

Ramping it up in Charlotte Square

A ramp has been built in the centre of Charlotte Square prompting locals to ask questions about the crude structure in one of Edinburgh's Georgian gems. Or it was until the roads team got to work.

Over the last year or so the road on the eastern side of the square has been narrowed by adding black and white wands. At one time The Edinburgh Reporter believed a cycle lane was being added on the eastern side, but this notion was unfounded. The space was simply being taken away from vehicular traffic in an experimental move to reduce traffic at the West End. The council has reduced four lanes to three lanes of traffic on Charlotte Street, two northbound and one southbound. They have introduced segregation kerb units to reduce road space on Charlotte Street and the south side of Charlotte Square. The square was then completely resurfaced and is now a fabulous surface for wheeling or cycling. There is a plan to create a new cycle track on the west side of Charlotte Street at the George Street junction.

This is all part of the council's plans to improve Charlotte Square, making it better for walking, wheeling and cycling. After resurfacing the square the council aimed to complete the walking wheeling and cycling connection from West Register House to George Street. As part of this work the council will

widen pavements making sure they are accessible to everyone. The council also state that they will be “maintaining and enhancing the world heritage assets and character”.

Pavements are to be upgraded and levelled – and this is where the telling proposal is mentioned. The council website says that “This could involve us in removing the current steps to return the levels to their previous state from pre-1960s.” And the council promises to enlist the help of the new Edinburgh Accessibility Commission.

The traffic lights at the Charlotte Street and George Street junction will be refurbished to improve pedestrian and cycling crossings.

Transport and Environment Convener, Councillor Stephen Jenkinson said: “The ramp in question is to make sure Charlotte Square is accessible for all, as part of the interim scheme.

“We’re committed to the permanent solution being in keeping with the wider World Heritage site and will continue to take on board the views of local residents and stakeholders.”

But the structure which has now been added is quite out of place as you can see in these photos below:



All Photos Duncan McGlynn



It is understood that the ramp is there to address accessibility concerns with the steps surrounding the square.

On Charlotte Street when crossing from George Street the levels are flush and then become stepped, increasing in height as you move round the Square.

The ramp is according to the council only in place on a temporary basis and the levels are proposed to be levelled out in the permanent scheme, reverting back to no steps, as it was before the 1960s.

Originally the ramp was proposed in timber with integrated planters, but we had feedback from Edinburgh World Heritage and CEC Heritage colleagues to keep the design as simple as possible. The handrail is a requirement under regulations, and we are looking to have it painted black so it fits better with the context of the site.

There was an engagement event for Charlotte Square on the 5th of June 2024 to discuss both the interim scheme and concept design for the permanent scheme.

We are told there are now only small amounts of work to finish up on site to conclude the interim scheme – mainly small items such as signage, road markings and installation of tactiles.



