

Coalition for Healthy Streets and Active Travel

Reducing vans in New Inn Hall Street (CoHSAT project 2019-20)

-summary of findings

1. Introduction

The Coalition for Healthy Streets and Active Travel (CoHSAT) comprises several voluntary organisations¹ and campaign groups in Oxford and Oxfordshire. They have sufficient aims in common that they are working together on responding to consultations while also putting individual responses where needed. CoHSAT bid successfully for a £5000 grant from Low Carbon Hub to undertake a set of five surveys to help reduce carbon from travel issues in Oxford.²

2. Context

This survey looked at the south end of New Inn Hall Street with particular reference to the problem of delivery vans using the cul-de-sac to deliver to premises in Queen Street, Bonn Square and NIH Street itself. Deliveries are not permitted on Monday-Saturday, from 10.30am-5.30pm.

New Inn Hall Street is an attractive area having been resurfaced, including brick sets instead of gutters in 2009/10 leaving a smooth road across the whole width and an aesthetically pleasing stone surface improved the appearance of the pavements. 10 disabled parking bays run along the east side of the road. At the southern end of New Inn Hall Street the turning into Shoe Lane is the main delivery access point to Clarendon Centre as well as Robert Dyas and Argos.

It is also on route 5 of the National Cycle Network and an important north-south route for cyclists. We wanted to examine whether inappropriate use by delivery vans is jeopardising the safety and enjoyment of the road for other users.

New Inn Hall Street is part of the Red Zone in the Zero Emission Zone (ZEZ) plans announced in January 2020 to come into effect in December 2020. Some of the issues raised in this study, therefore, will have to be addressed imminently.

The narrow section between New Inn Hall Street and Bonn Square is marked by two bollards and a strategically placed litter bin. There were 10 A-boards along the stretch between Shoe Lane and the bollards further narrowing the route, four of them completely occupying the width of the 'pavement'. Most of the time during the survey period there was at least one van being unloaded and often two, added to which there were cars, taxis and vans turning, dropping off passengers and entering Shoe Lane so it was rare to have a period with no vehicles obstructing the route.



Figure 1: The south end of New Inn Hall Street showing a typical state of affairs.

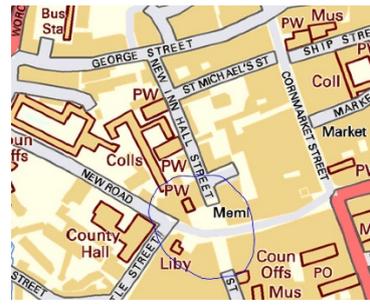


Figure 2: Circle shows our area of interest – South end of NIH and junction with Bonn Sq and Queen St.



Figure 3: Flag shows position of New Inn Hall Street.

3. Objectives of the survey

The purpose was to ascertain the views of pedestrians and cyclists on the number of vans parked at the end of New Inn Hall Street during the period when loading is banned. We also wanted to learn how the

shop staff viewed the issue of deliveries and how the van drivers coped with the challenge of deliveries in the centre of Oxford. We also wanted to know (within the limits of a simple brief survey run by volunteers) the numbers of people using this small stretch of road to understand the competing demands placed on it.

4. Survey Structure

On the mornings of Saturday 23rd and Monday 25th Nov 2019 between 10.30-12.30 (ie when there should be no deliveries), a group of volunteers³ from several of the CoHSAT member organisations counted pedestrians, cyclists and drivers and interviewed people using New Inn Hall Street to access Bonn Square. We also interviewed shop staff and van drivers. The weather was dry on Saturday and light rain / drizzle on Monday. There was a Sky promotional van in Bonn Square on Monday, but it didn't seem to be a cause for extra footfall, so we think our counts were representative of average Saturdays and Mondays in autumn.

5. Summary

Three volunteers visited the 11 shops and another 6 volunteers undertook counts and interviews. One volunteer interviewed all the van drivers. We were looking for both quantitative and qualitative evidence of the effect of van deliveries during the time of the loading ban. We surveyed from 10.30am-12.30pm on a Saturday and Monday morning.

On average there were over 1500 people walking and 140 people on bikes per hour. During the 4 hours there were a total of 29 vans or lorries unloading.

6. Results

6.1. Shop staff interviews

We interviewed staff in 11 shops⁴ in New Inn Hall Street, Bonn Square and Queen Street in order to understand their delivery needs and the solutions they organised. Some shops had impressive arrangements to avoid the loading ban, but even they had occasional small deliveries arriving in the vans that we questioned. Most staff felt that delivery by cargo bike would not be practical, mostly because of the sheer size of the loads they receive, but there is probably also a failure of imagination.

Broadly deliveries came in three types:

- Large volumes in cages, staff fully aware of the loading ban and able to avoid it by either getting a member of staff to come in early (Rymans, Hotter), contracting for the delivery to be before the 10.30 limit (Jessops, Scribbler) or the delivery team had a key and let themselves in late in the evening (Robert Dyas, Costa food delivery);
- Food outlets that needed fairly large quantities of different types of food and drink, perhaps several times in a day (Bonn Square newsagent, La Baguette, Costa milk delivery);
- Deliveries by individual vans of multiple small parcels to different shops where the driver was unable to reach all his clients before the loading ban started.

6.2. Van vehicle counts

During the 4 hours of observation over two days we recorded 29 vehicles stopped for more than just a few minutes. Adding together the duration which each vehicle was parked gave a figure of 284 minutes during the 4 hours of observation so on average there were 1.2 vehicles parked during the time we were observing (10.30 to 12.30). Taxis often waited for several minutes presumably on a pre-arranged booking.

Additionally during the 4 hours of our survey we observed 40 cars or vans turning round, dropping off or entering or leaving Shoe Lane. The milk delivery to Costa and the various food deliveries to La Baguette took about half an hour each because of the amount of material delivered. Our impression was that these could be managed with a cargo bike if refrigeration could be provided.

Because one of our volunteers felt there would be a similar scale of van parking in St Ebbe's St we also counted vans delivering  via St Ebbe's St on Saturday morning. The numbers were smaller – 3 over two

hours, but 6 cars parked there, of whom 3 had disabled stickers. 22 cars either dropped someone off or just turned around during the 2 hours.

As well as recording cars and vans in New Inn Hall St, our observers also recorded 2 cars, 2 vans and one electric scooter going along Queen Street between 10.30 and 12.30 on Saturday. We also saw 2 food delivery (Deliveroo) scooters going into Bonn Square from New Inn Hall Street which the enforcement officer told us was not legal even though they were pushing their scooters, as their engines were still running. There were 36 buses along Queen Street in the 2 hours on Saturday, an average of one every 4 minutes.

6.3. Van driver interviews

We interviewed the drivers of all the vans that unloaded at the end of New Inn Hall Street. Of the 12 interviewed drivers, only one of the Royal Mail drivers refused to give any answers.

Most van drivers were self-employed, owned their own van, paid their own parking fines and were aware of the loading ban, but felt unable to do anything to avoid it. About half the loads were physically small enough to easily be managed in a cargo bike, but there was an issue with the need for refrigeration and security. It was clear that there is no single solution and these drivers felt quite vulnerable to future changes such as ZEZ. Our impression was that deliveries to food shops were the most numerous and perhaps the most amenable to cargo bike deliveries. Allowing cargo bikes in Queen Street during the daytime cycle ban would be helpful in this respect.

Despite assurances from some shops that their deliveries were outside the banned hours, the van drivers told us they were taking items (usually small, single items) to those shops. The longest stays were those going to food outlets, especially La Baguette and Costa. Costa staff told us they would like their milk to arrive at 9am, but the driver was unable to achieve this. One van driver was delivering about a dozen smallish Amazon parcels to Argos and other places. All the van drivers expressed frustration with delivering in this part of town and were resigned to the fact of parking tickets. They were often making pragmatic decisions to optimise their route and New Inn Hall Street was said by two of the drivers to be preferred to get to Queen St as it was the  where enforcement was less rigorous.

We asked about replacing their delivery with a cargo bike and they were clear that this wasn't feasible. In the current paradigm they are right. There would need to be a convenient consolidation and transshipment hub, loads would need to be in smaller containers, there would need to be many more cargo bikes and they would need permission to enter Queen St in banned times. Costa stood out as an example of an opportunity to change to cargo bike, but this depends on refrigerated storage. One van driver said he couldn't afford to upgrade to an electric vehicle for the ZEZ proposals and several anticipated loss of work if a cargo bike delivery were introduced.

Our feelings were that many of the van drivers were 'at the bottom of the pile' being self-employed, poorly supported and struggling to keep their customers satisfied. We didn't ask about their payment method but some form of piece rate seems most likely.

6.4. Pedestrian counts

Approximately 3,500 people walked in or out of Bonn Square through New Inn Hall Street in the two hours 10.30-12.30 on Saturday 23rd Nov and there were 2700 during the same period on Monday. This averages about 30 per minute on Saturday and 22 per minute on Monday. There were surprisingly few people who expressed concern about their experience either of the obstruction by vans or the air pollution. Van drivers see the level pavement as legitimate parking space, so pedestrians are often forced into the road. The disabled parking places were all full during the 4 hours of our survey and the pavement beside these is not an attractive width for walking companionably in a group, so the main carriageway is the default place for many pedestrians.

6.5. Pedestrian Interviews

We interviewed 10 pedestrians on Saturday and 24 pedestrians on Monday. Of the 34, 11 were 'older adults', 8 were 'adults' and 4 were youths. 11 were not classified. This classification was not defined and

relied on the interviewer's informal assessment after the interview. One interviewee was in an electric wheelchair and another was using a walking frame. Two were walking with a young child.

Of the 34 people interviewed, 12 people (30%) reported no problems with the street. Vehicular traffic was complained about by 9 people (25%). Cyclists were seen as a problem by 7 (20%) and 6 (16%) expressed a general concern about all aspects of the traffic.

6.6. Cyclist counts and Cyclist interviews

National Cycle Network Route 5 runs north – south (from Derby to Reading) and passes through New Inn Hall Street to St Ebbes Street. Most cyclists we questioned found cycling through Bonn Square confusing and difficult and many chose to push their bike either because they weren't sure of the regulations or they felt riding was not safe or fair to people on foot. It is probably the quietest north south route in the city – the alternatives are Turl Street, Radcliffe Square or Worcester Street, all of which involve sharing the road with heavy traffic at some stage.

Of particular interest was the behaviour of cyclists on Queen Street. Anecdotal reports are that many people are riding their bikes during the banned period. Broadly we concluded about 50% of bikes were ridden and 50% pushed during our survey. Several continued to push their bikes outside the restricted area of Queen St. It proved very difficult to keep up with the numbers of bikes so it may be worth doing a dedicated survey. Our counting methods changed for the second day in the light of our experience on the Saturday to try to improve our recording accuracy.

6.7. Cyclist interviews

Cyclists spoken to were often confused about the restrictions that applied in different parts of their journeys along and around Queen Street.

We undertook 7 interviews, and of these 4 people felt the street could be improved for cyclists, mainly by creating a defined cycle track, or more obvious signs permitting cycling. Two were not aware that they could cycle through NIH. Only one cyclist felt it was not a problem cycling along the street. Two identified parked motor vehicles as contributing to the problem, but two others felt although it did inconvenience them to some extent they understood the drivers were just doing their job and were not put out by them. See Appendix B for one volunteers detailed comments on cyclist behaviour.

6.8. Air pollution monitor

OxAir lent us a high-quality pollution meter which one of us wore during the 4 hours of the survey. Generally, on the Saturday levels of pollution were acceptably low, though there were some brief peaks. Revealingly, the highest levels were seen on the Monday morning. This applied to PM1, PM2.5 and PM10, but was not so marked for NO₂. See Appendix C for chart of recordings.

7. Conclusions

New Inn Hall Street is a busy route for pedestrians and cyclists and motor vehicles. Drivers and cyclists generally recognise the street is a pedestrian area and move slowly through it. It is also a prime destination for unloading as it is the nearest approach to Queen Street and Westgate from the north. As a result, there are vans and lorries unloading during the prohibited times and additionally people being dropped off by taxi or private car. There are also lorries going into Shoe Lane to deliver to Clarendon Centre.

Reducing the number of delivery vehicles

Improving the delivery arrangements probably needs an individual approach with each shop, as their needs vary so much. Smaller shops, especially food outlets, and smaller parcel deliveries seem the main source of loading during the banned period. Working with the shops and van drivers in these categories would probably allow most of the deliveries to avoid the banned times, especially if there was more effective enforcement. Until cargo bikes can take over last mile delivery it may be worth considering a designated drop off point in New Rd or Castle St allowing van drivers to wheel their deliveries to the shops.

Improved Enforcement

Enforcement officers from NSL were present for a short time during both our sessions but on the first day they seemed reluctant to ticket anyone. The officer on Monday was much more active and warned one van driver and gave a ticket to another. On the other hand, without help to find alternative delivery methods, it is difficult to know how much difference enforcement alone would make as the drivers would either absorb the cost or move to St Ebbe's Street and cause a similar problem there. Generally it seems enforcement has little or no effect apart from adding to the van drivers' overheads.

Improving the experience of cycling and walking

Walkers cited bicycle riders as a significant concern. Some cyclists and pedestrians suggest creating a cycle lane to reduce conflict along New Inn Hall Street, in practice it would be impossible to create a reasonable cycle path and leave plenty of room for pedestrians without removing the disabled parking bays which is clearly unacceptable. Generally shared space causes cyclists to be more considerate because they don't see themselves as having a territorial right to ride uninterrupted.

People also found the parked vans and the air quality of concern. The planned Zero Emission Zone will mean ordinary petrol and diesel vehicles will be banned from 7am to 7pm, but disabled cars will be exempted. Since the ZEZ will be enforced by number plate recognition, many more drivers will receive a fine. Alternatively the van drivers may just pay the £10 fee for the day and ignore it. Some may afford a hybrid vehicle which will avoid the ZEZ ban.

8. Recommendations

1. Support the ZEZ to be as effective as possible at removing all powered vehicles from New Inn Hall Street.
2. Discuss trialling a cargo bike delivery of milk with Costa management.
3. Agree to allow cargo bikes through Queen St during the 10am – 6pm cycle ban.
4. Ask Amazon to trial a cargo bike delivery for parcels to the city centre.
5. Set up a consolidation and transshipment site within a mile or so of the city centre – Redbridge, Seacourt P&R for example.
6. Explore the possibility of small electric vans to undertake a shuttle delivery from a nearby transshipment area.

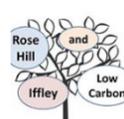
9. Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Low Carbon Hub for funding this survey. CoHSAT is grateful to the volunteers who gave their time to undertake the survey on rather cold, wet days. We also appreciate the remarkably helpful staff in the shops we interviewed, as well as the van drivers who were often in a hurry but willing to talk to us. Finally, thank you to the pedestrians and cyclists who gave us their views.

10. About CoHSAT

The Coalition for Healthy Streets and Active Travel (CoHSAT) is a group of voluntary and campaigning organisations working across Oxfordshire to create attractive, accessible and people-friendly streets. We will do this by encouraging efficient, active, low carbon and sustainable travel, which will reduce traffic, air pollution and noise, and enable healthy and thriving communities. More details can be seen at <http://www.cohsat.org.uk>.

For further information on these five investigations and other CoHSAT activities see <http://www.cohsat.org.uk> or email us at CoHSATOxon@gmail.com.



Endnotes

1. Oxfordshire Liveable Streets, Oxford Civic Society, Oxford Pedestrians Association, Cyclox, Oxford Friends of the Earth, Low Carbon Oxford North, Low Carbon West Oxford, Rose Hill and Iffley Low Carbon group, Pedal and Post(support but no executive input).
2. Broad Street traffic, Parcel delivery to Oxford Colleges, New Inn Hall St deliveries, School streets, Florence Park low traffic zone.
3. Volunteers were Abena Poku-Awuah, Alison Hill, Evelyn Sanderson, Genefer Clark, Karen Bell, Martine Moon, Peter Headicar, Ruth Davis, Andy Chivers.
4. Shop staff interviewed in: Costa, Hotter, Robert Dyas, The Works, La Baguette, Repair my phone, Rymans, Jessops, Scribbler, Ecco, Bonn Square Newsagents.

Appendix A

Shop staff interviews

Robert Dyas	4-5/week 9pm Company van, driver has key, lets himself in
Rymans	Mon and Thurs 7am own lorry and cages drive in up New Rd. contract requires delivery before 10am.
Hotter	3-4/wk 8am manager there early. Can be a lot of boxes.
Jessops	Daily, usually before 11am. Sealed boxes, heavy, high value.
Ecco	Can be daily, any time, parks in St Ebbes' St and wheels the boxes through.
The Works	Daily 9-10am park in Queen St. if late they park in Shoe Lane and come through Clarendon Centre – get told off
Scribbler	Can be big and heavy – daily variable time usually mornings
Repair my phone	Several companies deliver phones – usually afternoons, small packages ie individual phones for repair
Costa	Food arrives in the night, left in shop. Milk arrives about 12, would like it at 9am. If need more go to Sainsburys!
La Baguette	3-4 deliveries a day from different companies. Park outside, some arrive early morning when staff there but can be any time.
Bonn Sq Newsagent	Boss brings things from Osney Mead cash and carry as needed. Several times a day. Parks outside shop. Any time.

Vans and Cars

Van and car parking during 240 mins		
	number	Duration mins
Lorries	1	26
Vans	12	142
Taxis	10	62
Cars	4	36
Scoters	2	18
Total	29	284

Van driver interviews

Unmarked white van	4
Marked white van / lorry	3
Royal Mail	2

Parcel Force	1
Sainsburys	1
Direct Services (for City council)	1
Total	12

Pedestrian counts

Saturday morning, 23 November 2019			
	Entering Bonn Sq from NIH ie Southbound	Leaving Bonn Sq to NIH ie Northbound	
10.30 - 11.00	370	367	
11.00-11.30	365	370	
11.30-12.00	381	680	
12.00-12.30	467	502	
	1583	1919	3502

Monday morning, 25 November 2019			
	Entering Bonn Sq from NIH ie Southbound	Leaving Bonn Sq to NIH ie Northbound	
10.30 - 11.00	288	325	613
11.00-11.30	308	256	564
11.30-12.00	348	310	1177
12.00-12.30	367	505	872

Pedestrian Interviews

Identified motor vehicles as a problem	9	'I have asthma so worry about pollution' 'lorries parking on pavement' 'too many big vans'
Identified cycles as a problem	7	'most cyclists are a pain' 'always wary of cyclists'
General concern	6	'confusing and dangerous' 'dreadful, lorries, cyclists, pedestrians'

Cyclist counts

Saturday 10.30-12.30, 23 November 2019			
	riding	pushing	total
Going north on NIH			76
Going south in NIH			52
Going along Queen St	76	79	155
total			283
St Ebbes' St			128

Monday 10.30-12.30, 25th November 2019			
	riding	pushing	total
going south on NIH	75	7	82
going north on NIH	87	11	98
going east on QS	31	22	53

going west on QS	20	23	43
total	213	63	276

Appendix B – Martine’s report on cycle counting

Monitoring Survey Saturday November 23rd 2019

Sadly, given the volume of cycling to be recorded in the context of a very busy and crowded junction, the form provided was not fit for purpose. Data summary analysis provided separately.

Points arising from the data

- There was heavy movement on the north-south axis, less so the east west axis (south-north 79, north-south 106, east-west 39, west-east 37)
- On the east-west axis 50% of the bikes were being ridden
- Given the high numbers it was possible to record the numbers into the junction but not all the subsequent direction taken out of the junction, however, it was possible to observe that a third of the bikes entering on the north-south axis went straight on
- Two motorcycles passed from west to east in this period

Points arising from observation

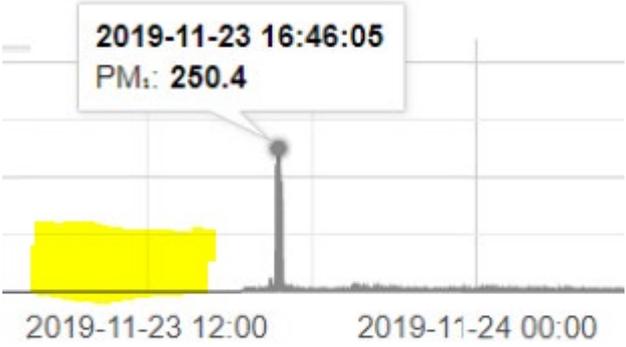
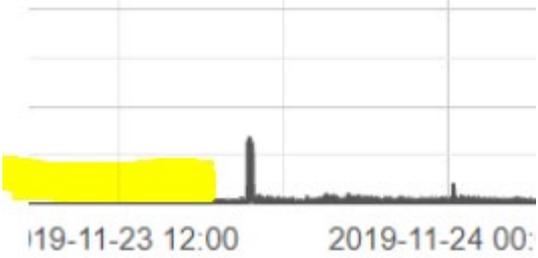
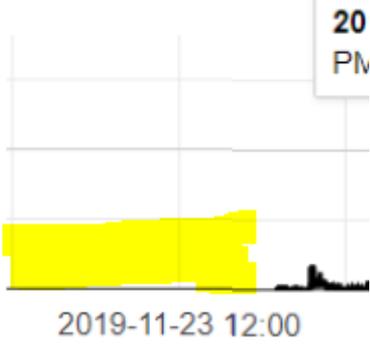
- Buses disrupted the flow patterns of bikes/pedestrians (for example some riding cyclists grouped together to follow a bus along Queen St)
- 10% of riding cyclists were going very fast given the density of pedestrians and the wet, slippery conditions
- Cyclists spoken to were confused about when/where they are required to dismount
- Cyclists, including those riding when they should have dismounted, zig-zagged to find a way through the pedestrians without reference to ‘riding on the left’.
- The cycle racks on St Ebbe’s St were full by 10.30am

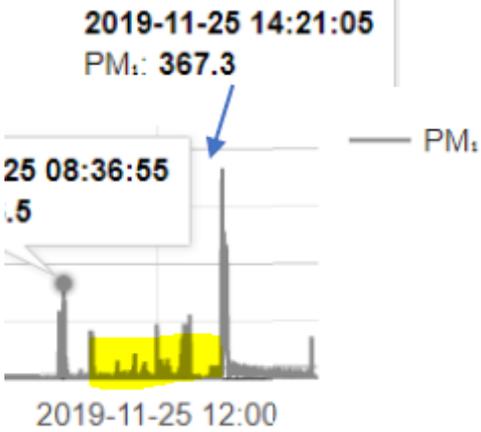
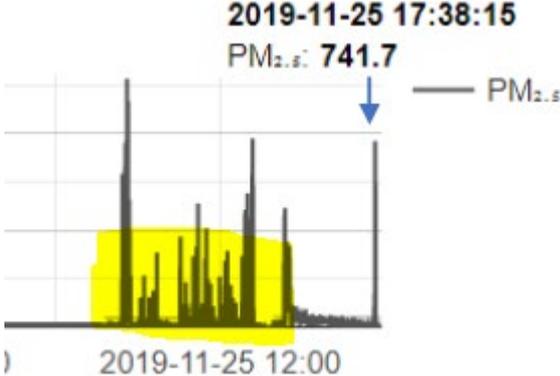
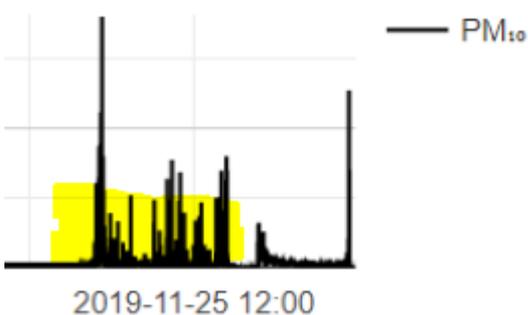
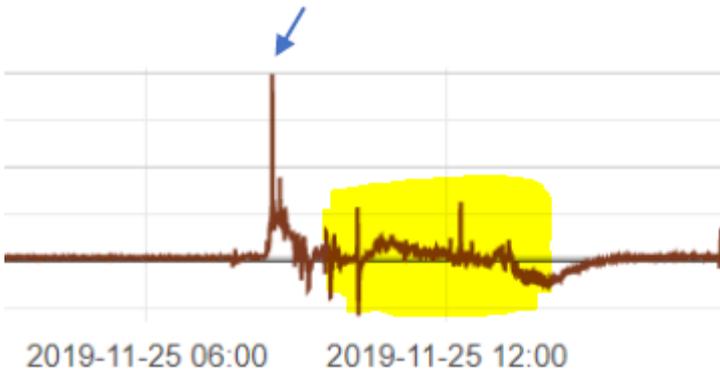
Monitoring Survey Monday 25th November 2019

- From the West, 31 bikes were ridden on QS while 22 were pushed.
- From the East, 20 bikes were ridden on QS while 23 were pushed.

Appendix C – Air Pollution Graphs

Data for Saturday 23rd Nov 2019 Duration of survey Highlighted

<p>PM 1 Negligible during survey Later peak may have been cycling home</p>	
<p>PM 2.5 Negligible during survey Later peak may have been cycling home</p>	
<p>PM 10 Negligible during survey Later peak may have been cycling home</p>	

Data for Monday 25 th Nov 2019	Duration of survey Highlighted
<p>PM 1 Intermittent high levels Peaks at start and finish probably cycling in and back</p>	<p>2019-11-25 14:21:05 PM₁: 367.3</p>  <p>25 08:36:55 2508.5</p> <p>2019-11-25 12:00</p>
<p>PM 2.5 Intermittent high levels Peaks at start and finish probably cycling in and back</p>	<p>2019-11-25 17:38:15 PM_{2.5}: 741.7</p>  <p>2019-11-25 12:00</p>
<p>PM 10 Intermittent high levels Peaks at start and finish probably cycling in and back</p>	 <p>2019-11-25 12:00</p>
<p>NO₂ High levels seen during cycle ride into town, otherwise reasonably low.</p>	<p>NO₂ 339.4 / 25-11-19 / 08:30</p>  <p>2019-11-25 06:00 2019-11-25 12:00</p>