

Determined moves by council to minimise street clutter



The council are set to declare war on A boards. These are the collapsible advertising boards which some traders set on the pavement outside their premises.

Councillors believe that a new strategy is needed to ensure that the city's streets are not cluttered with them, owing to the difficulties they create for people with prams and wheelchairs.

It appears to the council that they must now take steps on enforcement of the rules, or introduce new ones.

There is already a Street Design Guidance in place for Edinburgh which states : *"Every street that people live, shop, work and travel along can add to or detract from the quality of city life"*. Part of this guidance means that any street furniture such as advertising boards or tables and chairs must be used in what is described as a 'controlled manner'.

But the council also recognises that businesses have to advertise their wares, so their needs must be balanced against keeping our pavements clear for pedestrians.

In February this year environmental wardens carried out a survey of the boards on the Royal Mile and found about 60 of them among 200 items on the street. The problem is that there has been a ban on such boards on the Royal Mile for the last ten years, so it seems that enforcement is lacking.

Some cities elsewhere ban the boards completely, or ban them in certain areas while others license their use.

Edinburgh has been active in getting rid of trade waste bins

from our streets allowing the businesses to put these out for a limited time for collection, and not all day as before, and they might do something similar with the boards.

Advocates Close has been held up as an example of an area where there is coordinated business signage on the walls so that A boards are not needed, and the close is much tidier as a result.

Councillor Lesley Hinds, Transport and Environment Convener, said: "Despite the fact that there's been an A boards policy in place since the early 2000s, clearly a new strategy is now required to help reduce unsightly and potentially hazardous street clutter. A number of already busy pavements have started to become like obstacle courses, peppered with A-boards and obstructing free movement.

"Obviously shops and businesses want to be able to promote themselves to passers-by, but this should never be at the expense of public safety, particularly for those with mobility or sight problems or anyone pushing a pram.

"We now want to carry out a review and consultation exercise with a range of groups and organisations so that we can devise an A board strategy that best reflects the needs and requirements of Edinburgh's streets."

As part of their overall action plan, the charity Living Streets has been campaigning for a fundamental review of the council's policy on A boards and other street clutter.

Stuart Hay, Director, Living Streets Scotland, said: "We want walking in Edinburgh to be safe, easy and enjoyable. To achieve this we need better designed and maintained streets, free from clutter.

"Street clutter not only effects what a street looks like but causes obstacles for people walking, this is a particular problem for those who are blind or partially sighted.

“A review of the council’s policy should look at better management of ‘A boards’, including banning them from our busiest streets.”