

RETAIL POLICY GROUP

Notes of Meeting held 31 January 2008 at 3pm

John Lewis Branch Management Room, Level 5

Attending: Isabella Miller (Chair)
Michael Apter (Paper Tiger)
Joshua Miller (Charlie Miller)
Nigel Duncan (FSB)
Graham Birse (Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce)
Denzil Skinner (part) (Hamilton & Inches)
Keith Rimmer (Tie)
Mike Gallagher (ECCM)

Isabella Miller (IM) welcomed Keith Rimmer and Mike Gallagher to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

The minutes from the last meeting were discussed and the following points were raised:

Traffic flow post tram implementation

Graham Birse (GB) will arrange a date when the Transport Policy Group can meet with the Retail Policy Group.

IM has asked Mike Connelly for the following information:

- The enabling works/phase 1 and phase 2 works as detailed on your hand out as a 'gant chart' showing the works and the timeline.
- A briefing pack of positive 'sound bites' for retailers to use when contacted by the press.
- A briefing pack for us to communicate the works and the implications to our staff.

I. Traffic Management during MUDFA work

Keith Rimmer (KR) gave a run-down on the plan showing proposed diversions in Shandwick Place.

There will be no right turn from Lothian Road to Castle Terrace in order to avoid a big build up of traffic. It is proposed to take out the bus lane that currently goes up Lothian Road to Tollcross and generally traffic will be able to use all the road spaces between there and Bread Street. Traffic will be diverted along Bread Street down Spittal Street. Generally traffic coming from the City Centre to the West End will be routed as per buses, on to Lothian Road at West Approach to Haymarket via the Link Road.

Temporary bus stops in Melville Street will replace bus stops in Shandwick Place. Consultants are identifying lengths of yellow line kerb on adjacent side streets where temporary parking can be put in place. The consultants are to report by end of week beginning 4 February 2008 on how many spaces will be lost and how many will be temporarily created. These parking spaces can be put into immediate effect as they are illustrated in a Temporary Order covering Melville Street and the surrounding area. Edinburgh Council will control the parking spaces in the same way as all others in the same street/same zone. Tie will produce a map which shows the parking closures and the new temporary parking that is created.

Maps and leaflets will be produced showing bus stops and routes and Tie are working closely with Lothian Buses (who are working with other bus companies) to get the message across to passengers in the most customer friendly way.

Tie are working towards keeping as many car parking spaces available as possible and will aim to allow vehicle access in the affected areas.

KR agreed to meet Michael Apter to talk through the contractor's timings and where the dig is going to be at certain times.

For new traffic light sequences, technical people will be available to carry out any necessary fine tuning and four motorcycle police will be in attendance during the first few days to deal with any misunderstandings that may arise.

There will be signage to guide motorists to the correct routes. It was agreed that it was important that these signs should be displayed at the earliest and best possible points on the routes, especially for the benefit of tourists and visitors to the City. Where appropriate, brown signage that may be confusing to visitors should be covered up.

The timing has slipped and the first implementation date for the work is now 1 March 2008. Any fine tuning will be done on Sunday before rush hour on the Monday. The intention is that the work will be finished before the start of the Edinburgh Festival.

Concerns were raised that the contractors did not consider the effect of their storage areas and security fences on nearby businesses and pedestrians. When complaints and suggestions were made, these seemed to be ignored.

2. Update on 'Open for Business'

Graham Birse (GB) advised that a one minute film has been produced to remind people in Central Scotland that Edinburgh is 'Open for Business'. The film will be shown in various shopping venues in and around Edinburgh and Central Scotland from 11 February to the end of March. The ECC own the copyright and GB will ask for DVD copies and circulate them around the group. The total cost is £15,000 and when the Roadshows finish the DVD can be used for meetings and websites.

GB reported on the findings of a survey which had been carried out to assess consumer awareness.

Leanne Maberley will produce a user friendly newsletter giving an update on what is happening.

GB will visit Nottingham to meet the tram management company and local businesses to learn from them what went well and what did not work well.

It was agreed that it is important to use various types of the media to put across a positive message and it should be possible to get into TV news agenda as a major effect on transport.

Willie Gallagher is not able to give assurance that Princes Street will not close for periods of time but they will do their utmost to avoid this.

It was agreed that it is important that retailers are informed of any work to be carried out in their area as soon as possible before the event and told the timings for the different stages.

Nigel Duncan reported that a survey had been carried out to find out what the situation is with regard to trade at Leith Walk and the results are not good. Progress is not fast enough for the traders.

It was agreed that a letter should be sent to Jenny Dawe at Edinburgh Council on behalf of the group asking for the work to be extended to 7pm. GB and IM will work on the letter which will be signed by all members of the group. It was suggested that the Operations Director at Lothian Buses may be willing to send a similar letter to the Council.

3. Communication

Michael Apter (MA) reported that Graham Bell at the City Chamber has agreed to the group having space on the Chamber website and IMs name will be the contact for people who are interested in finding out about the group. Graham Bell is happy to write a feature on retail in the Chambers' 'Business Comment' forthcoming issue on what the group would like to communicate to the retail sector in Edinburgh and MA asked for ideas on how to go ahead with this. GB suggested the article should say that this group is the common point for retail information in the City Centre and tell what we have done, what we can do and what we will do. MA asked members of the group to contact him with any ideas they may have on this.

IM agreed to attend the next George Street AGM to give an overview of the Retail Policy Group.

The ETAG Conference is on 19 February and will cover a range of tourism related issues which will affect retail. MA asked that any member of the group who wished to attend should contact him.

4. BID Update

Mike Gallagher (MG) reported that things are progressing and the Council have confirmed that they will support the proposal. They will be sending out a summary of proposals to all eligible voters and that will give an outline of what the business plans will be. This will also be on the website for anyone to see.

Ballot papers will go out on 11 April 2008 and close on 31 May 2008. The BID needs a maximum turnout to be able to go further. Essential Edinburgh will start on 30 June 2008.

MC reported that an organisation called British BIDs has two organisations involved in England and Wales. British BIDs are having their first conference in Edinburgh on 4 and 5 February. Edinburgh BIDs will be telling them about the Edinburgh BID and the issues for the City and hope to get feedback from them on what they think about the City Centre.

There will be an announcement next week on support for future BIDs in Scotland but it's not thought that the funding will be at the same level as for the Pathfinder BIDs.

5. St James Redevelopment

IM advised that Rochelle Weir had sent her apologies to the group.

IM advised that an exhibition, which includes a model of the redevelopment and the surrounding area, was being held in Cathedral Mall in the Centre. IM suggested that it would be worthwhile for members of the group to visit the exhibition. The plans include two hotels, residential accommodation, roof gardens, two thousand car parking spaces. It brings in the West Register House area and includes proper public spaces. A lot of work has been done with the consultants to ensure there should be no change to the skyline.

Date of Next Meeting: 24 April 2008 at John Lewis, Level 5.