

Opinion – Edinburgh is on the road to post-Covid 19 recovery says Transport Convener

by Transport Convener Cllr Lesley Macinnes.

Cllr Macinnes has welcomed the award of £5 million of Scottish Government funding for social distancing measures to be introduced on Edinburgh's streets. A keen cyclist herself, she has already supported and led on plans such as the City Centre Transformation Project which promises much in the way of removing cars and congestion from the city centre.

The council has put certain measures in place, but for some it is not going quickly enough. Here Cllr Macinnes sets out her views on what has been done.

"One positive aspect of these last few, trying months is the city's clear desire to get walking and cycling.

"Not only has our own analysis shown pedestrian and cyclist numbers rocketing, but since launching the interactive [Commonplace](#) map we've received thousands of ideas for making it easier and safer to get around the city by foot, bike or wheelchair.

"It's clear there's work to do – and we're responding. Every

suggestion, from removing guardrails on narrow pavements to pedestrianising streets, to speed reduction or pop-up cycle lanes, is extremely valuable. This process is a very complex one and our teams are working flat-out to assess and consider responses, as well as linking them to those actions already identified across the city.



Crewe Road South – with the cycle lane painted but awaiting the wands which are now in place Photo: Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

“From inception to delivery, each scheme’s timescales can vary significantly, and we must target the projects that deliver the greatest benefits. For this reason, we won’t be able to undertake every suggestion, but each one gives us an invaluable insight into the kind of city people want to see post-Covid, and we’re taking this on board.

“We’re already delivering initiatives at a more ambitious rate than any other Scottish local authority. In the last week we have installed more than 5km of pop-up cycle lanes leading to Edinburgh’s two main hospitals, adding to some road closures

to help people walk, cycle and wheel to their local greenspaces and amenities. These changes follow engagement with communities, mobility and active travel groups and local councillors. They've had a great response so far. We're continuing to listen to the people that use them, tweaking the designs where necessary.

"As we begin to tentatively emerge from lockdown, we must get the city moving. Before long, businesses will begin reopening and this will have a real impact on the way we move around Edinburgh. We want cafés, bars and restaurants, shops and other services to thrive, once they're able to reopen, while also protecting people's safety as Scottish Government advice on physical distancing remains.



Photo: Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

"We're already preparing for this. From this week we will begin implementing several, major interventions in the city centre to help create a safer environment, encouraging people to spend time on foot or bike as restrictions ease. These include footway widening and the introduction of bus, cycle

and taxi gates on East Princes Street and South St David Street, reducing traffic volumes and aiding cycling and public transport, and the partial closure of Waverley Bridge. This kind of real, tangible change, supported by similar, forthcoming measures across the city's local high streets, will help us to move to the next phase of eased restrictions.



Edinburgh Waverley. Photo: Martin P. McAdam
www.martinmcadam.com

“Reintroducing parking enforcement next week is crucial if these measures are to have the desired effect. By minimising often dangerous obstructions from our streets, we will be able to create and maintain spaces for people. What’s more, encouraging turnover of parking spaces means a higher and more varied footfall on our shopping streets.

“Much of the work we are undertaking is to create quick, temporary changes to help people travel safely as we adjust to these exceptional circumstances. Emphasising clean, sustainable transport and people-focused spaces, where fewer cars result in less air pollution, supports our long-term city

goals of a carbon neutral future where air quality is improved and healthy, and where walking, cycling and wheeling is the norm. We will get through this together and, if we are to make the right decisions now, we can harness these positive outcomes as we emerge from this crisis.”

Here's the Crewe Road South cycle lane as at Monday 8 June at 3.00pm Wands anyone? [@lmacinnessnp](#) are we getting wands here too? Also some bits of the surface fixed but not absolutely all... and at some of the junctions the road surface is cracked and broken pic.twitter.com/PuilZjdCeI

– Edinburgh Reporter (@EdinReporter) [June 8, 2020](#)



Councillor Lesley Macinnes, Transport Convener Photo: Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com