

Briefing note for Healthy Streets Truro scheme

Healthy Streets Truro: creating a better environment for all and revitalising the local economy.

Background

The Healthy Streets Truro working group, which includes representatives from the City Council, Truro BID and Cornwall Council, are planning to work with local residents and businesses to develop an ambitious vision for Truro which will ensure that the city centre is accessible to all parts of the community and make Truro a thriving place for the future.

By developing a long term plan for Boscawen Street which meets the needs of all groups and creates a safe, accessible and attractive space in the centre of Truro, the Healthy Streets Truro scheme will help to regenerate the city centre at the same time as increasing opportunities for walking, cycling and bus use across the city and staging community events.

A temporary pedestrianisation scheme was introduced in Boscawen Street and a number of neighbouring streets in the centre of Truro in June 2020 to support the re-opening of the city centre following the relaxation of the first COVID 19 lockdown restrictions. The initial aim was to support social distancing measures and allow businesses to open safely.

In September 2020 Truro City Council commissioned research into the views of key stakeholders and user groups on the possibility of making some or all of the temporary restrictions permanent.

76% of respondents felt that Truro could be safer if the traffic management measures were made permanent, with two thirds saying they would use the city centre more often and for longer than they currently do. 57% felt the scheme would help make Truro more relaxed and leisurely, with 44% saying it would help to reduce air pollution.

A quarter of people had concerns about the impact on the availability of street parking and access for people with disabilities and / or those who are more elderly.

Although most businesses reported that they understood the importance of providing a COVID safe environment in the city centre following the first lockdown, almost a quarter felt the introduction of permanent measures would have a negative impact (compared to a third who saw it as positive), with parking and access to deliveries for their businesses highlighted as the key concerns.

There were also different views over access for buses. While some people said they would prefer buses to be completely excluded from Boscawen Street, others want buses to be able to travel through Boscawen Street so they can use the bus stops in the city centre and access the essential services they require.

In February 2021 the City Council voted to re-instate the temporary pedestrianisation in the city centre from April.

What are the aims of the Healthy Streets Truro scheme?

The initial aims of the Healthy Streets Truro scheme are to reduce traffic and pollution levels in the city centre and create a better environment for all, allowing space for people to move around safely and comfortably. The scheme is also part of the wider ambition to promote sustainable transport and tackle climate change.

However the Healthy Streets Truro working group also want to use this opportunity to work with local groups to develop an ambitious new vision for the city centre which will meet the needs of all parts of the community and make Truro a thriving place for the future.

These include older people and those with disabilities, people who live and work in the city, young people, businesses and visitors.

The historic features which make Boscawen Street so special, such as the 200 year old cobbled streets and granite pavements, can cause accessibility issues for wheelchair users and people with prams and pushchairs.

While the working group remain committed to protecting the culture and heritage of the city, rather than simply introducing a scheme which restricts certain vehicles from accessing the city centre, the group plan to look in detail at the whole environment and work with the local community to develop an ambitious vision which works for everyone.

The working group will also liaise closely with other local projects, including Truro Town Deal, Truro Loops, Hall for Cornwall, the Pydar scheme and the Langarth Garden Village.

What is being proposed?

The working group leading the Healthy Streets scheme, which includes representatives from Truro City Council, Truro BID and Cornwall Council, want to work with local residents and businesses to develop a long-term plan for Boscawen Street which meets the needs of all groups and creates a safe, accessible and attractive space in the centre of Truro.

The aim of the Healthy Streets Truro scheme is to reduce traffic and pollution levels in the town centre and create a better environment for all, allowing space for people to move around safely and comfortably.

The first phase involves an experimental 24 hour restriction on through traffic entering Boscawen Street. Access will be retained for emergency vehicles, buses, taxis, cycles and blue badge holders, and for loading and unloading.

This experimental scheme is currently due to be introduced on 19 July.

Boscawen Street has a key role to play in the wider public transport network. It is essential for people using public transport to be able to access the city centre. Excluding buses from Boscawen Street would require them to take lengthy diversions around the city. In terms of reduced accessibility and journey time

reliability this would not be viable for operators and would create considerable challenges for passengers.

During the past five years Cornwall Council has invested significantly in the One Public Transport System for Cornwall programme to create a high-quality, integrated and customer-focused public transport network

The investment has led to a number of positive achievements, including a fleet of new low-emission buses, new and more frequent services to hard to reach areas; improved integration with rail and other bus services; new bus shelters and Real Time Passenger Information displays at bus stops. Cornwall has also been chosen by the Government to pilot the introduction of a new bus fares.

Under the current agreement between Cornwall Council and bus operators, buses will return to Boscawen Street when the current Covid restrictions are lifted. This means that the Healthy Streets group have had to include access for buses in the proposed scheme.

The experimental scheme will be introduced under an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO), funded by Cornwall Council. The use of the ETRO will enable the new arrangements to be tested to see how they work in practice before a decision is made on a permanent scheme.

It will also provide the time and space for the Healthy Streets team to work with local groups to develop the longer-term vision for the historic city centre.

The use of an ETRO means that all comments made during the experiment are treated as part of a "live consultation". While the experimental order is a legal document which is enforceable by the police, unlike permanent traffic regulation orders it also allows any parts of the scheme which are not working as expected operationally or for other reasons to be modified without having to wait for the end of the experiment.

Next steps

The current temporary pedestrianisation scheme had been due to end on 21 June, in line with the lifting of the final stage of the Covid lockdown restrictions. However, following the Government's decision to delay this for an additional four weeks, the existing arrangements will now remain in place until July 18th, with the trial coming into operation the following day on 19 July.

This means that the restrictions on buses and other vehicles accessing Boscawen Street and surrounding roads will continue to operate between 11 am and 3pm during this period. Marshalls, funded by Truro City Council and Truro BID, will also remain in place to support the restrictions.

The detailed proposals for the experimental scheme are still being developed. The current preferred option is for the area of carriageway used by permitted vehicles to be narrowed, creating more space for pedestrians and cyclists to use. Existing disabled parking bays and loading bays will remain .

As this is an experimental scheme, the traffic islands in the centre of Boscawen Street will also remain in place for the present, with new benches and planters

installed at key places throughout the street to help create a vibrant and attractive space in the city centre.

The working group are also investigating a new disabled access crossing and will be working with bus operators to identify the passenger views of access to the centre.

How people can get involved

The experimental scheme is the first stage of a wider, more ambitious vision to transform the centre of Truro.

The Healthy Streets team will be listening to the thoughts and ideas of all parts of the community on the first phase during the coming months. This feedback will be used to assess the success of the arrangements at the end of the experimental period and shape plans for a permanent scheme.

Discussions will be held with all key groups during this period to develop the longer term vision for the city.

A comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan will be developed as part of the experimental scheme. This will include passenger surveys being carried out by the bus operators, surveys of people working in and visiting Boscawen Street, and a survey of local businesses led by Truro BID.

Full details of the experiment will be published on both the City Council and Truro BID websites as soon as they are confirmed and sent to the local media.

Information will also be shared with local organisations and community groups.

The working group are also creating an online community space to give the wider public the opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas. The Truro Healthy Street's section on the Let's Talk Cornwall online platform will provide information and regular updates about the experiment and enable members of the public to ask questions. There will also be a public opinion survey.

Regular updates will also be provided via social media and via articles in the local media.

Ends