

Item no 5.26

QUESTION NO 26

By Councillor Mowat for answer by the Convener of the Transport and Environment Committee at a meeting of the Council on 14 December 2017

Question

Has the Convener of the Transport and Economy Committee received the attached dossier on traffic management issues from the Old Town Community Council, and did she agree to meet with them to discuss this dossier, and if so when will this meeting take place?

Answer

The Edinburgh Old Town Community Council

OUR STREETS

How unpleasant they have become – and what to do about it

NOVEMBER 2017

This is a collection of the observations of the Community Council together with some of our now vast collection of photographic evidence.

Please be aware that these do not represent some 'worst cases' or unusual events, these are the things that the residents and workers in the Old Town, along with our millions of visitors have to put up with all of every day.

Although the overall effect is of an unsustainable mess, we have broken this down into specific problem areas to which we proffer our suggestions as to solutions.

Some of those solutions may seem radical to CEC, but they are mostly standard long ago in other world Heritage Cities. But please note our comments on enforcement at the end, as to us it seems a lot could be done at little or no cost by simply robustly enforcing the rules we already have, and perhaps widening the scope of other existing regulations.

- Advertising boards on the footpath
- Rubbish, unemptied bins and waste
- Other clutter, Council and Contractors junk
- Traffic, too much and too many large vehicles
 - City tour buses
 - Tourist coaches
 - Band tour coaches
 - Delivery vehicles
 - Heavy goods vehicles
 - Waste collection vehicles
- Poor State of Repair of our Roads & pavements
- Market Street & Cowgate
- Enforcement
- Conclusion



ADVERTISING BOARDS

In addition to the phalanx of oversize 'A' boards obstructing the pavement, here are some new extreme examples:



Note also non-containerized trade waste -->



This 'building' does not have planning consent.

In any case, is 'Pub Crawl' how the City wishes to promote itself ?



The Community Council consider;

Pavement advertising devices should be banned outright within the WHS. They are also a severe problem in certain peripheral areas, eg. Clark St. where they should also be banned

They cause serious obstruction of the footpath.

They are deliberately placed by businesses for that purpose; to stop passers by. The previous regulations on size, number and location, proved unenforceable.

Pavement advertising is an absolutely unnecessary thing, it is just an 'arms race' Apart for a small number of businesses that are located down closes, who could apply for a permit for a small 'A' board. (60x40cm max.)

RUBBISH.

Generally Edinburgh is a clean city compared to others, we like to keep it that way, when we can...

Sunday morning in July Outside City Chambers -



Payfair Steps (note also abandoned barriers)
"I'm a bin – Nobody cares"



Cowgate – trade waste + fly tipping.

Grassmarket-
Rising bin controller broken and used as a bin.



The Community Council consider;

This seriously degrades the liveability of our City and seriously degrades it as a visitor destination. The Community Council believes that the City Council should direct resources to this issue before it spends money on promoting and advertising what a wonderful City it is to visit.

OTHER CLUTTER

Grassmarket,
contractors rubbish dumped on a
bus top.



South Bridge,
a narrow pavement that is one of the
busiest pedestrian thoroughfares in
the city.

So nice to get your ankle gouged on
the way to work.

George IV Bridge, 50 metres from the 'Royal
Mile' - at the time of this photo this had been
here for over a year.

The Community Council considers;

If anyone else left crap like this laying about they
should be charged for fly tipping.

And if any of these things were on a business
premises, they would constitute a prosecutable
Health & Safety breach.

These things seriously degrade the liveability of
our City and seriously degrade it as a visitor
destination

The Community Council would like
the City Council to clean up it's own act !



TRAFFIC



Without question The City is congested, but it is blind dogma to continue to blame 'the cars' alone. This picture of Candlemaker Row is fairly typical, it shows a lot of pedestrians crowded onto the narrow pavement, one public bus, two huge virtually empty tour buses, two taxis and only two private cars.

Too many cars, possibly too many huge half empty tour buses, definitely.

CITY TOUR BUSES

1. There are far too many of them.
2. They are far too large vehicles. rarely more than half full.
4. They may be 'low emission' but they still emit, and the 'Vintage bus' especially so.

Here on a nice sunny summer Saturday morning, 3 buses in a row, all half empty
The one at the back is not moving, here they sit and wait for ages with engine running blocking the Grassmarket public bus stop.



To get up the 15% gradient on West Bow, as with most HGVs they need to take a run up of at least 35 mph. If they don't they get stuck on the bend, and then have to reverse down the one way street, and out onto the main road (both RTA offences)



Note the second bus, also empty, just behind
Events like this make Victoria St into a logjam several times a day

The Community Council considers;

Edinburgh is a WALKING CITY especially the Old Town, these oversized buses congest our narrow streets and represent a serious degradation of liveability of our City and serious degradation of it as a visitor destination for the very people that these buses are supposed to serve.

They should be BANNED from the old town. (as they are elsewhere in our sister city, Florence)
Visitors who are too infirm to walk, should be transported in much smaller ELECTRIC vehicles.

TOUR COACHES

The situation is much worse, these vehicles

- They are very very large.
- They are designed for Autobahn not City use.
- Driven by temporary or foreign drivers who have little or no regard to our regulations.
- They attempt to use narrow and unsuitable streets, Cockburn St, Victoria St. etc.
- They park selfishly and illegally, usually with their engines running for long periods.



No problem to park with engine running, the wrong way round in a one way street, which is a pedestrian only area as well !

Or maybe just park in the middle of the road in front of the Bow Well

Or maybe just double park in Johnston Terrace. Here blocking access for emergency vehicles)



The Community Council considers;

Obviously a £30 ticket, even if issued is no deterrent whatsoever.

But these coaches are contracted to service particular Hotels or tour operators etc.

Clearly the solution is through them to find a way to more tightly control these vehicles.

Coaches should be banned from the Old Town, unless they apply for a permit to service a particular hotel or venue, with no waiting or parking allowed.

The current £20 for idling is a joke, for large vehicles it should be vastly increased.

BAND TOUR BUSES

This problem occurs mainly at night when there is less congestion of the roads, but also when enforcement becomes non-existent. It only effects a few specific locations but is a serious loss of amenity none the less.



Here in Victoria St we allow overnight camping on the pavement.



Still 4 pm. This one has taken up residence on ten loading spaces (it has a trailer as well) during the hours of restriction. Notice the hazardous open hatch, and the roadie preparing to run power cables across the pavement into the venue.

A serious H&S issue.

This not just the Festival, it happens all year round. Cowgate and Forrest road are also effected

The Community Council considers;

We don't think a £30 fine (even if they paid it) is going to deter these people.

The solution here is very simple:

Obviously venues that allow this sort of thing are not 'fit and proper' and should have their Entertainment Licences restricted.

DELIVERY VEHICLES

The problem is that it is cheaper for delivery companies to use larger vehicles and fewer drivers. Advantageous for them, horrendous for other road users, pedestrians and everyone else.

Here a 26 tonner goes to make one small drop.



Drink is heavier, so perhaps requires a heavier vehicle, but not one three times the length of the loading bay. Meaning it has to double park and block West Bow



In Cockburn St a 26 tonner decides it is better to park on the pavement completely blocking it.

In the wider Nicolson street at 4:30 pm it is perfectly OK for this full size 44 tonne artic. to take up the bus & cycle lane.



It is not just deliveries, tradesmen's vans are a severe problem also. Here these two park all day on the narrow Cowgate pavement somehow without fear of a £30 ticket



The Community Council considers;

The use of such large vehicles for small deliveries is purely and simply for the convenience of the operators. They must be forced to use small, preferably electric vehicles for City centre deliveries, if necessary by re-distribution from peripheral depots. Ban all delivery vehicles over 7.5 tonnes (already a licence class) with exception of drinks deliveries which could apply for 16 tonne vehicles.

HEAVY LORRIES

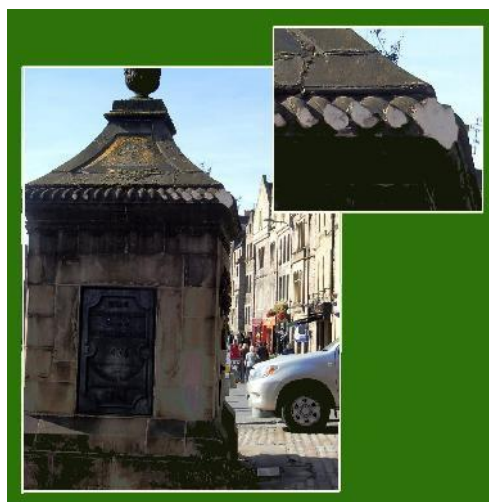
This is the only World Heritage Site in the World that has no restriction on LGV through traffic. The damage to the roads, the kerbs, to the listed buildings and of course to our lungs is totally unacceptable.

Quickest route to take these cables from the docks to west side of town, up the Cowgate of course



44 tonne bulker straight through the Grassmarket – no problem.

Damage to the recently restored Bow Well, 3 metres up, this was certainly caused by a heavy goods vehicle, probably a refuse truck, trying to negotiate West Bow.



The Community Council considers;

Vehicles over a certain weight, say 26 Tonnes gross, should be banned from the whole City Centre, and vehicles over 16 tonnes gross be banned from the Old Town.

Permits could be issued in the rare case of needing to deliver a particularly heavy item within the area. Heavy duty bollards could be deployed to deter HVGs on certain streets.

REFUSE COLLECTION VEHICLES

In addition to multiple private contractors all duplicating the same collection runs, gain the problem is that it is cheaper for refuse companies to use these vast vehicles and fewer drivers. Advantageous for them, abominable for other road users, pedestrians and everyone else.



OK at least these two engage in their bin lorry race during permitted access time in the Grassmarket. (note also the 'A' boards as well as bins obstructing the pavement)

Later in the day this huge bin lorry decides to try and mow down hundreds of pedestrians.

(note also the ancient polluting 'Party Bus' parked up)

(and note also the visible damage to the Bow Well caused by just such a truck)



Here the High St. this one just parks on the pavement while the crew gets their lunch.

(note the much more sensible sized Council bin lorry trying to get down the High Street)

The Community Council considers;

But there is no sense, economic or otherwise, in having many separate operators using these huge vehicles to make one or two collections in every street.

The real culprit was of course privatization of what really should be a public service, and a creative solution may take a while, meanwhile vehicles over 16 tonnes gross should be simply banned.

The Council and some companies manage to collect using these smaller vehicles.

Any proposed restrictions on refuse vehicles, delivery lorries or coaches, will have the operators squealing that it will damage their viability etc. etc. The same invalid argument used to try and perpetuate every antisocial and harmful business practice since time began.

POOR STATE OF THE ROADS & FOOTPATHS

The undeniable extremely poor state of the streets is a shame on the fine City that Edinburgh rightly likes to consider itself. Some streets are easily worse than places in the third world



Obviously there is no cheap fix for this problem

Money will have to come from some other part of the budget, we suggest that it is so urgent that the Council should divert some funds away from other more glamorous projects.

We need to maintain and treasure what we have, before creating more things to maintain.

For example; facilitating cycling is a wonderfully admirable cause which wholeheartedly support, but solving the problems we outline will do a lot to improve and promote cycling in the centre, maybe more so than spending the money on expensive peripheral cycleway projects, and solving the above problems would be a huge benefit for EVERYONE, not just those fit enough to cycle.

A bigger elephant in the room is the proposed tram extension at £200M +Why not spend a lot less on an equally good trolleybus system, and have loads of money left over to sort out these and a host of other things that the City needs done ?



See <http://www.tbus.org.uk>

Nearly all the damage to our roads and pavements is caused by vehicles that are too big and too heavy for use in the Old Town. These vehicles also produce nearly all the pollution.

The Community Council considers that at the very least;

Traffic calming and a large vehicle ban in

Victoria St. West
Port Candlemaker
row Cowgate
Cockburn St.
Lawnmarket
East Market St.

lower High St.
Canongate
Jeffrey St.
St Mary's St.
and probably a few others

MARKET STREET

Market Street is a shocking embarrassment to the City, currently the building works and the inactive refurbishment of North Bridge only serve to make it worse. But at any time the street represents a total failure of public transport integration. The chaotic and uncontrolled taxi rank, and the total lack of adequate drop off and collection points for Coaches (including 'rail replacement') as well as any facilities for private cars to set down and pick up passengers, make the place a vehicular scrum. A dangerous and unfriendly place to negotiate for the dense crowds of pedestrians as well. It is seriously over congested and definitely not conducive to the promotion of public transport. Not to mention the pathetically poor connecting links with city bus stops and the tram.

COWGATE

A comprehensive street audit on Cowgate has already been compiled for the City Council, and the Old Town Community Council fully endorse the findings and the recommendations made. Most of the recommendations would be equally well applied to other locations in the Old Town.

FINALLY – ENFORCEMENT

It seems to us that a great deal of the pain of of the problems above could be solved almost instantly and at very little or no cost, how ? Just by enforcing the traffic regulations, by-laws and licence terms as they stand.

We observe that the privatized parking 'enforcers' routinely fail to write tickets for commercial vehicles and coaches, probably because they know that they wont be paid. The Enforcers' contract needs enforced, and the police will be required to do their job too.

- Grassmarket bollards made to work (regardless of how the breweries want it).
- Vehicles on footpaths.
- Coaches parking on loading zones.
- Enforcement of 20mph speed limit in West Bow, West Port, Cowgate, Johnston Terrace etc.
- Enforcement against vehicles producing visible smoke, (including Lothian buses).

Quick further steps might be;

- Substantially increase parking and other fines for commercial vehicles and coaches.
- License conditions applied to premises to make them responsible for controlling vehicles that service them.

Further,

Until legal restrictions on oversize vehicles can be made into law, if the will was there, it would be easy and cheap to engineer deterrence to their use in certain areas. Just as speed bumps are already used to slow traffic, why not have a few awkwardly placed heavy obstacles that would force the use of smaller more nimble vehicles.

THE BOTTOM LINE:

- we are perpetually told that it is necessary to sacrifice everything including our architectural integrity to attract ever more tourists to our City.
- That this is necessary because these tourists bring vast amounts of money into our City.
- Meanwhile we are told that the City is nearly bankrupt and cannot afford to undertake basic maintenance let alone upgrade anything.

If this is the case then there is something SERIOUSLY WRONG
