

City centre ready for transformation

The council has now released details of its plans to radically change the way that people and vehicles will move around the city centre.

The plans include a proposal for a further tram extension by reintroducing a circular route round the city centre as there used to be before trams were disbanded. There is a bold plan to create new vertical connections by introducing urban lifts between Waverley Station and North Bridge, Market Street to St Giles, Cowgate to George IV Bridge and Grassmarket to Edinburgh Castle.



Victoria Street

Certain key city centre streets like Cockburn Street will become car free as well as Forrest Road, High Street, Victoria Street and Waverley Bridge.

Better pedestrian crossings will be created at areas such as Tollcross and the Hanover Street/George Street junction.



All on street parking on streets closed to traffic will be removed and the council will look at introducing a new coach management strategy, electric charging points for taxis and car club cars and what is called last mile freight – so it is hoped that the last part of any journey to deliver goods to the city centre will no longer be conducted by large HGVs but by electric vehicles or indeed cargo bikes.

A consultation will seek [your views](#) on the proposals over a six week period beginning on 20 May.

Edinburgh is one of the fastest growing cities in the UK and the council hopes that its strategy will allow it to meet the challenges of that while improving community economic and cultural life.

The centre will be transformed by improving public spaces and giving more priority to those walking, cycling and using public transport. The council aims to make the core of Edinburgh a safer, healthier and more accessible place for all who live and visit with these transformation plans linked closely to the proposals for Low Emission Zones and the City Mobility Plan.

At the head of the cross party working group driving these changes forward is [Daisy Narayanan](#) who is seconded from Sustrans where she is Deputy Director. Ms Narayanan has worked over the last year listening to people who live and work here and has now published plans which take a holistic approach to dealing with congestion and traffic by separating the city

into layers. In each layer measures will focus on six catalyst areas including Lothian Road as we reported earlier in the year.



Proposals may remove two lanes of traffic from Lothian Road linking Festival Square and the area outside the Usher Hall more easily for pedestrians.

The six areas include : **Haymarket/ West End** –providing a high quality arrival experience to the west of the City Centre, effective interchange to other transport modes and legible pedestrian and cycle links, in particular to key locations for employment such as The Exchange, Morrison Street and Rutland Square/Lothian Road.

Lothian Road – transformation from a heavily trafficked north-south connection to a safe and welcoming multi-modal, tree-

lined boulevard, with street space re-allocated from vehicles to provide widened footways, segregated cycleways and rejuvenated public spaces, This will enable offices, theatres, cinemas, bars, cafes and restaurants to thrive and rival Europe's leading cultural destinations.

Princes Street and the New Town – reinforcing Princes Street's unique qualities to provide an inspiring and pedestrian focussed environment, where people can dwell and retail and other uses prosper. This will involve rationalisation of bus movements to improve journey times, providing enhanced east-west pedestrian crossings and better links to Princes St Gardens.

Old Town – enhancing the character and pedestrian environment within the Old Town and providing a 'quieter' area for the benefit of all who live, work, visit with improvements to public realm, lighting and wayfinding that enhance perceptions of safety and promote lesser used and explored areas. General traffic would be restricted from a greater extent of the Royal Mile and connections with the Cowgate enhanced.



Waverley Bridge plaza

Waverley/Calton – improving the public realm to celebrate the

unique environment at each of Waverley's entrances, creating an enhanced arrival experience with ease of movement to the wider City Centre. This would include closure of Waverley Bridge to vehicles and formation of a new gateway public space, improved vertical accessibility between the station and surrounding high level streets and creation of a new bridge from Jeffrey Street to Calton Road, significantly enhancing north-south pedestrian and cycle connections across the Waverley valley.

Innovation Mile – maximising the potential for research, innovation and collaboration associated with the University of Edinburgh and regeneration at Quartermile and Fountainbridge by providing a coherent and high quality public realm that links east-west walking and cycle routes to the south of the city centre. The proposal includes potential for the future introduction of tram, providing a city centre loop, with Potterrow serving as an interchange between tram, bus, cycle and walking routes.



Princes Street is included in the proposals

Some of the recommended actions :

- **Public realm improvement schemes** for Princes Street, George Street, George IV Bridge, Lothian Road, South Bridge, Morrison Street and Ponton Street, including:
 - **Calton Road improvements** as a key connection between Waverley Station, Leith Street, New Waverley and Holyrood by upgrading public realm, lighting and wayfinding.
 - **Enhancing Nicolson Square** as a community focused space and the identify other opportunities for community projects.
- **New vertical connections** (urban lifts or other enclosed motorised connections) including Waverly Station to North Bridge; Market Street to St Giles; Cowgate to

George IV Bridge; and The Grassmarket to Edinburgh Castle.

- **Removal of general traffic from key city centre streets** including Bank Street (except buses and taxis); Candlemaker Row (except bus); Cockburn Street; Forest Road; High Street between North Bridge and St Mary's Street; Victoria Street and Waverley Bridge. Includes:
 - **Transforming Waverley Bridge** to create a new world-class gateway to the city.

While maintaining continuity of access for residents and essential business, a significant reduction (about 25%) in private vehicle movements within the city centre will be needed.

- **Reallocation of space to people on foot, those on bikes and public transport users** at Cowgate, The Bridges corridor, Calton Road, Johnston Terrace, Lothian Road, Morrison Street, Ponton Street and Western Approach Road including:
 - **Creating a boulevard on Lothian Road** with new tree planting to provide a green link that extends between Princes Street Gardens and the Meadows.
- **Local Junction improvements** that provide more footway space and more effective road crossing opportunities including at Tollcross; Lothian Road/Western Approach Road junction; High Street/North Bridge junction and Hanover Street/George Street junction.
- **Development of a full, cohesive and high-quality cycling network** across the city centre – including City Centre West to East Link (CCWEL); the Meadows to George Street; Lothian Road from CCWEL (Charlotte Square) to Tollcross (connecting to the Meadows); Princes Street and Lothian Road cycle safety improvements; and Leith Street to Jeffrey Street, including new pedestrian and cycle bridge from Calton Road to Jefferey Street.
- **A potential tram loop around the city centre**, subject to

consultation and in association with further expansion of the network – including a possible tram route along Morrison Street as part of a wider tram expansion.

- **New public transport interchanges** at the West End at Haymarket/West Approach Road; South-East at Potterrow/Nicolson Street; South-West at Tollcross and North-East at Picardy Place/St Andrew's Square. Including:
- **Removal of all on-street parking on streets being closed to general traffic** including selective removal of spaces on Chambers Street, Blackfriars Street and St Mary's Street to support cycleways/bus priority.
- **Revisions to permit zones** at the expense of pay-and-display spaces.
- **Council to take management responsibility New Street and Castle Terrace parking lots** or negotiate flexible use of these spaces.
- **A Baseline review of city centre workplace parking levy** supported by wider controlled parking zones extending from city centre.
- **Low emission vehicles** for the Council fleet.
- **City centre electric charging points** for taxis, car clubs, last mile freight and council fleet.
- **A coach management strategy** to reduce the impact of coach movements on Regent Road, Johnston Terrace and Waverley Bridge, with a view to being able to close Lawnmarket to general traffic in the future.



Cllr Lesley Macinnes Convener of Transport and Environment
Transport and Environment Convener, Cllr Lesley Macinnes, said: "This is an exciting and ambitious strategy, one which will deliver transformative benefits across the city and for a whole range of people travelling to and within Edinburgh. We want everyone to share in Edinburgh's success and reimagining our city centre and its purpose will help make this happen.

"Here we have a blueprint to move the city forward. The proposals are designed to prompt debate – they aren't finalised designs or ideas. They are examples of what we could do to deliver the city centre that residents are telling us they want.

"By creating public spaces that are more welcoming and enjoyable, making walking and cycling in the city centre easier and safer and improving access to public transport networks we want to equip the city for the future. Key to achieving this is to create a consistent and coordinated approach to city centre planning and management. This means continuing to link the Transformation Strategy with policies and projects including Low Emission Zone, City Mobility Plan, City Plan 2030."



Morrison Street could look like this

Proposals detail the key infrastructure, policy and management interventions to transform the city centre over the next ten years, in a phased approach, and include:

- A pedestrian priority zone and a network of car free streets creating a walkable core at the heart of the World Heritage Site.
- Improvements to streets and public spaces which complement the City's unique heritage.
- A connected network across the city centre of new segregated and safe cycle routes including a new walking and cycling bridge connecting the Old Town and the New Town.
- A free city centre hopper bus to support people moving around the city without a car.
- Lifts or other forms of vertical connections at key points to help people, especially those with mobility restrictions, explore the different street levels.
- Reducing the presence of cars to free up space for other users, including a significant reduction of on street parking with priority given to residents and blue badge parking.

Proposals to enhance walking and cycling facilities between the Meadows and George Street will also be considered as part of the Edinburgh City Centre Transformation report. These

include the closure of Bank Street between Market Street and the High Street to general motorised traffic and pedestrian priority on Forrest Road and Candlemaker Row. **These will be subject to a six-week consultation beginning on 27 May.**

A six-week consultation on the draft strategy will take place between 20 May and 28 June, during which time the project team will meet with local groups as well as holding public exhibitions and details of those are yet to be confirmed.

An online questionnaire is available at www.edinburghcitycentre.info.

Consultation feedback will be taken into consideration in preparing the final strategy and a costed ten-year delivery plan, which will be presented to the City of Edinburgh Council's Transport & Environment Committee in September for approval.

A full copy of the Full Edinburgh City Centre Transformation Strategy including the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and its Non-Technical Summary are available at www.edinburghcitycentre.info



Outside the City Chambers Edinburgh where there is already a space which becomes pedestrianised for at least part of the

day.