

City centre review for planners

- ✘ Councillors are set to approve a long term vision, and action plan, for Edinburgh's city centre public realm.

A report, going before the Council's Policy & Strategy Committee next week, details the results of a review of Princes Street, George Street and Rose Street by Gehl architects, the international urban design consultants.

Gehl's approach, which focuses heavily on people and how they use places, was used successfully in New York and Melbourne, where the Council say their work has been instrumental to bringing bold changes to public spaces in these cities.

The council-commissioned review, which was endorsed by city centre stakeholders – including representatives from residents and city centre businesses – sets out a series of recommendations for the city centre and suggests the use of temporary projects as a way of testing the ideas and long term vision.

These recommendations have now been developed into a detailed action plan by officers, including 11 immediate steps, to bring about a series of improvements to the city centre over the coming years.

Temporary projects, such as increasing footway space on the North Side of George Street and increasing the opening hours of kiosks, would be highly visible and affordable, while longer term projects, such as creating pedestrian spaces in the centre of George Street, could transform the city centre.

Council leader, Cllr Jenny Dawe, said: "Edinburgh is a world class city and a magnet for visitors but, equally, there is a consensus that the quality of public space in some parts of

the city centre lets us down.

“I am determined that this action plan be implemented. The starting point is the delivery of temporary short-term projects, which can be done quickly and cheaply to bring much needed changes to the dynamic of the city centre.

“Gehl’s findings reinforce the clear correlation between good public places and good economic performance, as already demonstrated by the success of the recent redevelopments of St Andrew Square and the Grassmarket.”