

# LEITH LINKS COMMUNITY COUNCIL

## SUMMARY REPORT OF 2024 SURVEY FINDINGS

### of Leith Low Traffic Neighbourhood, and N8 Controlled Parking Zone

#### Statement by Leith Links Community Council, February 2025

The Community Council is not a lobby group, and does not have any specific 'agenda' to push. It is a politically neutral body which aims to consult local residents and businesses and to represent their views impartially. *"Community Councils play an important role in grass roots local democracy."* (City of Edinburgh Council website.)

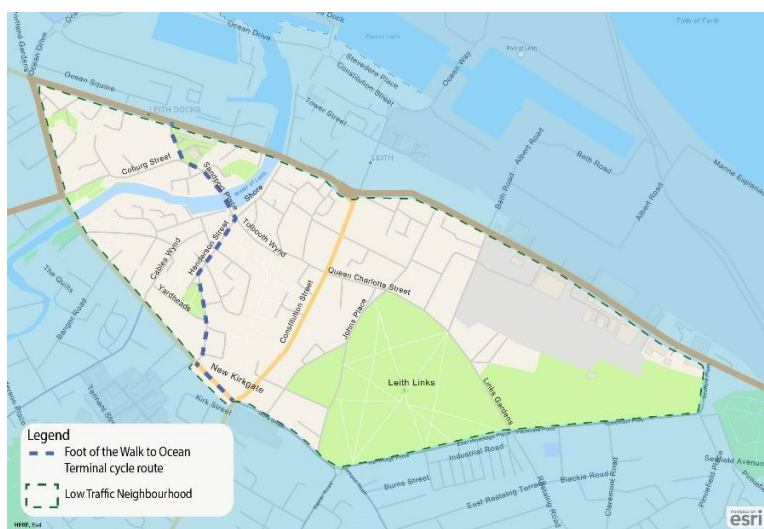
Leith Links Community Council (LLCC) has consulted and 'polled' residents in the area in various ways over an extended period, on their views regarding traffic and parking in the area. For example; comments gathered at Leith Festival Gala Day 2023, comments to the Community Council Website and social media sites; the 2024 Survey analysed below; poll of local businesses, January / February 2025.

The results of all of these show that the situation is complex and that the local community has very mixed views. It is disappointing to see issues that seriously affect our community all too often reported simplistically in the press and elsewhere as politicised, and as a kind of 'war' with two sides polarised into 'evil drivers who love cars and hate cyclists' versus 'cyclists who hate all cars and drivers'.

This is not only untrue but unnecessarily and unproductively divisive.

People do not just fall into one of two camps: at different points in their lives (or even, regularly, in their day or week), all people may be pedestrians, cyclists, users of public transport, drivers for work, and drivers and/or passengers in private vehicles. We would like to see a discussion at all levels that reflects the realities and the nuances of Edinburgh's ongoing and growing problems with population expansion and traffic congestion.

We hope that the results presented below can be viewed in that light, and not used to fuel over-polarisation of the debate.



## Introduction

The survey carried out by Leith Links Community Council (LLCC) in 2024 aimed to collect the views of people living inside, and also those living outside but just close to the perimeter of the new Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN) and the new North Leith(N8) Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ). We collected both quantitative data and, qualitatively, a large number of specific examples and comments.

## General Findings

364 responses were received in total.

The survey breaks down respondents not only by where they live or work, but also by age group, by ability / disability in relation to mobility, by whether they travel with young children and/or mobility restricted people, and by their current travel behaviours.

The majority of responses came from people who live within the LTN at 47% (171), with slightly fewer living on the perimeter at 38.2% (139), plus a few outliers who work within the LTN at 12.9% (47) and some living within 2 miles of the LTN at 12.6% (46). A small number of respondents attend school or college in the area - 0.8% (3).

We asked people to say how they felt about the /LTN generally and also asked them to comment on particular parts and areas within the LTN. This generated an almost unmanageable number of comments; many impassioned, and many quite long and detailed (these may be read in the full survey finding document).

The numerical data collected in the survey reflected what has also been widely noted anecdotally – that **there is a wide split in the views of local people.**

## LTN

### How do you feel about the LTN, generally?

1. 40% support. Many people like the LTN and find that it improves their lives.  
whereas  
34% are opposed to the LTN, and  
26% have Mixed Feelings

2. People who find the LTN beneficial are, broadly, those who are younger and fitter. (Though a few individuals with disabilities found the streets safer, e.g. for wheelchair use.)

however

The LTN creates significant barriers and problems for many older people, people with disabilities / restricted mobility, and also for people who regularly travel with those who have restricted mobility (including some of those who travel with young children).

The LTN is perceived to have increased traffic and reduced quality of life for those living around the perimeter.

## Discussion

In contrast to City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) statistics publicised in the press, our survey results amount to more or less an equal division of views across the community. Counting the 26% Mixed Feelings group as roughly 13% supportive and 13% opposed, we see 53% in support, and 47% opposed to the LTN.

Amongst the 'Support' group, many expressed appreciation of the overall reduction of busy traffic in their specific area. Three main reasons were given – increased safety, increased well-being/ quality of life, and reduced negative impact on the local environment.

Amongst both the Opposed and the Mixed Feelings groups, the issues raised most frequently / widely, were:

- (a) the greatly increased volume of traffic forced on to the perimeter main roads around the perimeter of the LTN, causing congestion, pollution, bus delays, increased journey times etc.
- (b) the counter-productivity of the 'bus gate' on Links Place.
- (c) the need for longer (in both time and kilometres) journeys for drivers.
- (d) lack of consideration given to older and mobility restricted people.
- (e) lack of transparency in planning and consultation when developing the designs.
- (f) deficiencies in CEC's traffic monitoring process particularly on boundary roads. E.g. No traffic baseline provided, meaning a proper before and after comparison is not possible.

Many of those opposed - and also those with mixed views who were partly or even largely in favour of the LTN - pointed out that there were many improvements to the LTN still needed, citing particularly the need for repair and improvements to pavements, road surfaces, and cycle routes, better signage in places, better monitoring, better responses to people's legitimate concerns.

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## **Recommendations re LTN**

The Leith Links Community Council would recommend that:

1. The 'bus gate' (that no bus ever goes through) should NOT be made permanent but should be removed entirely from Links Place, to make Links Place two-way traffic again.

### **Rationale**

- There is no bus going through there, and probably never will be as the corner at Constitution Street has been made too tight for buses to turn.
  - It doesn't protect St. Mary's Primary School from west-bound traffic anyway, as traffic passes the school reaching the bus gate (and, currently, turning down Salamander Place).
  - Links Place is not really a residential street (only a few homes), so restoring west bound traffic will not affect many residents.
  - Because of the blocking off of access to the Shore from Queen Charlotte Street, and access to Leith Walk via Constitution Street being blocked at Coatfield Lane, there is actually nowhere much for west bound traffic to go, so traffic is likely to be mainly fairly local only, and unlikely to be heavy.
  - Traffic flowing freely westwards through from Links Gardens to Links Place again will significantly relieve the current congestion at the junction of Salamander Place with Links Place, which currently causes problems especially for buses (and for school kids trying to cross there).
  - The introduction of the bus-gate has actually caused a new and undesirable 'rat run' (Fox Street, Poplar Lane, Pattison Street, Elbe Street), through narrow highly residential streets) for drivers who can't get from Links Gardens to Johns Place, Queen Charlotte Street or Constitution Street, otherwise. (Although the Leith Connections team has suggested in the past to just close off these streets to traffic too, that is not a viable solution as people living in those streets would be 'trapped' with their only entry / egress being Salamander Street which is an already very busy and often congested main road. The fact that they are being used by through traffic is a sign that the design of the LTN should be reviewed, rather than immediately moving to close yet more streets to motor traffic. If further changes to these streets are to be considered, residents of the affected streets should be involved in those discussions at an early stage.)
2. At the newly narrowed junction of Johns Place with Queen Charlotte Street, the 'Priority over oncoming vehicles' should be reversed, so that priority is given to vehicles coming into the junction from Queen Charlotte Street, rather than to vehicles coming down Johns Place. At the moment, there is a newly created bottleneck between the 'Give Way' lines at the junction proper, and the narrowed, single lane entry / egress on Johns Place. There is only room for one or two vehicles to wait in that bottleneck

‘waiting/holding area’, so if there are several cars waiting to turn in, they end up stationary, queuing on the ‘main’ road. If the ‘Priority’ was reversed, and the ‘waiting area’ moved back slightly, vehicles could flow through smoothly, leaving the main road clear. If there are any vehicles waiting, there is much more room for them to queue backwards on Johns Place.

3. Some highly targeted ‘micro-consultations’ are needed. Before the LTN design was started, the two problem areas consistently reported for traffic congestion were Duke Street and Great Junction Street. Have these streets been improved or have they got worse since the LTN? Additional streets reporting increased traffic flow since the introduction of the LTN and CPZ include Claremont Park, Vanburgh Place, and Commercial Street. Recent council market research did not include adequate sampling of people who live on boundary roads (although their results did show data and opinion pointing to negative experience for people on boundary roads), We suggest specific engagement sessions with residents of the streets mentioned, to fully understand the impact, and work with them on potential solutions.
4. Traffic monitoring practice needs to improve. The public headline news seems to be the dramatic reduction in traffic on the roads within the LTN - but it is hardly surprising or newsworthy that traffic is significantly reduced on roads that have been fully or partially closed and blocked off. What IS of interest is what effect those closures have had on other roads around the area. However, there is very little monitoring of boundary road traffic. Most of the monitoring done around the LTN only produced figures for 6 and 12 months post LTN, but had no base-line starting data, so effectively cannot show impact from prior to the LTN being implemented.
5. If it intends to keep the Leith LTN, and to start trying to roll out further ‘Liveable Neighbourhoods’ across the city, CEC needs to study, analyse and start seriously planning to mitigate the predictable phenomenon of ‘displacement’ of traffic caused by blocking off/ partially closing sets of roads within an area. Although some traffic evaporation can be expected, there are specific locations that are adversely affected especially at peak time. More thought needs to be given to how this should be managed, to improve the experience of those living in, and travelling through, those areas, not just those in streets where traffic is significantly reduced. The figures published in the AECOM report showing traffic monitoring data at 6 months and 12 months show a massive increase in traffic at the junctions on the roads around the perimeter of the LTN, especially at peak times. For example, on Vanburgh Place (which DID have pre-LTN baselines data), the 12 month post LTN monitoring showed that vehicles travelling westbound increased by 45% (am) and 53% (pm).
6. If CEC intends to keep the Leith LTN, a ‘basket’ of further measures needs to be introduced to help to improve some features of the LTN and to mitigate some of the undesirable side-effects of the LTN on local residents, particularly those living just outside the LTN.

**For Example:**

- Repair and improvement of both pavement and road surface on Tolbooth Wynd, and the pavements on the network of roads behind the Shore where cycling contraflows have been introduced.
- Possible installation of a smooth surfaced cycle path from Queen Charlotte Street, through Tolbooth Wynd to Sandport Bridge.
- Repair and improvement of the road surface on Salamander Place, which was poor to start with and is rapidly deteriorating further, due to increased traffic (including buses).
- Enforcement of speed limits on Claremont Park.
- A pedestrian crossing, or at the very least pavement build-outs for pedestrians on Claremont Park, somewhere near the Nursing Home.
- Traffic calming measures on Claremont Road (which is often used as a ‘rat-run’, by vehicles, including heavy lorries, to avoid the congestion and traffic lights on Restalrig Road.

- Improvement of the recently built pavement build-out crossing points on Hermitage Place and East Hermitage Place which currently lead straight into a tree, a cable box and a lamp-post - dangerous for visually impaired people.
- Regular 'refreshing' of the 'murals' painted on the ground at Johns Place (by the Croft) and Links Gardens (by the school) which faded quickly.
- Better landscaping, to replace the failed rusty plant containers, to introduce some greenery to traffic free areas in partnership with local growing groups – this will provide greater community 'ownership' and contribute to ongoing maintenance.

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## Controlled Parking Zone

**Q. How do you feel about the CPZ?** (from 362 responses, 2 respondents left this item blank)

1. 36% support the CPZ

however

26% oppose the CPZ, and  
35% have mixed feelings

2. The figures are slightly altered by whether respondents live inside or outside the CPZ boundary. Those inside are 38% in favour / 23% opposed, while those living outside were 34% in favour / 29% opposed.

In other words, there are as many (or more) people with mixed feelings as there are who support the scheme.

Comments were many and often impassioned, but broadly similar:

- Overall, people who have cars and who live inside the CPZ find the parking situation improved in terms of finding a space – although many people find parking permits painfully expensive in these 'cost of living crisis' times.
- Many (mainly pedestrians / non car owners) like the fact that the streets feel safer and more 'spacious' with fewer parked vehicles.
- The aim of stopping the use of Leith residential streets as an informal 'park and ride' for commuters appears to have been satisfactorily achieved.

however

- People who live just outside the CPZ are now plagued by a very heavy influx of parked vehicles on their streets, so much so that residents may find it hard to park near their homes, and road safety is compromised in some locations.
- Many respondents bemoan the loss of a large number of parking spaces.
- People who enter the area to work, or to visit (i.e. non permit holders), find the parking situation very difficult and/or prohibitively expensive. This especially affects elderly and/or disabled people who rely on carers (paid and/or unpaid family members or friends) visiting them regularly and needing to be able to park nearby without excessive cost or time and effort spent walking from a faraway parking spot.
- Tradespeople with heavy tools or equipment (and the householders who need to employ them) experience great difficulties – so much so that some tradespeople now refuse to work in certain areas, because of parking problems.
- Local businesses report that organising deliveries of supplies has become extremely difficult, and that overall customer numbers have declined.

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## Recommendations re CPZ

The Leith Links Community Council would recommend:

1. The process of offering parking permits for healthcare workers and carers (NHS workers, paid professional carers and unpaid carers) needs to be speeded up and delivered as soon as possible.
2. The North Leith CPZ needs to be extended southwards to include Vanburgh Place, Hermitage Place, East Hermitage Place, Gladstone Place, Claremont Park, and the roads at right angles to them, leading into those roads, i.e. Pirniefield Place, Claremont Road, Summerfield Gardens, Restalrig Road, and the Colonies.

This is urgent, but would need to be considered in the context of the possible new CPZ zones covering 'East Leith' and 'West Leith' as a whole (which are more controversial as local residents were not in support, at the last consultation).

3. Not specific to the Leith area, however given the increased number of deliveries and trades, LLCC would like to recommend that CEC gives consideration to a wider plan to include a 'deliveries and trades' area to all streets as part of reviewing parking measures. This would be separate from current loading/unloading bays, as it would be for deliveries and tradesperson visits to households rather than businesses. This reflects the move to increased online shopping, and would to some extent reduce reliance on owning private vehicles for shopping and large household items.

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