

Deputation: Close Brunstane Road, And Implement Traffic Management In The “Joppa Triangle”
29 October 2020

From: Calming Brunstane Road residents group

To: The City of Edinburgh Council’s Transport & Environment Committee – November meeting

C/O Councillor Lesley Macinnes
Convener of the Transport & Environment Committee

Dear Councillor Macinnes

This paper is sent to you as a deputation to the November meeting of the T&E Committee, which you have kindly granted to our group.

1. Executive Summary

1.1 We want to bring the follow points to your immediate attention:

1. We have been working constructively with your officers for over a year to address the issues of rat running and anti-social behaviour from drivers that we experience on a daily basis. The paper from your officers in January 2020 (authored by Graham Hall and Tony Holsgrove) was clear how an ETRO process could close Brunstane Road as it crosses the narrow bridge over the railway. That paper would have been presented to your committee in May, but events overtook it; we now wish that paper be discussed by the committee and the road closed.
2. In our paper to your committee of September 2019 we proposed a whole-neighbourhood closure for the ‘Joppa Triangle’ to end rat running down our street and the network of streets through the Coillesdene’s area to the East of Brunstane Road. This is a proposal that has taken the whole neighbourhood into consideration, not only Brunstane Road.
3. The only argument presented by those demanding our road be left open is the ‘inconvenience’ of finding another route through our community. This is a completely illogical argument, which can neither be evidenced nor empirically assessed. Indeed, our estimate is that using the two main roads of Seaview Terrace (30/20mph) and Milton Road East (40mph) is quicker and more reliable than Brunstane Road because it is rarely possible to drive on Brunstane Road at a constant 20mph without negotiating the road-space with other vehicles.
4. From February to December 2019, Brunstane Road was closed because of the re-construction of Brighton Place and in 1991 the street was also closed while the bridge over the railway was re-built. Portobello survived on both occasions. Brunstane Road can be closed and the area can remain functioning.
5. In this briefing and its appendices, we provide you with ample evidence why our street and the neighbouring Coillesdene’s area should be closed to rat running vehicles.

1.2 Our questions for you:

1. When will the traffic problem in Brunstane Road and the paper written by your officers for the May meeting be considered by your committee?
2. Will the CEC conduct a survey of the street to ensure it complies with the Equality Act's duties and compliance for wheelchair users?
3. Why has Brunstane Road not been closed using Edinburgh's Spaces for People funding, when streets with similar criteria have been closed.
4. Will the T & E Committee support improvement in public health and the environment by extending Edinburgh’s walking and cycling network by linking CEC's Route 10 to national route 1, connecting the Innocent Railway Path to the Promenade via a traffic calmed Brunstane Road.

1.3 Calming Brunstane Timeline:

- February-December 2019 Brunstane Road closed
- June 2019 Calming Brunstane Road (CBR) group formed and surveys residents
- August 2019 CBR meet ward councillors and CEC officers
- September 2019 CBR present Joppa Triangle proposal to CEC officers
- October 2019 CEC officers conduct community engagement with residents of local area in the Coillesdenes Centre
- January 2020 CEC officers present paper for May 2020 T&E Committee meeting
- May 2020 T&E Committee postponed
- October 2020 T&E Committee – no space for Brunstane Road
- November 2020 – this deputation is presented

2. Context

Many of Portobello’s streets are dominated by traffic, most of which is local and travelling very short distances. The street where we live is particularly badly affected because it is perceived as a short cut by drivers. It should be closed to through traffic.

We have recorded data from pre-Lockdown in February, showing an average of 137 cars an hour at weekends and 155 an hour on weekdays. A level of traffic you would expect on a distributor road for a busy housing estate of 10,000 people. Table 1 clearly shows that traffic is now at or above pre-Lockdown levels.

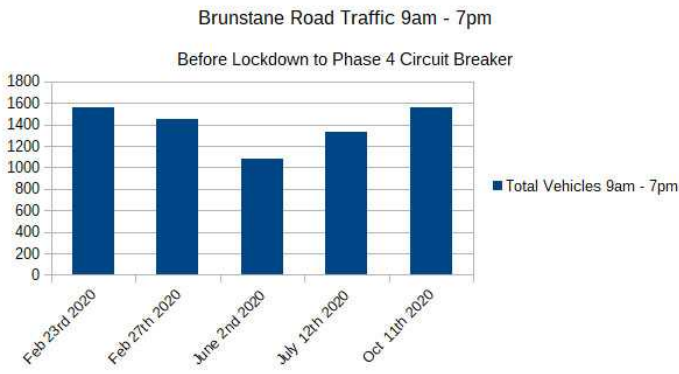


Table 1: Brunstane Rd traffic 2020

back in September 2019. This proposal took into consideration the planning permission to build a new community of 1300 houses in the fields between Edinburgh and east Lothian to the South of the Coillesdene’s area, which will have a distributor road opening onto Milton Road East. This areas was dubbed the ‘Joppa Triangle’, see Figure 1.

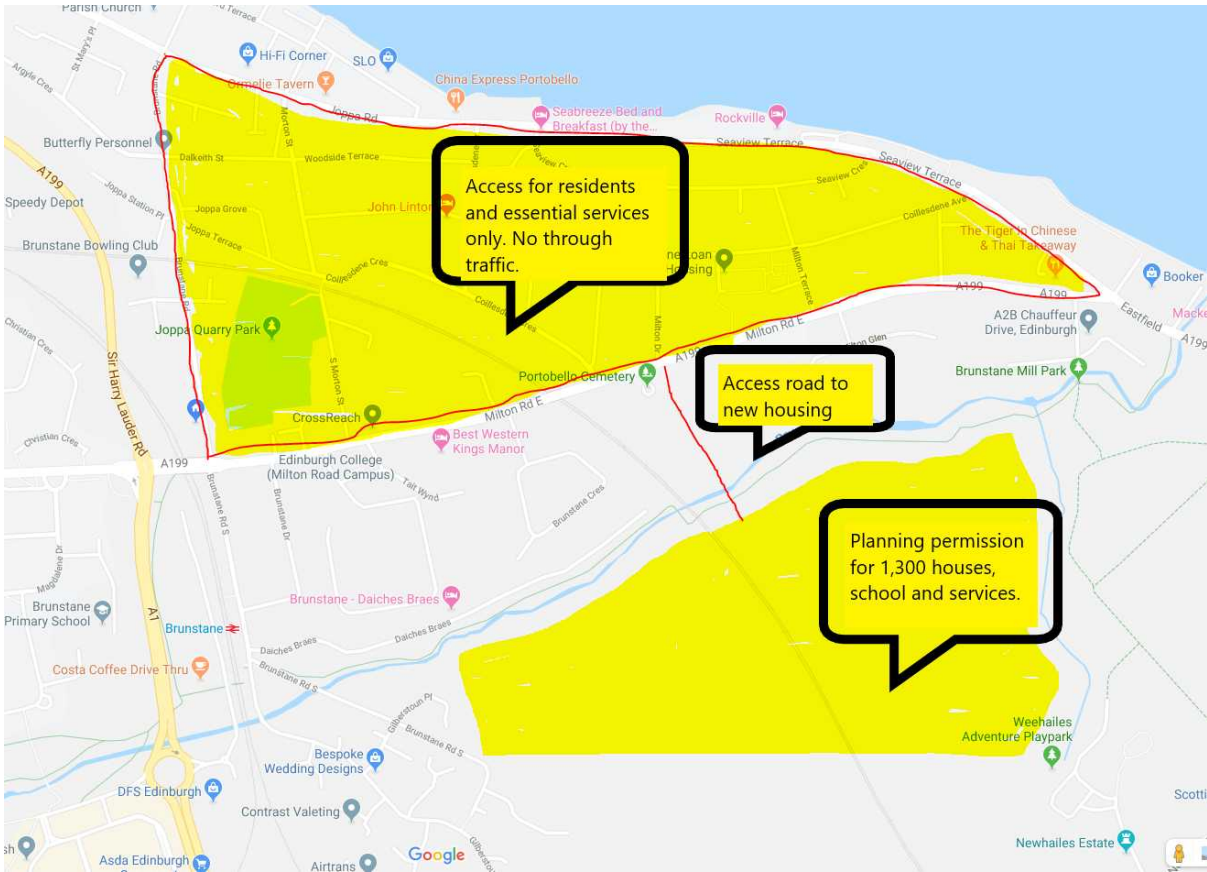


Figure 1: The Joppa Triangle whole neighbourhood solution

Given all the evidence above and throughout this briefing, and the article *Reducing Roads Can Cause Traffic to Evaporate* circulated in her newsletter by Councillor Child, we feel we are being reasonable in recommending our road is closed to through traffic.

3. Background

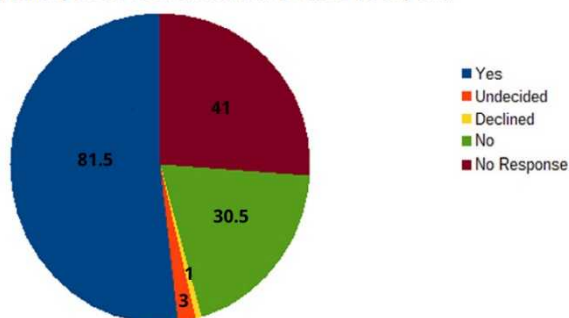
After over a year of patient, polite and mature discussion with your officers and after submitting a detailed proposal to bring an end to this situation, our street remains open to traffic, resulting in a constant loss of amenity for us, see appendices particularly the videos. Our submission of September 2019 contained a detailed proposal for a low traffic neighbourhood across what was referred to as the ‘Joppa Triangle’ see Figure 1. Your officers conducted a community engagement exercise based on our submission and in March this year they emailed us a paper for the May committee that proposed a trial closure of the street using ETRO powers. You will know that committee meeting was cancelled. Since then, we understand that the report from your officers was passed to the city-wide Transport Team on 31st August. We hoped they would pick the street for an early intervention using the Spaces for People funding programme, however nothing has happened. We wish to make you and your committee aware of the following:

Table 2 June 2019 Poll of Brunstane residents

There are 157 dwellings on Brunstane Road
(Including streets for which Brunstane Road is the only exit)
All dwellings were leafleted in June 2019 regarding support for closure of the road at the bridge

Results of Survey for the Closure of Brunstane Road at the Bridge

(Including Streets for which Brunstane Road is the only exit)



side of the railway and which we conducted in May 2019, see table 2. We note that this poll was mostly conducted using the PCC website and did not include Brunstane Road residents unless they followed that site or saw the few posters displayed in Portobello. Given the number of residents in our road compared to the whole suburb the result of the poll was inevitable.

The CEC also conducted a community engagement in the Coillesdenes area. This drop in session showed that residents of the Coillesdenes had mixed views and it was difficult to get a full picture all residents' opinions. During the drop-in, the intimidation meted out to our residents was vitriolic. Some residents of Brunstane Road will not attend such meetings for fear of retribution given the aggressive and abusive nature of some of the incidents they have experienced at these meetings, online, and in our street.

The street was recently closed to allow telecommunications work and we were reminded that life in Portobello does not come to a shuddering halt when Brunstane Road is closed.

Garbage collection vehicles coped well with the closure treating Brunstane Road as just another narrow, single entry road.

It was much easier for people on bicycles to use the street and it was easy to socially distance over the rail bridge. During these roadworks we witnessed some drivers physically moving traffic barriers and mounting the footpath to bypass the closure.

5. Brunstane Rd: not a short cut

Drivers use our street because they perceive it to be a short cut. It is the first left turn off the Milton Link down to Portobello and the beach. Yet if drivers used the A199 (Milton Road East) then the B6415 (Seaview Terrace/Joppa Road) or used the A199 (Sir Harry Lauder Road) they would take only a couple of minutes longer. The number of drivers depending on their Satnavs has also led to increased traffic. This also is particularly the case for commercial vehicles using domestic satnavs. This road is not suitable as a through road for commercial HGVs.

It has become an accepted norm that Brunstane Rd is treated as a B road. It is a residential street with no shops or offices and it is not on a bus route. It does, therefore, not fit the criteria for B classification as a distributor road, unlike Joppa Rd B6415, and is not marked as a B road on any current map.

6. Committee cancellations

We fully accept that tackling Covid takes precedence and understood when the May CEC Transport meeting was postponed. We have consistently tried to find out what happened to the agenda item regarding Brunstane Road and were disappointed that we did not figure on the October meeting agenda. As mentioned above, we feel that because closing Brunstane Road may be an unpopular decision with other local people, the safety and health of the residents of Brunstane Road have to suffer direct consequences. We are no longer willing to accept this. The convenience of others is not a sufficient reason for not closing the road.

7. The Covid Effect

Notwithstanding all the previously mentioned points, and hard evidence provided as a strong argument to close Brunstane Road permanently, we are all now faced with Covid-19. This issue alone should see the closure of the road at the bridge over the railway as we are simply not able to safely physically distance from other road and pavement users.

The rail bridge over the East Coast Mainline railway is narrow, with a single fenced pavement less than 1.5 metres wide. It is impossible for two pedestrians to cross the bridge in opposite directions and physically distance safely. We wrote to the Committee and you on May 7th pointing this out. Because the bridge is humped it is easy to start walking and find yourself meeting someone you didn't see. This situation is made worse for blind/visually impaired people and anyone in a wheelchair or mobility cart. With traffic returned to pre-lockdown levels, using the road space is dangerous given the aggression shown by many drivers. To have a physical distance that is safe, people now have to dice with injury by using the road.

The Spaces for People programme that was announced in March has been allowing councils to quickly close roads across Scotland to provide safe physical distance for pedestrians, wheelchair users and cyclists. You are to be commended for the work the council has

4. The 'Joppa Triangle'

In our submission to you and your committee in September 2019, we proposed what is essentially a Low Traffic Neighbourhood. The Joppa Triangle approach was to, in a neighbourly way, take into account the additional issues faced by the residents in the Coillesdenes as well as the issues we face, see Fig1 above.

A poll by Portobello Community Council included Portobello residents but was also open to people outside the Portobello/Joppa area. The poll showed that the majority of people not living in Brunstane Road want the road left open. This was in stark contrast and completely ignored our own poll, which covered the entire length of Brunstane Road, either

delivered elsewhere in Edinburgh, using the £5m funds and the emergency planning powers Spaces for People brings. We understand that councils can use TTRO powers with minimal planning permission and Scottish Government extended TTRO's to 18months to assist the Spaces for People programme. Brunstane Road qualifies for such funding given its narrow width, heavy use by pedestrians and cyclists getting to school, work, etc.

We call for the City of Edinburgh Council's Transport & Environment Committee to use these powers to protect the health and wellbeing of the residents of Brunstane Road from increased danger exacerbated by Covid-19.

Why is the CEC not closing the bridge?

8. Traffic is increasing

Since lockdown restrictions have eased, we are seeing traffic easily reach the level it was at last year, see Appendix 2. Incidents of bad driving are increasing, see Appendix 1. Driving behaviour has also worsened, incidents of car drivers in particular using the pavement are frightening for pedestrians when faced with a car swerving off the road space and onto the pavement, see the video in appendix 1.1. The police have been called more than once and residents now have many a story to tell of verbal abuse from passing drivers, damage to cars parked in the street and intimidation of pedestrians and people on bicycles, Appendix 1.

Police Scotland have recommended we report such incidents to them via 101 and as a result we have a number of incident reports. We will continue to report such incidents.

Police Scotland should be commended for the methods they have used in dealing with us. They have also contacted council official Evelyn Kilmurry to highlight concerns given the number of incidents and escalating situation.

You have the powers to address these problems so we ask, why are you not?

9. Key link in Edinburgh's cycling network

Brunstane Road is a key link in Edinburgh's cycling network as it connects national cycle network Route 1 'The Innocent Path' to the Promenade and CEC's own route No10. Given the length of the street, the steepness of the incline and the volume of traffic, we witness a real and worrying lack of safety for people using bicycles every day. See appendix 1.

10. Communications from Councillors

We are particularly disappointed that we have heard so little from our local elected politicians. When we met them in September 2019 they seemed willing to tackle the issue and it was their recommendation we submit the detailed paper on the 'Joppa Triangle'.

We have done everything asked of us. We have been polite and reasonable. We feel very let down over this process. The strategic aims of CEC for a city better for its residents and less dominated by cars is good. Our experience, however, is that these aims have a long way to go to permeate into Portobello.

11. Conclusion

1. For over a year we have been submitting detailed written suggestions regarding rat running traffic in Brunstane Road and how it could be better managed to stop blighting our lives. Your assertion that Edinburgh is turning its back on the dominance of the motor car in residential areas does not ring true here. We are writing to make you aware of this situation and that your strategic vision for the city is being betrayed.
2. We are baffled by the lack of action to close this road when the powers so to do are available and have been applied elsewhere.
3. We are determined to pursue our case and will continue to work for the health and wellbeing of the residents of our road.
4. Whilst we have demonstrated commitment to a whole area approach, due to the pandemic there is a need for urgency. The closure of Brunstane would act as a catalyst for area wide improvements

ENDNOTES AND APPENDICES OVERLEAF/

APPENDIX 1: IMAGES AND VIDEOS

1.1 Traffic Jams – particularly at weekends and on sunny days:



Car Mounts Pavement (Video: [Click to play](#))

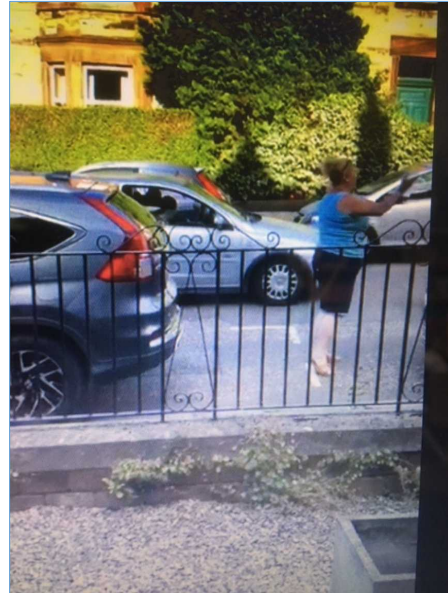


Van (Video: [Click to play](#))

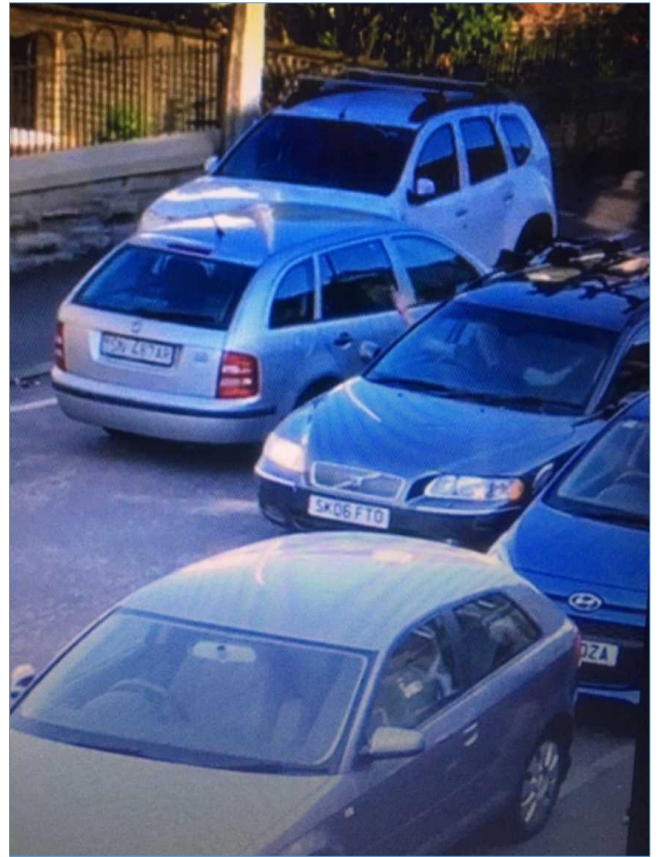
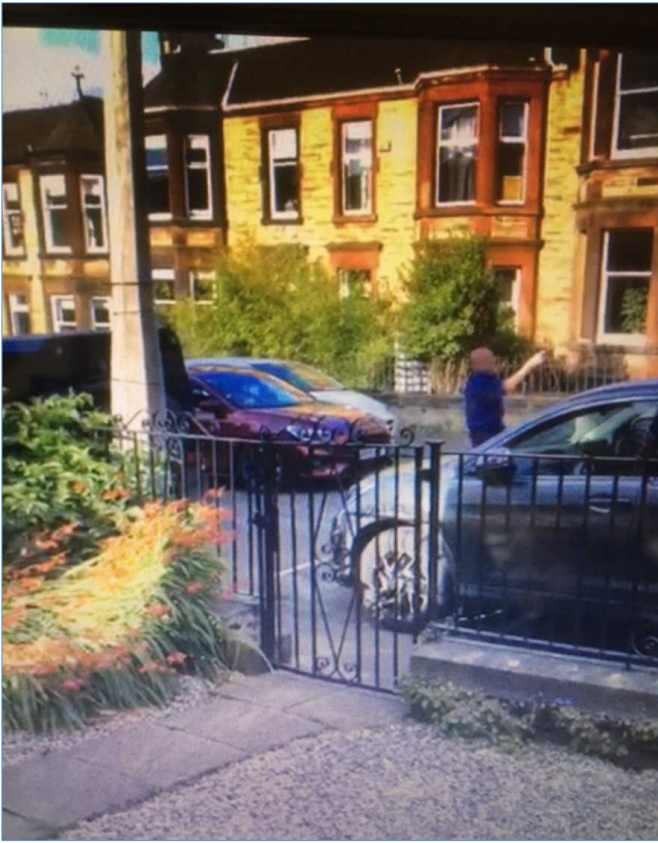
1.2 HGV's: often mis-directed using domestic instead of commercial sat-nav devices



1.3 Foul language and aggressive behaviour from drivers



Swearing (Video - Click to view)



1.4 Damage to Cars



1.5 Lack of space to physically distance over Rail Bridge



Weaving Cars & Pedestrians (Video: [Click to view](#))



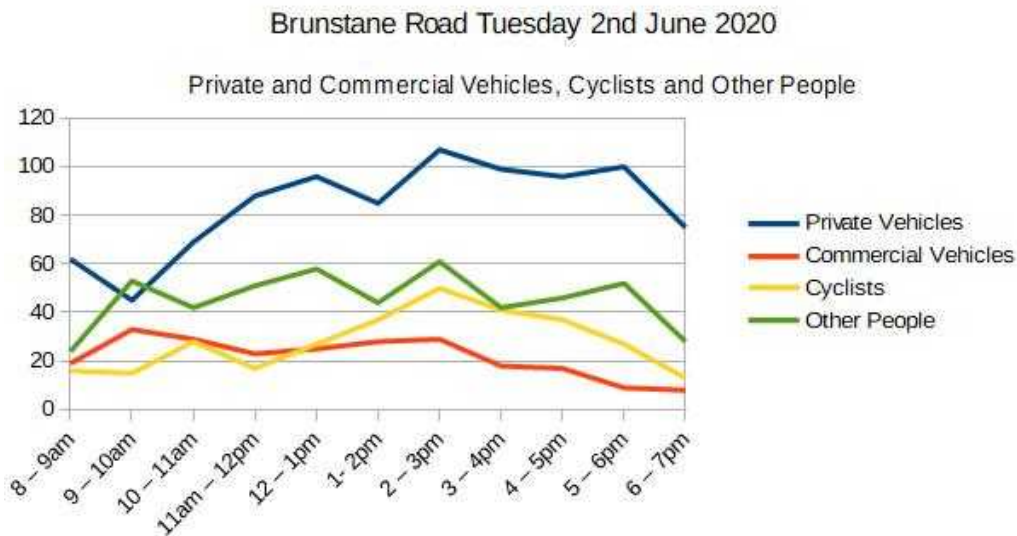
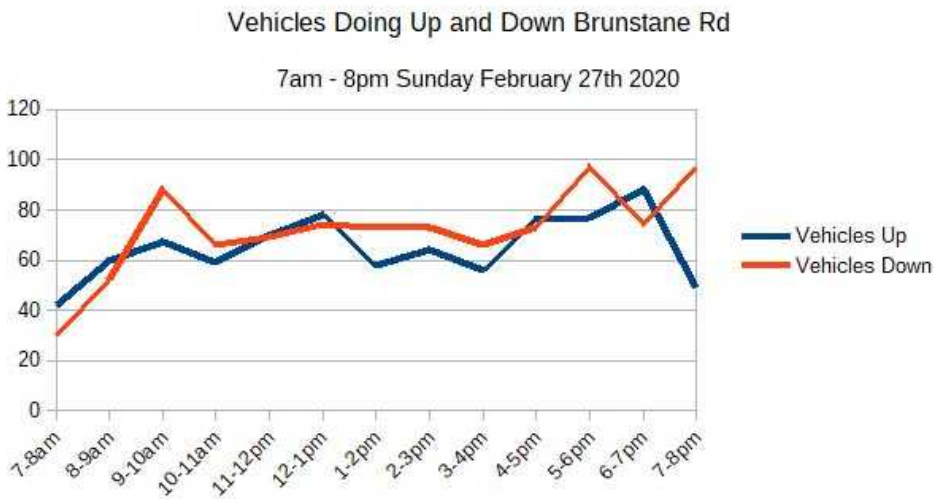
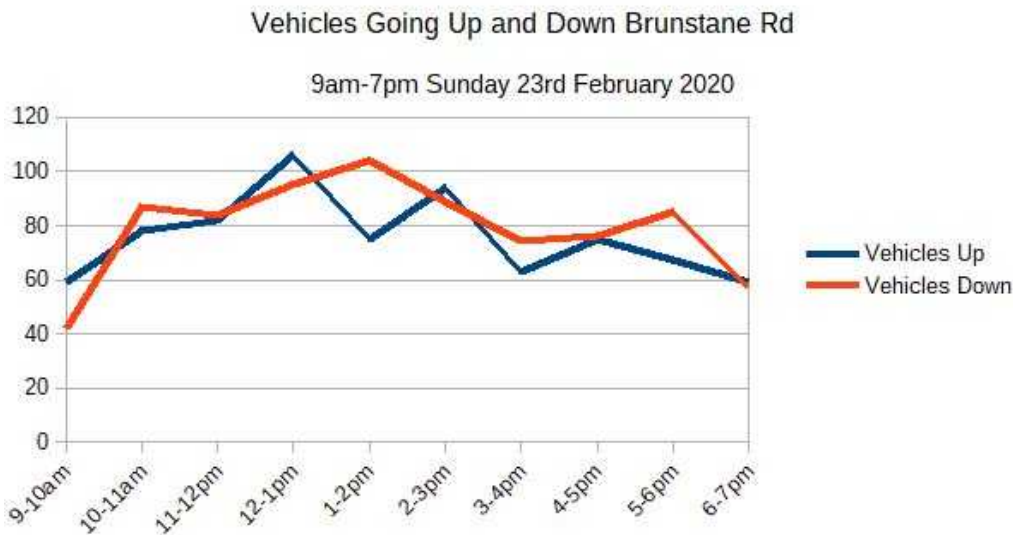
Bike Squeeze (Video: [Click to view](#))



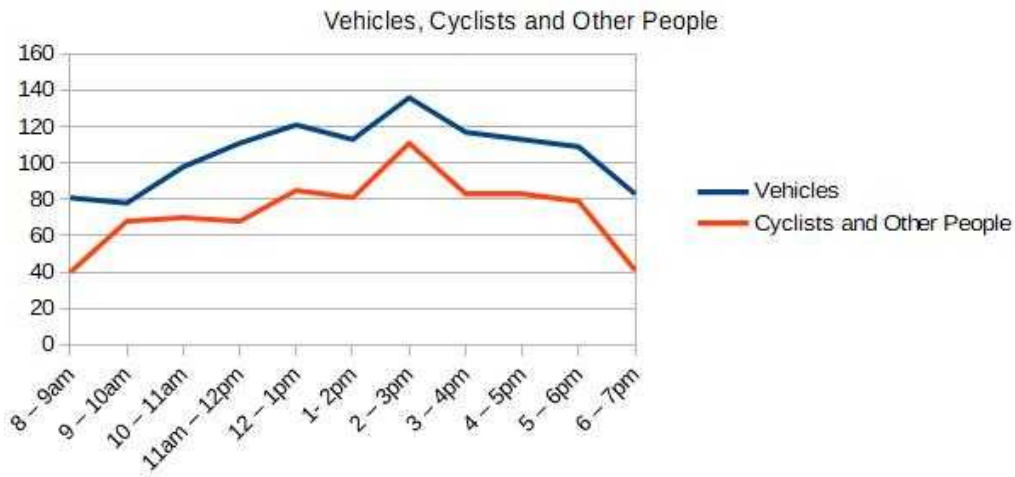
Bikes sharing with cars (Video: [Click to view](#))



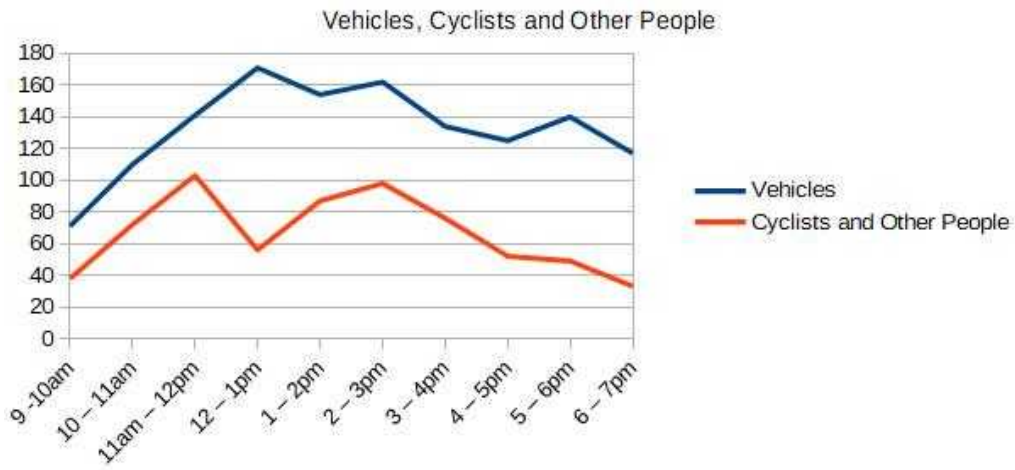
Appendix 2: statistical evidence: February 2020 to date



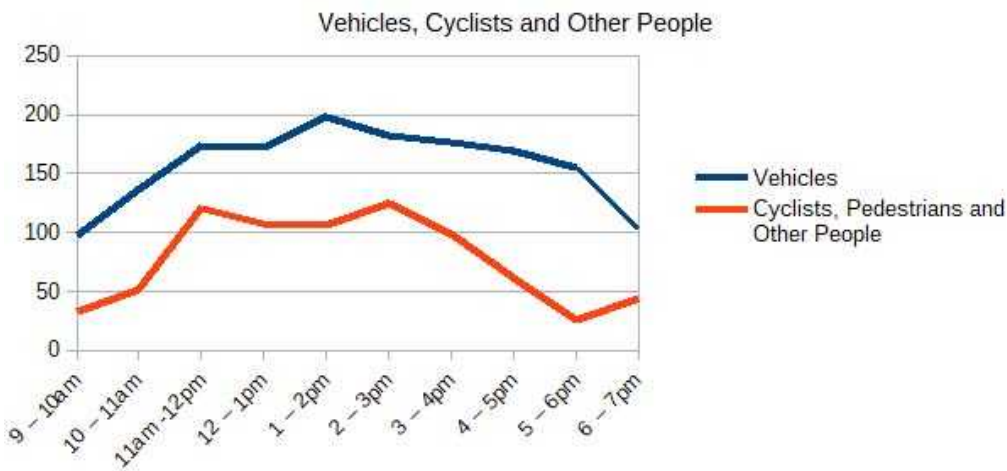
Brunstane Road Tuesday 2nd June 2020



Brunstane Road Sunday 12th July 2020



Brunstane Rd Traffic 9am - 7pm Sunday 11th Oct 2020



Brunstane Road Traffic 9am - 7pm

Before Lockdown to Phase 4 Circuit Breaker

