

School Streets Review

Report by Ricky Moffat, Head of Commercial Operations

1 Purpose of Report

At the Council Meeting on 28 June 2016, the Council agreed to:

- a) Support the introduction of 'School Streets' at King's Park Primary, Dalkeith and Lasswade Primary, Bonnyrigg; and
- b) Request that the Director, Resources provide a follow up report after the twelve month period of monitoring.

The purpose of this report is to advise Council of the survey results and monitoring undertaken and ask Council for a decision on whether to retain these permanently, change aspects of them or remove them entirely.

2 Background

- 2.1** 'School Streets' had been piloted by both City of Edinburgh Council and East Lothian Council. They involve a legal order that bans most traffic from driving in the street during a specified period (when children are arriving at or leaving the school).
- 2.2** The ban is applied to streets where vehicles manoeuvring to drop off/pick up children are causing an unsafe environment for pupils arriving at the school on foot or by bike. These are signed as a Pedestrian and Cycle Zone, with details of the times they apply and exceptions.
- 2.3** The two schools that have trialled 'School Streets' in Midlothian are King's Park Primary School, Dalkeith and Lasswade Primary School, Bonnyrigg. These schools are typical and have a prolonged record of issues around drop-off and parking. Police Scotland, School Travel Plan Co-ordinator, School Staff and Parent Teacher Associations of both schools have worked hard trying many initiatives and promotions to reduce the problem previously. It is acknowledged that many of Midlothian's schools have similar issues.
- 2.4** Although the problems are primarily caused by too many pupils being driven to/from school, fewer than 1 in 5 pupils are driven, and calls to restrict this came from some parents/carers of other pupils as well as residents of nearby streets. Consultation exercises were carried out to establish whether residents, school staff, pupils and parents/carers were supportive of the initiative and in the case of Lasswade Primary

School, which streets should be included in the zone. The majority of replies supported the proposals and extending the restrictions to all five Pendreich streets - View, Drive, Terrace, Avenue, and Grove

- 2.5** Following the consultation, draft Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) were prepared and advertised for the streets proposed to be restricted. Seventeen objections were received to the TRO for the Lasswade PS scheme but none for the King Park PS scheme. The objections were considered at Cabinet on 15 August 2017, when it was decided to authorise the making of the TRO. Resident Permit application forms were sent to qualifying residents and Permits issued to applicants. Some other vehicles are exempt from the ban, for example disabled badge holders, emergency services, badged delivery vehicles etc. The schools were also issued with a few permits for exceptional use (not for general commuting to or from work).
- 2.6** Once the necessary signs were installed and residents had their permits the scheme was brought into effect from October 2017, with Police occasionally carrying out enforcement of the restrictions. Council officers have monitored traffic conditions within the zone and in surrounding areas. Some complaints were received about parking, especially in Eskbank Road, James Leary Way, Scollan Avenue, Viewbank View, Viewbank Drive, and Eldindean Terrace. To help with the problems some road markings were installed and temporary no-waiting cones were used to deter bad parking. Due to changes in traffic levels, one of the sites for a school crossing patrol was moved (from the junction of Pendreich Drive and Terrace, to the junction of Pendreich Terrace and Eldindean Terrace). Further signs were installed on Eskbank Road to give drivers advance notice of the restrictions on access to Pendreich, and temporary waiting restrictions were introduced at the new school crossing site (although these have not yet been shown with road markings).
- 2.7** After 6 months of operating around Lasswade PS, a questionnaire was sent to residents in and nearby the restricted streets, and (via the school) to parents/carers and staff. This asked if they supported the scheme or not, or if they would support it with changes (for example to times or areas), as well as other questions. In particular, parents/carers were asked how their child travelled to school before and after the changes. This 6 month survey found that over 70% (175 out of 247) of respondents supported the scheme, either as it was (46% i.e.114) or with changes (25% i.e. 61).

There were majorities in favour from each of the four groups surveyed: parents/carers, residents in the restricted zone, nearby residents outwith the restricted zone, and school staff (although for staff this support was only with changes).

The margin was smallest amongst parent/carers, but looking at how the children travelled to school found there was over-representation from parents/carers whose children were driven to school. Previous surveys

had shown less than 15% of pupils were driven to the school streets, but in this survey 40% (44 out of 110) of replies from parents/carers said their children had been driven to school streets and of those who did not support the scheme 60% (29 out of 48) said their children had been driven to the school.

A separate hands-up survey of pupils in Primaries 4-7 in April 2018 found most agreed that there was now a more pleasant environment (106/277) and that they feel safer when walking, cycling or scooting to school (98/177).

- 2.8** A similar questionnaire was sent to residents in and nearby Croft Street and to King's Park PS, but only a few replies were received from residents.
- 2.9** These surveys were repeated after 12 months of operating, with a slight change to ask "Do you want the scheme to continue? Yes/No/Don't know". For Lasswade PS, this found that 60% (146/244) of respondents wanted the scheme to continue, with 31% (76/244) saying no, and 9% (22/244) saying don't know.

The largest response was for yes in each of the three main groups surveyed (parents/carers (67/126), residents in the restricted zone (58/64), and nearby residents outwith the restricted zone (19/39)). Although again the rate of response was disproportionately high from car users opposing the scheme, more parent/carers whose children walked to school replied to support the scheme than in the previous survey. Some of those opposed to the scheme wrongly assumed that the main demand for the scheme had been from residents, rather than other parent/carers whose children walked to school.

The only group with a majority (11/15) against continuing the scheme were the school staff, who have also been restricted from driving to or from the school at the start or finish of the school day. There were several suggestions (from staff and others) that staff should be eligible for permits as residents are.

- 2.10** Most parents/carers who gave a view said that they found it safer when walking, cycling or scooting to school now the scheme is in place. Of those whose children always walked to school before, there were 34 who said it is safer while 17 said it isn't. Of those whose children were driven in cars to school streets before, 9 said it is safer while 14 said it isn't.

A hands-up survey of pupils in Primaries 5-7 in November 2018 found that, as in April, most agreed that there was now a more pleasant environment (49/88) and that they felt safer when walking, cycling or scooting to school (59/94). The greater perceived safety may have helped the increase in active travel: the hands-up survey also found there was an increase in walking to school among these pupils from 49 to 61, and a reduction in being brought by car from 21 to 5.

In addition to the benefits from less traffic in the school streets, more pupils will be benefitting from increased exercise, which has been shown to help them be more alert in class, and improve academic attainment as well as mental wellbeing.

- 2.11** The questionnaire also asked respondents if they wanted additional restrictions, or other changes. Some asked for the restricted time to be reduced at end of day. Some asked for the area to be reduced removing Pendreich Avenue/Grove. The main change asked for, by half (52/103) of residents who replied, and by over a quarter (19/67) of those parent/carers in favour of the scheme, was to have parking restrictions on Eskbank Road. There have been complaints about delays due to parked cars restricting the flow of traffic along the main road and obstructing view of the crossing. Residents have also complained about parked cars obstructing accesses or view for people joining or crossing the main road. Some drivers have also driven partly onto the footway endangering or obstructing pedestrians, and vehicles have been parked with engines running, causing additional pollution.

Other comments were on problems at the junction of Pendreich Terrace and Eldindean Terrace, difficulties crossing Eldindean Road, and requests for parking restrictions or complaints about extra traffic in Viewbank View, Viewbank Drive, James Leary Way, Waugh Path, and Scollon Avenue.

- 2.12** As previously, a similar questionnaire was sent to residents in and nearby Croft Street and to King's Park PS, but again only a few replies (5) were received from residents. This may be because this scheme was smaller and had less effect as many of the parents/carers who drive already use the nearby supermarket car park instead of Croft Street, and a smaller proportion of residents of Croft Street use cars.

Unfortunately the survey of King's Park parents/carers was not sent out from the school until later and only 5 responses have been returned at time of writing. Of the 10 replies, 9 supported continuing the scheme, with several wanting the restriction enforced more or additional restrictions e.g. to limit parking to residents only, and only one reply (from a resident nearby) opposed continuing the scheme.

3 Report Implications

3.1 Resource

The funding for this project came from various sources as part of a larger sustainable transport project. The 'School Streets' element is estimated at £21,000.

3.2 Risk

The primary risk is a lack of appropriate enforcement, leading to vehicles continuing to drive in the streets adjacent to schools. Prior to

bidding for funding, officers negotiated a letter of support from Police Scotland.

Prior to considering a roll out of this initiative to other schools, comprehensive monitoring of the two schools and awareness of adjacent Council projects, should allow robust rationale for additional schools to be included.

3.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- Community safety
- Adult health, care and housing
- Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- Sustainable growth
- Business transformation and Best Value
- None of the above

3.4 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

The aims and objectives of the project are to improve safety for children arriving and leaving school and reduce car use and hence a reduction in carbon emissions. Both of which are key aims of the Single Midlothian Plan.

3.5 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The Council is committed to reducing carbon emissions and this proposal supports that aim. Further to this Midlothian Council has adopted the Scottish Government accident reduction targets for 2020. By reducing conflict at the school gate, the likelihood of a traffic accident is greatly reduced.

3.6 Adopting a Preventative Approach

The project aims to reduce the environmental impacts of travel and promote healthy living.

3.7 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Schools, parents, consultation and promotional events were all included within the scope of this project. In addition SEStran, Paths for All and ward members were identified financial partners in the project

3.8 Ensuring Equalities

The project aims to help people, children and the Midlothian community live a happier, healthier and longer life. Enabling and promoting walking, cycling and public transport use does not affect those who require to drive (for example disabled persons and residents will be exempt from the vehicle ban in school streets).

3.9 Supporting Sustainable Development

The project will aim to offer a more sustainable form of transport use which in turn will lead to lower carbon emissions.

3.10 IT Issues

There are no IT issues associated with this report.

4 Summary

Most parent/carers, most residents in the restricted streets, and most residents in nearby streets who responded to the survey supported continuing this scheme. There were some vociferous objections to the scheme, but these views are only supported by a minority. There have also been suggestions for further work to help make the scheme better and these additional measures can be considered by council officers. It is proposed that Council leaves the necessary Traffic Orders in place to allow 'School Streets' to continue at King's Park and Lasswade primary schools.

5 Recommendations

Council is asked to;

- 1) support continuing 'School Streets' at King's Park Primary, Dalkeith and Lasswade Primary, Bonnyrigg.
- 2) ask the Director, Resources to consider any further requests from schools/parents/carers for School Street schemes and report on any that appear to be worth supporting.

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Background Papers: