

Transforming Truro's Boscawen Street – exciting plans to develop ambitious new vision for city centre

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Exciting plans are underway to transform Truro's Boscawen Street.

Truro's Healthy Streets group are planning to work with local residents and businesses to develop an ambitious new vision for Truro which will ensure that the city centre is accessible to all parts of the community and make the city a thriving place for the future.

The working group leading the Healthy Streets scheme, which includes representatives from Truro City Council, Truro BID and Cornwall Council, want 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 long term plan is to help to regenerate the city centre at the same time as increasing opportunities for walking, cycling and bus use, and for staging community events. It is also part of the wider ambition to promote sustainable transport and tackle climate change.

The first stage will focus on reducing traffic and pollution levels in Boscawen Street, allowing more space for people to move around safely and comfortably, and creating a better environment for all. The Healthy Streets team will then work with the local community over the coming months to develop the new wider vision for the city.

The first phase is currently due to come into operation on 19 July.

While the temporary pedestrianisation scheme introduced last year as part of the COVID emergency measures has allowed businesses to re-open safely, concerns have been raised about the impact on the availability of street parking and access for people with disabilities and those who are more elderly, and for businesses needing deliveries.

Boscawen Street also 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.

"Although the current scheme meant city centre businesses could re-open safely last year, we know that it has not worked for all parts of our community" said Truro Mayor Steven Webb.

"We have listened carefully to the concerns which have been raised and are determined to ensure that our city centre is accessible to everyone and that any new permanent scheme meets the needs of all groups. These include older people and those with disabilities, and people who live and work in the city, as well as young people, businesses and visitors.

“We know that some of the historic features which make Boscawen Street so special, such as the 200 year old cobbled streets and granite pavements, can cause problems for wheelchair users and people with prams and pushchairs. We remain committed to protecting our culture and heritage. However, rather than simply introducing a scheme which restricts certain vehicles from accessing the city centre, this is a great opportunity to look in detail at the whole environment and work with the local community to develop an ambitious new vision for our city which works for everyone.”

The first phase of the plan 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.

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 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 current arrangements will now remain in place until July 18th, with the experimental scheme coming into operation the following day on 19 July.

This means the restrictions on buses and other vehicles accessing Boscawen Street and surrounding roads will continue to operate between 11 am and 3pm until 18 July. Marshalls, funded by Truro City Council and Truro BID, will also remain in place to support the restrictions.

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.

“We need to be bold and ambitious and think BIG for the future of our great little city” said Steven Webb. **“We want to protect and enhance what’s special about Truro, its heritage, cultural identity and strong sense of community, whilst creating a city centre environment which is more vibrant, better connected and greener. ”**

“This means looking at ways to improve access for everyone, as well as creating an attractive space where businesses can thrive and people can

walk and cycle safely, and which our young people and visitors to the city can enjoy. "

The use of an ETRO also means that all comments made during the experimental scheme 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 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.

"This is an exciting time for Truro, with new plans being developed for the quay and waterfront areas of the city and for Pydar, and the long awaited re-opening of the Hall for Cornwall" said Steven Webb. "We want to ensure that Boscawen Street is not left behind".

"We need to ensure that people with access issues, such as the blind, stick users or those using a wheelchair, can use our granite pavements safely. We will also be looking at how we can improve all our historic surfaces to bring them back to their original glory.

"This experiment is just the start. Talk to us, meet us in the street and tell us how you want Boscawen Street to be. We will be listening to the views of all parts of the community during the coming months so we can work together to develop and then deliver an ambitious vision which will ensure that Boscawen Street lives up to its full potential as one of the jewels in Truro's crown."

Full details of the experimental scheme will be published on the City Council and Truro BID websites as soon as they are confirmed. Information will also be shared with local organisations and community groups.

The working group will also be 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.

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

Ends