

Council to ban A boards citywide

The council will ban all 'A' boards or other temporary adverts in the whole of Edinburgh from autumn this year.

The current restrictions only affect some streets such as the Royal Mile, Rose Street, Princes Street and Rose Street Lanes in the city centre, where it is left open to the trader to place any board in such a way that it 'does not cause a hazard or obstruction to pedestrians'.

We took photos of some of the A boards on city centre streets on Thursday and you can see that the result in other city centre streets including the Royal Mile is not exactly uniform.



A board



A board PHOTO ©2018 The Edinburgh Reporter



A board



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A boards were banned by the council in 2018



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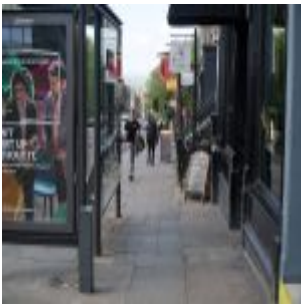
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To bring this into line the council will ban A boards and other 'temporary on-street advertising structures' such as flags, to declutter the streets, something that they already committed to in the coalition deal signed last year.

Council Commitment number 27 sets out that the council will reduce street clutter to improve accessibility. The council believes that stronger and more consistent control of obstructions such as temporary on-street advertising will help them fulfil that commitment.

A dedicated enforcement team will be set up to enforce the ban for the first 18 months, covering the city in phases. This is a similar type of enforcement to that used to police trade waste in the city. There is a possibility that offenders will be fined with Fixed Penalty Notices but that would require a change in legislation. At first the offender will be required to remove the board within 21 days and if they don't then the council will remove it, store it and bill the trader for their costs.

It has taken since March 2017 for the council to get to this stage, but now that they are ready to ban the boards, Transport and Environment Convener Lesley Macinnes said to The Edinburgh Reporter : "We have had a number of representations during the year from various groups about the problems that these boards cause. This includes those with various forms of disabilities or those using mobility scooters and those with children in buggies.

"People have to move in and out of structures that move all the time. They are never in the same spot which is difficult for those with visual impairment in particular.

"There have been attempts in the past by the council to control the use of these boards but this has eroded over time.

"Our intention is to ban them citywide. From my point of view there is a social justice aspect to this. People should be able to move around the city safely and securely no matter what method they use or whatever difficulties they may face.

"We know that we have support from external stakeholders on this matter. We do know that there is a degree of impact on businesses and we recognise that."

In the report produced to guide the council in making this decision a meeting with the Federation of Small Businesses in February this year is mentioned. Businesses think that other street clutter should also be dealt with as well as the

advertising boards as these are not the sole culprit.

It is recognised that signs, bollards, bins and bus stops also make up the clutter on our streets and the council is determined to minimise all of that.

In March a survey of businesses resulted in a majority supporting the council's proposal to ban the boards completely.

Councillor Macinnes continued : "We need to find some ways to help support those businesses who will be genuinely impacted by the loss of advertising. We are looking at that and will report on it in the coming months."

City Centre councillor and Vice-Convener of Transport and Economy, Karen Doran explained that city centre residents were very much in favour of this move. She said : "I am very much in favour of this too. It will make a huge difference."

The conveners spoke as one when they explained that this will take a bit of culture change in the initial period, and the scheme will be reviewed after a year to 18 months.

Adam Wilkinson Director of Edinburgh World Heritage told us he is in favour too. He said : "A boards are already banned on the Royal Mile, but there are many practical reasons as to why a ban is sensible, particularly with regard to getting around the city for residents.

"There are plenty of other advertising opportunities for traders, for example using their own shop fronts. There are some really good examples of how to find places which are perhaps tucked away. I saw this in Dubrovnik where the entrances to alleyways have the same type of signs with the same writing for directions to businesses."

Helpfully Adam provided us with a photo from Dubrovnik where you can see the type of sign he mentions.



A spokesperson for sight loss charity RNIB Scotland said: “We welcome this move by Edinburgh City Council to make the capital’s streets safer and more inclusive for residents and visitors with disabilities. It’s something our Street Charter has been pressing for throughout the country. While we, of course, want business to prosper, our streets should not be an obstacle course to be negotiated.

“A third of blind and partially sighted people surveyed by RNIB said they had been injured by pavement clutter when walking outside. Some felt so intimidated they ended up staying isolated in their homes. This is surely unacceptable.”

Robin Wickes, Vice Chairman of the Edinburgh Access Panel, said: “Pavement clutter is a significant obstacle for disabled folk in Edinburgh. For wheelchair users and vision impaired people in particular navigating our streets is a real challenge, especially since many of our pavements are narrow and busy with visitors. Banning A-boards will remove a major barrier and help disabled people enjoy equality of access to Edinburgh’s streets and pavements.”

David Spaven, Convener of Living Streets Edinburgh Local Group is positive about the news. He said : “This is the best news we’ve had for a long time. A-boards have been turning Edinburgh’s pavements into obstacle courses, and that’s been bad news for residents, workers, visitors and tourists alike.

“Two years ago, Living Streets Edinburgh undertook Streets Audits in conjunction with Tollcross Community Council, and we found the pavement clutter was so bad that we began pressing the City Council to undertake a major review of A-board policy – so we’re delighted that our work has led to this great opportunity to transform the streets. If Councillors give this plan the green light, it will be by far the most progressive walking measure ever introduced by the City Council.

“Council officers have also been wise to advocate a city-wide ban, with a holistic approach to the wider problem of street clutter and a robust enforcement strategy. This approach will ensure that the new policy is both fair and effective.”

The decision will be made at next week’s Transport and Environment Committee meeting on 17 May. You can follow this and other council meetings [online](#).