

Council setting up Accessibility Commission

Edinburgh Council is to establish an Accessibility Commission to ensure that the city's public spaces are as inclusive as possible for disabled people.

The Transport and Environment Committee will note what needs to happen for the commission to start working and will set out the Terms of Reference for it to operate within. These terms will cover the roles and responsibilities of Commissioners, who will represent a range of accessibility, disability, walking and public transport organisations.

The new Accessibility Commission comes in the wake of demands from councillors from various parties to support Transport for All's Equal Pavements Pledge, which commits to ensuring streets are accessible for everyone. Cllr O'Neill laid down a motion in August last year to follow up a demand made by fellow Green councillor Claire Miller who had asked for the pledge to be adopted by Edinburgh in September 2021. Other SNP councillors have also reinforced the need for this to become council policy over recent years. Cllr O'Neill pointed out that failure to deal with matters such as dropped kerbs and the enforcement of a council ban on A-boards had cost the city around £80,000 in five years in insurance claims.

In December, internationally recognised disability activist Zara Todd was appointed by the council as chair of the Accessibility Commission. Ms Todd, who was previously chair of Inclusion London and deputy chair of public body Equality

2025, has advised the British Council, the Fundamental Rights Agency and Transport for London on disability and accessibility issues, and has more than 20 years' experience in chairing and facilitating inclusive meetings.

She will lead the Accessibility Commission in providing independent advice to the Council on the challenges, opportunities and actions required to make sure the city's public streets and spaces are accessible for disabled people.

The idea is that the commission will set its own agenda whether that is looking in depth at certain transport projects, or simply looking at the basic design principles which the council works within. Cllr Scott Arthur the Transport and Environment Convener welcomes the appointment of someone with such a degree of experience and believes it is important as the city is going to change a lot in the next few years and he admits that the council has not always dealt with accessibility issues correctly.

He said: "I am proud that Edinburgh is a welcoming and diverse city, but it's clear that there is much work to be done to make it truly accessible and inclusive for everyone. In the coming decade transport in our capital will evolve substantially to accommodate growth, tackle congestion and respond to the climate emergency. This transition is also a huge opportunity to create a more equal city, and the Accessibility Commission is there to help ensure that happens.

"The Accessibility Commission will focus on addressing that challenge, and listening to the needs of disabled people to make our streets and public spaces as accessible as possible.

"Zara Todd brings with her a wealth of personal and professional experience which will be invaluable to the Commission's aims. As a resident of Edinburgh she knows what works here, and also where we have made mistakes in recent years. I look forward to working with her, and other

Commission members, to make Edinburgh a better place for everyone to live, work and visit.”

Zara Todd said: “As a disabled Edinburgh resident it is great to see the council taking accessibility seriously, I look forward to working with everybody involved.”

It is intended to hold the Commission’s first meeting in February 2024 and the cost of setting up the commission will be contained within the existing .

Commissioners will comprise a representative from each of the following organisations (although this list may be subject to change):

Edinburgh Access Panel

Edinburgh Trams

Equality and Rights Network

Euan’s Guide

HCL Transport

Inclusion Scotland

Living Streets Edinburgh Group

Lothian Buses

Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living

Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland

National Federation for the Blind Scotland

People First (Scotland)

Royal National Institute of Blind People

Sight Scotland and Sight Scotland Veterans

Sustrans

The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association (Scotland)

The Scottish Assembly

[The papers for the Transport and Environment Committee can be read here.](#)



A boards were banned by the council in 2018