

CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL
FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Item No 3

10 November 2022

DEPUTATION REQUESTS

Subject	Deputation
3.1 In relation to item 8.4 - Walled Garden and Stable Block at Gracemount Mansion, Gracemount House Drive, Edinburgh – Proposed New Lease	Gracemount Mansion Development Trust (verbal)
3.2 In relation to item 8.10 – Response to Motion by Councillor Davidson – Support for Roseburn Businesses	Murrayfield Community Council (verbal and written submission)
3.3 In relation to item 8.10 – Response to Motion by Councillor Davidson – Support for Roseburn Businesses	Roseburn Traders (verbal)

F&R COMMITTEE DELEGATION FROM MURRAYFIELD COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Introduction

The Murrayfield Community Council contains as one would expect a range of opinions on transport policy issues. However, we are united in our desire to get the best from the CCWEL for our community, including renewal of the streetscape and provision of additional pedestrian crossings.

The Roseburn Terrace traders

Central to our community is the availability of the unique range of 33 shops and other businesses along Roseburn Terrace. These include not only bars and eateries but also hairdressers, florists, a pet-shop, an art-dealer, a furniture-restorer, shoe-repairer, electrical repair-shops, an optician, chemist, dentist, cakeshop etc

These traders offer accessibility to local residents in the Murrayfield hinterland and also convenience to visitors for events at BT Murrayfield. The street retains a remarkable duality of character – a busy corridor in peak hours and a shopping parade at quieter times – that showcases the best of suburban Edinburgh. Historically it has been dependent on people arriving by a variety of modes, with people hopping out of their cars as well as pedestrians bus-users and cyclists.

Impact of CCWEL

Since the start of CCWEL works in February, the traders have had to endure not only disruption to parking and delivery arrangements – which has to an extent been mitigated through measures taken by the project-team – but also damage to their businesses caused by loss of amenity. Notwithstanding notices saying “open for business”, the clutter of fencing and barriers has conveyed a clear visual message that this is no longer a space to hang about in – and temporary banning of the right turn into Russell Road has exacerbated the fumes and noise of traffic.

Unforeseen problems with asbestos and a gas-leak have prolonged the programme, with only a hiatus for the Festivals, and during the autumn when some of the traders might have been hoping for Christmas sales the pace of work has intensified, with the start on construction of the actual cycleway. There has been a belated recognition by the team of the need for better communication, and the alternative short-stay parking by The Maltings has been inadequately signed.

Thus far, there have been only two casualties, and the rest are hanging on, but are reporting that when they might have expected a post-pandemic boost the impact is actually worse than that of lockdown or, for those with longer memories, the banking crisis of 2008. Takings are down typically 50% or more (some say up to 80%), and the full picture may only emerge next year when account is taken of Christmas takings which completion may come too late to ensure.

Status and context

Had the works been essential maintenance for the upkeep of the road, there might have had to be an acceptance that this was a burden whose time had come, to be borne stoically in the knowledge that these things come round periodically – and indeed Roseburn Terrace has had its share of gas-main and other utility renewals in recent years.

However, CCWEL is markedly different. As the first cross-city cycle-priority investment it is a prestige project that leads the way on delivery in accordance priorities set out in the Scottish Government's ongoing Strategic Transport Projects Review. It is new infrastructure, and as such ought to be considered alongside the Trams to Newhaven since both will deliver sustainable transport options that address the current Climate Emergency.

Conclusion

How will posterity judge CCWEL if in the absence of compensation our traders go under and future users in search of a diverse local shopping experience are greeted only by the sight of boarded-up premises?

Rebuttal

Please see at Annex a detailed response to officers' claims which we consider erroneous.

John Yellowlees Chair, Murrayfield Community Council 7 November 2022

ANNEX : DETAILED POINTS OF REBUTTAL

Back in 2014, the Council's Project Justification Report convinced the Transport Committee that the CCWEL would boost the city's economy, observing the health benefits that would result from thousands of the city's inhabitants taking to two wheels which, it argued, would result in reduced work absenteeism. On these grounds the Council officers proposed a Cost-Benefit Ratio of 3.3, yet no account was taken of the economic impact on traders of shops losing their parking. Reference was instead made to American streets like 6th Avenue where cyclists had brought more trade to shops, which ignored the fact that such thoroughfares are built for cars - they are extremely wide, and can easily suffer the loss of a lane with no impact to shoppers on four wheels.

Moving to the present day, the officers' report ignores the fact that Roseburn will have suffered 10 months of severe access restrictions. They also do not consider that a massive loss of revenue (up to 80%) for our local shops for 10 months is problematic. They think if they give cash to Roseburn, they must give it to all CCWEL-impacted traders. Do they really think they are going to spend 10 months digging up Haymarket as well?

The report draws parallels between the impact of CCWEL on Roseburn and that of the current works on the North Bridge. They have not grasped the difference between Roseburn, a suburban area significantly serviced by shoppers on 4 wheels, as well as a primary route from the West into town - and the North Bridge, which is a city centre location with negligible custom from motorists, as parking restrictions there have always been severe. Nobody takes their car to visit a shop on the North Bridge- whereas Roseburn has historically benefitted from the A8 traffic of people travelling across town and visiting Roseburn shops en route.

Trams to Newhaven has wisely received £2.4M "Business Continuity Fund", which compensates with cash grants to meet a trader's proven loss of income as a result of the tram "roadworks". That the CCWEL project omitted to consider a similar scheme for affected businesses losing up to 80% of income is not something the traders should be made to carry.

Some actions by the Council have achieved the very opposite of the mitigation which was the stated aim. In March, we were assured that there would be consultation with businesses prior to making changes to parking. The very next morning the Council was out with the contractors applying yellow paint to add double yellow lines so as to remove even more parking.

Reference is made to the other areas through which the CCWEL will pass, suggesting these businesses there may also want to make a claim. However the roads referred to - parts of Haymarket Terrace, Randolph Place, Queensferry Street, St David Place and York Place - are all:

- a) much wider than Roseburn Terrace
- b) do not have shops many shops on either side of a very narrow street
- c) are in the city centre so have historically not depended upon 4-wheeled traffic ; and
- d) are mostly home to businesses that do not depend on shoppers passing in vehicles for their custom

The loss sustained to the Roseburn shops is around £100,000. In council spending terms we are not talking about a massive amount of money here; a few thousand pounds to each of those traders that have been badly affected.