

Safer, Greener, Cleaner?

The slogan chosen by Newcastle City Council for the LTN scheme makes it very clear that one of its proposed objectives was to make Jesmond a safer neighbourhood for people to walk and cycle in, and for children to play in. This objective seems to suggest that the area was unsafe prior to the LTN and that the danger was from traffic passing through the area. While there is a discussion to be had about the dangers to pedestrians and cyclists from engine emissions, data from The Traffic and Accident Data Unit (TADU), based in Gateshead, highlight that, in terms of road casualties, the area was exceptionally safe before the implementation of the LTN. TADU is funded directly by the local authorities in the area, including Newcastle City Council who also had full access to this data.

The two tables which follow show road casualties for the eighteen year period from 2005 to 2023, in the area of the LTN, bounded by Osborne Avenue, Grosvenor Avenue, Osborne Road, Jesmond Road and Jesmond Dene Road, but not including Osborne Road and Jesmond Road. The latter two roads have been excluded as their status has not changed as a result of the LTN. They are classed as distributor roads on to which NCC is trying to funnel more traffic. This increase in traffic volumes as a direct result of the LTN is highly likely to increase accident rates on these roads.

TADU's data for 'Serious Injuries' and for 'Slight Injuries', is grouped across six categories of road user. Injuries are categorised by TADU as:

Slight injury: An injury of a minor character such as a sprain (including neck whiplash injury), bruise or cut which are not judged to be severe, or slight shock requiring roadside attention. This definition includes injuries not requiring medical treatment.

Serious injury: An injury for which a person is detained in hospital as an 'in-patient', or any of the following injuries whether or not they are detained in hospital: fractures, concussion, internal injuries, crushing, burns (excluding friction burns), severe cuts, severe general shock requiring medical treatment and injuries causing death 30 or more days after the collision.

The data all relate to accidents involving a vehicle (including bicycles). A casualty is recorded as seriously or slightly injured by the police on the basis of information available either at the time of the accident, or reported to them within 30 days, as required by law. This will not, generally, reflect the results of a medical examination, but may be influenced according to whether the casualty is hospitalised or not. Hospitalisation procedures will vary regionally.

It should be noted that the cause of the incident resulting in injury is not recorded by TADU and it should not be assumed that all incidents were caused by motor vehicles. Indeed, TADU has data from the NHS showing that, in general, single vehicle cyclist casualties make up a fairly large cohort of people attending A & E with injuries.

Serious injuries

The data in Table 1 show that there were only six (6) serious injuries to road users within the LTN area in the last eighteen years. Across the six categories of road users, these included 2 injuries to adult pedestrians, 2 injuries to car occupants and 2 injuries to pedal cyclists (see table 1).

Table 1. Road Casualties within the LTN area 2005 – 2023 – Serious Injuries

	Pedestrian (adult)	Pedestrian (child)	Car occupant	Motorcyclist	Pedal cyclist	Other vehicle user
2005						
2006						
2007			1			
2008						
2009						
2010						
2011						
2012			1			
2013						
2014						
2015						
2016						
2017	1				1	
2018					1	
2019	1					
2020						
2021						
2022						
2023						
Totals	2	0	2	0	2	0

(Source: TADU 2023)

Slight injuries

The data in Table 2 show 36 slight injuries in total during the eighteen-year period. Across the different categories of road user, these were as follows: Adult pedestrian (9); Child pedestrian (1); Car occupants (18); Motor cyclists (2) and Pedal cyclists (6) (see table 2).

Table 2. Road Casualties within the LTN area 2005 – 2023 – Slight Injuries

	Pedestrian (adult)	Pedestrian (child)	Car occupant	Motorcyclist	Pedal cyclist	Other vehicle user
2005	1	1				
2006			1			
2007			2			
2008	1		3			
2009	2		2			
2010	2		2			
2011			2	1		
2012			1			
2013					1	
2014					2	
2015						
2016			2			
2017	1		1		1	
2018			1			
2019			1	1	1	
2020						
2021						
2022	1				1	3
2023	1					
Totals	9	1	18	2	6	3

(Source: TADU 2023)

The above TADU data clearly show that from 2005 to 2023 there were just six serious injuries and thirty-nine slight injuries in the LTN area. An average of just 2.5 casualties per year.

Given the above verifiable data it is very difficult to understand how the area most affected by the LTN could be made any safer without removing every motor vehicle from this area at all times. Even this would still leave clear potential for accidents involving pedestrians, both adult and child, and cyclists or riders of electric scooters.

This leaves a number of potential scenarios. The first is that, despite directly funding the organisation that collects and collates the data, Newcastle City Council made no attempt to check, or examine, the data that already existed before or during the planning of the scheme. The second scenario is that they ignored what this data showed as it did not suit their proposal. The third scenario is that the proposed scheme is both seriously flawed in its objectives, and unrealistic in its attempts to achieve the unachievable.