

Slide 1

Princes Street and Waverley Valley Strategy

Stakeholder Workshop
8 June 2026

The logo for Edinburgh City Council, featuring the word "EDINBURGH" in a stylized font with "THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL" written in smaller text below it, all contained within a white rectangular box with a blue border.

Title slide

Workshop Agenda

13.30-
13.35 **Welcome - Councillor Griffiths**

Planning Convenor

Paul Lawrence (Chair)

Chief Executive of City of Edinburgh Council

13.35-
13.55 **Council Overview - David Givan**

Chief Planning Officer and Head of Building Standards

13.55 -
14.30 **Perspectives - Invited Speakers**

Richard Murphy, Richard Murphy Architects

Steven Robb, Historic Environment Scotland

Willie Hamilton, Lothian and Edinburgh Trams

Jo Davidson, Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce

Roddy Smith, Essential Edinburgh

Matthew Spence, Network Rail

Robin Wickes, Edinburgh Access Panel

Workshop Agenda (continued)

14.30-
15.30 **Group Discussion**
Facilitators and Notetakers

15.30-
15.50 **Break**
All

15.50-
16.00 **Feedback and Next Steps**
Paul Lawrence (Chair)

Agenda (continued)

Slide 4



Sub-title introducing Council overview presented by David Givan.

Slide 5

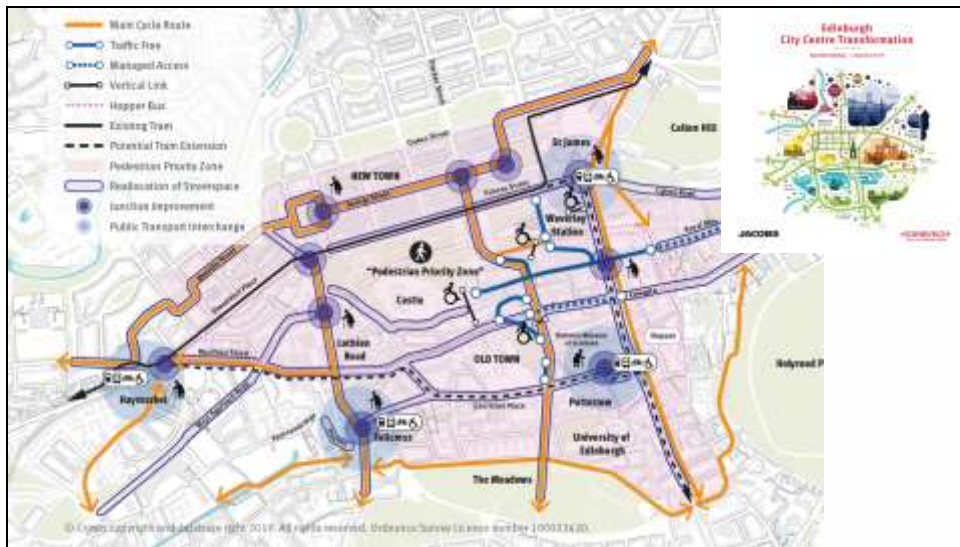


The requirement for the Princes Street and Waverley Valley Strategy (PSWV) is set out in Edinburgh's local development plan, City Plan 2030, adopted Nov 2024.

Place Policy 1, Edinburgh City Centre requires the PSWV Strategy to:

- Guide regeneration of Princes Street;
- Establish a placemaking vision for its public realm; and
- To manage change and improve access within the Waverley Valley, incl. protecting and enhancing Princes Street Gardens.

Slide 6



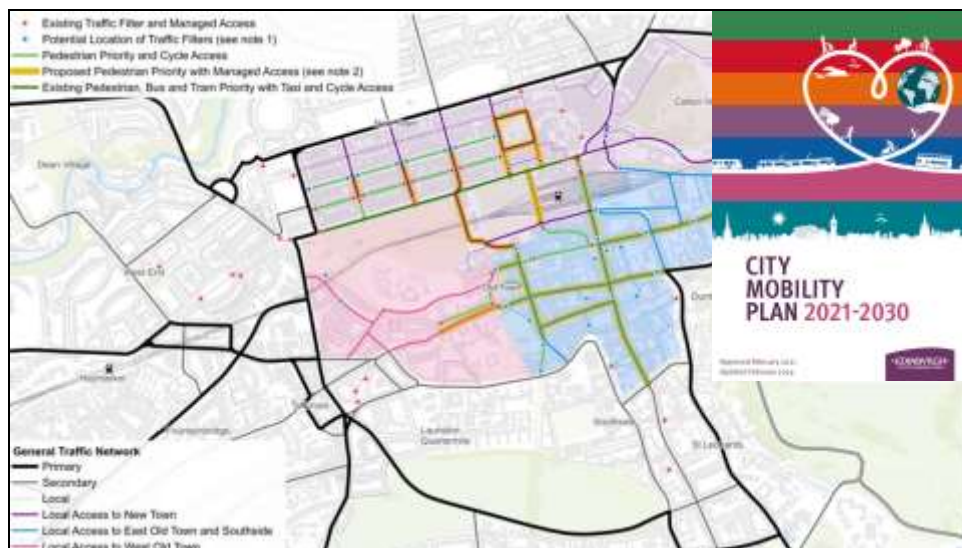
The PSWV Strategy supports delivery of Edinburgh City Centre Transformation (ECCT, 2019) - a 10-year plan from a traffic-dominated to a people-friendly city centre, embedded in the wider City Mobility Plan (CMP, 2021, updated 2024).

ECCT sets the context for projects such as George Street and First New Town, City Centre West East Link and Meadows to George Street.

For Princes Street, ECCT recommended:

- Improvements to the pedestrian experience and links along/across Princes St.
- Opportunities for seating and dwell space.
- A rebalancing of priority from vehicles to people.
- Enabling change of use with a high-quality environment.
- Strengthening connections with the Gardens and George St.
- Optimisation of bus movements.

Slide 7



Future Streets was developed as a circulation plan under the City Mobility Plan and adopted in 2024.

Future Streets provides guidance to help plan the city's streets by allocating road space to different modes of travel as well as place functions, helping people around efficiently and creating a more pleasant environment.

Future Streets classifies Princes St as a primary corridor for buses, place and walking, and a tram route. Most of Princes St is classified as a local cycling.

The range of ECCT projects sit within this framework and have been subject to transport modelling to confirm they work together as a co-ordinated package of measures.

Lothian Road is a primary traffic corridor within the Circulation Plan, linking to Queen Street via South Charlotte Street – these are the key cross-city centre North-South and then East-West general traffic routes categorised in Council policy.

Slide 8



The George Street and First New Town Project seeks to deliver an exceptional street environment that is welcoming and accessible for all users, on George Street, Castle, Frederick, Hanover Streets and the junctions with Charlotte and St Andrew Squares. The proposal will renew George Street's prime role within the New Town and strengthen links to the West End and St James quarter, making it more attractive for people of all ages to visit, shop, rest, and make active and sustainable travel choices whilst celebrating the New Town's unique heritage.

Slide 9



The proposed street layout and public realm outside the Assembly Rooms on George Street.

Slide 10



Meadows to George Street will transform the quality of walking, cycling, public spaces and improve access for all on some of Edinburgh's busiest historic streets: Hanover Street, the Mound, Bank Street, George IV Bridge, Candlemaker Row, Forrest Road, Bristo Place and Teviot Place. This will create safer, more attractive places to travel through and spend time in, including pedestrianisation of Forrest Road and linking cycle routes from the south of the city with CCWEL at George Street. It introduces a modal filter to General Traffic at The Mound, meaning north-south general traffic is routed via Lothian Road.

Slide 11



As an early phase of ECCT, the **City Centre West to East Link** (linking Roseburn to Leith Walk) opened in 2024 as a 3.6 km bi-directional cycle route, followed by redesign of Melville Crescent as a public space. £23 m was invested in the design and construction of the route, of which £14.8 m was from Transport Scotland via the walk Wheel Cycle Trust's Places for Everyone programme, as well as additional funding from the Scottish Government and Council's transport budget.

The route is designed to connect into the George Street and First New Town design and Meadows to George Street project as part of the primary cycle network.



Charlotte Square is a vital part of plans to transform the city centre, making it better for walking, wheeling and cycling as well as spending time in and connecting to other parts of the city.

As a strategic link connecting the City Centre West to East Link with the George Street and the First New Town project, Charlotte Square is crucial to our City Centre Transformation plan and Our Future Streets.

This will include:

- Widening pavements and making sure they are accessible to everyone by addressing existing levels.
- Adding new pedestrian crossings and upgrading existing crossings.
- Creating quiet areas to stop and spend time in.
- Maintaining and enhancing the world heritage assets and character
- Installing segregated cycle tracks beside main roads.
- Connecting key parts of the city's cycle network.
- Providing alternative cycle routes which avoid tram lines.

Slide 13

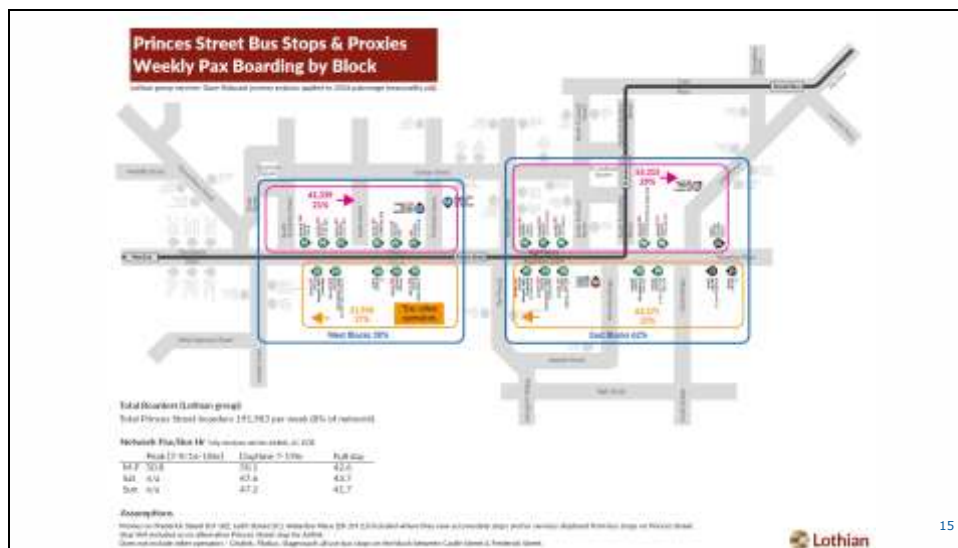


At the east end of George Street, at **St Andrew Square**, following the opening of the Garden to the public in 2008, redevelopment activity around the Square, not least the Edinburgh St James Quarter and construction of the Dunard Centre, outstanding works involve the completion of the north and west flanks of the Square, tying in the continuation of the CCWEL from George Street and completing the upgrading of the public realm to match that surrounding the tram stop to the east and the Square's south side.

Slide 14



The east end of Princes Street is subject to a tram safeguard to deliver part of the north-south tram route between Granton and the southeast of the city via South St Andrew Street and North Bridge. This end of the street is a strategic connection between George Street, Waverley Station, Leith Street, Regent Road and North Bridge and will require a localised design solution aligned with the Future Streets framework and the wider character of Princes Street. It also suffers from some of the heaviest footfall and overcrowding on the south footway. Improving footway capacity here and working with any reconfiguration of Waverley Market's roof terrace will be essential to providing greater comfort for walking and wheeling.



As part of the primary public transport network across the city, Princes Street is a key artery for bus services:

- The Council’s strategic model indicates over 85% of motorised trips to the city centre are made by public transport.
- Over 260 buses per hour (both directions) operate on Princes Street currently in the strategic model, with just under 80% by Lothian Buses.
- Due to more efficient operations and rationalisation efforts by bus operators, the number of bus services running on Princes St has fallen in recent years (previously close to 300 an hour).
- Over 50% of Lothian Buses passenger journeys are on routes which stop on Princes Street, and around 8% of Lothian Buses passengers boarding buses in the city, board on Princes Street.
- Other operators such as Citylink, Flixbus and Stagecoach (typically longer vehicles and higher dwell times) also use bus stops in the Western section.
- Frederick St and Hanover St are also classed as primary bus routes in the Council’s Circulation Plan.



The PSWV Strategy also supports delivery of the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site, inscribed by UNESCO in 1995.

The site is a unique cultural asset in the World, a place to connect with the past, whilst living in the present.

Princes Street is the southern single-sided street of James Craig's award-winning New Town design of 1767, representing Georgian order in contrast with the medieval Old Town, set across the landscape divide of the Waverley Valley. The area has evolved over time to serve the city's needs but remains remarkably intact.

The city centre includes a number of Conservation Areas, a high proportion of Listed Buildings, and the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Edinburgh Castle.

Slide 17



At 15 hectares combined, East and West Princes Street Gardens are integral to the First New Town layout. Located in the valley of the Nor' Loch, the Gardens were conceived as private pleasure grounds before becoming early public parks.


They form part of a nationally important Garden and Designed Landscape. A unique resource for the city, they sit within Edinburgh's Thriving Greenspaces 2050 Vision, vital for wellbeing, quality of life and heritage.

Slide 18

"By 2040 Princes Street and the Waverley Valley will be a more welcoming place designed for people and nature with sustainable mobility, liveability, and biodiversity at its heart.

It will support a thriving economy with a quality shopping, leisure and cultural experience and enable inclusive access to enhanced Gardens.

As part of a rejuvenated First New Town public realm, the status of one of Scotland's most iconic streets will be restored to offer a fitting and climate resilient setting for our World-renowned heritage."



18

The Draft Princes Street and Waverley Valley Strategy was approved for consultation in September 2024.

It comprised the following main chapters to deliver the vision for the area:

- Princes Street's Uses, Blocks and Buildings
- Princes Street's Public Realm and Mobility
- The Waverley Valley, including:

-Improvement principles for Princes Street Gardens and the Ross Bandstand

-Waverley Station Place Brief – land at the Station, Waverley Market and East Market Street

Appendices included a brief history, case for change, indicative actions and costings.



The chapter on **Uses, Blocks and Buildings** focussed on the ongoing revitalisation of Princes Street, including:

- Mix of use, incl. change to planning guidance and permitted development rights.
- New Town design principles for the street's urban blocks.
- Building design, incl. shopfronts, heights, roofscape, sustainability, lighting, and servicing,
- Pop-up uses, design of hoardings and construction access.

Slide 21



On street cycling continued to be provided for but the proposals followed Future Streets (2024) and did not identify capacity for cycle segregation on Princes Street, with the exception of the east and west ends to join up the primary cycle network.

This principle was tested in developing the strategy and through consultation. Segregation was discounted as it reduced footway space for walking and wheeling.

The position set out by Future Streets is for George Street and Queen Street to form the city's Primary Cycle Network.



In developing the Princes Street and Waverley Valley Strategy, the impact of reducing sections of carriageway from two to one lane on Princes Street was tested. This considered single lane running for bus and tram.

This was carried out by Jacobs using micro-simulation traffic modelling developed for tram and which digitally reproduces the traffic patterns of all road users.

The findings suggested that:

- Bus numbers would have to be reduced by half in each direction if carriageway space were given over to walking, wheeling and place functions.
- journey times tripled eastbound (from c3mins between Shandwick Place & South Charlotte Street to c9mins), and westbound (from c2min between Frederick Street & South Charlotte Street to c6mins).
- Diverting buses via Charlotte Square would add significantly more movements to this primary North-South traffic route (via South Charlotte Street) and would result in queueing onto Queen Street and on to Princes St which could impact on tram movements on the latter, limiting any potential for further tram extensions in the city.

Using George Street as an alternative route for bus travel would require a full redevelopment of the proposed layout to ensure buses were provided with adequate turning space around the statues at each intersection, which may impact on the original design principles of James Craig's masterplan. This would also impact on footway widths and deliverability of CCWEL. Journey times would be slower due to the cross-street junctions and indirect rerouting.

If buses were diverted to Queen St- Bus journey times will be longer due to the longer distances and there would be significant equality impacts from requiring bus users to walk uphill to the city centre (Princes St) from Queen St. Older people and

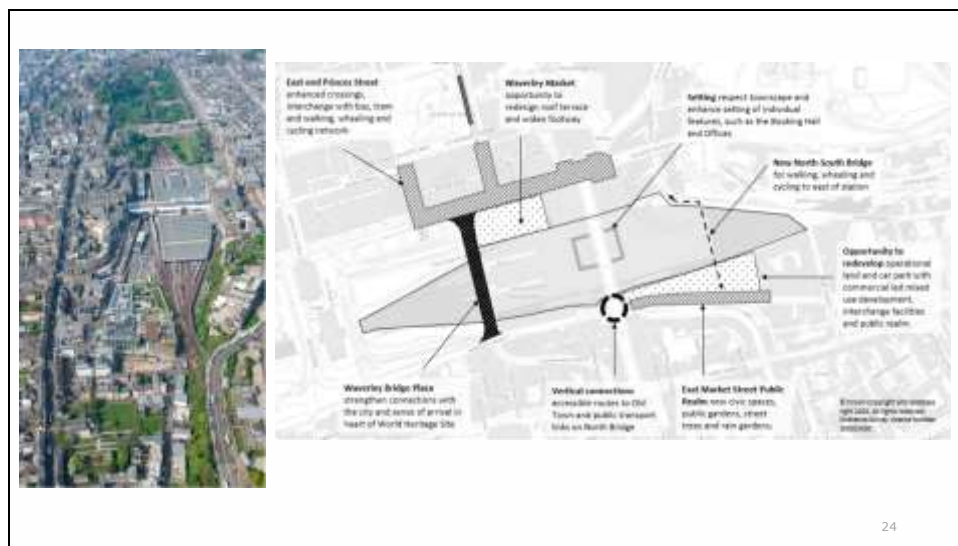
disabled people are more likely to use buses and would be disproportionately affected.

As a result of these potential delays to the public transport network and potential for wider congestion, proposals for public realm enhancement were focussed on working with the existing kerblines and streetspace allocation on Princes Street in line with Future Streets.



The chapter on the **Waverley Valley** focussed on enhancing the Gardens and a Station fit for the future, including:

- Priorities for Princes Street Gardens Improvement Plan
- Heritage Research – the preparation of a Statement of Heritage Significance to guide the Strategy.
- Future potential of the Ross Bandstand (image on right shows the restored Kelvingrove Bandstand)
- Waverley Station Place Brief, incl. Waverley Market and land at East Market Street (as shown on the next slide)



The **Waverley Station Place Brief** set out a series of Place Principles reflecting the city's ask of the Station masterplan, this included:

- To strengthen interchange
- Enhance accessibility through multiple step-free entrances and retaining the north-south civic link through the station
- Respect the Station's setting and historic assets – enhancing key features of the building
- Supporting net zero 2030 and car kilometre reduction targets
- Deliver positive effects for biodiversity
- Improve public realm in line with Edinburgh City Centre Transformation:
 - Waverley Bridge arrival plaza
 - A new walking, wheeling and cycling link to the east of the valley
 - Enhanced vertical connections with the Old Town
- Modernise the retail and food and drink offer
- Plan servicing to minimise impacts on streets and public realm
- Retain publicly accessible toilets
- Re-use of any down takings within public spaces.



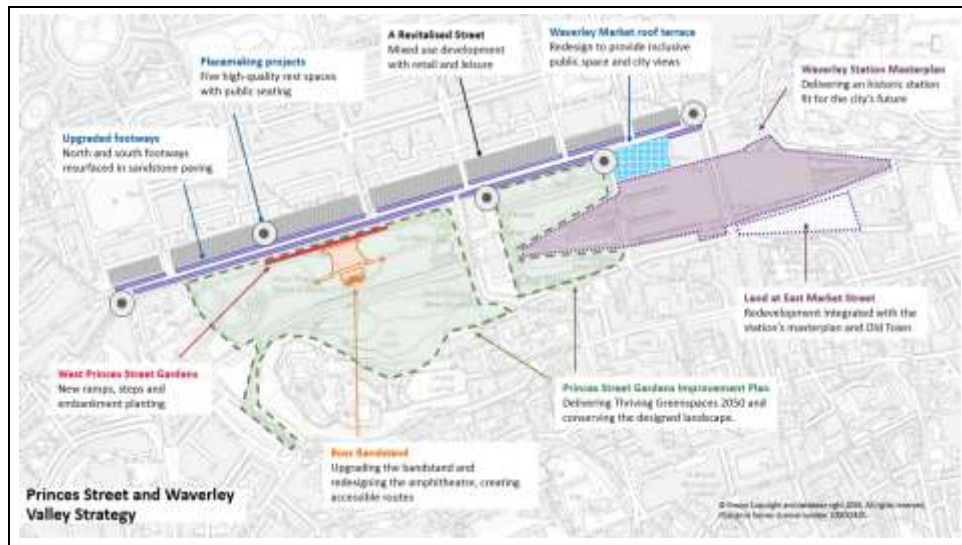
Public Consultation ran from November '24-February '25; a mix of in-person and online engagement.

There were 693 responses with 95% measures supported. Key feedback included:

- Community Councils: concern with vision.
- Business community: street's future is positive
- Improvement of footways/public realm was the top priority.
- Cycle segregation: 22% for, 60% against.
- Sensitive improvement of the Gardens - carefully balanced improvements to access and facilities to preserve the Garden's unique and valued character.
- Over 50% of respondents supported keeping and improving the Ross Bandstand, compared to 33% who preferred its replacement. 70% support redesign of the bandstand's amphitheatre to improve access and its usability.
- Waverley Station Place Brief – general support

The survey also measured people's attitudes to the area and how often they visit it for different purposes:

- The most frequent reason to visit daily or weekly was to travel by public transport, followed by shops and services, for work, food and drink and to visit the gardens. Reasons not to visit the area included the quality of shops and services, overcrowding, accessibility, inconvenient car and public transport access, and feeling unsafe.
- Respondents were most satisfied with the efficiency of public transport and the quality of Princes Street Gardens. Respondents were least satisfied with the selection of shops and services, and the condition of streets and paved spaces.



Following consultation and changes to incorporate feedback the Strategy was returned to Planning Committee in November 2025 for approval.

The summary plan shows how the different proposals come together, accompanied by an indicative delivery framework to explain how the Strategy could be taken forward, parties involved, indicative costs, and potential funding streams, incl. visitor levy, park events levy and developer contributions.

Chapter 5 Placemaking and Mobility was fully revised to reflect footway/public realm priorities, then seating and garden access and bus priority strengthened at east end. Working with existing street space allocation and public transport function, cycle segregation was not taken forward, but the city centre would be served by the primary network and improved cycle parking.

Slide 27



The voluntary submission reported in the press by Richard Murphy Architects was cited at Committee as one example of a more ambitious vision that might be expected for the street.

The need for a stakeholder workshop

Revised Strategy Returned to **Planning Committee** following consultation (Nov 2025). Planning Committee:

- Noted work and consultation
- Vision to match area's importance
- Concerns raised by organisations
- Not to adopt at this stage
- Convene workshop

Bring forward **a more ambitious strategy** for approval

28

The decision by Planning Committee in November 2025 was not to adopt the Strategy at this stage:

- Committee noted work and consultation but sought a vision to match area's importance
- Noted the concerns raised by some organisations
- Instructed officers to convene a workshop to be convened between Councillors/Council Officers/and stakeholders with expertise in transport, culture, heritage and placemaking.
- The aim being to bring forward a more ambitious strategy for approval.

Since then there has been pre-engagement with Planning Committee on the arrangements for today's workshop, as well as wider thinking on the city centre priorities in light of the Council's decision in February on the Edinburgh Visitor Levy.

Edinburgh Visitor Levy

- Special Full Council Feb 2026, first 3 years of Visitor Levy spend agreed
- The George Street and First New Town project was not approved for allocation of £31m as proposed
- It was decided by Full Council that this budget remain unallocated
- *"To agree for officers to bring a report to Transport and Environment Committee which sets out options of how the unallocated budget could be utilised to deliver public realm improvements in the city centre, including both Princes Street and George Street, alongside any other required investment and set out a rationale for how that investment should be prioritised."*

29

The importance of today's workshop is that future of Princes Street is fundamental to the way the Council plans to deliver a transformed city centre and its investment in place and mobility projects.

Whatever the outcome, review of the City Centre programme will need to be undertaken to understand what a design change on Princes Street will mean for the critical path and funding of the framework of ECCT projects.



Views on the city centre have continued to reflect changes in society.

From James Craig's original plan of a residential street, Princes Street quickly became a commercial street reflecting its wider connectivity with the city. It has survived radical post-war plans plans to turn it into an inner-city motorway in the late 1940s, and there have been plans to turn part of the treasured Gardens into a shopping mall and to remodel them around a modern open-air arena, with the city centre having twice been considered by Jan Gehl, the celebrated Danish architect famous for his approach to shaping cities for people.

The street will continue to evolve but the question is what scale of intervention will best meet the city's future needs?

No change?	Ambitious pragmatism?	Complete rethink?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not an option 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repave and widen south footway • Repave north footway • Seating and rest places • Lifts and / or ramps to West Gardens • Renew planting • Re-imagine garden shelters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete reconfiguration of street and / or garden boundary

What's next in Princes Street's evolution?

31

Our current thinking is developed around Edinburgh City Centre Transformation (2019), the City Mobility Plan (2021 and updated 2024) and Future Streets (2024), with each project having considered the implications on cross-city mobility and the inter-relationships between our finite street network and the places and destinations it supports, where place, walking, wheeling and cycling and public transport as well as general traffic have priority routes allocated to them.

As established by ECCT and CMP – doing nothing, the existing scenario is not an option.

This may mean that Princes Street cannot achieve the same level of place function as George Street, but collectively across the First New Town, these projects can achieve a transformed city centre.

As Officers our recommendation would be to continue to build on this planned approach and enable funding from Transport Scotland and the Edinburgh Visitor Levy to bring about phased delivery of a framework of projects, including George Street and the completion of the CCWEL within it.

This would mean working towards as an ambitious but pragmatic solution that can enhance the city centre's economy, create a better place for people and nature and respect our heritage and today's workshop is welcomed to pool the city's expertise and bring about the best solutions for the city's future. Can we enhance our existing measures and communicate them better to provide a joined-up picture of our future city centre?

Rethinking Princes Street more fundamentally, and its operational role in the public transport network would necessitate a new city centre strategy and accompanying

approach to circulation, putting strategic projects at risk and failing to match investment being made in premises along the street. Therefore, we need to establish if this is the direction the city wishes to go in?



Council Officers have reflected on the need for a more ambitious Strategy and looked at the potential to achieve more within the current policy framework:

The global financial crisis, online retail, COVID-19 pandemic and relocation of stores to the St James Quarter have impacted on the street, however, ongoing development activity underlines the continued interest in the street and its adaptability.

Transformation includes: the former Forsyth's building, Jenners, Next, Rusell and Bromley & Zara, Debenhams, and completed Uniqlo store and Johnny Walker Experience.

The current strategy continues to work with these changes and to complement investment with an improved public realm. Following changes in policy at the local and national level, there are now more food and drink uses on street – enhancing the street's leisure appeal.





Princes Street Gardens are a jewel in City Centre and major asset in terms of the street's attractiveness as a destination. Their south facing aspect make them popular at all times of year in fine weather and they provide a place of calm away from the street and commercial activity.

Slide 35





As recognised by the Garden's Management Plan and City Centre Transformation, accessible routes into the garden and within it are challenging.

How can improved ramps be sensitively integrated with their historic layout, trees, and other features people come to enjoy?

There may be opportunities for public lifts to provide an alternative to negotiate the 5-6m change in level from the street.

Slide 37



Although B listed, the public shelters in the garden are in poor condition, opportunities exist to re-imagine these structures originally conceived as air-raid shelters.



The pre-cast paving on Princes Street's footways is reaching the end of its serviceable life. Footway widths are often subject to crowding at bus stops or bench locations, being too narrow for the volume of pedestrians using the street, particularly on south side.

The north side of the street also suffers from poor drainage and slope across the widened part of the footway undertaken in the 1990s.

There may be opportunities for widening to the south to gain increased usable widths, which alongside surfacing improvements will provide a more comfortable space for walking and wheeling.



- Princes Street is part of the primary public transport network for bus and tram.
- An important artery to and through the city centre and its efficient operation is important to service users.
 - It also plays a role in the livelihood of the street and enabling accessibility to the city centre.
 - Emphasis in the City Mobility Plan and ECCT is on optimising the service to reduce delays.
 - Transport and Environment Committee have tasked officers to report later this year on how bus journey times and reliability can be improved across the city. The Convener of the Transport and Environment Committee has written to operators to ask them for journey time data and what the Council can do to improve this for them in the city.



Revisiting the ramp concept, a returned solution could provide gentler which allow for greater accessibility, requiring some tree removal and reconfiguration of the banking layout (RankinFraser Landscape Architects). Images show the steep existing ramps at West Princes Street Gardens and a longer graded ramp at Quartermile to the south of Lauriston Place by Optimised Environments.



The sensitive siting of new lifts between Princes Street and the upper terrace walkway within the gardens could provide alternative means of an accessible route ((RankinFraser Landscape Architects). This would involve selected tree removal and localised adjustment to the railings and footway thresholds. The images show the use of a simple glass lift at Caernarfon Castle by Buttress and lifts combined with pavilions at Union terrace Gardens, Aberdeen by Stallan Brand and LDA Design.



Image of the full extent of streetscape and banking to West Princes Street Gardens by RankinFraser Landscape Architects – showing upgraded footways, returned ramps, reimagined shelters and potential public lifts. The extent of tree loss in the central section of the image is indicated in orange outline.

Slide 43



Left: The existing situations on the south footway, showing a narrowing at the bus stop.

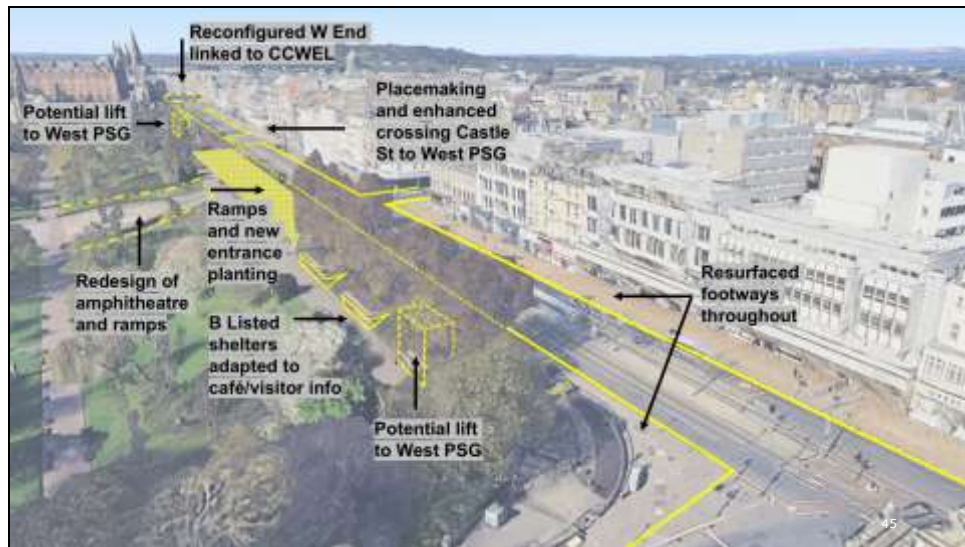
Right: Potential to widen the footway and resurface it, thereby creating additional usable width and avoiding crowding at bus stops.

Slide 44



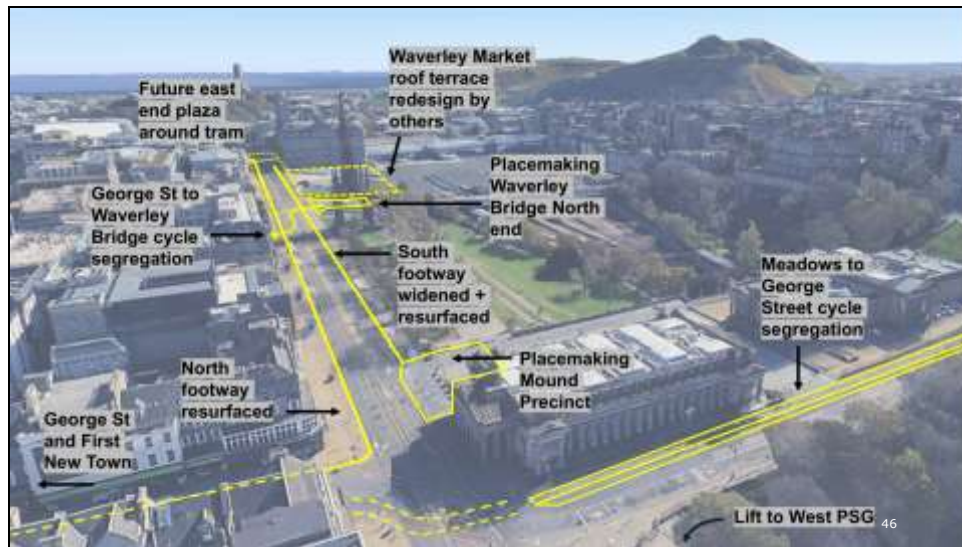
Left: The current situation of the B listed structures in West Princes Street Gardens. Right: Restoration and re-interpretation of the historic shelters to provide improved café facilities, rest spaces and or interpretation and displays, adapting them to modern life.

Slide 45



Looking west from The Mound, a sketch of how the combination of proposals could come together.

Slide 46



Looking east from The Mound, a sketch of how the combination of proposals could come together.

Perspectives Invited Speakers



Invited Speakers

- Richard Murphy, Richard Murphy Architects
- Steven Robb, Historic Environment Scotland
- Willie Hamilton, Lothian and Edinburgh Trams
- Jo Davidson, Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce
- Roddy Smith, Essential Edinburgh
- Matthew Spence, Network Rail
- Robin Wickes, Edinburgh Access Panel



We have an hour for stakeholder discussions to focus on key steps to bring about a more ambitious Strategy.
Discussions will be supported by facilitators (not technical specialists) but seeking to get the best from your contributions today.
Key questions to support this are on the next slide.

Key questions

People will go to Princes Street in future because...

Therefore, the area needs to provide for?

How do we make this happen?