

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 20 August 2020

Spaces for People Initiative – Response to Motion

Executive/routine Wards Council Commitments	Executive All 16
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1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Policy and Sustainability Committee are asked to note:
 - 1.1.1 UK and international evidence and case studies showing the beneficial economic impacts to businesses in high streets when space for walking and cycling is prioritised;
 - 1.1.2 the relevance of this evidence to the Spaces for People initiative along with existing and emerging transport policy in the city; and
 - 1.1.3 the ongoing commitment to engage with businesses and evaluate impacts from the Spaces for People programme to inform medium to longer term sustainable transport and public realm investment.

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Spaces for People Initiative – Response to Motion

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The UK and international examples presented in this report highlight the potential benefits of creating streets which prioritise access for those walking, wheeling, cycling and using public transport. Adopting such measures often places restrictions upon vehicular traffic and parking provision but evidence shows that these changes can bring significant benefits to the local economy.
- 2.2 The examples predate the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic and the changes it has brought to people's way of life, places of work, travel behaviours and consumer habits. The difficulties this has placed on local businesses is keenly acknowledged.
- 2.3 In response to significant public interest and funding provided under the Scottish Government's 'Spaces for People' initiative, the Council has been implementing temporary changes to key parts of the road network to help people practice safe physical distancing and to support businesses recover by providing additional space for queuing and outdoor hospitality.
- 2.4 As part of the ongoing monitoring of this initiative, the Council will continue to work with business to ensure that, in line with Scottish Government's route map through and out of the crisis, as many of the wider benefits described by this report can be accrued through the city's recovery.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council has recognised the incredibly difficult trading conditions currently being faced by businesses across the city and has committed to work in partnership with the business community to support its recovery.
- 3.2 Council and Policy and Sustainability Committee have considered a number of recent reports on Spaces for People and on Supporting Local Businesses.
- 3.3 This report sets out a response to the Motion raised by Councillor Macinnes with a Liberal Democrat addendum, as approved at the Policy and Sustainability Committee of [23 July 2020](#). The approved Motion is set out in Appendix 1.

- 3.4 It outlines evidence from UK and international research which looks at the economic impacts for high street businesses when walking and cycling is prioritised and provision for vehicles is reduced. The relevance of this evidence is considered in the context of the Spaces for People initiative along with existing and emerging transport policy in the city.
- 3.5 The report will support ongoing dialogue and engagement with high street businesses over the coming months.

4. Main report

- 4.1 This section outlines some of the most widely recognised research and case study evidence from both the UK and internationally, which demonstrate positive impacts on business trading in high streets where the high-quality spaces and accessibility for those walking and cycling are prioritised. Links to this research are set out in Section 8 of this report.

The Pedestrian Pound

- 4.2 In 2013 Living Streets launched 'The Pedestrian Pound' to highlight the hidden and underestimated economic contribution of people on foot to high street economic vitality. The research, prepared by independent experts 'Just Economics', was updated in 2018. Key findings and case studies are summarised as follows:
 - 4.2.1 Investing in better streets and spaces for walking can provide a competitive return compared to other transport projects; walking and cycling projects can increase retail sales by 30% or more. For example, traffic management and public realm improvements in Kelso increased town centre footfall by 28%. In the city of New York pedestrian improvements at one junction increased local retail sales by 48%;
 - 4.2.2 If more space is given for walking and cycling and less to cars, the absence of customers arriving by car is more than compensated by people arriving on foot or by bike. For example, in San Francisco, the first trial 'parklet' increased pedestrian traffic in the area by 37% on weeknights and increased people walking with bikes at the weekend by 350%. A similar scheme in Shoreditch, London, increased takings in an adjacent shop by 20%;
 - 4.2.3 For retailers, a good-quality public environment improves trading by attracting more people into an area. It has been shown, for example, that well-planned improvements to public spaces within town centres can boost commercial trading by up to 40% and generate significant private sector investment; and
 - 4.2.4 Evidence shows that retailers, businesses and agencies often overestimate the importance of the car for customer travel.

Sustrans' Research - 'Common Misconceptions of Active Travel'

- 4.3 In 2019 Sustrans published research showing that encouraging active travel investment with the removal of cars and car parking from streets does not harm the local economy:
- 4.3.1 Retail turnover in pedestrianised areas generally outperforms non-pedestrianised areas and shop vacancy rates are five times higher on streets with high levels of traffic;
 - 4.3.2 Per square metre, cycle parking delivers five-times higher retail spend than the same area of car parking;
 - 4.3.3 Converting car parking spaces to seating and planting to improve 'place' impact can contribute to regeneration and improvement in retail performance. Removal of car parking spaces from a shopping street in Seattle was followed by a 400% increase in retail sales; and
 - 4.3.4 Studies in Toronto, Graz and Bristol found that retailers overestimate how many of their customers travel by car by around double. One study found only a weak relationship between parking and retail vitality. In combination with appropriate case studies, there is a consistent message of either no negative impact (or positive impact) on retail from removing car parking spaces.

Specific Research on Economic Impacts of Cycling

- 4.4 A variety of research has been undertaken which specifically looks at the impact of cycling on economies across the world.
- 4.5 In 2016, Cycling UK published 'Cycling and the Economy', a briefing which summarised evidence on a range of topics including the contribution that cycling makes to the vitality of town centres and the rural economy. Key findings and case studies are summarised as follows:
- 4.5.1 Research into shopping in Copenhagen and in London found that although cyclists may spend less than car-borne shoppers per trip, their total expenditure is, on average, greater as they tend to visit the shops more often. Studies in 15 town centres in London have shown a greater retail sales return for cycle parking over car parking spaces in city centres. In a popular street in Melbourne, Australia, the retail spend generated by one car parking space occupied at all times has been calculated at \$27 per hour. The same space (13m²), occupied by six fully utilised bike stands generated \$97.20 per hour;
 - 4.5.2 A study in Bristol found that retailers tend to overestimate their customers' use of cars and the distances they travel. They thought, for example, that just 12% of customers lived within half a mile, and 40% more than two miles away. In reality, 42% had travelled less than half a mile and 86% less than two miles;

4.5.3 In New York, a project to shift space from cars led to significant investment in, for instance, high quality cycle lanes, more space for pedestrians and better bus provision. This has boosted local business overall, but in some areas the return has been huge: according to figures published in 2012, on 9th Avenue (Manhattan), where a high quality cycle lane was rebuilt in late 2008, retail sales increased by up to 49%, compared to 3% borough-wide; and

4.5.4 When San Francisco reduced car lanes and installed bike lanes and wider sidewalks on Valencia Street, two-thirds of merchants said the increased levels of bicycling and walking improved business. Only 4% said the changes hurt sales.

4.6 Other key research papers on this topic published between 2014-2016 reinforce the evidence that shows investment in cycling can result in an uplift of spending in high streets. These papers are noted in Section 8 of this report.

Transport for London (TfL)

4.7 In 2018 TfL published a suite of reports and studies presenting evidence from London and elsewhere highlighting the economic benefits of investment in walking and cycling. Overall, the research concludes that people walking and cycling visit high streets more frequently, spend more money there compared to people in cars and that businesses may overestimate their customers' car use. High streets that are nice places to walk, cycle and spend time in attract more shops, making the high street more economically viable and vibrant.

4.8 Key impacts on business trading and consumer spending are summarised as follows:

4.8.1 High street walking, cycling and public realm improvements can increase retail sales by up to 30%;

4.8.2 People who walk and cycle take more trips to the high street over the course of a month;

4.8.3 Cycle parking delivers five times the retail spend per square metre than the same area of car parking;

4.8.4 Over a month, people who walk to the high street spend up to 40% than people who drive to the high street; and

4.8.5 9 in 10 London Business Improvement Districts say walking and cycling creates vibrant areas and 83% say it attracts more customers.

4.9 International case studies are also referenced which reinforce London's experience:

4.9.1 A study of businesses in Portland found people walking and cycling spent more in a month than drivers;

4.9.2 Businesses on two Dublin shopping streets overestimated how many customers travel by car and underestimated how many cycle;

- 4.9.3 Streets with dedicated cycle lanes in New York saw a larger rise in retail sales compared to the surrounding area;
- 4.9.4 People who cycle to shops and supermarkets in Copenhagen spend more each year than people who drive. Two thirds of shopping trips and half the total revenue comes from customers on foot and cycle;
- 4.9.5 People who walk and cycle in San Francisco visit shops more often and spend more in a month than drivers;
- 4.9.6 For every square metre of parking space in Bern customers who cycled generated 7,500 € compared to 6,625 € from car drivers; and
- 4.9.7 In Los Angeles sales tax revenue rose by two thirds after cycle lanes were built – 14% higher than unimproved areas.

City of Dublin

- 4.10 A Dublin City Council report has revealed that a pedestrianisation trial in July 2020 led to an increase in takings of between 40% and 100% for 292 businesses that were surveyed. Footfall in the area has also increased dramatically, rising to 50% of pre-Covid levels after being at just 20% at the start of July. Results from a public survey on pedestrianisation in Dublin were also extremely favourable with 92% reporting that improved experience of streets "significantly" and over 90% wanting these measures to be made permanent.

Policy Context

National Context

- 4.11 Scotland's National Transport Strategy (NTS2) will provide the policy basis for local government decisions over the next 20 years and embeds the Scottish Government's target for net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045. A move to low and zero carbon transport will be essential, alongside priorities to reduce inequalities, deliver inclusive economic growth and improve health and wellbeing.

Council Policies and Strategies

- 4.12 Edinburgh's transport policy is set out through the Local Transport Strategy 2014-2019 (LTS). This will be superseded by the City Mobility Plan (CMP) once finalised. The draft CMP, approved at the Transport and Environment Committee in [January 2020](#), reflects the Council's commitment to net-zero carbon emissions by 2030.
- 4.13 The city's current and emerging transport policies equally recognise the city centre's regional focus for retail and leisure, and the role of Edinburgh's town centres and local retail streets as places where people live, work, shop, socialise and do business. Together with land use planning, transport policies seek to widen travel choice and reinforce a sustainable travel hierarchy that promotes walking, cycling, public transport and car sharing in preference to single occupancy car use.
- 4.14 In relation to the city centre and town centres, transport policies seek to create better places for people by reducing the harmful effects of vehicular traffic in terms of road safety, air pollution, equity of space for those walking, wheeling and cycling, and the impact of traffic noise and congestion on street life and trade. These

measures are underpinned by action to reduce the global threat of climate change by reducing carbon emissions from the transport sector.

- 4.15 As part of the public consultation undertaken in 2018 to inform the draft CMP, Edinburgh City Centre Transformation (ECCT) and development of the Low Emission Zone (LEZ), it was found that around three-quarters of the 4,192 respondents:
- 4.15.1 supported reductions in the amount of general traffic in the city centre and town centres to benefit both people who live in, work in and visit Edinburgh but also to improve conditions for those walking, cycling or using public transport;
 - 4.15.2 supported traffic reductions and the creation of some vehicle free streets in town and city centres; and
 - 4.15.3 agreed that by creating a safe, attractive, accessible and connected network of walking and cycling routes more people would choose to walk or cycle for short journeys rather than use a car.
- 4.16 In response, the approved ECCT agreed to take forward selected street closures to general traffic in the city centre. The draft CMP proposed policy measures to deliver people friendly streets in town centres, and by 2030, to establish a largely car traffic free city centre.
- 4.17 The current LTS seeks to protect provision of short-stay parking for shoppers in local centres. The draft CMP continues to seek effective access for businesses whilst reducing levels of on-street parking in areas well served by public transport in addition to ensuring access for people with mobility difficulties and residents. The application of such principles to town centres will also recognise that many are situated on arterial routes.
- 4.18 Delivery of these policy principles will require the preparation of place-specific design responses to be developed on a case-by-case basis, through appropriate engagement and consultation with local communities and businesses.

Spaces for People

- 4.19 Since May, the Council has been implementing an emergency programme of temporary measures across key parts of the city's road network to create space for people to practice safe physical distancing.
- 4.20 The public health imperative of this programme has meant that usual community engagement opportunities cannot be fulfilled. Notwithstanding this, the public mapping tool [Commonplace](#) is helping to inform and refine proposals and consultation with local ward Councillors and stakeholders is a key part of the proposal design and refinement process. Some targeted engagement with the business community continues to be undertaken so that measures can be designed and refined to best support economic recovery.
- 4.21 As lockdown lifts and people return to the high streets, they must feel safe in doing so and this has meant that adequate space needs to be provided for customers to

queue outside businesses, to pass each other safely, to wait at bus-stops, and to enable businesses to expand outdoor dining.

- 4.22 In the city and town centres, measures are being designed to support people with disabilities who rely on access by car through the retention of some dedicated on-street blue badge parking. Provision of space for deliveries, loading and servicing is also built into proposals. Where residential properties form part of the mix of uses, the needs of those residents will continue to be considered as part of balancing the overall variety of needs.
- 4.23 Given limited street widths, providing more space for people to access shops and travel on foot, wheel or bike in the city and town centres has necessitated the reduction of space for general on-street parking. It is recognised that businesses are finding this particularly challenging at a time when many people are nervous about using public transport again, and that some businesses are concerned that this will make visits to the high street less appealing.
- 4.24 Through the Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) process, the temporary measures continue to be reviewed and refined as necessary in response to local feedback. Scope exists to enhance measures where they are not performing well so that all needs can be carefully balanced.
- 4.25 It is important to ensure that as public transport use scales up the city can support the most sustainable modes of travel - walking, cycling, wheeling and public transport. These modes therefore need to be as safe and convenient as possible so that the city can continue to support sustainable economic recovery and growth while reducing congestion and improving air quality.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Supporting the city's economic recovery in the wake of Covid-19 is of paramount importance. The Council is committed to understanding the challenges for and needs of local businesses.
- 5.2 The evidence set out in this report highlights the substantial body of evidence on the economic benefits of investing in walking and cycling which will provide a basis for further discussion, policy making and the acceleration of appropriate active travel and public realm improvement schemes. Work is progressing on defining the next steps around this and this will feed into key strategies including the emerging CMP, Active Travel Action Plan and City Plan 2030 along with delivery programming under the ECCT.
- 5.3 This work will be undertaken in collaboration with the city's citizens and businesses, and will include evaluation of the short-term temporary measures delivered under the Spaces for People programme to inform the longer-term creation of a more sustainable city.
- 5.4 On [28 July 2020](#), a report setting out support measures for local businesses was approved at the City of Edinburgh Council meeting. This report noted the ongoing

work being undertaken to support local businesses across the city and set out next steps to support this commitment. These next steps will be undertaken in alignment with the Spaces for People programme and longer term policy making and investment.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications resulting from this report.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 Stakeholder and community involvement will continue to be built into the dialogue around Spaces for People and discussions around longer term investment in active travel, as set out in Section 4 and 5 of this report.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 [The Pedestrian Pound - The business case for better streets and places \(Living Streets\)](#), launched 2013 and updated in 2018.
- 8.2 [Common Misconceptions of Active Travel Investment - A Review of the Evidence \(Sustrans\)](#), research carried out between July – December 2018), published July 2019
- 8.3 [Cycling and the Economy \(Cycling UK Campaigns Briefing\)](#), 2016
- 8.4 [Benefits of Investing in Cycling \(British Cycling\)](#), 2014.
- 8.5 [The Value of Cycling](#) (Commissioned by Department for Transport with University of Birmingham and Phil Jones Associates), 2016.
- 8.6 [Economic Benefits of Walking and Cycling \(Transport for London\)](#), 2018.
- 8.7 [Bicyclists as Consumers: Mode Choice and Spending Behaviour in Downtown Davis, California, 2014.](#)
- 8.8 [Consumer Behaviour and Travel Choices: A Focus on Cyclists and Pedestrians](#) (Transportation Research Board), 2013.
- 8.9 [Supporting Local Businesses in Edinburgh](#), report to the City of Edinburgh Council, 28 July 2020.
- 8.10 [Supporting Local Businesses in Edinburgh – Road Occupation Permits for Tables and Chairs](#), report to the City of Edinburgh Council Policy and Sustainability Committee, 6 August 2020.
- 8.10 [Creating Safe Spaces for Walking and Cycling](#), report to the City of Edinburgh Council Policy and Sustainability Committee, 14 May 2020.

- 8.11 [City Mobility Plan – Draft for Consultation, report to the City of Edinburgh Council Transport and Environment Committee, 16 January 2020.](#)
- 8.12 ['Edinburgh: Connecting our city, Transforming our places' Findings of Public Engagement and Next Steps,](#) report to the City of Edinburgh Council Transport and Environment Committee, 28 February 2019.

9. Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 - Motion by Councillor Macinnes with Liberal Democrat addendum - Spaces for People Initiative.

Appendix 1 - Motion by Councillor Macinnes with Liberal Democrat addendum - Spaces for People Initiative (as approved at Policy and Sustainability Committee 23 July 2020)

“Committee:

Welcomes the continued work to deliver the Spaces for People initiative designed to deliver better conditions for safe social distancing as Edinburgh moves towards recovery from the international pandemic, including economic recovery.

Committee recognises the incredibly difficult trading conditions currently being faced by businesses across the city and reaffirms the Council’s commitment to work in partnership with the business community to ensure it takes practical action to support their recovery.

Recognises that there is growing concern among some business owners, particularly in our local high streets across the capital, that removal of car parking spaces will have a detrimental impact on the number of customers accessing their businesses. particularly in light of government advice which discouraged people from using public transport.

Acknowledges that there is a growing body of evidence, from UK and international examples, that implementation of such schemes often meet with great concern but that in practice can lead to better trading conditions for many businesses.

Requests a report, within two cycles, which describes that evidence and indicates its relevance to both the Spaces for People initiative and existing transport policy in the city and looks forward to using that report to continue its two-way dialogue and engagement with high street businesses over the coming months”.