

West End will become a 'shopper's paradise' amid tram works

✖ This weekend another round of roadworks will be starting.
Edinburgh Trams announced:-

"As of Saturday 14 January 2012, Edinburgh Trams will start preparing Shandwick Place for a programme of tram works until spring 2013 and will include diversions and signal works in the local area.

In advance of this enabling works will be taking place on the diversion route.

The work will result in all traffic being diverted from Shandwick Place between Lothian Road junction and Palmerston Place."


Any news about the tram project in Edinburgh always seems to be bad news, with reports of roads being dug up and traffic diverted apparently at random, resulting in businesses having real difficulties as a result of street closures and diversions.

So, among all this disruption, it is perhaps heartening to hear about one business area which is embracing the tram works as a positive factor in helping them thrive even in these difficult economic times.


Michael Apter Chair of the West End Village Association said:-
"We are keen to see the tram work in the area started and completed in as short a time as possible. There will undoubtedly be disruption to regular routes during the works, but we also know that there is an opportunity to reach out to new customers who will be experiencing new and different

routes into the city centre during the track laying. The businesses in the West End have proven themselves to be resilient during the previous tram work and global recession.

We are confident that the unique blend of West End shops and boutiques, bars and restaurants, salons and beauticians will continue to draw customers to the area throughout the period of the tram work. We look forward to the time in 2014 when we will have a tram stop at the West End Village which will be a major point of entry into the city centre”.

Sarah Connelly, Company Director of [Odyssey Boutique](#) on  William Street feels she can turn the tram works into something positive for her business, a boutique which aims to offer great fitting, beautiful lingerie and year round swimwear, alongside a capsule collection of specialist beauty treatments. With on street parking available right outside the front door Sarah hopes that William Street will be discovered as a shopper’s paradise:-

[Sarah Connelly of Odyssey Boutique \(mp3\)](#)

 Hairdresser Lindsey Gillies has also been working in the William Street area for around 20 years and she also told The Reporter that she had high hopes for the area being much busier during the tram works when people find out what a lovely little shopping area it is. She said:-“Once people find us they will love the very different shops we have to offer.”

Transport Convenor, Councillor Gordon Mackenzie said:-“The traffic changes will inevitably have an impact on trade and we’ve got a support package in place to help businesses with deliveries, marketing and other initiatives to help them through that. On the other hand some businesses will do well from those changes, as pedestrians and others change their habits. I saw that first hand with some of the stores on George Street the last time Princes Street was closed to traffic, and I’m pleased businesses in the West End are

looking to take up that opportunity this time as well.”

Councillor Charles Dundas is one of the three councillors who represent the city centre ward. He said:-“I have no doubt that a fast, electric addition to our world-class public transport system in Edinburgh is going to improve the experience of living in, and getting around, Edinburgh. The aims of the tram are to get more people onto public transport and have fewer cars in the city centre. This should mean an improved experience for pedestrians and cyclists too.

William Street is a real gem in the heart of the West End. It’s certainly where I go for a lunchtime sandwich from my office, or for a birthday present for my wife from one of the many boutiques along the way.

I expect that most people share my glum acceptance of the disruption which the next set of tram works will bring, but we have been through these before, indeed we are currently in the midst of diversions at Haymarket, Waverley Steps and Princes Street which have not brought the city to a halt. However, the important thing is to remember that after month and months of stalemate with the contractor these diversions are at least proof that work is pressing ahead, and Edinburgh is getting closer to the benefits of having an operating tram.

You ask what businesses can do. I would point them towards the active and strong-voiced “West End Village” Business Association who are very good at engaging with both the tram developers and the Council to ensure that the voices of local businesses are heard. They lobby me, as a councillor all the time.”

Another of the City Centre councillors, Councillor Joanna Mowat said:-“I was encouraged to hear that some businesses see the Haymarket closure as an opportunity to capture pedestrian trade – it is inspiring to hear businesses who have had to weather a heavy storm in recent years being so positive and

upbeat. I hope that their enthusiasm is justifiably rewarded, but I will be keeping close eye on how the tram works affect business and put a motion to the December meeting of Edinburgh City Council asking that the Council recognises the difficult trading conditions combined with tram works that businesses have had to endure and that the Council explores every avenue to ensure that businesses are supported at this difficult time. I am open to suggestions and will work to ensure that we keep a vibrant business community in the City Centre.”

Shandwick Place will be closed to all traffic between Atholl Crescent and Lothian Road. Traffic will be diverted to either Melville Street for eastbound traffic or the West Approach Road for westbound traffic.

Access to shops and premises will be maintained in both areas, while additional support will be put in place for business deliveries.