

Late Reports

Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am Monday, 18th November, 2024

Dean of Guild Court Room - City Chambers

Late Reports

The attached report(s) were received after the deadline and therefore require to be ruled urgent by the Convener to allow them to be considered by committee.

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10.00am, Monday, 18 November 2024

City Centre Ward Councillors - Cowgate

Executive/routine
Wards

Routine
11 – City Centre

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Committee:
 - 1.1.1 Expresses its sincere condolences following the tragic road traffic incident in the Cowgate on Saturday 2 November;
 - 1.1.2 Notes that officers from the Council and Police Scotland have undertaken a site meeting in respect of the circumstances which led to the tragedy;
 - 1.1.3 Notes the update on the proposals to reduce traffic in the Cowgate; and
 - 1.1.4 Agrees the Next Steps, as outlined in section 5 of this report.

Gareth Barwell

Interim Executive Director of Place

Contact: Dave Sinclair, Local Traffic and Road Safety Manager

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City Centre Ward Councillors - Cowgate

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The report provides a short update of the tragic and devastating incident that occurred on the Cowgate on Saturday 2 November 2024. It also provides an update on the workstream to reduce traffic on the Cowgate and proposes short, medium and longer term options for this.

3. Background

- 3.1 Since May 2003 the Cowgate has operated under part time No Entry restrictions from 22:00 to 05:00 between the junctions of Cowgatehead/Grassmarket and Blackfriars Street. Vehicle access within the Cowgate is permitted during these restricted hours provided that entry/exit is done via Guthrie Street and Blair Street.
- 3.2 At approximately 19:30 on 2 November 2024, a pedestrian was involved in an incident on the Cowgate with tragic and devastating results. Following this collision Council officers and members of the Police Scotland Road Policing team have participated in a site meeting to understand the circumstances leading up to and surrounding the incident.
- 3.3 On 1 February 2024, Committee agreed to take forward an [enhanced plan](#) for Edinburgh City Centre Transformation (ECCT), focussed on reducing non-essential through-traffic and reallocating roadspace to prioritise sustainable travel and placemaking in the form of a City Centre Circulation Plan (and associated Operational Plan). This proposed an experimental closure of the Cowgate to some or all through traffic in 2024.
- 3.4 On 23 May 2024, Committee received an [update](#) on initial work to develop an option to trial the road being open to traffic one-way using an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) with engagement in advance of a comprehensive redesign with road closure. As noted in the Business Bulletin update, a funding bid was submitted, however, this has not been successful, resulting in delays to project delivery timescales. On this basis, officers are looking at existing funding allocations to determine whether some of this funding could be reallocated to the Cowgate.

- 3.5 On 7 November 2024, the Council agreed an emergency motion submitted by Councillor Mowat on behalf of City Centre Ward Councillors recognising that the Council previously agreed that traffic in the Cowgate should be reduced and requesting an update to Committee on progress on this workstream.

4. Main report

Collision Investigation

- 4.1 As noted above, a site meeting involving Council officers and officers from Police Scotland's Road Policing team has taken place. Whilst it would be inappropriate to offer any further information at this time, it is understood the road and footpath layout were not contributing factors to the incident.
- 4.2 All collisions reported to the Council by the Police form part of the Road Safety, Accident Investigation and Prevention (AIP) programme. Once the Police investigation is concluded, Council officers will carefully consider any recommendations made and will review the AIP programme in anticipation for future Road Safety Delivery Programmes.

Short-Term proposals to improve traffic conditions

- 4.3 While initial investigations indicate that the road and footpath layout were not contributing factors to the incident, Police Scotland have asked officers if it would be possible to extend the existing no entry arrangements (a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) is in place for the Cowgate no entry between the hours of 22:00 and 05:00 daily).
- 4.4 Officers are currently considering the appropriate powers to enable the order to be amended and will discuss the times of operation with Police Scotland before any changes are made. It is hoped that this change will be introduced in December 2024.

Further proposals to reduce traffic on the Cowgate

- 4.5 As noted above, the Council was unsuccessful in securing external funding to introduce a full road closure or one-way traffic operation in the Cowgate in 2024.
- 4.6 However, in advance of the summer festival 2025, it is proposed to deliver actions to improve pedestrian safety in the Cowgate.
- 4.7 The longer-term aspiration is to reduce traffic on the Cowgate. Three options have been identified, with further detailed development required to determine the most appropriate option to be progressed. These measures need to be considered as part of wider planning for the city centre to fully understand the implications and potential mitigation required to address access and displaced traffic. This will build on lessons from the 2019 closure of the Cowgate to traffic.
- 4.8 The Council is currently reviewing the City Mobility Plan Capital Investment Programme to prioritise activities and funding. The detailed development of

proposals for the Cowgate forms part of this work. Committee will receive an update on this work in December 2024.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 As noted in the Main Report section, there are short, medium and long term proposals to reduce traffic in the Cowgate to improve pedestrian safety, including:
 - 5.1.1 Revising the operational hours of the existing TRO, which prevents vehicles from entering the area from the east and west between 22:00 and 05:00;
 - 5.1.2 Carefully consider any recommendations made by Police Scotland as part of the incident investigation and the Road Safety AIP process, in advance of finalising the Road Safety Delivery Plan for 2025/26;
 - 5.1.3 Investigating options for improving pedestrian safety in the Cowgate further prior to the commencement of the summer festival period 2025 (alongside plans for the wider city centre); and
 - 5.1.4 Completing the City Mobility Plan Capital Investment prioritisation, with recommendations for Committee on progressing with more detailed development of plans for the Cowgate.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 Discussions are on-going with Transport Scotland and there is a high degree of confidence that funding will be available to improve pedestrian safety in the Cowgate.
- 6.2 The City Mobility Plan Capital Investment prioritisation programme will include more detailed development of plans to reduce traffic in the Cowgate. Initial options have been identified; however, the estimated cost of each option has not yet been quantified.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 While the proposals in this report do not identify any equality or poverty impacts for people with protected characteristics, an [Integrated Impact Assessment](#) has been carried out on the City Mobility Plan.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

- 8.1 The emergency nature of this report is considered to improve traffic conditions and reduce the likelihood of harm in the Cowgate area. Mitigation may need to be considered on routes affected by displaced traffic.

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

- 9.1 The changes to the times of the existing road closure operation will help to reduce the likelihood of conflict between moving traffic and pedestrians during busy evening periods.
- 9.2 Officers welcome the continued support from colleagues in Police Scotland to physically barrier each end of the current vehicle prohibition at weekends. Revisions to the timing of the current TRO should offer additional protection to vulnerable road users in the Cowgate.
- 9.3 Whilst the legal process to make interim changes to the TRO will need to be confirmed, extending the duration of the vehicle prohibition should have limited impact on residents and businesses, and result in a positive outcome for visitors to the area.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 [Our Future Streets – a circulation plan for Edinburgh](#), Transport and Environment Committee, 1 February 2024

11. Appendices

None.

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