

Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 31 March 2022

Pavements Clear of Signs – Response to Motion by Councillor Webber

Executive/routine Wards Council Commitments	Routine All
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1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Committee notes:
 - 1.1.1 The information provided on signage and the Council's commitment to providing for the safety of all road users and reducing street clutter on Edinburgh's network, and;
 - 1.1.2 That officers will write to Transport Scotland to highlight weaknesses in current guidance that do not allow for maximum protection of footway widths and to ask for this guidance to be improved.

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2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report summarises the work that has been undertaken in relation to temporary traffic signs and their placement on the network.
- 2.2 This report also reviews the issues encountered, exemptions that exist and issues surrounding the placement of signs as a result of legislation pertaining to Health and Safety.

3. Background

- 3.1 The following adjusted motion by Councillor Webber, entitled ‘Pavements Clear of Signs’, was approved by the Council on [15 October 2020](#):
 - 3.1.1 To understand the need for temporary signs to inform road users of changes and limitations to the road network.
 - 3.1.2 To note that in many locations, it was highly undesirable for these temporary signs to be placed in the roadway or on the pavement.
 - 3.1.3 To therefore, instruct the Executive Director of Place to seek to explore the barriers to displaying these signs at a high level, making use of lampposts or other Council infrastructure, so that messages are clear to drivers but do not restrict the pavement or the roadway, with the ultimate aspiration of removing all redundant poles and street clutter, from roads, pavements and cycle tracks. This should include sounding out disability groups and charities, other Local Roads Authorities, Local Government associations, levels of Government and Government Agencies.
 - 3.1.4 To ask the Executive Director to report his findings to the Transport and Environment Committee within six cycles.

4. Main report

Need for Temporary Signs

- 4.1 In the operation and maintenance of road networks, it is necessary to put in place temporary traffic management measures to facilitate safe road works, temporary closures or incident management, whilst keeping the traffic flowing as freely as possible.
- 4.2 With high traffic flows on many roads, it is particularly important to plan all works activities and temporary closures to optimise safety, road space and work efficiency, whilst minimising road user congestion, delay and inconvenience. All works must comply with the [‘Safety at Street Works and Road Works, A Code of Practice \(2013\)’](#).
- 4.3 Road users, which includes pedestrians, should not be put at risk and should be able to see the extent and nature of any obstruction well before they reach it. This also ensures the safety of the operatives carrying out the road works.
- 4.4 Road works on or near a carriageway, cycleway or footway might impair the safety and free movement of vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians (particularly those with mobility and visual impairments). All reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that the effects of the works are reduced to a minimum. The Code of Practice sets out the requirements of undertaking road works or temporary closures on all kinds of road user and recommends steps that should be taken to minimise these effects. It also emphasises the importance of following the recommended measures.
- 4.5 Failure to comply with the Code of Practice is evidence of failing to fulfil the legal requirement to sign, light and guard works.

Temporary Signs in Roadway or Pavement

- 4.6 There is existing legislation regarding temporary signs for road works and the risk assessment associated with the placing of the signs which cannot be changed and in regular meetings with all of the Public Utilities (PUs), they are reminded of their obligations regarding signs on the roads and pavements under the legislation.
- 4.7 In regard to managing the transport network, there is a difference between temporary signs used for safety which are part of a temporary traffic management placement and other signs that are semi-permanent or permanent.
- 4.8 The placement of temporary signs is the most effective way of advising road users of works ahead and the placement of restrictions on the road that will need to be considered during their journey.
- 4.9 It is necessary to place warning signs as close to eye level as possible to ensure the signs are easily seen.
- 4.10 There are guidelines in the Code of Practice which stipulate the minimum clearances that must remain when deciding on the locations for each sign. These signs must be placed on the road, the pavement, or a combination of road and pavement.

- 4.11 When planning works on the road, a risk assessment for each site is an essential element of planning and there is existing legislation and codes of practice prescribing where temporary signage should be placed, and of the consideration which should be given to all road users.
- 4.12 The New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 calls upon PUs and Road Authorities to adequately utilise Chapter 8 of the Traffic Signs Manual (Temporary Traffic Signage and Traffic Management) (see background for hyperlinks), recognising that the nature of the works being carried out dictates the traffic management and the temporary signs required.
- 4.13 Often the temporary signs need to be on the road, at low level and on temporary frames, as part of the signs, cones and barriers traffic management which can be moved and set up quickly as the works progress.
- 4.14 Road works traffic management must ensure the safe passage of road users through the works. Where a footpath is required to be closed, it is stipulated that a 1.2 metre minimum walkway must be provided for the safe passage of pedestrians and temporary signage must be provided to inform and control vehicles safely past the works.
- 4.15 The relevant codes of practice state, where signage is required to be placed on footways, a minimum footway width of 1m should be maintained but this should ideally be 1.5m. This wording makes it difficult for officers to properly enforce the protection of more than 1m in many locations, which contradicts the Council's aspirations (as set out in the Edinburgh Street Design Guidance parameters for footway widths).
- 4.16 A Local Authority cannot force a traffic management provider to place temporary traffic management signs on poles or to instruct companies (including PUs) on where to place the signs if it differs from their design. This ensures that full liability for health and safety sits with the traffic management provider.
- 4.17 A meeting with all traffic management contractors operating in the Lothian area and all PUs was held on 20 March 2020. At the meeting, improvements required in behaviour and operations while placing out temporary signs were discussed.

Barriers to displaying signs at a high level

- 4.18 The very nature of road works means that they do not take place at the same location every time. Six to 10 temporary poles would have to be installed at each location to facilitate the number of signs legally required for proper traffic management every time road works take place.
- 4.19 Due to the size of some mandatory warning signs, they would have to be placed at a height of at least 2.3 metres to avoid being an obstruction to pedestrians and be safely visible to drivers. Most existing poles in the city would not be suitable for such signs and could not safely be used for such temporary signage. In addition, the Council are moving towards reducing poles and associated street clutter on the road network, so the introduction of temporary poles is not considered a positive way to deliver temporary traffic signs.

- 4.20 Making signs narrower and taller can also result in drivers not having sufficient time to see, read and react to the sign before they have passed it. Based on road speed, legislation dictates the size of text on signs and therefore the size of the sign and sign location. This is to ensure it can be read by the road user depending on the type of sign. In addition, for example, a warning sign must be at a certain distance in advance of a hazard. If a PU were to display signage at a location that did not meet these standards, this could be deemed as being a breach of the Codes of Practice and would potentially result in them being liable for any harm caused.
- 4.21 Most street lighting columns in Edinburgh are at the rear of footways and as such may not be within sight lines of road users. Even if lamp columns were considered an option for the display of temporary signage, they would always have to be assessed for strength (to make sure they could take the weight and additional wind loading of signs attached to them). This is not a viable option for temporary measures which often have to be introduced and removed quickly.
- 4.22 As part of the ongoing Travelling Safely programme, the Council has worked in partnership with stakeholders, including Living Streets, to implement significant removal of street clutter including guardrail (following assessment), redundant poles, large parking signs, bollards and other street furniture. This will continue as part of the Pedestrian Experience Improvement Programme (PEIP) and officers are working with Living Streets to embed the ethos of their 'Cut the Clutter' campaign across all services who work with street furniture.
- 4.23 Traffic Signs Inspectors are actively looking to reduce obsolete traffic signage and to declutter redundant poles wherever possible, while maintaining the legislative requirement for enforcement. In addition, where legislation allows, officers have attempted to amalgamate signs where possible and to reduce them where practical.
- 4.24 It is encouraging that the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002 has adequate provision to allow the reduction of street sign clutter, making the network less confusing for all road users.
- 4.25 Officers are working to achieve the goals highlighted in Edinburgh Living Streets and Edinburgh Street Design Manual, to declutter the street scape for all road users.
- 4.26 Officers will also check with the various services who may install street furniture or remove it as part of their work to ensure that it is part of their processes to remove, relocate and rationalise clutter
- 4.27 Discussions with PUs, and especially with Royal Mail, about their on-street apparatus (cabinets and holding boxes) are ongoing. It is hoped that redundant cabinets can be removed and those that are causing an obstruction, but still in use, should be relocated. Officers are also aware that BT have a significant number of kiosks only being used for advertising, but they are unable to remove some as they receive a high number of 999 calls from them. Discussions are taking place about how best to manage these assets and how to streamline them if they are no longer required.

- 4.28 The Council is committed to The Equal Pavements Pledge and officers continue to work with Living Streets, Spokes, Edinburgh Access Panel and other stakeholders to provide a network that is suitable for all users and is as uncluttered and safe as possible. These matters are also discussed with colleagues across Scotland at regularly at meetings such as the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland, Road Authorities and Utilities Committee Scotland and regular meetings with Transport Scotland.
- 4.29 Internal meetings have been set up to discuss road work co-ordination and traffic management issues including the City Wide Traffic Management Group, Traffic Management Review Panels and Events Planning Operations Groups. These groups regularly discuss the suitability of traffic management signage and the paramount importance of a free flowing and safe network for all road users.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Following on from the meeting on 20 March 2020, officers will arrange a further meeting with all PUs and their Traffic Management contractors to discuss specific issues regarding the placement of signs on the road network and, in particular, the placement in relation to keeping 1.5 metres free of clutter on all footways.
- 5.2 Officers will write to Transport Scotland to highlight the challenges faced by the Council in ensuring that footway widths of 1.5 metres are protected and that signage is only placed on footways as a last resort and where this minimum width can be protected. Any changes in the codes of practice will need to be progressed by Transport Scotland, through Scottish Ministers and raised with UK Government due to the fact that the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 does not solely cover Scotland.
- 5.3 Officers will continue to:
- 5.3.1 Meet with PUs and remind them of their obligations regarding street signage and the need for proper and accurate risk assessments of every site where works are being carried out;
 - 5.3.2 Hold regular meetings associated with road work co-ordination and stress the need for proper and well designed traffic management and suitably placed temporary signage; and
 - 5.3.3 Seek new opportunities to de-clutter the network of street furniture and will continue to ensure the requirements of the Edinburgh Street Design Guidance are followed where possible and practicable.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 Costs associated with the decluttering of the network will be contained within existing budgets and will be considered as business as usual, particularly where there will be an associated maintenance saving.

- 6.2 Additional funding for dedicated programmes of decluttering like PEIP will have to be identified and initial bids have been made to the Place Based Investment Programme. Where possible, officers will bid for any external funds that will assist with the delivery of this programme.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 The actions and policies detailed in this report continue to encourage PUs and Traffic Management providers, including the Council, to use proper signage for all temporary works and ensure the safety of all road users.
- 7.2 It is clear that through proper management of the network, utilising the Edinburgh Street Design Guidance and adherence to legislation all permanent signs erected by the Council are safe and placed to reduce street clutter wherever possible.
- 7.3 The removal of street clutter opens space to pedestrians that may have been previously obstructed allowing improved movement and being more accessible, especially for those with visual impairment or requiring the use of mobility aids.
- 7.4 The Council continue to work with stakeholders including businesses, public utilities and their contractors to improve the environment for pedestrians by reducing temporary obstructions on the footway.
- 7.5 Through the Travelling Safely programme the Council worked with stakeholders to identify streets for street clutter assessment and removal which will be taken forward in further programmes.
- 7.6 The Council is committed to The Equal Pavements Pledge and officers continue to work with Living Streets, Spokes, Edinburgh Access Panel and other valued stakeholders to provide a network that is suitable for all users and is as uncluttered and safe as possible. These matters are discussed by teams with colleagues across Scotland at regularly held group meetings like Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland, Road Authorities and Utilities Committee Scotland and regular meetings with Transport Scotland.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 [Safety at Street Works and Road Works – A Code of Practice October 2013](#)
- 8.2 [Instructions within Chapter 8 of the Traffic Signs Manual](#) - Traffic Safety Measures and Signs for Road Works and Temporary Situations Part 1: Design
- 8.3 [Instructions within Chapter 8 of the Traffic Signs Manual](#) - Traffic Safety Measures and Signs for Road Works and Temporary Situations Part 2: Operations

9. Appendices

- 9.1 None.