

# Council approves outline plans for walking and cycling measures in Edinburgh

The council got to the end of a very long Policy and Sustainability committee earlier today when some of the most important measures fell to be discussed and decided.

These are the plans to change streets and roads in the city to allow space for social distancing and more space for exercise. They will undoubtedly affect everyone in the city whatever form of transport you use to get about. They were approved in outline, without any specific streets being approved today.

Initially, the report asked that the council noted a long list of possibilities where change could be made. It asked that the council delegates authority to the Chief Executive, along with the Council Leader and Deputy Leader, to take action where they saw fit. Local councillors would be consulted for no longer than five working days. Everyone recognises the need for swift action, and that the council is temporarily at least free of the restrictions of the TR0 framework which takes so long to implement.

In view of the combined cross-party amendment to the initial report there will be periodic 'member briefings with details of actions, rationale and impact'. There will be bus gates and new bus lanes, removal of street clutter, hedge cutting and

pavement scraping (nobody clarified what that actually means during the meeting).

The council agreed to develop a travel code to enable everyone to travel safely while applying physical distancing.

Some streets which are currently 40 mph streets will be reviewed and may become 30mph. Some which are 30 mph may be subject to a 20mph limit.

Just as soon as workers are allowed to return, the road investment programme will be continued, and some roads will be resurfaced and treated, and some pedestrian crossings will also be created.

Eventually, after a lot of discussion by the various political groups, the coalition administration pulled out an amendment which had been agreed with the Greens and Liberal Democrats and this three page document along with the initial report, is what was approved.

The amendment does not say that it fully replaces the council report – just as well as that contains a lot of minute detail in the appendices. There is a wide range of possible road schemes to be considered, but it is clear that simply by passing the report these are not just simply agreed upon.

There is also the matter of money. And the council will now move forward with an application to The Scottish Government for funding from the £10m 'Spaces for People' funding for local authorities.



Transport Convener Lesley Macinnes and Cllr Melanie Main at Braidburn Terrace where additional measures were put in place. Photo: Martin P. McAdam [www.martinmcadam.com](http://www.martinmcadam.com)

The council moved swiftly in the last couple of weeks to close Silverknowes Road, Links Gardens, [Braid Road and Braidburn Terrace](#), as well as Cammo Walk. Future schemes will make space

for people to exercise, travel safely around the city, reduce the risk to those who use roads for travel or exercise and make space for people in high streets and in the city centre.

## **So what should you now expect?**

More measures like this, removal of guard-rails on some city centre pavements, removal of street clutter and perhaps, when circumstances change, some resurfacing of roads and streets that need it. That will certainly be necessary if cyclists are to be encouraged to use roads not pavements.

## **Victoria Street and Cockburn Street**

There was no mention at the meeting of these specific measures, but The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) wrote to committee members yesterday expressing the concerns that businesses have raised about the proposed closure of Cockburn Street and Victoria Street to traffic.

Garry Clark, FSB Development Manager for Edinburgh, said: "Many businesses in Edinburgh right now are putting in place the support they have received to keep their businesses viable, whilst others are having to do their best to get by since they do not qualify for the support packages that have been made available so far. All, however, have one eye on the future and are planning ahead for our eventual emergence from lockdown.

"Businesses in Cockburn Street and Victoria Street are no different and many are in sectors like hospitality, retail and tourism, which are likely to be impacted by the lockdown, social distancing and changing consumer behaviour for some time to come.

"In this context, any plans to close these streets to traffic need to be fully thought through with the interests of local businesses in mind. Local businesses have told me that they

are concerned that there has been insufficient consultation on the planned measures and that any closures implemented during the lockdown or recovery phase could seriously damage already fragile businesses.

“FSB has written to the Committee outlining these concerns and we hope that Councillors will respond positively by putting local businesses first.”

## **Sustrans**

John Lauder, Deputy CEO Sustrans and National Director, Sustrans Scotland, Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland said: “It is clear that the way we travel, work, spend time with each other and enjoy our urban spaces has been changed by the pandemic. It is increasingly clear that there is no ‘old normal’ to go back to.

“Sustrans therefore welcomes Edinburgh’s leadership in envisioning how Scotland’s capital can have the resilience to deal with the twin challenges of ensuring people have safe space to physical distance and a more sustainable and less polluting way to get around the city. We warmly welcome the measures to create safe spaces for walking and cycling approved today and we look forward to more changes in the future.

“We strongly welcome the emphasis on public safety, the connection between better public spaces and economic recovery, and the recognition that making space for walking, cycling and wheeling is central to getting the city reconnected and back on its feet.

“Delivering temporary measures based on existing plans to change Edinburgh’s streetscape is a sensible and pragmatic approach. This will enable works to be delivered with the urgency demanded by the circumstances, and will address areas of the city which, even prior to Covid-19, required much more

space for pavement users”.

If you are a member of a community council, traders’ association or a member of the public then you can suggest additional schemes to be assessed against the criteria in the form of a webpage and dedicated email, [spaceforeveryone@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:spaceforeveryone@edinburgh.gov.uk)

## Deputations

There were deputations lodged for this meeting, but none were read out, they were referred to by the council leader at the beginning of the meeting. We have not found these published anywhere on the council website. We understand the deputations were sent to all members of the committee, but perhaps not all councillors.

The Edinburgh TUC sent theirs to us – it is embedded below, and you will see that they reckon there is a democratic deficit at the City Chambers.



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There were others from the Unite the Union Edinburgh Cab Branch among others. They were annoyed that they did not get to speak to the meeting 'live'. This is what they wanted to say:



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If we get copies of any others then we will publish them here too.



Silverknowes Road. Closed. Photo: Martin P. McAdam  
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