

119 –WHO Cares - but does Edinburgh Council?



For four years a group of residents who realised the implications of facts within the Tram project have fought to bring these to the notice of the public in general in Edinburgh.

They have done this because these are important facts with a direct bearing on the health of people in the city -- the issue is the careless and negligent way in which the city of Edinburgh Council are actively ignoring the effects of traffic displaced through Residential areas that used to flow through streets that were main roads and so had developed as commercial and business streets.

Today the World Health Organisation have added more evidence to the pile growing almost daily testifying just how dangerous this policy of denial, dissembling and disarray is for the people of the City. (Story here <http://tinyurl.com/cf8fa3f>)

Denial: There is an avalanche of evidence that Traffic created pollution kills people by causing strokes and heart attacks and makes babies and children ill by causing respiratory conditions, such as asthma, which they would otherwise not develop..

Today's news from WHO simply adds cancer to that list of effects. Yet the Council continue to deny any problem may exist.

At present traffic levels in Edinburgh are down because of the effects of high fuel prices and recession, by up to 7%, yet pollution levels and traffic in the residential streets are rising, this shows how large the problem is and how much larger it may become when normal service is resumed in the economy.

What makes Edinburgh unique amongst councils across Europe is the Council are doing things that directly cause enormous pollution increases in the city, and at the same time also transferring these increases from non-residential streets to ones where many people live which means the people there cannot realistically escape the effects.

The Council have consistently denied any of this is happening, or that it constitutes any sort of threat, preferring to accuse residents of scaremongering rather than producing evidence to refute them.

But the Tram project is not the only council project being pursued which adds to this problem.

Right now glossy brochures about a 'world class' development of Charlotte Square litter the offices of Waverley Court and City Chambers. A major condition of this development is the virtual emptying of Charlotte Square to all traffic.

This is a fantastic development in theory, just as the tram is a fantastic idea---in theory.... But in practice the denial of the health implications for people in many, many streets across Edinburgh that will now have to take the traffic displaced by these and other developments, ought to make both of these developments questionable for the same reason, that unless we can get an idea of what the health effects will be it is impossible to justify continuation.

The Council are in denial about this.

Dissembling: To continue to push forward with the now crippled tram project, shorn of its long term justification (the regeneration of Leith - that was to be activated by the tram in order to provide the major source of passengers for the tram) the council has borrowed £231,000,000 extra to add to the city debt pile. This was voted through at a long meeting in which all the pertinent facts were not known.

Without any changes we are now getting the worst of the pollution for little, or indeed no, transport benefits, and paying through the nose for it.

To try and pretend pollution is not rising dangerously in the city the council used to measure the pollution levels with a built in error whose effect was always to make the levels published lower than they truly were.

The residents, and in particular Dr Ashley Lloyd, who pointed out their error, have never had their contribution acknowledged---although the Council have changed the way they measure pollution after a change by DEFRA made doing so unavoidable

They are also measuring the pollution differently on a number of others streets as a result, yet refuse to acknowledge the fact openly that it was a resident who pointed out the mistake.

This may be because they don't wish to give credibility to Dr Lloyd because in the street that triggered the recognition that an error was being made they are continuing to make another error, which again, the residents have pointed out but just as before, for the time being, remains unacknowledged.

- In emails the Head of Scientific Services at the Council admits that if the Council record pollution the way Residents say it should be done, the levels may already be above EU statutory limits.

In the case of the Charlotte Square Development the impact of the traffic displacement is being denied by keeping the traffic model used to to predict it secret from the public.

Incredibly this model, and the information of wider traffic effects it contains, is not part of the publically provided information published to support the traffic changes being considered by councillors.

- Objectors trying to have it released into the Public domain under FOI legislation have been told it will cost £142.50p to do this and the release will not be in time before the votes of councillors are taken.

Disarray: Despite all parties having spoken against the project, and despite the health and mortality impacts that clearly threaten the future, virtually all political parties, in Edinburgh presently support the Tram.

By calling this ill conceived light rail project a 'tram' the above concerns about pollution increases in Edinburgh is presently being ignored by the politicians anxious to appear Green.

Many prefer to say the pollution is caused by the traffic not the tram and so it is traffic that needs to be sorted out. This is a dishonest and deplorable argument.

- It is borderline insanity to support a project that worsens the threats to public health so that the Council can pretend to solve it at some time in the future.

- To increase pollution, which even now at the very beginning of the two decade predicted uplift in pollution in the council's own report may already exceed statutory EU levels, without clear ideas of what damage IS being caused and how it can ever be meaningfully reduced is a terrible indictment of past planning failures on a colossal scale.
- To inflict HGVs on the cobbled streets of the World Heritage Site is to stand by and look on as lorries with an axle weight that has gone up from and axle weight of 32t in 1992 to 44t in 2012 thunder through 24x7, next to the longest Georgian terrace in the world—built with foundations nowhere near those of modern buildings in terms of strength, depth and resilience.
- Failures which sadly continue unabated. The traffic model used by the City of Edinburgh Council ought not to be restricted information. At present one resident are being told to cough up £142.50p to have it released under Freedom of Information legislation. The restricted traffic survey produced by a consultant which *has* been published as part of the TRO, cannot be fully understood without reference to the overall city traffic model which has not bee published. This oversight should be rectified immediately.

ENDS