

Culture and Communities Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 13 November 2018

Managing Our Festival City

Item number	8.3
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	City Centre
Council Commitments	46

Executive Summary

This report sets out the issues of public concern which were raised during the summer festival 2018 and proposes changes for future years.

The headline issues of resident and business concern were:

- Whether more space is needed for safe circulation of pedestrians by reducing road space at key locations in the Old Town;
- Issues associated with the summer concerts in the West Princes Street Gardens;
- Whether proactive steps were required to encourage the spread of activity during summer into the New Town and beyond;
- The need for a more coherent approach to the promotion of festival activities across the city; and
- Addressing vehicle and pedestrian conflict, including at the junction of the High Street and Cockburn Street.

These proposals will require engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, and detailed development.

The annual 'Managing our Festival City' scorecard will be reported to Culture and Communities Committee in January 2019, and the accompanying report will provide a more detailed assessment of specific liveability issues from the 2018 summer festival period.

Managing our Festival City

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 Culture and Communities Committee is asked to:
 - 1.1.1 Note the initial feedback received on the summer festival in 2018 and the issues raised;
 - 1.1.2 Note a summer-specific operational plan for the city centre is proposed for future summer festivals;
 - 1.1.3 Note that proposals for appropriate temporary limits, management or prohibition of vehicle traffic at key periods of the day will be developed by officers in consultation with key stakeholders. Proposals will then be presented to Transport and Environment Committee;
 - 1.1.4 Note the need to enhance the attractiveness and appeal of George Street for festival activities and footfall;
 - 1.1.5 Agree that officers should develop a new agreement for free event space on the High Street, as outlined in paragraph 3.13
 - 1.1.6 Discharge the motion from Governance Risk and Best Value Committee in August (as outlined in paragraph 2.3);
 - 1.1.7 Agree that the Summer Sessions concert series in West Princes Street Gardens will continue in 2019, subject to approval from the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Convener and Vice Convener of Culture and Communities and of Transport and Environment on the final details and design of an improved public safety and access solution. This solution should be developed as early as possible;
 - 1.1.8 Note that a Coach Parking Strategy for the city is being developed and that a plan specifically for the summer period will also be developed concurrently; and
 - 1.1.9 Note that a more coordinated approach will be taken in support of the presentation of the city during the summer festivals, with a review of festival advertising and city dressing.

2. Background

- 2.1 At Culture and Communities Committee in January 2018, the [Managing our Festival City Report](#) was approved, with an amendment to the third recommendation, as follows:
- “To agree to continue to work with citizens, relevant services, partners and ward councillors to further develop an annual combined Festival City performance scorecard and Festivals highlight report, including values, status/trend benchmarks and management actions and to investigate the feasibility of establishing a citizens’ panel to consider these issues.”
- 2.2 This action is still under development and will be discharged in an annual follow up in January to the original Managing our Festival City report and scorecard.
- 2.3 At the 28 August 2018 Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee, an amendment by Councillor Mowat, was adjusted and agreed as follows:
- “Committee recognises the concern expressed by many in Edinburgh regarding the hoardings that appeared around Princes Street Gardens to facilitate the Summer Sessions events which changed a public space into a private space during the busiest time of the year reducing amenity for residents and visitors to the city and in order to better understand how this happened requests that the forthcoming report on ‘Managing the Festival City’ to the Culture and Communities Committee in November 2018 covering:
- 2.3.1 The process followed to let the contract to hold the event and how the event was approved.
- 2.3.2 The process followed to agree the use of the hoardings including advice taken and who made the final decision.”

3. Main report

- 3.1 The overarching priorities for the city during the busy summer festival period are:
- 3.1.1 ensuring that residents can easily continue to go about their daily business;
- 3.1.2 ensuring the safety of the public at all times; and
- 3.1.3 ensuring that the festival period offers something for everyone (for all ages and backgrounds).
- 3.2 Both East and West Princes Street Gardens are utilised for summer and winter festival activities as well as other events outwith these periods.

- 3.3 Edinburgh during the summer festival period is a busy, noisy, and often crowded place. Whilst this is clearly part of the festival experience, it is now widely acknowledged that the experience of Edinburgh during the summer festival time could be significantly improved, for residents and for visitors. A more coordinated set of measures is now required to respond to the demands of managing our Festival City.
- 3.4 Feedback has been received from key services, festivals, operators, and stakeholders and the following challenges have been identified:
- 3.4.1 Making it easier for residents to go about their daily business;
 - 3.4.2 Ensuring the festival city has something for everyone, for all ages and backgrounds;
 - 3.4.3 Addressing pavement crowding, safety and access issues, particularly in the Old Town area;
 - 3.4.4 Ensuring a greater spread of audiences and participants by identifying focal areas for festival locations across the city;
 - 3.4.5 Improving the New Town appeal as a festival / summer offer;
 - 3.4.6 Addressing public concern over the use of and access to West Princes Street Gardens for festival activity, including the need for detailed discussion prior to agreeing future use;
 - 3.4.7 Improving the look and feel of the city through more coherent presentation, publicity points and signposting that is specific to the summer period; and
 - 3.4.8 Managing the impact of numbers of bus services and coach based tours in the World Heritage site area.
- 3.5 It is important to recognise that the approach being proposed is to enhance the experience of the summer festivals for residents, businesses and visitors.

Addressing Old Town pavement crowding, safety and access

- 3.6 Ensuring the safe movement of both residents and visitors to the city during the peak summer season is becoming a growing issue in terms of maintaining public safety. As the numbers of pedestrians increases, there is a growing tendency for pedestrians to spill onto roadways and in doing so increasing the potential for conflict with vehicles and accidents.
- 3.7 Three key hubs of Fringe festival activity are concentrated in and around the Old Town: Bristo/George Square; the Pleasance; and the High Street. Pavement congestion in 2018 resulting in observed overspill into road traffic. Appendix 1 shows some images taken by Environmental Wardens during the peak periods at locations throughout the Old Town. These show pavement congestion, overspill into road ways and traffic

and the impacts for access and ease of movement for those with mobility disability or sensory impairments.

- 3.8 Pavement crowding in 2018 was compounded by an apparent rise in 'on street' tour activities (including licenced and unlicensed walking and disco tours).
- 3.9 The greatest pressure is evident on the High Street from North Bridge to St Mary's Street, at the top of Blair Street, on Victoria Street, and on the Lawnmarket and the Cowgate from noon until midnight.
- 3.10 At evening-times around 9pm, Police Scotland noted the junction of Lawnmarket, George IV Bridge and High Street were densely crowded with pedestrians, directly linked to flows of Tattoo audiences between the early and later shows.
- 3.11 It is considered that, to improve pedestrian safety, more 'pavement' space is required. To address this, it is proposed that appropriate temporary limits, management or prohibition of vehicle traffic at key periods of the day will be developed. This will improve the safety of people in these streets and improve access for those who struggle to move through the very crowded pavements. This issue will also be considered within Connecting our city, transforming our places activity which is currently underway.
- 3.12 However, the proposal requires early, initial engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, before detailed planning is developed in liaison with Police Scotland. Adequate planning and development will require the establishment of a dedicated resource and team. The detail of these proposals will be the subject of a further report to Transport and Environment Committee.

High Street and Cockburn Street

- 3.13 The area of High Street at the top of Cockburn Street and on Cockburn Street itself continues to present a slightly separate set of issues that are closely related to the High Street Fringe Event. As reported in the Managing the Festival City report in January 2018, a trial 'lane reduction' on the High Street into Cockburn Street in 2017 did not sufficiently address the conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles previously.
- 3.14 In 2018, a temporary part day road closure was introduced, with stewarding, as a condition of the licence for Street Trading at the junction with Hunter Square. This reduced pedestrian and vehicle conflicts, but created noise and crowd issues for nearby businesses in Cockburn Street beyond the 'closed' area. These were not anticipated and therefore no management arrangements were in place.

- 3.15 As also reported in January, the Fringe's extremely popular High Street Event offers free entertainment to all. It is delivered on the basis of an ongoing agreement between the Council and the Fringe to use the street.
- 3.16 The scale of attendees has continued to increase and it is proposed to review this agreement to ensure the event space is sufficient for the number of attendees. In consultation with key stakeholders, businesses, community groups, elected members and licence holders it is proposed to consider extending the space from the High Street down to North Bridge, including Hunter Square. Management of this space could also be extended to areas beyond the designated event space to ensure safety at all entrance and exit points. This would help to reduce the intense pressure and improve access for people with mobility and sensory impairments using the streets.
- 3.17 These proposals will be developed in accordance with the Public Spaces Protocol.
- 3.18 Creating more pedestrian space in the right locations will improve the experience of the streets during the busiest hours for those who live and work here, as well as for those who visit, and planning will ensure that essential access is provided for residents and businesses.

New Town

- 3.19 The second year of the book festival extending into George Street has been successful for the Festival, yet year-round businesses have reported a dip in footfall in the New Town in 2018, and this is presented in the [Essential Trends](#) monitoring.
- 3.20 There is a real need to provide a high-quality summer festival offering on and around George Street in a way that better meets the needs of residents, local businesses and operators in the area, and to drive and retain footfall in the area. A successful New Town festival offer will help in the wider dispersal of crowds across the city, as well as supporting businesses in this area.
- 3.21 The maintenance of live traffic in one direction, on George Street between Frederick and Hanover Streets, limits what can safely be provided on street.
- 3.22 With the exception of maintaining continuous cycling in each direction, and allowing for loading and emergency access, it is proposed that vehicles be fully removed from blocks between Charlotte Square to Hanover Street to facilitate a much higher quality of on street offering, with much better visual links and pedestrian permeability across the street, on each block. This proposal requires development and delivery in partnership with Essential Edinburgh, to ensure appropriate business involvement. Planned increases towards lost parking revenue will be

applied. Proposals developed will still adhere to the Public Spaces Protocol.

- 3.23 As noted, the proposals above, to increase pedestrian safety in our city are primarily achieved through changes to vehicle access in key streets. The proposals are consistent with longer-term aspirations to create a healthy, accessible and safe city centre.

West Princes Street Gardens

- 3.24 In August 2018 the 'Edinburgh Summer Sessions' promoted by DF Concerts Ltd, featured six high profile acts (including Tom Jones, Bastille, Rag'n'Bone Man, Paloma Faith and Kasabian). Whilst there are clear benefits for the city and residents from the summer concerts, lessons have been learnt which will help the city to provide a valuable and complementary offer within a key public space, for residents and visitors.
- 3.25 Over 27,000 tickets were sold, with 39.94% to Edinburgh residents. 12.26% of the tickets sold were to Glasgow residents while a further 36.10% were from elsewhere in Scotland. The remaining tickets were purchased by visitors to Scotland.
- 3.26 Learning from other cities shows that outdoor concerts are important in helping to share the city in the height of summer with a diverse range of residents. The offer of high quality popular music and a range of acts ensures there is appeal for a wider audience and demographic during summer, and compliments other activity associated with the festivals taking place at the same time (the Edinburgh International Festival contemporary music series in the Leith Theatre complex).
- 3.27 Committee may recall the closure of the Picture House in December 2013 impacted significantly on the city's ability to host contemporary live music.
- 3.28 In view of this, when DF concerts brought forward a Summer Sessions proposal in September 2017, officers began discussions with them on the practical arrangements. The proposal was considered as a single event, in line with how the Council deals with the other festivals taking place around that time (e.g. Jazz Festival). Following these discussions and following a briefing of the Conveners of Culture and Communities and Transport and Environment, the decision to progress the 'Summer Sessions' was made by the Executive Director of Place, under delegated authority.
- 3.29 Event planning was progressed through a series of Event Planning and Operations Group (EPOG) meetings, chaired by the Council but involving the operator and key emergency and public services.

- 3.30 Through the EPOG and following discussions with Lothian Buses, Council officers and Police Scotland, it was considered that screening arrangements would be required to manage any potential safety issues. It is clear that there is a need to identify a much more appropriate screening and barrier solution than was used this year to protect key views of the Castle and maximise public access to the Gardens for general use, and all practicable options will be investigated.
- 3.31 The benefits of hosting music events such as the summer sessions has benefits for the city, for residents and for local visitors. Council Officers believe an improved solution can be found to address the issues experienced this year - providing a shorter limitation on access, redefining the event space to impact less on grassed areas, and installing appropriate screening which would be used at live event times only. The solutions would form part of the ongoing EPOG meetings but will not compromise the secure the 'public safety' first approach.
- 3.32 Committee is asked to agree, subject to suitable solutions as outlined in paragraph 3.26 and agreement on the final details and design being approved by the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Convener and Vice Convener of Culture and Communities and of Transport and Environment Committee, to discussions for a summer sessions 2019 programme being progressed.

Presenting the city

- 3.33 Whilst the wayfinding system being planned for the city will assist with year-round orientation, the city lacks a summer festival 'display' to showcase the festival city and help orient people walking between key hub areas.
- 3.34 Setting up a system of improved sign posting will help to promote the wider Festival City offer, including the newer, out-of-centre festival hubs across the city. A city-wide branding approach that promotes all summer festivals would help welcome visitors and highlight other cultural attractions.
- 3.35 Feedback from stakeholders, including local residents, has highlighted that the presentation of festival advertising posters can do more to benefit the city centre's overall appearance. Proliferation of unofficial posters that spring up alongside official sites can impact on the environmental quality of some areas, and this is particularly the case around the Southside corridor, as noted at the Transport and Environment Committee on 4 October 2018.

- 3.36 The procurement of the festival advertising contract is underway, and this provides an immediate opportunity to review these issues and the management of poster sites and adjacent areas, and identify any opportunities to link with city branding. An update will be provided at the January Culture and Communities Committee.
- 3.37 Council officers will also work closely with the Fringe Society on the management of flyposting throughout the festival period.

Bus and Coach Tour Congestion

- 3.38 Non-local bus and coach services contribute to road congestion within Edinburgh's World Heritage site and impact on effective public transport services. The [Public Transport Priority Action Plan](#) report considered by Transport and Environment Committee on 9 August 2018 expanded on these issues. Officers are now developing comprehensive coach parking strategy for the city.
- 3.39 However it is proposed that an additional bus and coach management plan is also required for the city centre / world heritage site area specifically for the summer period.
- 3.40 This will be developed alongside the strategy and will involve industry consultation and engagement throughout to ensure that this will be successfully developed and implemented. This will be presented to Transport and Environment Committee for approval when complete.

Operational Plan

- 3.41 It is proposed that an operational plan for the city centre will be developed, focused on the summer period. This plan will take account of all aspects of city operations and performance, including those outlined above.
- 3.42 A project team, bringing together officers from across the range of Council services, will be established to develop the plan and then to take forward implementation.
- 3.43 This plan will inform a wider process of consultation around extending the period of tourist footfall outwith the peak summer festival period, to reduce crowding and extend the financial benefits throughout the year. This will take place in tandem with plans to extend footfall to areas beyond the Old Town and University.

4. Measures of success

- 4.1 Edinburgh maintains its reputation as a world class festival city.

5. Financial impact

- 5.1 There are no financial impacts directly arising from this report.
- 5.2 As the proposed actions are developed for implementation, the financial impacts will be assessed and will be included in future reports as appropriate.

6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 As part of the operational plan development, a risk register will be prepared and all compliance and governance impacts will be considered.

7. Equalities impact

- 7.1 Overall engagement in cultural activity amongst adults living in Edinburgh has increased over the previous six years, with a 10% increase in residents attending any of the Edinburgh Festivals, and an 8% increase in the percentage of residents attending live music, theatre, museums or galleries outside of festivals since 2013. Overall attendance at Festivals has increased and in 2017 was at its highest recorded level.
- 7.1 The movement of residents and visitors with a disability or with mobility needs is an important consideration for the future planning of road closures and transport adjustments around the city including, for example, ensuring provision of blue badge parking facilities.
- 7.2 It is intended that the changes proposed will improve conditions in the city centre for all residents and visitors in future. This will be assessed as part of the development and implementation of these proposals and a detailed impact assessment will be carried out where appropriate.

8. Sustainability impact

- 8.1 There are no sustainability impacts arising from this report.
- 8.2 However it is hoped that the changes proposed will improve air quality in the city centre for all residents and visitors in future. This will be assessed as part of the development and implementation of these proposals and a detailed impact assessment will be carried out where appropriate.

9. Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 Consultation and engagement with key stakeholders and businesses as appropriate during the development of the proposals.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 [Managing our Festival City – 30 January 2018.](#)
- 10.2 [Edinburgh People’s Survey – Culture Results – 11 September 2018](#)

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11. Appendices

- Appendix 1: Old Town - Summary of issues observed on Environmental Warden patrols, August 2018.

Old Town, August 2018.

A summary of issues observed on Environmental Warden patrols

The Council's Environmental Warden service took an active role in observing Old Town issues for pedestrians during Summer 2018. A small sample of photos illustrate the following three issues:

- Circulation of pedestrians on roadways
- Access issues for people with disabilities
- Crowds forming outside event areas

Circulation of pedestrians.

Safe circulation of pedestrians is made more challenging when informal activities create additional pavement obstructions. This was an issue across the entire Old Town area. In summer, pressure on pavement space is often linked to street performance and walking tours. Wardens frequently observed pedestrians walking into the roadway to get around crowds. This leads to potential conflict between pedestrians and vehicles. It presents particular challenges for people who have a physical or sensory disability or impairment, and for the most vulnerable (very young and very old).



Image 1: Lawnmarket.
People walking on roadway.



Image 2. Blair Street
People on roadway as a crowd forms

Access issues for people with disabilities.

When the space available for circulation of people becomes restricted, it most impacts people who find it harder to negotiate very crowded areas and streets for a wide range of reasons. Dense crowds tend to obscure sightline to kerbs, bollards, temporary fencing or other low-level obstacles.



Image 3.
Crowded area near High Street



Image 4.
High Street after Fringe event closes

Crowds forming outside key event areas.

On the High Street at the top of Cockburn Street, and into Cockburn Street, wardens noted crowds forming. The area is adjacent to the formal Fringe event. It was at times an informal performance area; a secondary informal area also established in Cockburn Street. The latter caused disruption to some businesses and residents.

At this location, in keeping with designated temporary traffic restrictions, vehicles were permitted in the street during morning loading hours up until 10.30am, and then after 6pm; wardens often observed people in the roadway during these hours too.



Image 5.
Crowd around main Fringe event area



Image 6.
Secondary crowd in Cockburn Street