

(Published on the One Jesmond website 22/07/23. Copied into Word document by J.S.G 22/07/23)

One Jesmond's response to Newcastle City Council's interim report on the East Jesmond LTN.

Who is One Jesmond?

One Jesmond is a local resident and business group opposed to the Jesmond East Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN) trial scheme. It was established in response to the introduction of the LTN by Newcastle City Council (NCC) in March 2023. The LTN imposed bollards on our streets, creating a physical barrier that divides our community in half, greatly restricting access and freedom of movement for residents, visitors and the emergency services. The LTN was introduced by NCC on short notice without any adequate level of consultation and has resulted in daily traffic gridlock, increased emissions from standing traffic and longer journey times, both within Jesmond and its neighbouring areas. Our local businesses have suffered as a result. Our aim is to persuade NCC to honour its own code of conduct, remove the bollards and to re-unite and revitalise our community. We also believe that any future traffic schemes proposed by NCC must be subject to genuine consultation with residents and businesses.

We set up One Jesmond to move the discussion around the LTN away from polarising social media debate. One Jesmond aims to proactively improve the situation through constructive engagement with residents, businesses, NCC and other groups, so that all interested parties feel involved and consulted.

One Jesmond is non-party political and is not funded by or affiliated with any other group. We support the goals of reducing traffic emissions and improving public transport options in Newcastle, including by encouraging walking and cycling. We also recognise the seriousness of climate change and the need to act now in response to it. However, the LTN does not credibly address any of these issues and has instead had a detrimental and damaging everyday impact on the lives of our residents and neighbours. Contact details for One Jesmond, including our website and Twitter account, are at the bottom of this report.

Why have we produced this report now?

In June 2023, half way through the LTN trial period, NCC published an Interim Report summarising its "initial findings" on the LTN. Echoing NCC's general track record in respect of the LTN, the Interim Report is presented without much of the relevant and necessary context, is in parts misleading and presents cherry-picked data (omitting much of the relevant evidence available) in order to create the false impression that the LTN has largely been a success. We will highlight these issues in this report.

Moreover, the very real negative effects of the LTN, which have been widely reported by residents and businesses across a variety of media, appear to have been omitted or glossed over. Again, we want to bring these to the attention of residents and other interested parties now, before the LTN consultation period expires in September.

However, it was what appears to be the suppression or ignorance by NCC of a key response concerning the impact of the LTN on public safety and order provided by Northumbria Police that was the catalyst for this report being produced. NCC's unwillingness to acknowledge, address or remedy Northumbria Police's concerns in any meaningful way led us to believe that it was essential that people are made fully aware of the true situation facing local residents and businesses.

Background to the LTN and NCC's failure to adequately consult residents before implementation

NCC formally introduced its policy of creating LTNs in a Cabinet report in June 2021. In this report, NCC committed that:

“Communication and engagement will take place with relevant members, residents, businesses and stakeholders ahead of implementation of [LTN] schemes”.

In October 2022, a second NCC Cabinet Report set out a process for implementing LTNs, which included a commitment to “Pre-consultation on proposals with residents and businesses”, during which:

“Opinions are sought about local issues and additional ideas generated... This stage will lead to the development of a single neighbourhood plan containing schemes for implementation or trial”.

These clear commitments to properly consult with residents and businesses prior to the implementation of any scheme have not been honoured by NCC in Jesmond. NCC’s engagement with the community in the affected area consisted of a leaflet drop in January 2022 of 3,500 flyers setting out in generic terms a programme to reduce traffic on local streets, inviting comments from residents by 31 January 2022 – a very short period – on any issues they would like to be considered. The flyer made no mention of large scale road closures and only touched on the idea of “trialling the closure of through routes” part-way through a list of potential options, including new crossings, tightening junctions to reduce traffic speeds or introducing school streets.

Clearly, unaddressed flyers, which often end up being mixed-up with unsolicited spam and are immediately discarded, were not an appropriate method for communicating NCC’s plans. NCC could have written formally to all residents and businesses in the area but chose not to. Nor were the flyers in any way sufficient in terms of providing details of what might be implemented. Unsurprisingly, the number of responses to the flyer was woeful: in a response to Freedom of Information (FOI) request, NCC confirmed that only 119 email and 9 telephone responses were received by NCC up to 31 January 2022, a return of only 3.6% on the 3,500 flyers apparently distributed.

Representatives of NCC have since publicly acknowledged, on several occasions, the inadequacy of this. However, it should have been clear to NCC, at the time, that its efforts to obtain feedback had failed and that as a result, the majority of residents would have little or no idea that a LTN was being considered for implementation. It is worth pointing out that we live in a democracy and, as such, the city council is not there to simply dictate to us. They are our elected representatives.

Yet, at the same time, NCC was actively seeking the input of pro-cycling campaign groups in formulating its plan for LTNs. A response to a FOI request has confirmed that a Jesmond-specific cycling group was liaising with NCC in January 2022. This group had prepared a proposed LTN scheme for Jesmond, which it shared with NCC in January 2022. This proposed scheme, which included the use of “modal filters”, i.e., bollards, was very similar to the LTN ultimately introduced by NCC in March 2023. Notably, details of the group’s proposed scheme or involvement were not circulated by NCC to residents or businesses as part of the consultation process described above, even though this was, in large part, the scheme that was finally imposed.

Although the January 2022 flyer promised “we will update you soon on proposals for your area”, NCC did not provide any further detail on its plans until February 2023, the month before the LTN was implemented. What NCC described as a “pre-consultation” on the LTN was hosted on NCC’s online Commonplace engagement platform from 7 February to 19 February, in which NCC confirmed that it intended to shut five roads in Jesmond to through vehicular traffic using bollards. The information on Commonplace included several unclear maps of the affected roads, some of which did not make clear the actual locations where bollards were going to be placed.

Despite the low response rate to the January 2022 leaflets, the Council accompanied its Commonplace information with another door drop of leaflets, this time only 3,250, some of which went to Sandyford. Residents who were aware of the Commonplace site were invited to provide comments on the proposed LTN over only 12 days, a completely inadequate period of time for consultation.

NCC state that 344 respondents provided comments on the proposed LTN, raising issues such as the likely traffic impact on Grosvenor Road and Grosvenor Avenue (the streets linking Osborne Avenue and Jesmond Dene Road which were to remain open), poor access to streets via Jesmond Dene Road, increased traffic on boundary roads, negative impacts on local businesses, as well as criticism of NCC's consultation process and lack of evidential basis for the LTN. Despite these concerns being raised, NCC implemented the LTN without any further change on 6 March 2023, thereby physically dividing Jesmond for at least 18 months. As a result of NCC's failure to adequately consult on the LTN before it was imposed, very many residents and businesses had little idea of the extent and impact of the restrictions until the bollards were installed.

The timing of the LTN consultation period is not fair or representative

Jesmond is home to a large seasonal student population, with around 25% of its population living in Jesmond only during the academic year: primarily between late September and early June. Jesmond is also home to several large primary and secondary schools.

NCC introduced the LTN in early March 2023, with its six-month public consultation period running until 10 September 2023. Therefore, almost three months of this period coincide with the time of year when most of Jesmond's student population is not in residence and many of the streets that have a high concentration of student houses are largely free of parked cars and student traffic. School run traffic will also reduce over the summer. Moreover, the trial period also coincides with the warmer and drier spring and summer months, when more people naturally walk and cycle instead of using cars.

Therefore, any traffic, emissions or mode of travel data that is collected during the trial period cannot be considered representative of the likely full-year impact of the LTN and should not be relied on to support the LTN. Traffic levels in Jesmond always reduce over the summer months and any observed reduction is unlikely to be attributable to the LTN.

Of course, the true acid test for the LTN would be from September 2023 onwards, when schools and the universities return and the weather worsens, leading to a predictable increase in the number of car journeys and vehicles being used and parked in Jesmond. Conveniently for NCC, this is the very point at which the LTN consultation period ends, depriving residents of the opportunity to provide continuing feedback, even though the trial is due to continue for another full year.

Initial chaos caused by the LTN

NCC states that it had discussions with the local Fire, Police and Ambulance services in September 2022 to establish emergency access requirements within the LTN area. As a consequence of this, it was decided that Grosvenor Road and Grosvenor Avenue would remain open to through vehicular traffic in order to provide East-West access for emergency vehicles. All other streets running between Osborne Road and Jesmond Dene Road would be blocked.

As soon as the LTN was implemented, Grosvenor Road and Grosvenor Avenue, both narrow streets with on-street parking on both sides of the road, took on an unsustainably high volume of traffic, leading to dangerous road conditions and a raft of resident complaints. The risk of congestion on Grosvenor Road had been highlighted in residents' comments prior to the implementation of the LTN, feedback that was obviously ignored.

NCC representatives acknowledged this critical issue at an open residents' meeting on 15 March 2023 – to date the only open "town hall" style meeting with NCC that has taken place – and resolved to make amendments to the LTN. On 31 March 2023, additional bollards were placed on the junctions of Grosvenor Road and Jesmond Dene Road, and Akenside Terrace and Jesmond Road. The closure of Grosvenor Road resulted in the complete physical division of Jesmond between Osborne Road and Jesmond Dene Road.

While NCC has acknowledged that the additional bollards were necessitated by a significant increase in traffic caused by the LTN, the Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders that implemented the additional bollards make clear that they are justified “by reason of the likelihood of danger to the public”. In other words, the LTN had directly caused an increased likelihood of danger to the public on the affected roads.

The immediate impact of the LTN on Jesmond’s major roads, principally Jesmond Road and Osborne Road and their junction, was obvious. While weekday peak time congestion was always experienced on these roads, it increased immediately, with longer tailbacks and more stationary traffic spread across a wider period of time, including at the weekend. Residents reported significantly extended journey times and delays on bus routes, in particular to the Q3 route that travels along Osborne Road.

The impact was also felt far wider than in Jesmond, as travellers attempting to access Newcastle from the east suffered from queues that ran past the Corner House and down the Coast Road.

Continuing issues

These congestion issues and delays to journeys have continued in the months since the LTN was introduced. Prior to the LTN, traffic was relatively well distributed over the multiple routes through the area and while some peak time congestion was inevitable, it was rarely a major issue for the majority of residents. Following the implementation of the LTN, all traffic has no choice other than to use only Osborne Road and Jesmond Road for entry and access to Jesmond, as well as for travelling through the area. The Osborne Road and Jesmond Road junction has become almost un-useable at peak times. As traffic has, quite literally, nowhere else to go, the gridlock is very unlikely to improve over time and will only worsen in autumn and winter. We have observed several incidents of road rage caused by frustration at the tailbacks and an increased incidence of collisions.

Whilst the LTN does have its supporters, the most vocal of whom are prominent members of the local cycling campaign groups, there is no doubt that the LTN simply does not work for the majority of residents. In fact, the LTN has created far more problems for the residents of Jesmond and further afield than it has had any positive impact. The impact is particularly felt by residents who are more reliant on their cars: the elderly, disabled and families with young/multiple children. The LTN makes essential daily activities, many of which take place during peak travel times, far harder and more stressful to achieve. These overwhelmingly negative outcomes represent a clear failure of governance by NCC.

Unsurprisingly, there have been several visible manifestations of public dissatisfaction with the LTN. A number of protests against it have taken place at the junction of Osborne Road and Jesmond Road over the past few months. Many local businesses and shops display posters and leaflets produced by One Jesmond. In the May 2023 local elections, Labour lost its seat in the North Jesmond ward to a Liberal Democrat candidate who actively campaigned against the LTN. A Change.org petition demanding the removal of the LTN, organised by a One Jesmond member, has gained over 4,250 signatures and was formally presented to NCC on 12 July 2023. Our story has also gained attention in the media: the LTN and our campaign has featured on the front pages of The Journal, Evening Chronicle and on BBC Look North, as well as in The Daily Telegraph and Private Eye nationally.

Commonplace Feedback

NCC uses the online Commonplace platform to gather feedback on the LTN. NCC representatives actively direct individual complaints and evidence on the LTN towards Commonplace, so we would encourage any feedback to be posted on Commonplace as soon as possible.

An early problem with Commonplace was that the design of its landing page made it appear that any comment made regarding the LTN – whether positive or negative – was in agreement or supportive of the scheme. This gave a false impression to anyone accessing the site that there was overwhelming support for the LTN, whereas in fact the true situation was completely different. It took persistent requests from a resident to NCC to have this misleading display changed.

As an individual accessing the Commonplace platform, it is almost impossible to analyse the scale or detail of the feedback given. However, even on NCC's own analysis of the data, provided in its June 2023 Interim Report, it is clear that the majority of feedback posted on Commonplace is negative. NCC states that, as of 14 June 2023, 1,539 individuals have provided a response, with a total of 2,361 comments. Of the 2,361 comments, only 327 are positive and 23 are mostly positive, a positive return of only 14.8%. By contrast, there are 1,109 negative comments, 48 mostly negative, 840 with no sentiment chosen and 19 neutral comments. These figures demonstrate that there is no majority of support for the LTN that by far the most comments fall into a negative category. NCC cannot, therefore, claim any mandate of popular support for the LTN through its own feedback platform.

The nature of the comments on Commonplace echoes the experiences we, and others, have all faced over the past few months: everyday essential journeys made longer and more stressful; working parents struggling to get children to school/activities and then on to work on time; residents experiencing traffic build-up and heightened emissions levels outside their houses; difficulties faced by the elderly and disabled; businesses reporting lower footfall and takings; and perhaps most powerfully, a real sense of injustice that the majority of residents have suffered for the potential gain of a small minority.

We are now very concerned that NCC seems to be shifting the goal posts for how Commonplace feedback will be reviewed and weighted. Previously, NCC gave the impression that all comments would be heard and considered. However, at the recent NCC meeting on 12 July 2023, the council then stated that feedback from residents in the recently closed streets will receive greater weighting in the final analysis. As we strongly believe that the LTN affects all residents of Jesmond, as well as our neighbours elsewhere, we consider this to be a serious backwards step and one that suggests ill will on the part of NCC and a desire to select evidence that supports their favoured outcome. We have very little confidence that the Commonplace material will be comprehensively or competently analysed, so we encourage NCC to use the material as fairly and openly as possible. NCC also made a major change in its consultation procedure, stating at that meeting that it now requires evidence to support comments. So far, explanation of what constitutes acceptable evidence has not been forthcoming.

The LTN's negative effect on business

One of the most concerning aspects of NCC's introduction of the LTN has been its cloth-eared approach to local business. Businesses were ignored during the pre-consultation period, and NCC's Cabinet member for a Connected, Clean City was seen stating at the Jesmond Library meeting on 15 March 2023 that she was not interested in business. There is no tailored feedback platform available for businesses to comment on the LTN; they are required to use the basic Commonplace platform alongside individuals. Ignoring business is to ignore a vital piece of what makes Jesmond so unique: quality, often smaller-scale or closely-held privately owned firms, many of them specialist, whether long-established or more recent additions, who rely on their premises being accessible to visitors from within the area or elsewhere.

We have heard numerous complaints from retailers about how the LTN has made it harder to trade.

Even worse, businesses who provide vital non-profit community services, such as Jesmond Pool and our local GP surgeries (these are businesses and employers too!), report difficulties in retaining staff because of commutes that have been made unrealistic and unbearable by the LTN.

One Jesmond decided to initiate a confidential online business survey. We have already had 50 local businesses respond, many of them among our most long-established and best loved. Their responses provide a stark insight into the negative impact the LTN is having on them and their long-term sustainability.

In summary, of the 50 responses, all but one said that the introduction of the LTN trial had negatively affected their business. In addition:

- 98 % do not support the LTN in its current form
- 74 % reported a reduction in turnover
- 80 % reported a loss of customers
- 84 % reported that the LTN created a risk to the future sustainability of their business
- 34 % had been forced to reduce staff hours as a result of the LTN
- 18 % had been forced to let staff go because of the LTN
- 74 % thought the LTN should be scrapped and NCC should then consult with residents and business properly on a more workable alternative.

We also asked about concerns regarding increased traffic pollution and emissions produced by idling stationary vehicles because of the LTN congestion:

- 68.1 % were concerned about the effect on their own health
- 61.7 % were concerned about the effect on their customers' health
- 89.4 % were concerned about the effect on the wider environment

At the NCC meeting on 12 July 2023, NCC representatives took the position that they require documentary evidence from businesses to support any claim of negative financial impact caused by the LTN. This is an absurd position for NCC to adopt, and strongly suggests that NCC does not trust rates and council tax-paying business owners to provide honest feedback or that NCC wishes to impose an unreasonable hurdle against feedback that it fears will be overwhelmingly negative. It appears that NCC's evidence requirement is especially onerous for businesses. To require businesses to provide confidential financial statements and other business records to NCC, in circumstances when trade over the past few years has already been hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of global events, is absolutely ridiculous.

NCC's interim report lacks credibility

We are concerned that NCC's Interim Report presents a selective and unrepresentative picture of the first three months of the LTN. Continuing on the theme of local business, it is notable that the position of businesses is not mentioned at all in the Interim Report, apart from in comments directly cited from Commonplace users. It seems that while residents clearly care about their local businesses, NCC does not.

Moreover, the Interim Report contains much, seemingly cherry picked and irrelevant, data to present a falsely positive impression of the LTN. It also omits many relevant and negative impacts. For example:

- Although only around 14% of the comments that NCC have received about the LTN on Commonplace are fully in support of it, the Interim Report presents 11 comments in favour versus 13

negative comments. This is not a representative selection given the balance of positive versus negative comments.

➤ Considerable space is given over to graphs showing a reduction of traffic on bollarded roads following the imposition of the LTN (including Jesmond Dene Road and Akenside Terrace, neither of which form part of the LTN and are subject to separate temporary closures). It is a blatant truism that traffic on newly dead-end streets will reduce; what about full analysis of the streets that carry the displaced traffic?

➤ The baseline data used for the comparison of average weekday vehicle counts on the A1058 Coast Road at Cradlewell following the commencement of the LTN is sourced from May to June 2019, rather than for the months immediately preceding the LTN. Why is this? Comparing pre-COVID data to post-LTN data is completely misrepresentative given the consequent shifts in working practises caused by the pandemic. Unsurprisingly, it shows a misleading reduction in traffic volume, but this is a false comparison and does not reflect the very obvious increase in congestion that we have experienced since March 2023. We therefore need to see the vehicle count comparison for the period immediately before the LTN to be able to understand the LTN's impact.

➤ The Interim Report's main findings regarding journey times are also fatally flawed by their reliance on comparisons with 2019 data. Furthermore, the graphical analysis regarding journey times refers to journey times between Benfield Road and Sandyford Road. While we agree that there is a significant impact on journey times through the Cradlewell Bypass and on to the Coast Road to the east, journey times should be measured to Osborne Road, rather than to Sandyford Road, as this captures the critical Osborne Road/Jesmond Road junction. Oddly, graphs showing journey times from Benfield Road to Osborne Road are included in the appendix to the Interim Report, but not in the main body.

➤ There is no analysis whatsoever of the impact on journey times on Osborne Road. We believe that if proper analysis was done of journey times pre and post the LTN, a significant increase in journey times would be seen, in particular on the stretch between Clayton Road and Jesmond Road and, at peak times, going as far north as North Jesmond Avenue. The increased congestion on Osborne Road has had a major detrimental impact on the punctuality of the Q3 bus route.

➤ The obvious problem of increased traffic emissions and pollution caused by greater levels of standing traffic is not subject to any meaningful analysis. NCC placed two air quality monitoring devices on Osborne Road in April 2023, one at the junction with Grosvenor Road and the other opposite Jesmond Nursery. Therefore, conveniently for NCC, there is no prior data to provide a comparison of air quality following the imposition of the LTN. NCC further refers to air quality data being collected at a monitoring site on Jesmond Road but does not actually provide any data or analysis. NCC states that data collected at the Osborne Road sites shows that NO2 levels for April 2023 were within the average limits. However, there is no breakdown of whether peak travel time air quality is acceptable. We also note that the monitoring unit opposite Jesmond Nursery is sited on the northbound carriageway, which suffers far less congestion than southbound, and is further away from Jesmond Nursery's facilities. This is a major source of concern for parents of children at Jesmond Nursery who do not have accurate data for air quality.

NCC is not abiding by its own Code of Conduct

NCC is bound by its code of conduct, which states:

"The City Council is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this. Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from

the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing. Holders of public office should be truthful”.

We consider that NCC has not upheld the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability in respect of the LTN. As detailed above, the pre-consultation process left much to be desired in terms of the open and transparent provision of information, and since the imposition of the LTN, NCC and its representatives have not made themselves available to discuss the many issues raised by affected residents and businesses. Since the 15 March meeting at Jesmond Library, NCC has battened down the hatches.

Residents have been compelled to issue several FOI requests to NCC and other public authorities to obtain even the most basic relevant information relating to the LTN. Typically, responses to these requests have been delayed and have rarely complied with the 20-working day statutory response period. If viewed cynically, it appears that NCC officers are being, or have been instructed to be, uncooperative in response to FOI requests.

The entire policy basis of the LTN appears to be the creation of a “safer, cleaner and greener neighbourhood”. The specific meaning of this objective has never been explained or fleshed out by NCC, and no evidence has ever been provided by NCC that establishes that Jesmond was not sufficiently safe, clean or green beforehand. By framing the issues in such a vague, opaque way, it seems that NCC has created a situation in which there are no quantifiable metrics by which success or failure can be assessed.

Doing our own research, if we consider whether Jesmond needs to be a “safer” neighbourhood, we have been able to identify relevant data on the North East Traffic and Accident Data Unit website that suggests that, in the area roughly equivalent to the LTN, in the past 19 years there have been: 10 slight injuries to pedestrians, 18 slight injuries to motorists, 2 slight injuries to motorcyclists, 6 slight injuries to pedal cyclists and 3 slight injuries to other vehicle users. In the same period, there have been 2 serious injuries to pedestrians, 2 serious injuries to motorists and 2 serious injuries to pedal cyclists. While any injury is obviously regrettable, this relatively low accident rate within the LTN over the past two decades would not support the need for the restrictions imposed by the LTN.

In terms of “cleaner and greener”, again, there is no evidential basis to establish what the LTN is aiming to achieve, or on what metrics any success is to be assessed. NCC’s Interim Report suggests that air quality and emissions might be relevant, but as explained above, we do not know what the relevant emissions levels were before the LTN was introduced. NCC’s analysis of present emissions is barely existent.

NCC’s code of conduct states that holders of public office should submit themselves to scrutiny, be truthful and accountable. In our experience, NCC’s representatives have shown themselves to be defensive, elusive and obfuscatory in the face of scrutiny and criticism. There are several examples of this:

- At the 15 March 2023 residents’ meeting at Jesmond Library, the NCC Cabinet member bluntly informed attendees that the LTN trial and consultation process was “not a referendum” and that the option of simply removing the bollards and returning to the status quo was not to be countenanced.
- When the local news media covered our petition opposing the LTN reaching 1,700 signatures, the NCC’s spokesperson’s response did not acknowledge the legitimate concerns and instead tried to deflect and undermine the petition by making claims that it contained factual errors. These alleged factual errors have not subsequently been detailed or backed-up by any evidence.
- A request by a member of One Jesmond to add an agenda item regarding the LTN to a NCC Audit Committee meeting on 7 July 2023 was refused. Our member went to the meeting anyway and requested permission to speak, which was ultimately granted but only after opposition. In the

aftermath of this meeting, it was revealed that the NCC Cabinet member had filed a complaint against the Audit Committee for an unspecified reason. NCC members present at the Audit Committee meeting have said that NCC would commission an internal review to examine the procedures undertaken in creating LTNs in Newcastle.

- During the NCC meeting when our petition was formally presented, the NCC Cabinet member made a disingenuous statement that key workers had been able to obtain keys to unlock bollards within the LTN to facilitate their access, whereas the experience of an on-call medic member of One Jesmond who had requested a key proves otherwise.
- Most egregiously, the failure of NCC to disclose key feedback from Northumbria Police outlining its concerns about the impact on policing of the LTN, contrary to all of NCC's statements regarding the input received from the emergency services.

NCC withheld serious public safety and policing concerns raised by Northumbria Police NCC has maintained, throughout the process, that it has not received any objections to or concerns regarding the LTN from the Police, Ambulance and Fire services. NCC did confirm that the emergency services requested that one road remain open to through vehicular traffic within the LTN (which was Grosvenor Road). As we have seen, this through road was shut by NCC shortly after the LTN was imposed, thereby prioritising the viability of the LTN over maintaining emergency service access.

Contrary to NCC's statements, we have seen and heard several examples of police cars and ambulances impeded while on "blue light" journeys. Most commonly, we have seen emergency service vehicles stuck in traffic or waiting at our overwhelmed junctions. We also have video evidence of emergency vehicles driving up streets within the LTN and being forced to turn around and re-trace their journey on discovering that the street is blocked by bollards. It is a commonly held feeling within the community that it is only a matter of time before a serious incident occurs as a result of delays to emergency vehicles. This is a feeling shared by several ambulance crew members that One Jesmond members have spoken to.

Members of One Jesmond have been active in making several FOI requests to try to find out the true picture when it comes to NCC's consultation with the emergency services. We have not yet received any response in respect of the Ambulance service. A FOI response was provided in respect of the Fire service; however, it was so heavily redacted that it is difficult to draw any conclusions from it. On 6 July 2023, NCC published a post on Commonplace stating that the Ambulance service "have not had any incidents raised internally" and that the Fire service "have experienced no adverse operational impact as a result of the LTN". These anodyne responses are so brief that we find it hard to believe that there has been no more detailed discussion between these services and NCC.

The situation with Northumbria Police, in contrast, could not be further from NCC's stated position. A One Jesmond member obtained a lengthy FOI response from Northumbria Police, which confirmed that they did have significant concerns about the LTN. A full copy of this FOI response is available on our website, but we have included the following extracts here that highlight these serious issues:

"Police have received plans for an experimental traffic regulation order, which has been implemented with effect from March 2023... In effect, this prevents any through traffic in the area of Jesmond Dene Road and Osborne Road at all times. Careful consideration has been given to the impact that this may have from the perspective of Northumbria Police's ability to deliver effective service in the area. Our considerations are as follows:

- This implementation is likely and has increased the time taken to deploy to incidents in the area of Jesmond. This is due to an overall increase in traffic in the area of Jesmond Road up to its junction

with Osborne Road... The majority of incidents attended would therefore result in police response times extended due to the high volume of traffic in the southern region of Jesmond and Sandyford...

- As the bollards which have been erected have been placed to the central junctions of each affected street, this presents a unique risk of further delaying response times... In a time-critical incident, this can make a substantial difference to our response times
- In the event of a police van or carrier attending any street in the applicable area, the existing road layout means that it is not possible to turn such vehicles around. Prior to the installation of the bollards, this risk is remedied by the driver simply exiting the street in their initial direction of travel. However, this is no longer possible and results in the requirement for protracted reversing onto a main road. This manoeuvre is exacerbated when the driver is responding to a subsequent urgent callout.
- Operating Oak is a joint partnership operation funded by the local universities which deals with student ASB, crime prevention and safeguarding... Due to the restrictions in place this is adding additional traveling time to officers who may need to travel from the east to the west of the area and to do this use the main arterial roads as opposed to utilising the previous through roads.
- Not only will there be added time attending incidents due to the restrictions, but our fuel consumption will be greater.

From a policing perspective, our overall consideration is that the implementation of this TRO is likely to adversely impact our ability to provide effective policing in the area.”

The FOI response further confirmed that Northumbria Police representatives had met with NCC’s Transport Team on 2 May 2023 and had highlighted their concerns regarding the potential impact of the LTN on response times. This obviously flies in the face of all of NCC’s prior statements about receiving no objections from the Police and calls in to question the reliability of all of NCC’s other assurances about the emergency services. Would residents have been made aware of the Police’s concerns without the FOI request being made?

The Evening Chronicle reported on the Northumbria Police FOI response on 18 June 2023. NCC issued a hasty statement on the same day: “No elected member of the Labour administration was aware of the meeting with Northumbria Police on May 2 or the content of any discussion until receiving correspondence from a resident on June 12. Following this urgent action was requested”.

This statement, a clear attempt to shift the blame away from the elected administration on to NCC’s salaried employees, completely misses the point. It is NCC’s collective duty, both officers and elected representatives together, to respond appropriately to significant concerns raised by the Police. Are residents to believe that a competent Transport Team should not have acted to deal with these concerns?

Notably, in its statement, NCC does admit that it became aware of its own 2 May meeting with Northumbria Police on 12 June, two days before NCC’s Interim Report on the LTN was released on 14 June. Despite having knowledge of the Police’s concerns on 12 June at the very latest, the Interim Report makes no reference to these concerns whatsoever.

The “urgent action” promised in NCC’s 18 June statement has come to nothing. Instead, we received a bland Joint Statement from NCC and Northumbria Police on 19 June 2023, in which it was stated that “The Council’s trial will continue with the support of Northumbria Police... At this stage it is too early to fully understand the full impact but we will work together to analyse the data with public

safety a top priority". This "joint" statement does not appear on Northumbria Police's own website, which must call in to question how much support there is for it within the Police.

We are now told that the NCC internal review of LTN procedures, which was announced after the 7 July 2023 NCC Audit Committee meeting, was instigated by the Council Leader and the Cabinet member for a Connected, Clean City, following the revelation of Northumbria Police's concerns about the LTN. Whether that is true or not, we have absolutely no confidence in NCC abiding by its own code of conduct in carrying out its internal review.

Council officers would seem to have already made their minds up & are attempting to shape the public & press narrative, by withholding critical information from citizens & gaslighting the electorate with impunity. All for the goal of eventually enforcing the current Jesmond LTN trial arrangements at almost any cost, totally against the will of most residents & with no regard for their safety.

What do we want to happen now?

We demand that NCC act in accordance with its Code of Conduct by addressing the following:

- The serious concerns raised by Northumbria Police about the LTN must be acknowledged by NCC and then fully and publicly addressed.
- All input, responses and comments received by NCC from both the Ambulance and Fire Services regarding the LTN must be made public now.
- New emerging data showing steep rises in traffic levels on Jesmond Rd and the Cradlewell must be urgently analysed.
- Council gaslighting and spin tactics must cease. Instead, transparency must now be applied to this project.
- The bollards and other LTN restrictions must be removed now.
- If NCC wishes to propose and implement an alternative, workable scheme, it must undertake to meaningfully and openly consult and engage with all relevant stakeholders, including residents, businesses, public service providers and emergency services, to ensure that any alternative scheme has the support of the wider community.

Make sure your opinion on the LTN is heard and stay informed

- One Jesmond Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/onejesmond>
- One Jesmond Website: <https://www.onejesmond.net>
- One Jesmond Twitter: https://twitter.com/one_jesmond
- To sign the One Jesmond petition objecting to the LTN:
<https://www.change.org/p/objection-to-the-east-jesmond-low-traffic-neighbourhood->

scheme

➤ NCC Commonplace platform to provide feedback and comments on the LTN:

<https://jesmondeasttrialsconsultation.commonplace.is/> (NB. All feedback and comments must be provided by 10 September 2023)

➤ You can also provide feedback and comments directly to the relevant NCC Councillors:

o Cllr Jane Byrne, Cabinet member Connected, Clean City:

jane.byrne@newcastle.gov.uk

o Cllr Nick Kemp, Council Leader: nick.kemp@newcastle.gov.uk

o North Jesmond: Cllrs Philip Browne (philip.browne@newcastle.gov.uk), Gerry

Keating (gerry.keating@newcastle.gov.uk) and Tanya Pretswell

(tanya.pretswell@newcastle.gov.uk)

o South Jesmond: Cllrs Lesley Storey, Cabinet member for a Growing City

(lesley.a.storey@newcastle.gov.uk), Laura Cummings

(laura.cummings@newcastle.gov.uk) and Charlie Gray

(Charlie.gray@newcastle.gov.uk)

➤ Nick Brown MP, Newcastle upon Tyne East: nickbrownmp@parliament.uk

➤ Formal written objections to the scheme being made permanent must be submitted by 7 September 2023, quoting ref GH/P44/1377, to: traffic.notices@newcastle.gov.uk

➤ To sign a national petition to carry out an independent review of LTNs:

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/632748>

This report is being circulated online and in print and is being sent to regional and national media. It is also being distributed to every Newcastle city councillor, to local MPs and to the Secretary of State for Transport.