

Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 12 October 2023

East London Street

Executive/routine
Wards

Routine
11 – City Centre

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Transport and Environment Committee notes:
 - 1.1.1 This update on the actions taken by Lothian Buses to reduce vehicles using East London Street and also the actions taken by the Council in response to resident concerns;
 - 1.1.2 That traffic monitoring will be carried out and the results will be reported to Committee in the Business Bulletin on 11 January 2024; and
 - 1.1.3 That the annual nitrogen dioxide monitoring data for East London Street will form part of the Council's annual air quality monitoring report for 2024.

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East London Street

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report responds to the request from Committee to address resident concerns about the issue of excessive traffic, particularly out of service buses, on East London Street.

3. Background

- 3.1 On 17 August 2023, Committee considered a petition submitted on behalf of, and with the support of, residents of East London Street. The petition called for the Council to address the issue of excessive traffic, particularly out-of-service buses, using East London Street to avoid road works and closures associated with various transportation projects.
- 3.2 Committee [agreed](#) to receive a report in two cycles considering the issues raised by the petitioners and Committee, the Lothian Buses response, and the following issues:
- 3.2.1 That East London Street was a residential, setted street on the edge of the World Heritage Site that had for the duration of the Trams to Newhaven works been used as a traffic diversion for the rest of Leith Walk. In practice, this meant years of heavy vehicle usage which led to a severe deterioration of the setts;
- 3.2.2 That properties in the area were primarily single glazed due to heritage restrictions and therefore the noise from motor vehicle traffic could be excessive, to the extent that residents had been unable to sleep or use rooms that faced into the street due to the noise disruption; and
- 3.2.3 That the road condition further exacerbated this issue due to reverberation and bangs caused by the road surface, and that with the pace of works in current CEC Setted Street Policy it was unlikely to be resurfaced for some time, without an intervention of the Council.
- 3.3 Committee requested that the report recommended an appropriate course of action, such as:

- 3.3.1 An updated traffic volume and speed survey to be undertaken on East London Street to provide an accurate summary of daytime and nighttime traffic levels;
 - 3.3.2 Atmospheric pollution monitoring on East London Street;
 - 3.3.3 Transport and Environment Convener engagement with Lothian Buses to explore options for reducing the number of off-service buses further than the reductions achieved thus far; and
 - 3.3.4 Clarification of the Trams to Newhaven Project's responsibility for reinstatements and other possible routes to fund capital works to fix the sets on East London Street, including the estimated costs for work on this street, and the option of matching London Street, retaining the setts in car parking spaces but tarmacking the central carriageway and the possibility of exploring appropriate traffic calming measures.
- 3.4 Committee also requested that Lothian Buses provide the policies and guidance given to drivers on speed limits and how they were circulated.

Road Safety Traffic Counts

- 3.5 The last road safety traffic counts were carried out in May 2019. The survey results, as a total for traffic travelling in both directions, suggest the following:
- 3.5.1 On average 450 - 2 axle vehicles travelled on the route each day between Monday and Friday;
 - 3.5.2 On average 115 – 3 axle vehicles travelled on the route each day between Monday and Friday;
 - 3.5.3 Approximately half of these vehicle classes used the route at the weekend;
 - 3.5.4 2 and 3 axle vehicles accounted for 6.4 percent of the total daily traffic; and
 - 3.5.5 The average vehicle speeds were measured between 16 and 17 miles per hour.
- 3.6 It should be noted that the traffic count undertaken in May 2019 cannot determine the difference between Public Service Vehicle (PSV) or Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) vehicles with similar axle configurations. HGV delivery lorries and buses have a similar pattern when passing over the survey tubes. A video survey may be necessary if an accurate PSV vehicle count is required.

4. Main report

Traffic on East London Street

- 4.1 The table in Appendix 1 shows the number of buses scheduled to use East London Street as part of their run out or in to the Annandale Street depot in 2019, 2022 and in 2023. This data shows that, although there was an increase in the number of

scheduled buses in 2022, this has now reduced significantly and is lower than the 2019 volume.

- 4.2 The information provided by Lothian Buses for 2023 also shows a breakdown of the time in which buses are scheduled to use East London Street in March 2023 and, following the autumn timetable change (from 10 September 2023), there has been a further reduction in the number of scheduled buses on East London Street.
- 4.3 Lothian Buses have also carried out speed surveys in August 2020 and August 2023. These showed that the average speed of buses in 2020 was 14.1mph. In 2023, this was 12.56mph. The highest speed recorded was 19mph.
- 4.4 In addition, on 14 September 2023 a spot survey was carried out by the Lothian Buses training school and Police Scotland. This recorded the average speed of buses on East London Street as 12.5mph.
- 4.5 Officers are currently investigating possible, alternative, routes in the area that would be suitable for HGV and bus use. Results and costs for any required alterations are due in November 2023.

Road Condition and Noise

- 4.6 East London Street is inspected on a regular basis, in line with The Council's Risk Based Approach to Safety Inspections and Repairs, with any identified defects repaired within the agreed timescale.
- 4.7 While there were some diversions along East London Street as part of the Trams to Newhaven project, these were only for short periods. Therefore, any remedial works required on East London Street would fall within the remit of the Council's Roads and Transport Infrastructure Investment Programme. An update on this was reported to Committee in September 2023.
- 4.8 Following discussion with residents, Ward Councillors and New Town and Broughton Community Council, it was agreed that noise monitoring would be carried out in East London Street.
- 4.9 This monitoring took place at three locations, over a 24-hour period, between 19 December 2022 and 20 December 2022.
- 4.10 In the absence of more appropriate standards, comparable guidance is contained in the [Noise Insulation Regulations 1975](#) which has a qualifying limit of a minimum of 1dB above $L_{10(18\text{-hour})}$ of 68dB(A). The limit is based on a measurement 1m from the façade of the relevant building (06.00 to 00:00 hours). However, these Regulations only apply to new or altered roads that affect existing properties.
- 4.11 The results of the monitoring showed that daytime and nighttime noise levels, at all three locations, were below 68dB(A). Whilst the average noise levels fell below 68dB(A) it should be noted that there were peak levels of noise above this level. Many of these peaks were recorded between 23:00 – 24:00 and 05:30 – 07:00.

4.12 However, given that both day and nighttime levels were generally below 68dB(A), there are no proposals for any on-street interventions at this time.

Setted Streets

- 4.13 The capital budget allocation for the renewal of setted streets is top-sliced from the Roads and Infrastructure capital programme. This means that all setted street are prioritised against each other.
- 4.14 Based on the current list of setted street renewal priorities, East London Street does not currently merit inclusion in the three year programme. This is because the following streets have a higher priority score: Lawnmarket, St Mary's Street, Victoria Street and The Shore.
- 4.15 Any acceleration of East London Street would mean a deviation from the Council's approved prioritisation procedures and would delay to all of these other schemes.
- 4.16 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas)(Scotland) Act 1997 states that Conservation areas are 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Local authorities have a statutory duty to identify and designate such areas.
- 4.17 Under Article 4 of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992, amended 2012, the planning authority can seek the approval of the Scottish Ministers for Directions that restrict the development required for the purpose of the carrying on of any tramway or road transport undertaking (Class 41). The Directions effectively control the proliferation of relatively minor erosion of character and appearance, such as the removal of setted streets.
- 4.18 At its meeting on 9 March 2018, Transport and Environment Committee approved the "[Finalised Strategy for Setted Streets](#)". As part of the principles that were approved within this report, it states that setted streets that fall within the World Heritage Site and/or are in a conservation area will be protected.
- 4.19 East London Street is within the New Town conservation area, therefore, when a capital renewal takes place, the proposal will be to renew the setted carriageway. A deviation from the Finalised Strategy for Setted Streets would be required for the setts to be removed. If an alternative surface was pursued then this would require a consultation exercise, including heritage groups, finalising with a report to be approved by the relevant committee.
- 4.20 If there was a deviation from the setted street policy was approved and an alternative treatment was selected (i.e. full asphalt reconstruction) it would still require a significant investment and would not accelerate East London Street on the capital investment programme as it would continue to be prioritised against other setted streets.
- 4.21 An asphalt overlay of the setts in East London Street would not be recommended due to the short lifecycle of this type of treatment on setts and, in particular, where speed calming measures are in place.

Atmospheric Monitoring

- 4.22 In February 2023, monitoring of nitrogen dioxide (main traffic related pollutant) commenced on East London Street with passive diffusion tube (PDT) samplers.
- 4.23 PDT samplers provide a simple, cost-effective method for assessing ambient levels of nitrogen dioxide over an extended network. The assessment procedure is approved by the Scottish and UK Governments and proper application of the methodology is set out in [technical guidance](#).
- 4.24 PDTs are sited at appropriate locations for a period of one month prior to laboratory analysis. Monitoring data then determines an annual nitrogen dioxide concentration in air for assessment against Air Quality Standards.
- 4.25 This requires the complete annual data set collected over the calendar year to be subjected to a range of corrections and quality assurance checks. These checks and adjustments are made in accordance with the guidance and can be carried out only at the end of each calendar year.
- 4.26 Fully corrected, ratified air quality monitoring data is reported annually by the Council, in accordance with requirements of the Local Air Quality Management Framework, the National Air Quality Strategy and the Environment Act 1995.
- 4.27 In respect of the Lothian Buses' fleet, all buses are Euro VI (or equivalent) engine standard, which makes them Low Emission Zone compliant, and it is anticipated that further emissions reduction will continue with Net Zero ambitions.

Policy and Guidance from Lothian Buses

- 4.28 Policy and guidance information forms a core part of the Lothian Buses driver training programme, with regular supervision and updates distributed. A summary of this is provided in Appendix 2.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Lothian Buses are aware of the concerns raised in respect of buses running on East London Street and will continue to review their route plans to minimise its use for scheduled services.
- 5.2 In addition, they will continue to remind drivers of their responsibilities at the start and end of service, on service route information, newsletters, online portal and through real time information.
- 5.3 Council officers will continue to monitor the road condition, in line with the Council's approach to inspection and remedial action will be taken if required. The road condition will also continued to be assessed as part of the prioritisation of road condition (in accordance with the policy on setts renewal).
- 5.4 Atmospheric monitoring will continue, and the annual report of data gathered from the PDT will be available in 2024.

- 5.5 A road-tube style traffic speed/volume survey will take place later in the year. The results of this will be reported to Committee in the Business Bulletin on 11 January 2024.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The information collated in response to this request forms part of the Council's normal activities and therefore no additional costs have been incurred.
- 6.2 Lothian Buses have advised that there would be a financial and operational service impact should scheduled services not operate along East London Street.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 No equality or poverty impacts have been identified in preparing this report.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

- 8.1 As a public body, the Council has statutory duties relating to climate emissions and biodiversity. The Council

“must, in exercising its functions, act in the way best calculated to contribute to the delivery of emissions reduction targets”

(Climate Change (Emissions Reductions Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019), and

“in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as it is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions”

(Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004)

- 8.2 The City of Edinburgh Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and committed to work towards a target of net zero emissions by 2030 for both city and corporate emissions and embedded this as a core priority of the Council Business Plan 2023-27. The Council also declared a Nature Emergency in 2023.

Environmental Impacts

- 8.3 Atmospheric monitoring is being carried out on East London Street to understand the nitrogen dioxide concentration in the air.
- 8.4 Lothian Buses have also provided information on their goal to achieve Net Zero (paragraph 4.22).

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

- 9.1 The information provided in the petition highlights the community impact of noise associated with traffic, particularly buses, on East London Street.

- 9.2 The report sets out the actions taken by the Council and Lothian Buses and highlights the work which has been progressed in discussion with residents to address the concerns raised.
- 9.3 The Council policies on setted street and road condition have been applied for East London Street. A report on the prioritisation methodology is expected to be considered by Committee in November 2023.
- 9.4 Atmospheric monitoring is being carried out in accordance with the Council's responsibilities on monitoring air quality.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 None.

11. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Lothian Bus Scheduled Buses using East London Street

Appendix 2 – Lothian Buses Policy, Guidance and Training

Appendix 1 – Lothian Buses’ Scheduled Buses Using East London Street

	2019	2022	2023
Run Out	67	75	56
Run In	67	71	37

Time of Day	Run Out	Run In
23:31 - 01:30	1	10
03:30-04:30	5	1
04:31-05:30	7	1
05:31-06:30	15	
06:31 - 07:30	17	
07:31-08:30	3	
08:30-09:30		2
09:31-10:33		4
13:54 -17:16	8	
18:10 -19:30		7
19:31- 20:30		9
20:31- 21:30		3

Appendix 2 – Lothian Buses Policy, Training and Guidance

The initial training programme is based on the DVSA National Standard for driving buses and coaches which sets out the expected standards of a professional bus driver in the UK.

This includes drivers' responsibilities in respect to adherence of speed limits and driving in accordance with the Highway Code, and in particular the following sections:

- Role 2: Guide and control the vehicle;
- Role 3: Use the road in accordance with the Highway Code;
- Role 4: Drive Safely and responsibly in the traffic system; and
- Role 5: Review and adjust driving behaviour over a lifetime.

Following completion of the initial training programme, live drive activities take place under supervision to ensure that drivers continue to demonstrate the required knowledge for both on and off service driving. 'Off-service' training is restricted to one day per week.

Driver Notices regarding access/egress to/from the garage have been updated and recirculated to drivers regularly since 2020. These are distributed via noticeboards and online digital platforms.

An Engineering Road Test Route Map which eradicates the use of East London Street for safety critical journeys.

Designated off service routes have been designed and run-out sheets specify the exit route to be taken from the garage. Since July 2023, the online platform for drivers has included route specific guidance in respect of registered start points.

An upgrade of the Real Time Information includes a 'sat-nav' like route map for drivers showing the route to be taken, this includes off-service routes and diversions.

All Night Services/Airlink are instructed not to use East London Street in the early hours. This has been relayed through control room and driver digital log on/duty portal. In exceptional circumstances, any instructions to use East London Street would come through driver control e.g. Road Closure/traffic light malfunction etc.