

Dear Fear

City Centre Vision: a recipe for traffic chaos?

We all know how chaotic traffic is in the centre of Edinburgh. But, it could get a whole lot worse if you don't respond to the Council's proposals before Thursday 9th May. The purpose of this email is to make you aware of their proposals, to put them in context and to seek your involvement in the consultation process.

The City Centre Vision can be found at:

http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20056/city_centre_and_leith_neighbourhood/1958/building_a_vision_for_the_city_centre

This gives links to the full proposal and to illustrations of the proposals. If you don't have time to read the full report here is a summary of the main proposals:

- To split bus services so they are running eastbound on George Street and westbound on Princes Street;
- To close Princes Street to general traffic in both directions;
- To allow buses, cycles and taxis on Princes Street in a westbound direction only on the south carriageway;
- To operate trams on Princes Street in both directions;
- To allow general traffic on George Street in an eastbound direction only on the north side. This will include taxis;
- To develop the south side of George Street as the preferred location for the primary east – west cycle route; and
- To minimize the overall net loss of parking spaces on George Street.

We encourage you to look at the illustrations of the proposals, before and after.

What are some of the implications?

1. The Council definition of City Centre is Princes Street and George Street only. This is a very limited definition and suggests that these streets can be considered in isolation. This is ridiculous.
2. 2233 scheduled buses travel along Princes Street every day, Monday to Friday between 0900 and 2100. (This excludes Edinburgh city tour buses).
3. 456 scheduled buses travel along George Street every day, Monday to Friday between 0900 and 2100. (This excludes Edinburgh city tour buses)
4. Daily one can see buses queuing nose to tail the length of Princes Street. If east bound buses are removed where will they go?
5. If all eastbound buses from Princes Street (say 50% of the total) have to move to George Street that means that there will be 1341 buses travelling eastbound along George Street each weekday. Or, they will have to be re-routed elsewhere. What impact will this have on pollution levels that are already acknowledged to be too high?
6. The proposals suggest that all west-bound general traffic will be diverted from George Street. Where will it go? Queen Street can scarcely cope with the existing volume of traffic.
7. Is public transport for the benefit of the public? If so, it must meet their needs and travel where the public wish to go. This happens very effectively now.
8. The report ignores the implications of rerouting displaced buses and general traffic to adjoining New Town streets. This includes increased traffic volume, noise, pollution and structural damage.
9. *'A city wide review of the bus network/provision (so that long term alternative routes may be considered for buses that access Princes Street) will not be*

completed until 2015.' (Source Ghel report, 2010). Why? Proposals for Princes Street and George Street should only be considered as part of a holistic review for the whole of central Edinburgh.

10. On Princes Street bus passengers may want to access the shops on the north side of the street. Will they cross at the pedestrian crossings or, do as many do now, cross wherever they can by dodging the traffic?
11. What will happen when trams travel silently along Princes Street at over 30mph? If there is an accident will the next step be the erection of barriers along the length of the street?
12. The illustrations (on the web site) show a further significant increase in the width of the pavement on the north side of Princes Street. Why should this be necessary, particularly if the bus shelters can be removed?
13. The Council are considering the closure of part of George Street during the Edinburgh Festival for the erection of a Spiegel tent in front of the Assembly Rooms. What will happen to displaced traffic then?
14. There is a proposal that the Christmas ice rink in Princes Street Gardens should be moved to George Street outside The Dome. What are the implications of this for shopkeepers and traffic?
15. Is it not better to let the tram line settle down for two to three years before suggesting any major changes to traffic management in the streets concerned?

We have tried to illustrate some of the implications of these proposals. We believe the vision is poorly thought through and if adopted will have huge problems for the citizens of Edinburgh and particularly for residents of the Moray Feu, some of whom have not yet been affected by the tram works.

We urge you to:

1. Complete the online survey whose link is on

http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20056/city_centre_and_leith_neighbourhood/1958/building_a_vision_for_the_city_centre

2. Send your comments to citycentre.vision@edinburgh.gov.uk

The deadline is 8th May.

Alistair Laing (with thanks to Fearar Richard Wood for the draft),

For Dr A D Lloyd,

Chairman,

Transport and Environment Sub Committee.

01 May 2013.