

Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am, Friday, 11 October 2019

Open Streets Programme Progress Report

Executive/routine

Wards

Council Commitments

City Centre

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 This report recommends that the Transport and Environment Committee:
 - 1.1.1 notes the progress of the implementation of the Open Streets Programme;
 - 1.1.2 notes the Evaluation and Monitoring Plan; and
 - 1.1.3 notes the Programme Plan, budget, and model for community engagement.

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Executive Director of Place

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Report

Open Streets Programme Progress report

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 In [February 2019](#), the Transport and Environment Committee approved the scale and delivery process for an 18-month Open Streets Programme. The public engagement in August 2018 was focussed around 15 ideas to create a more active and connected city, a healthier environment, a transformed city centre and improved neighbourhood streets. Edinburgh is the first city in the United Kingdom to implement an Open Streets Programme with an inaugural event on the 5 May 2019.
- 2.2 Open Streets is supported in its delivery by funding partners including Sustrans through the “Places for Everyone” programme. The early evidence and feedback from business as well as residents has been broadly positive and indicate a preference for early consultation and consistency in the implementation of Open Street initiatives.
- 2.3 This report summarises the progress to date in delivering the first three Open Streets days. There has been considerable interest from other cities in the United Kingdom as well as international interest in Edinburgh’s approach and there is scope for “best practice” models of engagement to be shared in as part of the [Open Streets](#) movement.

3. Background

- 3.1 [Connecting our City, Transforming our Places](#) became Edinburgh’s largest public engagement of 2018 with three quarters of respondents supporting traffic reduction in the city centre, access restrictions for the most polluting vehicles and the creation of more vehicle-free streets. Overall 88% of respondents felt that Edinburgh needed to make changes to deliver a city fit for the future.
- 3.2 The case for change was presented most recently in the [City Centre Transformation](#) report presented to Committee in May, placing people at the heart of future change. The ambitious plan details the proposals that will deliver to this vision to bring economic, social, and environmental benefits.
- 3.3 The Open Streets programme of vehicle-free days on the first Sunday of every month is aligned to this strategy, developed around five objectives as set out in the

main report including one to inform future initiatives for the city. Adopting a position as an early exemplar of how things could work, provides opportunities to develop iterative approaches, learn as we roll out the programme and adapt to meet changing demands.

4. Main report

Programme Update

- 4.1 Open Streets was inaugurated on 5 May with an opening event hosted by the City of Edinburgh Council. There was involvement on the day from key stakeholders and funders; Transport Scotland, Paths for All, Sustrans, the Active Nation Commissioner for Scotland, Lee Craigie and the Walking and Cycling Commissioner for Greater Manchester, Chris Boardman. Wide media coverage focused on the positioning of Edinburgh as the first city in the United Kingdom to lead on a regular programme of street closures.
- 4.2 While the feedback reflected broadly positive views, there were some concerns over access to the Open Streets areas for people disabilities or those with limited mobility. These concerns were followed up directly with respondents and improvements in communications have been made on access arrangements, highlighting the support available for those who need assistance to enjoy the vehicle free spaces. There was also feedback regarding strengthening the communication around the programme and identification of Open Streets areas, especially at the entrance and exits to the Open Streets area. Plans have been developed to introduce a central information point, street and barrier signage which will be implemented in the next phase of the programme.
- 4.3 Two further events ran on 2 June and 7 July. The programme was developed with community collaboration and consultation. The aim is not to deliver a professional arts or cultural event but to assist communities in shaping and showcasing how the spaces could be used.
- 4.4 The Open Streets programme did not run over the summer festivals period in August and September. The next phase resumed on 6 October for three months; with discussions underway with residents, community groups and businesses to continue their involvement in developing the October to December programme.
- 4.5 The project team will continue to seek ways to improve upon communication; including attending regular meetings of organisations in the Old Town e.g. the Community Council, The Old Town Association, Old Town Development Trust, GRASS, the places of worship, resident and business groups to help further develop the programme.

Funding Model and Budget

- 4.6 The Open Streets programme is funded and supported by the 'Places for Everyone programme which is managed by Sustrans. A budget was submitted with the

project application to cover the full 18-month programme which will run until December 2020.

Open Streets Budget	May-July 19	Oct-Dec19	Jan-Mar 201	Totals
Traffic Management, Parking Enforcement, TTRO	£27,980	£27,980	£27,980	£83,940
Security, First Aid	£9,788	£10,140	£10,140	£30,068
Event Staffing & Volunteers	£14,260	£12,400	£12,400	£39,060
Equipment and activations; planters, toilet, and radio hire	£5,500	£5,500	£5,500	£16,500
Communications	£4,000	£3,500	£2,000	£9,500
Evaluation and Monitoring	£3,000		£3,000	£6,000
Total 19/20	£64,528	£59,520	£61,020	£185,068

Evaluation and Monitoring

- 4.7 A programme for evaluation and monitoring has been developed with partners like Sustrans and the University of Edinburgh, based on the objectives and measures agreed in May 2019. The formal approach includes:
- 4.7.1 On-Street Surveys
 - 4.7.2 Footfall Counters
 - 4.7.3 Retail Vitality Survey, Business Survey
 - 4.7.4 Focus Groups with residents
 - 4.7.5 Interviews with Service Providers
 - 4.7.6 Social Media Analysis
- 4.8 Local businesses were invited to provide feedback in the Business Survey in July 2019 with a further prompt in September. Initial feedback indicates that businesses would like to have more involvement and consultation on Open Streets. The final feedback will be shared with Committee in a future Business Bulletin. Engaging with the local businesses is important and will provide an opportunity for collaboration with community groups, residents and the wider population in the city who visit Open Streets. In consultation with the developing Business Improvement District, the Federation of Small Businesses and Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, a focus group will be established to take forward this work and assist in shaping the programme moving forward.

- 4.9 In addition, Edinburgh Futures Institute are interested in the way that big data analysis may be able to determine well-being and diversity of use in public spaces and discussions on this will continue.
- 4.10 A full report on key findings will be prepared for committee, May 2020.

Early Feedback and Impacts

- 4.11 During the demonstration phase of the programme, residents, businesses, and other local stakeholders have been in contact with Open Streets. There have been a range of comments and queries, the following is intended to offer a balanced perspective on the challenges, also benefits of implementing temporary vehicle free spaces.
 - 4.11.1 Residents in the area have commented on the challenges faced because of the diversion of the 35 bus service. Discussions are ongoing with different resident's groups on alternative "green" travel options including use of e-trikes to assist movement around the area and to nearby bus routes.
 - 4.11.2 NHS District Health Team – the team are reassured with the access arrangements for their staff who are required to use their cars to visit patients living in the Open Streets area.
 - 4.11.3 Residents in Parliament Square and Victoria Street have commented on their satisfaction with Open Streets; enjoying the quieter spaces and no vehicles.
 - 4.11.4 An Edinburgh resident who attended May and July Open Streets commented on how much his family enjoys the opportunity and would welcome this every Sunday. As someone who had trialled an e-bike in May, the respondent confirmed that he had subsequently purchased one for regular commuting, changing from a daily drive into work.
 - 4.11.5 Access Panel members have offered comments on the need to improve signage, ensure the provision of "quieter spaces" and advice on the role of stewards. they are keen to ensure that staff are proactive in looking out for people who may need help.
 - 4.11.6 Canongate businesses have welcomed Open Streets as this provides a more relaxed atmosphere and quieter spaces for their customers. One owner has commented that this has been an opportunity to get to know our neighbours and is keen to participate in activities.
 - 4.11.7 There has also been detailed feedback comparing the first Open Streets event in May to the last one in July reflecting on the progress made in three months.
- 4.12 Some changes made through feedback received were:
 - 4.12.1 Road closure barriers in July were moved further forward towards to main road, creating safer pedestrians crossing inside the Open Streets zones with people no longer crossing in between cones and barriers.

- 4.12.2 Parking restriction cones were removed from the side of the roads and traffic management vehicles were instructed to park outside the Open Streets zones.
- 4.13 The stewards and volunteer briefings were informed by feedback and by the July event, the feedback was that it felt more 'normal'.
- 4.14 More partnerships emerged and existing partnerships were strengthened, for example with Edinburgh World Heritage Trust, UNESCO City of Literature, Scottish Poetry Society, active travel organisations and others, to ensure a well-balanced approach to activities.
- 4.15 Looking ahead, feedback will continue to be monitored, considering the following for future Open Streets:
 - 4.15.1 Looking at ways to reduce the number of vehicles at the top of the Lawnmarket, and Castle Hill.
 - 4.15.2 Explore the potential to have the road closure at the foot of the Royal Mile, including the Canongate.
 - 4.15.3 Explore the potential to amend the traffic lights at major junctions to allow pedestrians to cross safely and with enough time.
 - 4.15.4 Continue to review the position of road signs, barriers and activities to ensure safety and a sense of welcome in the Open Streets areas.
 - 4.15.5 Continue to monitor any conflict between people on foot and bicycle in the Open Streets areas.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The first three Open Street events have demonstrated the importance of planning, consultation and need for careful, balanced approaches to managing the spaces to ensure accessibility for all.
- 5.2 The process of an "all services" debrief has been beneficial and will continue to be an essential operational requirement as the programme progresses towards a mainstreamed approach.
- 5.3 The need to align related activities is critical to ensure a collaborative approach is adopted in the consultation of residents who are affected by longer term diversions and disruptions to daily routines. Consideration will be given to the project governance for Open Streets, alongside other related activities.
- 5.4 In scaling up and extending the practice of open streets, there is a need to develop operational guidance, toolkit and flowchart to build on good practice, maintain safety and embed the principles of initiating "people friendly" streets.

- 5.5 Adapting to local demand and being flexible during the Open Streets programme to changing needs will assist in shaping the ethos, also depth of the interactions over the full period of time.
- 5.6 A key task will continue to be the overview of public safety, traffic management and maintenance of a risk register.
- 5.7 Open Streets evaluation and monitoring will continue to form an important strand of the programme as we move to the autumn.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The programme at present is dependent on grant funding for the 18-month period until December 2020. This has been secured by Sustrans through the 'Places for Everyone' Fund.
- 6.2 There is potential to investigate the potential for business sponsorship and involvement to reduce this level of investment from public funds. This will be progressed over the coming months.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 The vision of Open Streets is to engage with all who live, work, visit the old town, involving, and empowering the community to take ownership of the "vehicle free streets". The programme is developed in consultation with community groups and plans continue to be influenced by the regular feedback from the different interest and representative groups.
- 7.2 This wide range of consultation extends to key services and agencies that work with residents including primary care health professionals. There is a need to minimise the impact and delay for residents who may require home care. We are in frequent contact with the area health team who provide this service to ensure that there is essential vehicle access for this team.
- 7.3 The needs of people who have a disability or other health concerns that may limit their mobility is important to ensure that the area is accessible to everyone who can benefit from the cleaner air and reduced congestion. The engagement programme has included meetings with specialist groups representing the interests of people with disabilities and additional needs. The feedback and involvement from these groups is ongoing and will inform future planning.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 Edinburgh: Connecting our city, Transforming our places Findings of Public Engagement and Next Steps

9. Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1 – Visitor and Resident Survey Results (interim)

Open Streets Visitor Survey

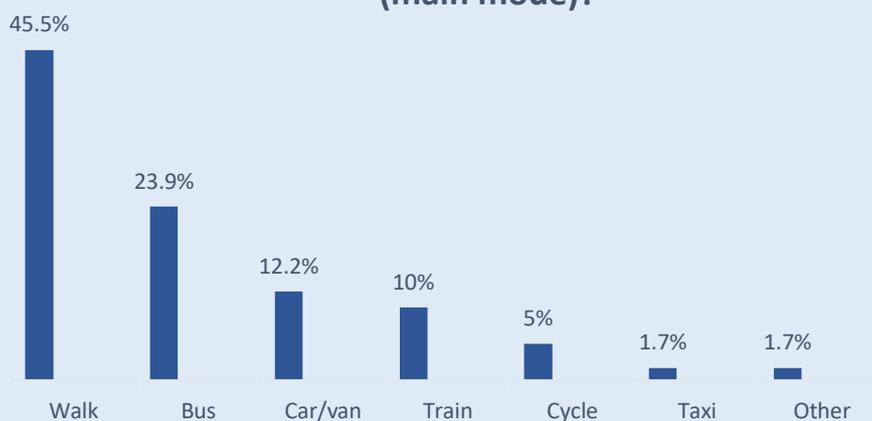
This information has been compiled from surveys conducted during the pilot events which ran May to June 2019; collated by Sustrans

1. How far did you travel to get here today ?

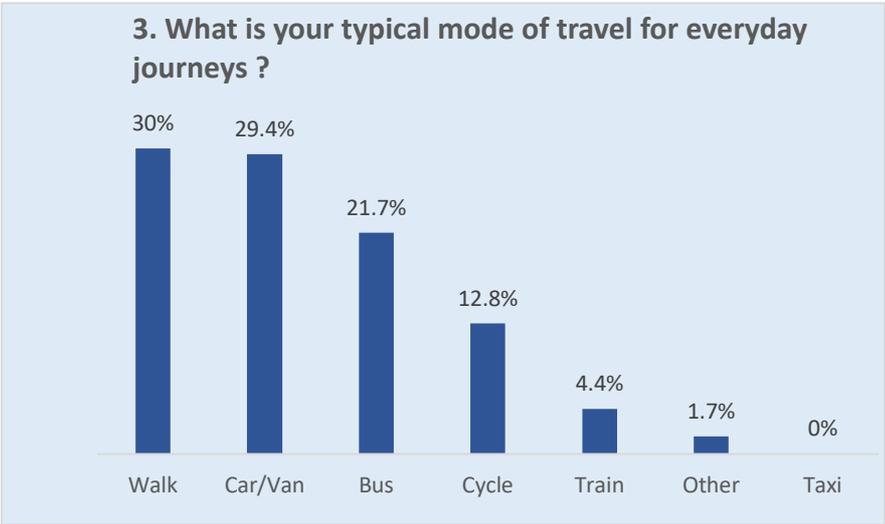


The majority of people travelled less than 2 miles to get to the event.

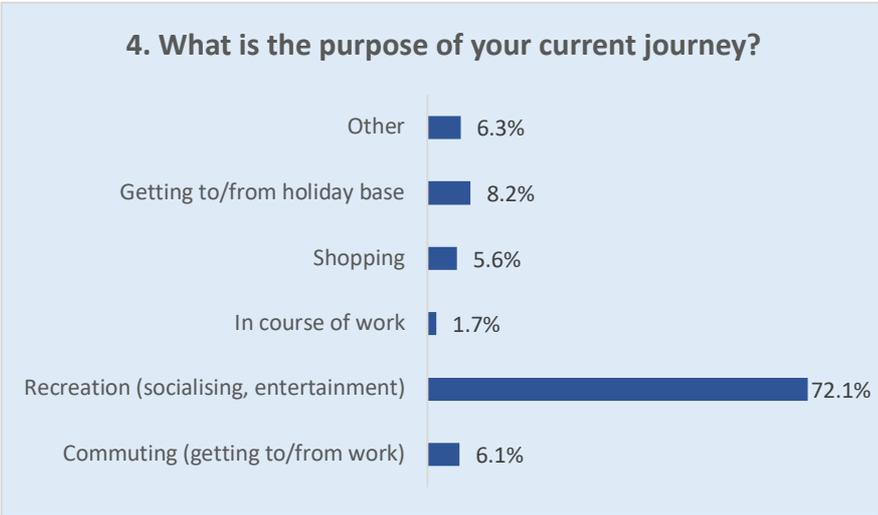
2. How did you travel here today (main mode)?



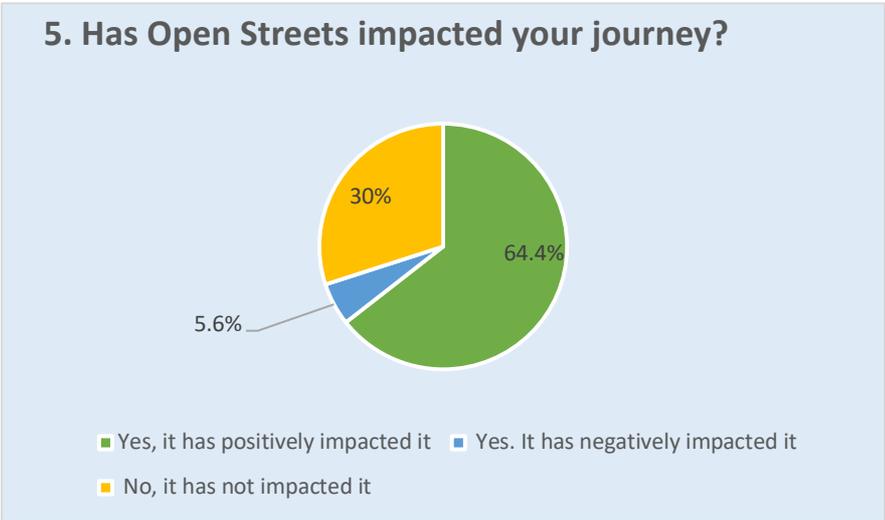
Almost half of people walked to the event, another quarter used the bus



Open Streets seemed to attract more people who typically use active travel for everyday journeys. 42% compared to 32%

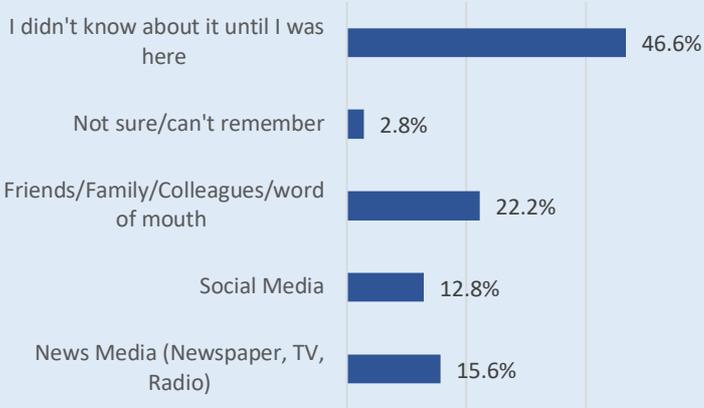


72% were visiting friends, family, socialising or visiting the area during Open Streets



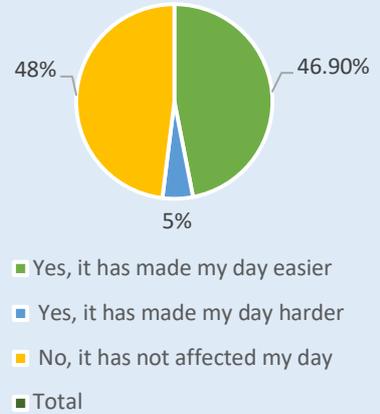
64% of respondents felt Open Streets had positively affected their journey, compared to 6% who felt it had a negative effect; *this is not representative of all journeys due to only those enclosed streets being asked*

6. Have you heard about Edinburgh Open Streets? If so, how?



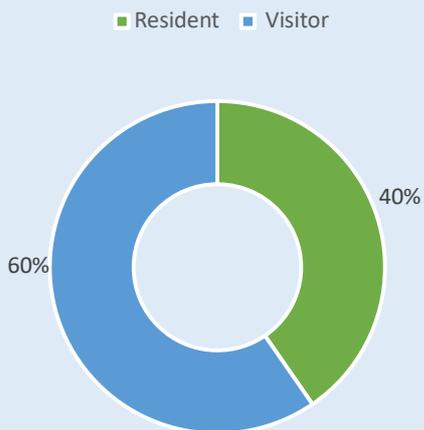
The vast majority of those surveyed were aware of Edinburgh Open Street events, though the majority were only aware on being in the event space

7. To the best of your knowledge, has the Open Street event affected your ability to go about your day?

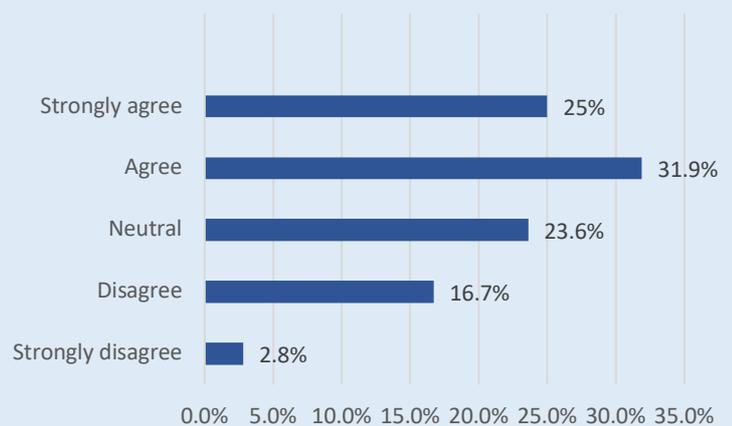


47% thought Open Streets had made going about their day easier compared to 5% who said that it made it harder

8. Would you say you are a resident of, or visitor to, Edinburgh?



9. My experience today make me feel part of the local community in Edinburgh frequency



Thinking about your experience in the Old Town of Edinburgh today, to what extent do you agree with these statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The streets are easy to cross	1.1	1.7	11.2	38.5	47.5
It's easy to move around the neighbourhood	1.1	2.2	8.9	36.9	50.9
The air is clean	0	1.7	12.3	48	38
The area is too noisy	2.2	8.4	15.6	38	35.8
I have enjoyed watching or engaging with the stalls, exhibits, or special events.	0	5.8	39.9	29.5	24.8

Findings suggest that people found it easier to move around the Old Town during the event; also enjoy an improved air quality. It was also noted that the area is considered to be too noisy which had a higher response than the number of people who enjoyed engaging in activities.