

Date: 12th Sep 2019

Subject: CEC Proposal for Cruise Liner visits in Ferry Fair Week

Ahead of the meeting to discuss the CEC proposal for cruise liner visits in Queensferry during the Ferry Fair Week, QDCC would like to present the following points for further discussion. We take a view that the proposal appears to be based purely on the logistics of coach traffic management and has not considered the holistic impact. It also flags up a significant question relating to the ongoing arrangement throughout the cruise ship season.

Safety Concerns

- The promenade area is occupied by fairground amusements which attracts a high volume of visitors of all ages from within and out with the town. Many are youngsters, unsupervised, in crowds, not always familiar with the area and some intoxication. There are three pubs/restaurants, a cafe, three shops and female public toilets directly across Newhalls Rd from the fairground, where the coaches, taxis, buses and general traffic travel. The fairground butts right up to the main road, taking out the island pavement and creating a wall of blind spots to traffic. During the early part of the week the fairground is being constructed, with many large vehicles and equipment being moved around the area. This all presents a considerable risk as it stands, however, introducing coaches, taxis, buses and 1,000-3,000 disorientated liner passengers in to the mix increases this risk significantly.
- Whilst popular with many, the one way system is not universally welcomed. Safety concerns over the impact on alternative routes such as Station Rd, Burgess Rd, Rosshill Terrace and The Loan are well documented by residents and have been the very reason that a permanent one way system could not be proposed in the forthcoming High St refurbishment. Some of those roads are also directly adjacent or leading to various Ferry Fair family and sports events in the town, throughout the week.
- These safety concerns were discussed at length between QDCC and CEC officials from Nov 2017. A decision was made by all that the liner visits should be stopped during the Ferry Fair week and the necessary communications sent to operators. Although circumstances have not changed since then other than the town is even busier and liners bigger, it would appear that this new proposal has been formulated without local consultation and was only stumbled upon through a question raised to cllr Lesley Macinnes by cllr Louise Young followed by our presentation of the CEC email from Jan 2018 confirming the previous decision to no longer accept cruise liners during the Ferry Fair week in its entirety.

Economic Impact

- QDCC respectfully requests further explanation of the claim that around 80% of the liner visits to Queensferry are potentially jeopardised by the blocking of what would likely be 1-3 liners in that week from the 20-30 for the season. We find it hard to fathom how that would be a significant factor whilst we have well documented but still unaddressed complaints about the Hawes Pier facilities for passengers. Very poor toilets, no shelter from the elements whilst queuing for tenders, no tourist information point, poor local signage, a historic town's public car park and world heritage site being flooded with excursion coaches to the exclusion of anyone else and all the confrontations that brings, are all factors far more likely to jeopardise future bookings.
- The fairground, condensed traffic and footfall, combined with the existing poor facilities do not present a great welcome image to visitors who may be visiting Queensferry, Edinburgh, Scotland or even UK for the first time.
- As part of the High St refurbishment project, large vehicles (including coaches) will be restricted from the High St outside set service hours. Local businesses will be required to negotiate alternative arrangements with suppliers, etc. and the High St will have a much improved ambience to encourage increased footfall and thus trade. However, this proposal would involve an unfair and contentious exception for coaches to break that restriction on liner days, thus deterring pedestrians and consequent trade.

Contradiction

- QDCC has suggested an offsite coach stacking and just in time pick up/drop off system many times since Nov 2017. Whilst there is an acknowledgement that such a system has merit, it has never been progressed to date and we have been told that discussions and arrangements with various operators are necessary to coordinate such a system. No such formal discussion has ever taken place despite our persistent requests. Our request to fully free up the car park and give it back to the visiting public to eradicate the significant negative impact on local trade has never been adopted.

Yet this proposal contradicts every excuse we have been given for non-adoption to date. Faced with no option during the Ferry Fair week, the car park is **not** used by coaches; this proposed system has clearly been arranged, agreed between operators, operated and claims to have been been '*managed safely and successfully*' for two consecutive years. **Which begs the question – Why is this system of operation a problem the rest of the season when it is deemed such a success in Ferry Fair week?**

If the trade off for return of the Hawes car park to the public was a one way system during all liner days, then we can put that proposal to the community with some confidence. The question is, if operatives are saying it can cope "safely and successfully" without the car park in Ferry Fair week, why are we still using the car park for liner coaches to the significant detriment of local trade, the rest of the season?