

Planning for cafe culture on Princes Street



The council wants to encourage more cafes with outdoor seating on Princes Street and in the city centre. This, they say, will help the town centre become a place for 'social and economic interaction'.

The planning committee meets next week when it hopes to approve guidelines which will help achieve that aim by allowing properties currently used as shops to be turned into cafes where they can safely offer an outdoor seating area and the shop is under 300 square metres in size. There has already been some discussion over the last 10 months to find out what local businesses thought of these proposals, but the council will also undertake further consultation for a minimum of eight weeks if the draft proposal is given the green light.

Planning Convener Councillor Ian Perry said:- "This is about breathing new life into Princes Street. Cafes and restaurants will give people a new incentive to come into town to meet friends, relax over a meal and visit the shops.

"We've already had interest from prospective food and drink businesses who are keen to take advantage of the world-beating views of Edinburgh Castle and the Old Town that you get on Princes Street."

Andy Neal, Chief Executive of Essential Edinburgh, said:- "Essential Edinburgh are delighted this positive step for Princes Street is being taken. For city centres to survive they need to offer a great experience and a row of almost a mile with only shops does not deliver that.

"The chance to break for a chat with coffee or a glass of wine

will deliver a much more pleasurable experience and allow the unique and stunning views to be enjoyed. It will also allow the street to be used into the evening. With later shop opening and places to eat, Princes St will be an even greater asset for Edinburgh.”

The idea is to retain the larger shop units for retail use, but allow smaller shop units to be used for food and drink in an effort to bring people to the city’s most prestigious street. The council says that it realises there are some units where daytime seating would not work alongside retail shops, but there is a possibility that these units could be used in the evenings, particularly during the summer.



There is also some recognition by the council that the upper floors on Princes Street, as shown in our photograph, are not really very well used.

All of these proposed changes are subject to overall number crunching, and there is an overarching principle that at any one time no more than a third of the shops in Princes Street can be used as food and drink outlets. Otherwise in the city centre there will be no more than four cafes or bars in one stretch, and these will be spaced out by retail shops.

All of the planning matters currently under discussion will be subject to the Proposed Local Development Plan which has been consulted upon recently. The LDP is the framework within which all individual planning applications are dealt with.

You can read all of the papers relating to the Planning Committee [here on the council website.](#)