

George Street to be Festival centrepiece



Following proposals aired earlier this year to establish the pedestrian zone in part of George Street in the same way as last year, which did not entirely meet with approval from businesses along the city centre thoroughfare, a new scheme has now been approved.

New and revised plans to create a Festival hub along the entire length of Edinburgh's George Street have been agreed – to the delight of city centre businesses.

The City of Edinburgh Council has agreed to a plan proposed by Essential Edinburgh, the company that runs the city centre Business Improvement District, to extend the Festival hub along the entire length of the street.

Until now, the plans were only for the Assembly Rooms block, which is to be entirely closed to traffic to allow space for the SpiegelTerrace.

Now, greater areas of the entire length of the street will be available for pedestrians and businesses so that visitors to the city centre can enjoy performances from the various festivals at different staging points all along the street. Local restaurants and bars will help to create the festival ambience by using some of the additional pedestrian space for extra tables and chairs outside.

A pilot transport scheme will allow traffic to continue to flow, but along one side of the street only, and parking will also be maintained.

Andy Neal of Essential Edinburgh said: "We are delighted to

get agreement to these proposals as it will allow one of our most prestigious streets to show what a great environment can be created with more space for pedestrians whilst still keeping the vitality of the street through retained access and parking. As well as the festival presence, the great food and drink businesses on George Street will have the chance to show what cafe culture really means.”

Councillor Steve Cardownie said:- “August is so important for Edinburgh’s economy and international reputation. This development on George Street will help to bring back some of the fantastic festival vibe to the New Town and ease the pressure on other parts of the city centre, especially around the Royal Mile. It’s also a very welcome step towards the continental cafe culture that we’ve all been looking for in the capital.”

Councillor Lesley Hinds said: “This is a great example of the Council and local businesses working together to make the most of the festivals season. We’ve been able to plan transport arrangements that maintain parking, keep traffic flowing and allow for special events. Initiatives like this also help us all to see the potential for the area as a whole as we create a new vision for the capital’s city centre. I’m sure it’s going to be very popular and may even become a blueprint for the future of George Street.”

One half of the street will be closed in each block, with traffic flowing west on the south side of George Street between Frederick Street and the West End, and eastwards on the north side of the street between Hanover Street and the East End. Access lanes will also be maintained for use by emergency vehicles.

The arrangements will be in place from 1 August to 25 August.