

## Introduction

The following is a written transcript of the presentation used in support of the George Street and First New Town Project Stage 3 Business & Resident Engagement to be undertaken from March 1st, 2022, onwards. The following is numbered in line with the accompanying presentation which can be found on the City of Edinburgh Council Consultation Hub.

<https://consultationhub.edinburgh.gov.uk/sfc/gnt-plan>

### Slide 1: Introduction to presentation

The Council and Sustrans are investing in the future of the City Centre. It is an exciting time in Edinburgh - the design and operational changes proposed for George Street and the First New Town Project will be transformational.

### Slide 2: What we want to cover

In the presentation we will explain why change is needed, remind you of the previously agreed concept design and summarise the operational decisions that have been made. We'll explain what decisions still need to be made and what information we'd like from you and explain the timescales.

### Slide 3: Why does George Street need to change?

The vision is to create a great place that everyone can enjoy and benefit from, which supports the Council's drive to be net zero carbon by 2030 and helps the city's economic recovery. We are developing a welcoming, safe, better connected and sustainable space that will embrace and enhance the much-loved heritage of George Street, Castle Street, Frederick Street and Hanover Street.

### Slide 4: The concept design

We've reached a key stage in the detailed design of George Street and the surrounding area. The operational plan is central to the design's realisation in the coming years.

Here the upper diagram shows the proposed design for a typical block on George Street early in the morning when deliveries are being made. The lower diagram shows the same block later in the day.

### **Slide 5: The concept design**

This transformational change prioritises pedestrians and wheelchair users promotes cycling, and creates a welcoming environment. Pavements are widened, cars and buses are removed with only blue badge access where appropriate. Buses access the area via Frederick, Hanover and St David Street.

### **Slide 6: How the city is changing**

The George Street project forms part of the wider Edinburgh City Centre Transformation Strategy. This is a long-term 10 year strategy to develop sustainable travel which includes other active travel projects like Meadows to George Street and City Centre West-East Link.

As part of the Meadows to George Street Project a bus gate is proposed at Bank Street at the top of the Mound. This removes a majority of vehicle traffic from the area and provides a more friendly environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

Edinburgh City Centre Transformation will also be influenced by the proposed Edinburgh Low Emission Zone. This builds on the air quality management areas already in place across the city. This is subject to final approval by Transport Scotland and would be enforced from 2024.

### **Slide 7: What is an Operational Plan?**

An Operational Plan is a guide on how the proposed design will work in future. It covers day-to-day operations for businesses and residents like deliveries and servicing, occasional requirements including events, church services, planned and emergency construction & maintenance works and secure deliveries as well as access in emergency situations.

### **Slide 8: Example Operational Plan - Buchanan Street Glasgow**

We have reviewed operational plans of other centre like Glasgow, London, Perth and York looking at the approach to traffic management, access restrictions and other exemptions.

One example is Buchanan Street in Glasgow. Much like George Street it supports a variety of shopping, nightlife, and office-based businesses.

Redesigned in the late 70's, traffic and parking in the area is banned and with permitted access to loading and servicing during specific times of day. Buchanan Street is one of Europe's busiest shopping streets and an award-winning public realm space.

The Operations Plan for Buchanan street includes morning and evening servicing windows and a period of full pedestrianisation. On a typical weekday there is a loading only window until 10am, the street then becomes fully pedestrianised from 10am until 7pm, from 7pm onwards loading is permitted again.

### **Slide 9: Draft operational layout (August 2021)**

This plan shows the proposed location of each use and type of parking in the area within the proposed design. A draft operational plan was approved by the Council in August 2021. The current draft plan will be revised following the conclusion of final engagement with local businesses and residents and will be presented to the Council's Transport and Environment Committee in Autumn this year for final approval.

#### *Parking*

As you can see there would be no general parking permitted on George Street. For resident permit holders, parking spaces are maintained around the area on Castle Street, North Castle Street, and Frederick Street. Blue badge spaces will be retained on George Street and the surrounding streets.

#### *Loading*

There are also designated loading areas throughout George Street, these are provided on both sides of each section of the Street. Businesses on Castle Street and Frederick Street will continue to use loading and servicing arrangements similar to those currently in place.

#### *Cycle Parking*

A new addition to the area will be cycle parking, this would provide cycle stands for over 120 bikes throughout George Street adjacent to the central seating and planting areas.

### Taxis

Taxi Ranks are currently not shown on George Street however a final decision on taxi rank locations will be made as part of this business and resident engagement process. We'll touch on this later.

### Buses

Finally on buses, Hanover Street, Frederick Street and St. Andrew Square are the three most critical bus corridors in the First New Town, linking north-south via Princes Street, The Mound and Queen Street. Maintaining bus services and increasing the accessibility for buses is also an important element of the design.

As part of a planned wider review of the bus network, it is proposed that all bus routes are removed from George Street. The existing positions of all other stops in the area would be maintained.

## **Slide 10: A new transport hierarchy**

The proposed designs and operational plan put pedestrians and cyclists at the top of the transport hierarchy and prioritise their movement over other modes.

The goal is to create an attractive, coherent and safe place for users of all levels of mobility.

To better facilitate pedestrians, both walking and wheeling along George Street, street clutter would be removed, footpaths widened and all road crossings realigned to make the street easy to navigate. Landscaped seating areas are incorporated within design, making George Street an attractive place to stay, visit and enjoy.

Introducing active travel facilities to the area and connecting to the wider Edinburgh cycle network is a critical part of the project and the proposed design includes a 6m wide 'central cycle carriageway' along the full length of the street.

With general traffic access being removed in future, and loading/servicing windows being enforced, the road environment would be much more conducive to cycling in future, given the significant reduction in general vehicles with access only for daily deliveries and services, blue badge holders and essential vehicles.

### **Slide 11: Inclusivity and Blue Badge access**

Access for those with impaired mobility is also core requirement within the design. High-quality surface materials would be provided, removing trip hazards and other nuisances. Blue badge holders in future will be also able to park on George Street in bays on either side of the street and blue badge spaces will also remain on surrounding streets.

### **Slide 12: Loading, servicing and deliveries**

Sustainability is a high priority in the design process. The George Street Design and Operations Plan must align with The Council's 2030 Climate Strategy and Net-Zero ambitions. The goal of these policies is to reduce a large proportion of current emissions by progressively changing servicing techniques and the vehicles they use.

The Council and Sustrans are committed to encouraging businesses in the area to continue to develop low and zero emission solutions for 'last mile' deliveries, for example increasing the use of cargo bikes throughout the day. Greater use of smaller and electric vehicles will also be encouraged to reduce congestion and air pollution within the City Centre.

In future, businesses on George Street would use loading bays provided on both sides of the street, businesses on Castle Street and Frederick Street would continue to use loading and servicing arrangements similar to those currently in place.

No changes to the operation of Rose Street and the Lanes are proposed at present however a future review could be considered as part of the Council's wider City Centre Operational Plan which forms part of the City Centre Transformation Strategy.

### **Slide 13: Key decisions to be made**

Some of the key remaining Operational measures to be agreed include the timing of access windows for loading/servicing and potential to allow taxis access.

The previous draft operational plan did not arrive at a final decision with regards to Taxi access to George Street. Under the current proposals Taxi ranks on Castle Street, Frederick Street and Hanover Street are to be maintained. There are



currently 16 taxi bays on the side streets, the design aims to provide a similar level of provision in future.

The Council is aware of demands for Taxis to remain on George Street especially to support mobility impaired users and the vibrant night time economy. Improving user experience and ensuring public safety is also a key objective of the project. There are potential benefits of allowing evening taxis into George Street to not only increase the level of surveillance in the area but also support more vulnerable groups particularly in the early hours of the morning.

The design will aim to apply many of the principles associated with the 'Secure by Design' accreditation (normally applied to buildings like hospitals or universities) to ensure the design and operational proposals promote a safe and secure environment for all.

Enforcement methods to prevent “non-essential” vehicles from entering George Street will also be reviewed and considered once the operational plan is due to be implemented. For example Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras are one solution that in the future could help enforce access to George Street.

#### **Slide 14: Events & occasional access**

The design and Operational Plan also needs to accommodate temporary access to the street for events and maintenance or construction, local closures and utility works. These access needs will be included as part of the Traffic Regulation Orders for the street.

#### **Slide 15: Timeline & next steps**

From March 1<sup>st</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> April – we are building on previous rounds of engagement, this latest round of engagement will gather further information on the requirements of local businesses and residents. You can provide us with information by completing the online questionnaire and/or requesting a meeting with the project team.

We will then review the information you've given us and in May will feedback to you with proposed recommendations thus allowing refinement and the final Operational Plan being concluded summer 2022 and discussed at the Council's Autumn Transport and Environment committee meeting.



The measures agreed as part of the Operational Plan will be implemented within the Traffic Regulation Orders for the design, these will be published for public comment later this year.

### **Slides 16: What we need from you**

Within our online questionnaire there are a number of questions we'd like your feedback on. This includes timings for loading and servicing each day and your opinions on whether taxis should be allowed access in future.

### **Slide 17: Your feedback & the way forward**

Thank you for listening to this presentation. Your feedback is essential to how we shape and adapt the Operational Plan for the area going forward. The team would like to invite you to participate in our Online Questionnaire by scanning the QR code on the right of your screen or following the link below.