

Transport and Environment Committee

10am, Tuesday, 13 January 2015

Review of Tables and Chairs Summer Festival Trial in George Street

Item number 7.7
Report number
Executive/routine
Wards 11 – City Centre

Executive summary

On 3 June 2014, the Transport and Environment Committee approved a month-long trial to extend the operating hours of the current tables and chairs permit system, for premises located on George Street, for the duration of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Provided that businesses had successfully applied for the appropriate license, the trial enabled them to apply for permission to use tables and chairs outdoors until midnight instead of 10pm.

This report outlines the outcomes of this trial. While the trial arrangements in August 2014 were tested only on George Street, the results demonstrated an improved economic impact for traders, a positive atmosphere on the street for locals and visitors, yet resulted in no noise complaints, public disorder or arrests. This report recommends consulting on extending the trial to other areas of the city centre during the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 2015.

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Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Transport and Environment Committee:
 - 1.1.1 agrees to extend the operating hours of the current tables and chairs permit system in future years for premises on George Street for the duration of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe;
 - 1.1.2 agrees that, during the advertised operating period of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, businesses on George Street may apply for permission to use tables and chairs until midnight instead of 10pm (noting that it is the responsibility of businesses to apply for and obtain the appropriate License and that this report does not seek to fetter the discretion of the Licensing Board or Regulatory Committee);
 - 1.1.3 agrees to consult with key stakeholders, on extending the operating hours of the current tables and chairs permit system, on a similar trial basis, to the premises within the City Centre Ward that are located within 150 metres of an official Festival or Fringe venue, and to premises attached to Fringe venues at the Pleasance, Bristo Square and George Square during the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 2015; and
 - 1.1.4 agrees to receive a report on the outcome of the consultation at its meeting in March 2015, prior to any further trials of extended operating hours for tables and chairs permits.

Background

- 2.1 On 3 June 2014, the Transport and Environment Committee approved a month-long trial to extend the operating hours of the current tables and chairs permit system, for premises located on George Street. This trial ran for the duration of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. The trial enabled businesses to apply for permission to use tables and chairs outdoors until midnight instead of 10pm, provided they had successfully applied for the appropriate License.

- 2.2 The 3 June 2014 report required that the Council liaise with Police Scotland to report on the outcomes of the trial. Concerns had been expressed that later operating hours may lead to an increase in complaints about noise, or an increase in arrests and public disorder, and Police Scotland were asked to provide information on numbers of arrests on George Street during the hours of 10pm until midnight during the trial period.

Main report

- 3.1 Police Scotland reported that there were no arrests or complaints relating to noise or any other disturbance from patrons using the outdoor tables and chairs facilities on George Street during the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 2014. There were no complaints made to City of Edinburgh Council services about noise or behaviour within the outdoor dining areas during the hours of 10pm to midnight.
- 3.2 The extended operating hours contributed to very positive customer feedback about their experience of George Street during the Festival. There is a major piece of independent research work taking place during August 2014 to July 2015, where 1,200 on-street interviews are being conducted with people on George Street. This is to gauge the views of residents, visitors, shoppers, diners and commuters on what they like about the street and what they would like to see change.
- 3.3 During the Edinburgh Festival Fringe period 200 interviews were conducted. Around 90% of those asked said that the introduction of café culture on George Street has improved their experience of the street.
- 3.4 Given that there were no arrests and no recorded complaints about noise or other behaviour relating to the patrons in the outdoor tables and chairs areas on George Street during this trial month, it is recommended that the same arrangement (of permitting tables and chairs use outdoors until midnight instead of 10pm) should be allowed on George Street during the advertised and recognised operating period of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in future years.
- 3.5 The 3 June 2014 Committee report made it clear that “while the trial arrangements will be tested only on George Street in 2014, the report on outcomes will consider extending the trial to other areas of the city during the Festival in future years”. There were no arrests, no recorded complaints about noise or other behaviour, and the public feedback about the impact on the sense of place was positive during the trial. It is recommended that a consultation with key stakeholders should take place on extending the operating hours of the current tables and chairs permit system on a similar trial basis to premises in City Centre Ward located within 150 metres of an official Festival or Fringe venue, and to premises attached to Fringe venues at the Pleasance, George Square and Bristo Square during the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 2015.

- 3.6 If the consultation supports the extending of operating hours for tables and chairs permits on a trial basis during the 2015 Festival Fringe a further report will be submitted to Committee on the outcome of the trial and on whether to change the existing 10.00pm limit on tables and chairs in those areas for future festivals. The report will also consider the potential to carry out similar trials in other areas of the city.

Measures of success

- 4.1 The introduction of these measures during all future Festival periods on George Street will result in a more attractive city centre environment for those travelling to, living in, working and visiting the area during the Edinburgh Festivals, and bring parity to businesses in the street.
- 4.2 For premises elsewhere in City Centre Ward, and premises attached to Fringe venues at the Pleasance and Bristo Square, the outcomes of the consultation will be reported back to Committee. That report will make recommendations on the suitability or otherwise of extending the hours of tables and chairs permissions on a trial basis in other areas beyond George Street.

Financial impact

- 5.1 The cost for reviewing the impact of the proposal will be contained within the Services for Communities budget.
- 5.2 Revenue from tables and chairs permits would increase for the Council, as any businesses seeking to operate with external tables and chairs during extended hours would need to apply for a tables and chairs permit at their own expense. The additional operating hours would be charged on a pro rata basis. A separate fee is payable to the Licensing Board but that does not affect the Council's budget.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 The proposals are consistent with the outcomes identified in a report to the Transport and Environment Committee on 29 October 2013 "Building a Vision for the City Centre - Consultation Outcome".
- 6.2 It is the responsibility of businesses to apply for and obtain the appropriate License. This report does not seek to fetter the discretion of the Licensing Board or Regulatory Committee.

- 6.3 In areas where extended hours for tables and chairs permits are in operation it is the responsibility of businesses to apply for an extension. Any such application must be notified, through a site notice, to the public who have the right to object. If an application is refused the business making the application has the right of appeal and any such appeal will be determined by the Licensing Sub-Committee.

Equalities impact

- 7.1 An Equalities and Rights Impact Assessment (ERIA) has been carried out and is ongoing for the duration of the wider George Street Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) project, which will run until September 2015.
- 7.2 The layout of the street has been influenced by consultation feedback from a wide variety of equalities groups, to ensure ease of access could be maintained for all equalities groups, including by ramp access onto any outdoor seating areas. This was previously reported to Committee on 29 October 2013 and 29 April 2014.
- 7.3 Crime and air quality levels on George Street and surrounding streets are being monitored as part of the research package which will run for a year alongside the proposed George Street trial. Local residents' groups have been included in specifying the research package, to help ensure the right information is captured, recorded and analysed.

Sustainability impact

- 8.1 The delivery of improvements in the city centre will help improve pedestrian and cycling activity in the area. In addition to introducing a café culture, the wider George Street trial should reduce carbon emissions in the street. Sustainability impacts, including air quality and traffic movement in the street and the surrounding area, will be assessed as part of the evaluation of the trial project.

Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 An extensive round of consultation on permits for tables and chairs last took place in 2007, being reported to the City of Edinburgh Council on 20 December 2007. This evidenced that a majority of members of the public supported extensions of permit times, and a significant majority (90%) of permit holders supported an extension.

- 9.2 A consultation will take place with key stakeholders on the proposal to allow the extension of operating hours for table and chairs permits on a trial basis during the 2015 Edinburgh Festival Fringe for premises in the City Centre Ward that are within 150 metres of a Fringe venue and to premises attached to Fringe venues at the Pleasance, Bristo Square and George Square. The Council's City Centre Programme Manager will meet with local Community Councils, Business Improvement Districts and Festival organisers to identify any areas with existing tables and chairs permits in City Centre Ward where an extension of operating hours during the Festival period may impact on residential amenity. The 2014 George Street Trial concluded that an extension of operating hours did not identify any change in behaviour or increase in complaints and crime by extending the operating hours of outdoor tables and chairs permits during the Summer Festival period. As a result, the discussions with local Community Councils, BIDs and Festival organisers will focus on current and historic patterns of noise complaints, anti-social behaviour complaints and crime statistics when assessing any hot spots or areas to exclude from the trial on the grounds of potential adverse impact on residential amenity.
- 9.3 If the outcome of any trials supports a change the existing 10.00pm limit on tables and chairs permits during future Fringe Festivals then there will be a requirement for a full public consultation before any such change could be progressed.

Background reading/external references

[City of Edinburgh Council – Local Transport Strategy 2014 - 2019](#)

[Building a Vision for the City Centre, Transport and Environment Committee, 19 March 2013](#)

[Building a Vision for the City Centre- Consultation Outcome, Transport and Environment Committee, 29 October 2013](#)

[A Review of Permits for Tables and Chairs, The City of Edinburgh Council, 20 December 2007](#)

[Tables and Chairs Summer Festival Trial in George Street, 3 June 2014](#)

John Bury

Acting Director of Services for Communities

Contact: Iain MacPhail, City Centre Programme Manager

E-mail: iain.macphail@edinburgh.gov.uk | Tel: 0131 529 7804

Links

Coalition pledges	<p>P24 – Maintain and embrace support for our world-famous festivals and events</p> <p>P28 – Further strengthen our links with the business community by developing and implementing strategies to promote and protect the economic well being of the city.</p> <p>P31 - Maintain our City’s reputation as the cultural capital of the world by continuing to support and invest in our cultural infrastructure.</p>
Council outcomes	<p>C19 – Attractive Places and Well Maintained – Edinburgh remains an attractive city through the development of high quality buildings and places and the delivery of high standards and maintenance of infrastructure and public realm</p> <p>C20 – Culture, sport and major events – Edinburgh continues to be a leading cultural city where culture and sport play a central part in the lives and futures of citizens.</p>
Single Outcome Agreement	<p>SO1 – Edinburgh’s economy delivers increased investment, jobs and opportunities for all.</p> <p>SO4 – Edinburgh’s communities are safer and have improved physical and social fabric.</p>
Appendices	None