

[You can fool some of the people](#)

We called our website www.edinburghtramfacts.com because the tram was, and remains, the worst of a number of transport projects in the city that to a greater or lesser extent depend for their viability on the unacknowledged displacement of traffic from the former main roads, lightly inhabited and mainly commercial, into domestic and residential streets, far more densely populated, and far less adapted or able to carry large volumes of traffic.

The tram project is the worst of these schemes, but it is not the only one.

And with each new project the cumulative effect gets worse; even LOWER traffic overall in the city is creating MORE pollution at present because the vehicles are being forced to use unsuitable streets that simply cannot carry the levels of traffic as the main roads are now largely closed off.

Another scheme, not connected to the tram project, presently the subject of dispute is a development of Charlotte Square led by Fordell Estates a Bermuda based private company.

Residents objecting to the scheme say it is clear that 'improvements' to the Public areas of Charlotte Square would involve yet more displacement of through traffic into residential areas.

The Council have said that the scheme would not have this effect but this isn't borne out by their own statements and actions.

In *July 2011*, an email was sent by a senior executive of City of Edinburgh Council to colleagues, exploring possibilities about ways to find money to contribute to a share of the 'Public Realm works.'

It only entered the public domain following a recent Freedom of Information application, describing the development within Charlotte Square to others within the Council hierarchy.

".....the completed scheme will aim to target "boutique" financial services companies. The idea is to replicate similar high end town houses offices that are located in places like Bedford Sq and Grosvenor Sq London As part of their

proposed scheme Fordell Estates has identified that to attract the high calibre of financial service companies to the project and to this location, **the quality of the office scheme will not be enough.**

..... In light of this Fordell Estates are keen to promote not just the refurbishment of the buildings in Charlotte Sq but also the public realm in the heart of the square itself..... **.The public realm improvements will look to curb traffic levels..... The plans will involve re-routing traffic so that Charlotte becomes more private to the tenants."**

This second extract is an article published in February 2012 in Scotland's Urban Realm website :

Fordell Estates' £4m planning application, to remove street clutter and upgrade the public realm around Edinburgh's Charlotte Square, looks set to be realised after council officials recommended the proposal be approved.

*Designed by Optimised Environments the project would see extra pavement space provided by reducing road width around the New Town set piece to one lane – **a deliberate attempt to reverse the growth in vehicle numbers since the sixties.***

The email and the report simply illustrate the blindingly obvious fact that the main intention of the Public Realm proposals is to curb traffic levels deliberately in order to make the Square quieter and nicer for the business tenants.

Fast forward from 2011 to January this year.

The 4 pictures immediately below show road signs along the approach to Charlotte Square, on Queensferry Road, now the development is completed, and the road signs tell their own story—traffic deterred from the Square as per the intention.





The problem is nothing to do with whether Charlotte Square should be developed or not, or whether the development by Fordell Estates is a good one or not.

Or even whether Fordell are right or wrong to want traffic reduced and the work environment for their tenants made more private, quieter, more healthy and nicer.

The problem isn't the developer it's the Council.

At a public hearing held recently in Edinburgh Council executives and transport chiefs not only attempted to make the case that this scheme was not *intended* to move yet more traffic from commercial streets and main cross city routes used for centuries into domestic and residential streets.

The point made by objectors was that FoI emails such as the one above, show it was *intended* to move traffic out of the Square and the road signs put up by the council, showed this actually happening.

Two of the leaders of the Council team at the hearing, Mr Alisdair Sim and Ms Ann Faulds, responded by denying this and that while the signs were 'not the best' they did *not* deter traffic from heading towards the Square.

It may be the reason they felt they couldn't just admit the blindingly obvious was that the Public Hearing itself was part of the process intended to decide whether the scheme itself ought to go ahead at all --- or not.

And the Council had put up the signs intended to deliver the developer's wishes *before* the formal process of deciding whether or not those wishes would be granted had been completed.

It's a blunder of course and it left the hapless officials between the rock, of explaining how road signs promoting traffic changes that had not yet been properly enacted were already in place diverting traffic --- and the hard place, of a development company which has *already* finished refurbishing the offices for which *they* were promised a traffic free street.

What this is about is trying to hold to account a Council that in private has already decided to divert traffic from yet another lightly inhabited commercial area into densely populated domestic streets, while in public embarking on a sham consultation process about a decision already made.

Over a number of years residents objecting to these various projects that constantly put MORE traffic, MORE noise , MORE Pollution and MORE congestion into streets where people and children live, have come up against this kind of attitude again and again.

The Council are mired in a toxic mixture of complacency and hypocrisy about the reality of traffic pollution and noise, and its effects on health.



Here is an increasingly common sight in Montagu Terrace/Inverleith Row, not city centre roads by any means, but now streets that take increasing amounts of vehicles exiled from the old central main roads now no longer available.

These two pictures, taken earlier this month, show traffic bumper to bumper all the way from Ferry Road looking one way to Canonmills and beyond looking the other way.

This is just another example amongst many across the city where the effects of the willed traffic displacement are becoming ever clearer.

The inconvenient truth that the Council are unable to face, let alone admit, is that it is their own policies that are directly responsible for increasing pollution in our city, not some inevitable and unhappy accident of fate about which they can do nothing.

Recently in Paris and London pollution has been forcing its way remorselessly into the public consciousness, but not in Edinburgh.

These two, and thousands of other cities, are struggling against one of the major public health issues of the 21st century. They are trying to do something positive about it right now.

But Edinburgh, our city, remains locked in denial, defending the indefensible over and over again, pursuing policies that not only do not make things better but are actually making it all worse.

This has become a cynical and corrosive state of affairs which the situation in Charlotte Square right now, serves to highlight. This not only threatens to blow up in the face of the council - but deserves to do so, and the sooner the better.

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