

# **Council officers make recommendations on the future of Spaces for People measures**

**Council officers have made their recommendations to the members of the Transport Committee who meet next Thursday, regarding what will happen to the Spaces for People measures put in on the city's streets over this last year.**

The temporary schemes have come under fire on several counts: for example the lack of consultation required to introduce the measures and the criticism of the appearance of the temporary cones and wands which have not lasted well in some places.

Now the council will remove some of the road closures and retain others. The headlines are that streets such as Victoria Street and Cockburn Street, Silverknowes Road and Braid Road will remain closed as they are at present. The temporary crossing at Maybury Road will be retained, but all of these traffic schemes will be different in a highly technical sense. The devil is in the detail and a list of proposed measures will be included in the Transport Committee papers and some are set out at the foot of this article.



Victoria Street. Photo: Martin P. McAdam [www.martinmcadam.com](http://www.martinmcadam.com)  
The £5.25 million Covid-19 Spaces for People programme was introduced in 2020 to give pedestrians, cyclists and those

wheeling a pram or in a wheelchair more space on the roads and pavements in the city. It was funded by The Scottish Government and as at January 2021 had provided 39 km of segregated cycle lanes, 11 widened footpaths, three city centre pedestrian zones, seven areas for safe access to Spaces for Exercise, 10 road closures around schools and 54 measures at schools to reduce the risk of infection.

Moving forward there will be no Spaces for People measures as introduced under Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTROs), but some will remain in place as **experimental** projects within the council's overarching transport policy. You can read about the future experimental projects below.

*It is worth stating again the processes under which the schemes were introduced. The measures which are to be retained will be covered by an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO). Until now the temporary schemes introduced under Covid emergency legislation were introduced under TTROs where there was thought to be a specific risk to the public and public health.*

The difference between TTROs and ETROs is a clear one. ETROs are available to the council to experiment with traffic arrangements and learn from any experiment, and for that learning to feed into potential future transport schemes. The council agreed in January 2021 that they would use the ETRO process for future road traffic layouts after the pandemic.

The best example of an ETRO being used in this way is George Street. The council experimented with road traffic measures there, both during the festival season and outside it, for about eighteen months (which is the longest time that an ETRO can be put in place for). The learning from that has been fed into the new George Street scheme which is now going through the statutory processes. The ETRO process involves public advertisement in newspapers and on lampposts, and consultation, with formal objection stages throughout the

period if the scheme is then to be moved on to a permanent one.

## Post-pandemic plans

TTR0s were used to introduce measures to protect the public, but are no longer appropriate in the days when, although recently cases of Covid-19 in Edinburgh have been on the rise, it is hoped the situation can be truly described as post-pandemic.


The council will use ETR0s in most cases to specifically try out measures to meet transport and mobility policies set out in the City Mobility Plan approved by council in February 2021. The new or retained measures have different purposes entirely from the Spaces for People arrangements.

The new ETR0-based measures will allow the council to look at the city's transport network over the next year or so with enhanced active travel options actually in place with real-time traffic. Changes can be made to the measures and reports will be regularly considered by the Transport Committee during the 18 month period.

The City Mobility Plan includes the results of three years of discussion, and sets out the council policy for reducing emissions from transport which is the single biggest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. The headline in the plan is that Edinburgh needs mobility systems in the next decade which are "carbon emission free, efficient, accessible and affordable". It is within that policy, as well as the council's plans to become net zero carbon by 2030 that all new active travel measures are now introduced.



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Transport and Environment Convener Cllr Lesley Macinnes said: “Over the last year we’ve responded to an emergency situation, making great strides to provide families with protected spaces to exercise, to help people cycle safely to work and to give the public room to physically distance while spending time in local shopping streets. We know people have benefited from the changes and we want to see if we can keep as many as possible of the project benefits as we hopefully move out of the COVID pandemic.

“As we look toward the end of the pandemic, we want to make a sustainable, successful recovery. By helping people to walk, cycle and wheel, many of the changes we’ve made to streets will support this, as well as our broader ambitions to achieve carbon neutrality, reduce air pollution and to improve the quality of life for all those who live in and visit Edinburgh.

“Projects have been controversial, and some groups, notably those representing people with mobility and visual impairments, have raised concerns about their impacts, especially on parking. Other concerns include ‘floating’ car parking and impacts on traffic levels on some roads. I’m committed to making sure we listen to feedback and make improvements as we move into a new stage of trialling projects. I want the measures we keep in the longer term to get the balance right, working for everyone.”

Transport and Environment Vice Convener Cllr Karen Doran said: “When we agreed to explore retaining some of these changes longer term, we recognised how beneficial they could be to encouraging active travel, improving road safety and reducing

air pollution, amongst other positive impacts.

“We’re committed to delivering these benefits, but we want to bring the public with us. By extending the life of any of these measures on a trial basis, we’ll be able to continue monitoring schemes and working with communities to shape and enhance them while they’re in place.”



Spaces for People measures on Waverley Bridge – council proposes keeping this area closed to traffic

## **FUTURE ACTIVE TRAVEL MEASURES**

On an experimental basis, with real traffic returning to our city streets, the council proposes that several of the Spaces for People schemes are retained for up to 18 months, although as explained above they are technically different schemes.

These include:

- Victoria Street pedestrian priority and closure to through traffic
- Cockburn Street pedestrian priority and closure to through traffic
- Waverley Bridge to remain closed to traffic with a taxi rank in place at the top of the Waverley Ramp
- South Queensferry High Street
- Protected cycle lanes in places such as Ferry Road, Duddingston Road, Comiston Road, the A1 and the A90.
- Leisure connections will be mostly retained – Cammo Walk, Maybury Road, Silverknowes Road, West Shore Road, Starbank Road, King’s Place, Seafield Street, Braid Road (one way southbound), and Arboretum Place.
- full road closure at Sciennes Primary School and James Gillespie’s Primary School and the associated Meadows to Greenbank Quiet Connection.

The measures introduced to Forrest Road and George IV Bridge

will be removed as there are already legal orders in place for that area – so there is no legal requirement for experimentation. The permanent traffic arrangements will be introduced here under the [Meadows to George Street project](#). (We encourage you to click this link to the main information page about this project which the council hope to begin building in 2021/22. There are plans with detailed visualisations of what will be put in on the ground as a permanent structure.) This area has been popular with those using the segregated cycle lanes and the council officers hope to be able to put new permanent layouts in place as quickly as they can.

The shopping street measures in Stockbridge, Morningside, Portobello and Broughton Street (although the measures at the roundabout will stay in place) will be removed, except for some specific “pinch points”. Redesigns are planned for shopping streets in the future but will not be covered by experimental orders at present. This work is included in the 20 minute neighbourhood plans which the council has just approved. We asked specifically the question about paying for all removals and were advised that the removal costs are included and budgeted for in the Spaces for People funding.

Where cycle lanes are retained the council has confirmed it will examine any improvements that can be made to adjusting any floating parking bays for example to minimise conflict.

Links Gardens at Leith Links will be reopened during the remainder of the tramworks, but may be included in the new Low Traffic Neighbourhood planned for Leith.

The council aims to keep all measures around schools in place and will discuss possibilities of developing measures at schools which at present only have part time measures. They will talk to headteachers, parents and parents organisations about the comprehensive designs which are considered to be needed.

Plans will be drawn up for an active travel link between [Portobello and Musselburgh](#) as promoted by Spokes Party during a deputation to council earlier in the year, and the council officers hope these will be introduced under experimental orders as well as a cycle lane on Orchard Brae which also appears to have public support.

## Council decision

The council conducted a public consultation and market research alongside it. Council transport officers have also carried out a technical review of road traffic arrangements with a view to using the ETRO process, and any new schemes have to sit within the strategic transport policies already agreed by the council.

The Transport and Environment Committee will discuss all of this report at their [17 June 2021 meeting](#) and move forward in accordance with the committee's decision. It should be noted however that any Spaces for People measures may not be removed immediately – they will be removed when public health permits.



P1 to P3 pupils go back to school for first time since Christmas. Some James Gillespie's Primary School pupils. used the Quiet Route recently set up PHOTO ©2021 The Edinburgh Reporter