

Action on Petitions

ACTION TAKEN ON PETITIONS

Council Members are asked to note the action taken in relation to the under-mentioned petitions which were presented to Council:-

- (i) **Petition from residents calling on the reinstatement of the Go North East 36 Bus to serve the Houghton-Le-Spring – Herrington and Silksworth Areas.**

Detail of the Petition and Background

At the meeting of Council on 19 June 2019 a petition was presented by Councillor G. Walker, signed mainly by residents of New Herrington, requesting the reinstatement of Go North East Service 36 serving the Houghton le Spring, Herrington and Silksworth Areas.

The petition raised inter-alia, a number of issues including connectivity with other neighbouring areas, extended journey times, reduced frequencies, impact on older and younger residents, access to medical facilities, access to Farrington School and claimed that Go North East had reneged on a previous commitment to continue the service.

Actions Taken

Sunderland City Council has no powers in relation to bus services. The City Council's powers in this context are limited to influencing or lobbying the commercial operators and requesting Nexus, the Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive, to secure additional services to make good any gaps in the commercial network. Whilst Nexus are able to secure socially necessary bus services not provided by the commercial operators, in practice budgetary constraints mean that the scope for action is quite limited. In either instance the final decision on whether to reinstate the service will rest with the operator or Nexus.

Go North East announced a number of network changes to take place in May of this year. Nexus provided a briefing to the Portfolio Holder and officers which raised a number of concerns, one of which was the partial withdrawal of service 238 and also the service 36. The withdrawal of 36 was of concern because of the lost links as described in the petition and the withdrawal of service 238 would have left many Sunderland residents without any bus service at all.

This matter particularly affects older and very young residents in the affected area along with all others who are dependent on public transport in conducting essential personal business.

Nexus endeavoured to manage this unfortunate situation with a very limited budget. The Portfolio Holder wrote to the Managing Director of Nexus and the immediate accessibility issue caused by the withdrawal of service 238 was alleviated by the introduction of secured service 79. However, there were insufficient funds to address the problem of the 36 withdrawal which was covered by other services. Existing service TB20 was extended to cover an unserved portion of the route in Fence Houses (again replacing the only bus in the area).

Following a subsequent meeting with the residents of Oakfield Court, East Herrington, Go North East promised to look at resolving the situation of lost connectivity between East Herrington and Silksworth through registering a change to service 33. The link was restored with effect from 21 July. This change should resolve most of the points raised in the petition.

Councillor G. Walker and the lead petitioner have been advised of the outcome.

(ii) Petition requesting the introduction traffic calming measures such as chicanes on Saint Luke's Road to reduce vehicle speeds

At the meeting of Council on 18 September 2019 a petition was presented by Councillor Haswell containing 174 signatures from residents requesting the introduction traffic calming measures such as chicanes on Saint Luke's Road to reduce vehicle speeds.

After consideration by Council Officers, the outcome of the petition is as follows:-

To decline the petition requesting Sunderland City Council introduce traffic calming measures such as chicanes on Saint Luke's Road to reduce vehicle speeds.

An examination of the accident/collision history for St Luke's Road indicated that over the latest 5-year period to the end of July 2019, Northumbria Police have reported that 2 personal injury accidents have occurred at this location. This accident/collision rate is considered good, particularly given the relatively high volumes of traffic utilising this route.

The recent introduction of a 20mph speed limit on St Luke's Road is a traffic management measure that should help reduce vehicle speeds. The success of this scheme will be reviewed in 12 months-time, after it has had time to become established.

Northumbria Police will be asked to continue undertaking speed enforcement action on this road.

It is because of the above, additional traffic calming measures are not considered necessary at this time.

The local ward councillors, as lead petitioners, have been advised of the outcome.

(iii) Petition requesting the upgrade to the Thompson Road/Carley Road junction on the grounds of safety

At the meeting of Council on 18 September 2019 a petition was presented by Councillors Butler, Chequer and Samuels on behalf of the residents of Southwick containing 1,651 signatures requesting the Council to upgrade the Thompson Road/Carley Road junction on the grounds of safety.

The petitioners reported that this was following long-standing concerns and in the light of numerous accidents that had happened in a short space of time that year that had seen the road being named 'the notorious road' by Sunderland Echo. The petitioners urged the council to listen to residents and urgently review the junction.

On further examination of the petition by officers, the 883 electronic signatures of the 1,651 submitted appear to be for a second petition that stated as follows:-

"Install traffic lights on the junction of Carley Road and Thompson Road in Sunderland.

Why is this important?

Tonight, there has been a bad car crash on this awful junction. The lack of lights on this junction leads to daily near misses on an incredibly busy cross road and it is only time before somebody is killed. It is essential pressure is put on the City Council to install these lights and also ensure that they are not able to claim that they were unaware of the problems on this junction. If they fail to deal with the issues on this junction they need to be aware that local voters will hold them responsible for their failure to keep local people safe."

As the petitions had a similar intent it was decided to treat both petitions as one and investigate accordingly.

After consideration by Council Officers, the outcome of the petition is as follows:-

To decline the petition as the Thompson Road/Carley Hill Road junction is not considered to be inherently unsafe, without the contributory factors involved and detailed in the accident/collision investigation.

In addition, the request to introduce traffic signals to this junction is also declined as the proposals requested by the petitioners would lead to significant capacity issues at this junction, result in the formation of long vehicle queues and introduce unnecessary vehicle delay. This could lead to driver impatience occurring and potential red light running, both of which could increase accidents/collisions at this junction.

The local ward councillors, as lead petitioners, have been advised of the outcome.

(iv) General condition of the footpaths and surfaces to Mayfield Road South Hylton and in particular a block of lock up garages

At the meeting of Council on 18 September 2019, a petition was presented by Councillor Mann signed by residents of Mayfield Road requesting that Council representatives look into the general condition of the private residential street of Mayfield Road, specifically a block of garages and the condition of the road and footpath surfaces.

A copy of the petition was forwarded to the Development Management Compliance team to investigate the condition of the garage block in private ownership, having regard to the possible use of powers under the Town and Country Planning Act in respect of land and buildings whose appearance, normally through neglect, has an adverse impact on the amenity of the neighbourhood.

An inspection was made of the properties and an approach was made to the landowner, highlighting the main visual defects which included heavily-peeled paint to the timber fascia boards and some growth of weeds and bushes on the tarmac-surfaced apron to the front.

As a matter of practice prior to any consideration of formal action, the landowner was asked to undertake voluntary remedial works aimed to improve the appearance of the garage block prior to a proposed further inspection during the week commencing Monday 11 November 2019.

During the course of a site inspection on Wednesday 13 November, it was noted that weeds and bushes had been cleared, new white plastic fascia boards fitted to the front of the garages and the front edge of the mineral felt roofs made good. These works had considerably improved the appearance of the garage block, as viewed from the public realm.

The works undertaken by the landowner were acknowledged and the lead petitioner and Councillor Mann advised that the works voluntarily undertaken were sufficient not to warrant any further action.

(v) Request to remove the bus lane at the Board Inn roundabout in Herrington

At the meeting of Council on 19 June 2019 a petition was presented by Councillor McDonough containing 321 signatures from 212 properties requesting the Council to remove the bus lane at the Board Inn roundabout in Herrington.

Although no reason was given by the petitioners for the removal of the Bus Lane, an investigation had been undertaken by officers into its operation.

It should be noted that the Bus Lane referred to in the petition is actually a “No Car Lane.”

It is often a wide-spread misconception that the introduction of Bus Lane/No Car Lanes onto the highway infrastructure will create congestion, i.e. “if you remove a lane from the road, you must reduce the capacity of the network, and hence the level of congestion goes up.” This assumption is often based on visual evidence, i.e. when Bus Lane/No Car Lanes are put in the traffic queues increase. However, in the urban environment, congestion almost always occurs around junctions and consequently, it is the junctions that are constraining capacity and not the loss of a lane.

Although this is a relatively short No Car Lane, these have significant benefits to, in particular, the bus operators. These lanes enable public transport to bypass queues on the approach to the roundabout and their importance is recognised nationally as a bus priority measure.

The bus operators have a high frequency of services operating along this route which are well utilised, and the services have benefitted significantly from the presence of a No Car Lane. The bus operators have stated that given the services which run along this route, the removal of any No Car Lanes could result in major service disruption.

The Cirtas Accident Data System indicates that, in the last three-year period to the end of July 2019, Northumbria Police recorded that four personal injury accidents have occurred within 100m of the roundabout. The opinion of Northumbria Police investigations into each of the accidents indicated that in their opinion, the No Car Lane was not a contributory factor in the accident occurring.

The accident data record for this junction is good considering that it is a busy urban route into and out of the City. Most drivers who are using this junction can negotiate while taking the appropriate due care and attention. There is no indication that the No Car Lane has had a negative impact on the overall road safety.

On 1 May 2019, the UK Parliament declared a climate emergency. With the increasing amount of carbon in our atmosphere we need to make a modal shift into using more sustainable travel around our City. The introduction of

No Car Lanes around the City allows for better transport links and encourages motorists to use alternative modes of sustainable transport helping to reduce Sunderland's carbon footprint.

As a consequence of the above, it is considered that the No Car Lane on Durham Road is operating successfully and has the full support of Nexus and the bus operators.

Therefore, the petition is declined and no changes are to be made to the No car Lanes operation at this moment in time.

Councillor McDonough and the lead petitioner have been advised of the outcome.