

Council makes a u-turn on charges for taxi drivers outing

Edinburgh taxi drivers will no longer be charged by the council to use The Royal Mile on their annual outing.

The cab drivers organising this year's Edinburgh Taxi Outing in June were quoted a figure understood to be around £1,500 to have planters blocking traffic on the High Street temporarily moved.

Following calls for any fees for the long-running event to be waived, the local authority had said they would be free to shift the large boxes themselves or alter their route by turning left down Cockburn Street. Cockburn Street

However, announcing the u-turn today, council leader Cammy Day said there would be no charge and said the issue "has now been resolved".

Taxi Outing secretary Keith Bell said: "I was confident this was just a bureaucratic misunderstanding and that once the relevant people became involved the matter would be sorted, and I'm glad it has."

It is understood that earlier in the week organisers were told the cost could be reduced to £400..

In an initial letter the council told them events wishing to use a route which requires planters to be moved – including

the much-loved outing which marks its 77th year this year – then “costs for the work would be at the expense of that organiser”.

The Association of Hackney Carriage Drivers of the City of Edinburgh hit out in response, saying despite efforts to uplift the spirits of vulnerable children, “bureaucratic hurdles erected by the council” threatened to “undermine altruistic endeavours”.

The tradition sees the capital’s cabbies treat local youngsters with special needs, life-limiting conditions and terminal illnesses to a fun day out parading through the city in their balloon-clad taxis, soaking spectators with water pistols.

Originally the convoy, bound for Musselburgh for an ice cream stop and then East Lothian, travelled along Princes Street and Regent Road. However amid tram works the procession was directed along the Royal Mile, and this became the established route for the event. It was also a convenient place to drop off the Lord Provost en route.

The planters were first installed in 2020 as part of a range of measures to make it easier and safer for people to walk, wheel and cycle during the pandemic, although the council had previously agreed to permanently close the High Street to traffic between North Bridge and St Mary’s Street.

Cllr Day said: “The taxi outing is a highlight every year for the children, drivers and public who love the fun spectacle – and the possibility of getting soaked! – as the cabs and young people travel through Edinburgh.

“It’s an unforgettable day out which lives long in the memories of all the children taking part so I asked officers to waive any fees that may be incurred for the removal of the planters, I’m pleased to say this has now been resolved.

“We recognise how important this annual charity event is for both the young people who take part and the drivers so I’m delighted that they’ll now be able to travel down the Royal Mile.”

by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter



75th Edinburgh Taxi Outing for kids-