. Send us a photo of your bike if you decide to take part – best to do that on Bluesky over here if you can.

[@edinreporter.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/edinreporter.bsky.social)



29th November 7.30pm

#NO EXCUSE

Middle Meadow Walk

Ride with us during the #16DaysOfActivism
for night-time cycle infrastructure
that's safe and comfortable for women

Our Streets, Our Nights
MASS BIKE RIDE