



# **Future of Spaces for People Measures**

A response from FSB Scotland

**Federation of Small Businesses Scotland**  
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## Overview

Spaces for People schemes are varied in nature both within Edinburgh and across Scotland. The ways in which schemes have been implemented have varied from Council to Council and the response of businesses to these schemes has been equally diverse. The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) has received a number of representations from members in Edinburgh regarding these schemes. Some have been broadly positive about individual schemes and have been seeking to find ways to exploit the changes for the benefit of the business. Others have been sceptical of schemes in their area and have expressed concerns about the impact on their business and on issues of public safety. The FSB is broadly supportive of measures designed to make our public places safer and more attractive but we believe this needs to be undertaken with the full involvement and consent of local businesses.

## The Implementation of Spaces for People

The Coronavirus pandemic necessitated urgent action to ensure that public safety was paramount and it is understandable that measures were required to ensure that social distancing could take place where possible. Such measures were particularly important in the summer of 2020 as businesses began to reopen for the first time, in order to help give customers the confidence that they could go out into the streets and businesses in safety.

Whilst the initial implementation of these issues was naturally time constrained, FSB believes that more could have been done to engage local businesses in the plans even at this early stage. For example, neighbouring East Lothian Council sought to engage with the local business associations in the various towns across the local authority to ensure that plans for local Spaces for People schemes were understood by businesses and that those businesses had the opportunity to help shape and inform the design of schemes.

In Edinburgh, the early consultation was more limited and remote from business. There seemed to be a heavy reliance on the Commonplace tool, with this being used to justify specific local measures. For example, the closure of Cockburn Street seemed to be justified by reference to three unattributed comments left on the site, despite the fact that this measure would impact, for better or for worse, many of the businesses on this street.

In our view, the Council should have taken steps to engage with each of the businesses in streets where Spaces for People measures were planned. By understanding the nature of these businesses, their customers, their delivery patterns, and their staff travel needs, a more complete picture of the individual needs of areas could have been compiled and more effective Spaces for People measures implemented, crucially with the informed consent of local businesses.

## The Situation Since Implementation

The FSB has been contacted by members about the impact of various local schemes on individual businesses. For example:

- A range of cafes and restaurants based in **Cockburn Street** contacted FSB because they wanted to engage with the Council on the implication of the road closure on their businesses. We arranged an online meeting with Cllrs Macinnes and Doran where the businesses explained their needs for the use of outdoor space. Some of these businesses remain in discussions with the Council.
- By contrast another business on **Cockburn Street**, a retailer, is concerned that the closure of the street to traffic is causing a drop in footfall in his business. We have also passed these concerns on to the Council.
- A business in **Causewayside** contacted us to complain that a double yellow line had been painted outside his retail store with no notice, preventing customers from parking to pick up supplies. Following discussions with the Council, the line was removed.
- A business in **Lanark Road** complained that parking spaces had been moved to a 'floating' area with a cycle lane between the spaces and the pavement, creating a hazard for young children getting out of cars and to the pavement. This issue remains unresolved.

In addition, FSB has engaged with groups of local businesses which have expressed more general concerns with local Spaces for People measures, such as South West Edinburgh in Motion and traders groups in Bruntsfield and Morningside. Many of the businesses in these groups have expressed concerns of low footfall but are also worried at the aesthetic look of the schemes and the confusing nature of the changes which they believe is leading to traffic incidents and danger to pedestrians, cyclists and other road users.

We are aware of petitions that have been drawn up by local business owners against the long term retention of Spaces for People schemes and demands have been made for compensation for the perceived disruption caused by the schemes.

## The Council Consultation

Businesses have expressed concern at the structure of the consultation launched by the Council on making the Spaces for People schemes permanent. The purpose of the scheme was to provide additional space for social distancing and the mechanism used for this was the Temporary Traffic Regulation Order, intended for very temporary schemes and with a maximum lifetime of 18 months. Indeed, some local authorities chose to implement changes under Spaces for People for just a few weeks.

By seeking to make the Spaces for People schemes permanent, some businesses believe that the intentions of the Council are more aligned to its City Centre Transformation and City Mobility Plan policies than to the Covid public safety intentions of the policy.

In particular, some businesses feel that insufficient weight may be given to business views through the consultation process. This feeling is underlined by the strength of feeling expressed in local petitions against the extension of the measures.

Many businesses we have spoken to would prefer the Council to go through a full Traffic Regulation Order process in order to secure each and any extension planned to temporary Spaces for People measures.

In any event, FSB believes that businesses must be fully engaged and consulted on the extension of these measures in the city.

## Conclusion

Many of Edinburgh's businesses have suffered a great deal throughout the Covid pandemic. This is particularly true of retail and hospitality businesses and especially those located in the city centre area, many of whom have had their key markets – tourists, office workers and students – disappear for all or part of the year. These businesses need to be a key recovery priority for the city economy and must be supported in every way possible.

It must be as easy as possible for customers to access our city businesses and to spend their time and money there. All of us have a responsibility to support our local businesses.

Before any of the Spaces for People measures are extended, it must be considered whether this is necessary for public safety, whether each scheme has achieved its intended aims, and whether it will impact local businesses. This can only be achieved if these businesses are fully consulted and the Council understands the needs of each business, their staff and their customers. This knowledge would result in better designed schemes and happier and more prosperous businesses.

## Further Information

For further information please contact Garry Clark, Development Manager – East of Scotland, Federation of Small Businesses: [garry.clark@fsb.org.uk](mailto:garry.clark@fsb.org.uk)



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