

**Victorian Market Stakeholders Group Meeting**

Virtual Meeting by Microsoft Teams

Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at 5.30pm

**Present:** Cllr Isabelle MacKenzie (**IM**); Cllr Graham Ross (**GR**); Cllr Janet Campbell (**CJC**); Cllr Bet McAllister (**BM**); David Haas (**DH**) Inverness City Area Manager – Highland Council; Jo Murray (**JM**), Victorian Market Manager; John Ewart (**JE**) The Milk Bar, Victorian Market; Willie Morrison (**WM**), William Morrison Jewellers, Market Arcade, Victorian Market; Mike Smith (**MS**), Inverness BID; Colin Howell (**CH**). Head of Infrastructure, Highland Council; Craig Baxter (**CB**). Planner, Highland Council; Neil Young (**NY**), Senior Engineer, Highland Council

**Apologies:** Colin Craig, Oil and Vinegar

**Cllr Isabelle MacKenzie in the Chair**

| No. | Item                                 | ACTIONS   | Action |
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|     | <b>Welcome</b>                       | <b>IM</b> welcomed everyone and reminded everyone of the online protocol  |        |
| 1.  | <b>Actions from Previous Minutes</b> | The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed.  |        |
| 2.  | <b>Spaces for People</b>             | <p><b>CH, CB</b> and <b>NY</b> gave a presentation on “Spaces for People” project – presentation attached.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The “Spaces for People” project is in an effort to reverse the trends of the Covid infection in the Highland Region.</li> <li>• Scottish Government funding of £10m has been allocated for specific interventions and to promote Active Travel throughout the Highland Region.</li> <li>• A one-way system has been created around parts of the City Centre and images of these new layouts were shared with the group.</li> <li>• The Millburn Road (cycle lane) interventions are to support Active Travel across the City and are flexible and are able to respond and react to any changing circumstances.</li> <li>• These have already been altered recently with a change in the block positioning and a surface applied to the cycle lane.</li> <li>• The pavements have been widened on Academy Street to enable more meaningful spaces for people.</li> </ul> |        |

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|  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The team had previously taken note of the concerns made by <b>JM</b> on the crossing from the Railway Station and adjustments were made to make the crossing easier and safer.</li><li>• There is £3million match funded grant available to improve Academy Street.</li><li>• This gives the opportunity to finally make permanent improvements.</li><li>• The project could be used as a pilot to roll out to other areas.</li><li>• There is an online portal for listening to comments with 1000+ comments already received.</li><li>• Visitors to the portal can comment on the plans and proposed crossings. The majority are supportive of the project so far.</li><li>• The team are also aware of a petition, signed by 1,500 people so far, to have the spaces for people measures removed vs. another petition signed by 2,500 people so far to support the measures being made permanent.</li><li>• Currently conducting analysis of all traffic use within the city centre and how it is used via CCTV and other measures.</li><li>• A business survey was conducted within the city centre.</li><li>• A report will be going to the City of Inverness Area Committee in February on the mid-term mitigations that will be required.</li><li>• There has already been some work done on the Rapid Deployment/Bus Priority scheme which has removed 10 buses per hour from Academy Street.</li><li>• <b>DH</b> commented that the “Spaces for People” project is important for how the traffic flows around the city centre and how it works. We are listening to all the feedback from businesses and the public and will get the balance right and what’s best to encourage footfall.</li><li>• <b>EM</b> felt it was good that this is being supported but the message must get out to the public and make them aware of what is going on - a positive message to the public that 70% are supportive of the permanent measures.</li><li>• <b>JE</b> commented that it was encouraging to see some movement to address the mess on Academy Street and it will also be great to see something more permanent. The temporary blocks look temporary and are not particularly neat. He also commented that anecdotal feedback from other businesses is that there is not a lot of support for the temporary measures. He feels if the pavements are to be widened the street could and should be narrower. He also mentioned that the area around the Castle and the River people are not using the spaces provided therefore is the plan wide enough? There is scope to widen at the grassed area and around the Castle Tavern. This area is possibly not getting the best use by</li></ul> |  |
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|  |  | <p>pedestrians. He welcomes the focus on Academy Street and hopes that the street surface will be addressed at the same time and wondered when are we likely to see this?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>IM</b> considered it important to hear back from the businesses and get a varied response from more people but is recognised that the current lockdown hinders interactions with businesses. She believed the “Spaces for People” project will be reviewed in February.</li><li>• <b>CB</b> confirmed that 70% of the funding is allocated to the wider Highland Region and the report going to the CIAC in February will break down all of the costs.</li><li>• Inverness BID takes in the views of the local businesses. <b>MS</b> asked if there was any feedback from Sustrans on the solutions? BID is very supportive of the current arrangements but feel they need to be amended, to accommodate for deliveries to businesses halfway down Academy Street. How can this be reconciled with a one/dual way cycle lane?</li><li>• <b>IM</b> felt it was really good to get background information from everyone</li><li>• <b>CH</b> felt <b>JE</b> had made some good points about the Spaces for People measures.</li><li>• As 97% of the traffic is being monitored, real life success can be implemented on the modelling and this will help to refine the design.</li><li>• Gary Smith is responsible for the design of Academy Street and is well aware of what is achievable and how to maintain access where necessary.</li><li>• A lot of information is being captured and the team are working very closely with Sustrans on what is realistic and deliverable.</li><li>• They are looking forward to coming up with long term solutions.</li><li>• There are a lot of views to consider with feedback from businesses to Sustrans including those that are not so positive and supportive.</li><li>• Businesses have voiced concerns ranging from major issues to the aesthetics.</li><li>• There has been a good response rate and they are getting balanced views from businesses and the public which will be discussed at the CIAC in February.</li><li>• <b>MS</b> accepts that this will come together and feels that those businesses in the immediate vicinity of the measures should have their input to get a balanced view.</li><li>• <b>IM</b> has retail understanding and has campaigned in the past for reinvigoration of the old town after listening to businesses in the area.</li><li>• The health and safety measures are in relation to Covid.</li><li>• It will not be until around 2022 before the Highlands recover.</li></ul> |  |
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|  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We normally have huge numbers of tourists coming in the summer, but things are not normal at the moment. There could be more staycations this summer and looking forward, we could really increase visitor numbers.</li><li>• Highland Council officers have a lot of work to do to get the balance right. John Taylor (Roads Department) should be included in the planning applications as these will be a challenge. Electric car usage is going up.</li><li>• The online survey may not be wholly accurate or representative.</li><li>• <b>JE</b> commented that on the wider plan and in the bigger picture there is an opportunity to make a step change. Christmas trade changed in 2020 and may continue to change. He is supportive of innovative ways of developing the city centre to enable people to get around. He feels there appears to be a disproportionate lobby towards cyclists and asked if that approach is driven by demand or ideology? He has examples of a lack of bike racks and safe places to leave bikes in the city. There is a need to support this.</li><li>• <b>CH</b> has been designing roads for 38 years and the designs are arrived at through traffic capacity and traffic modelling.</li><li>• There is a national transport strategy that has changed to encourage walk, wheel or electric. More can be achieved in society <b>CH</b> understands the frustration felt.</li><li>• The team working on this is well balanced and will work to get it right.</li><li>• Society needs to embrace active travel.</li><li>• There is long term funding available for many projects.</li><li>• The castle arrangement had to be a one-way system to increase space for people.</li><li>• These are all temporary measures and will not be made permanent until all approved through the CIAC in February.</li><li>• The first 6 months of funded measures has been exceeded and although they are temporary, they may stay longer depending on the Covid situation</li><li>• <b>NY</b> confirmed that there are 404 bike parking spaces currently and better spaces are now provided</li><li>• There was a study conducted by “Bike Life” where 1000 cyclists were surveyed in Inverness. The result of this is that there are 3000 less cars on the roads due to increased bike usage.</li><li>• 32% do not want to cycle and wouldn’t consider cycling. 68% may do or would consider doing so.</li><li>• There are lots of case studies that show how active travel positively affects businesses whereby cyclists spend more per trip than car users.</li></ul> |  |
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- **CB** commented that in the Netherlands, in the highest footfall areas there are only pedestrians and no cyclists. Place and movement must be considered in all areas.
- The Inner Moray Firth project covers all aspects of the active travel strategy. There will be a public consultation launched at the end of January.
- **JE** commented that it would be interesting to see a map of where the bike racks are in the city centre and asked if the national strategy for travel take into account the unique nature of the Highland Region?
- **IM** has noticed that bike stands are congested.
- Inverness BID have recently conducted a survey of vehicle use on Millburn Road. Monitoring from 8am – 6pm they lodged 10,000 vehicles and 5% of those were cyclists.
- **IM** commented that it is good to have a broad vision looking at presenting the city centre and accommodating visitors. She asked how public transport could be improved.
- Could a park and ride scheme be considered. Inverness is geographically challenging.
- **IM** is very keen that the public get a chance to get involved and encouraged VM stakeholders to feed into this group via email with any questions.
- **DH** commented that this is an ongoing debate and improvements must be right for the city.
- Feedback will be sought from the other VM Stakeholders.
- The Council is listening and will take note and these proposals will go to the CIAC for discussion and approval.
- **CJC** feels it is hugely important that we get this right and asked when did the Sustrans funding become available? She also commented that Academy Street is a mess and has petitioned previously to improve the street as it has so many impressive and important buildings.
- There were excellent plans two years ago but the challenges of Covid need to be addressed.
- **CJC** does not feel that the “lego blocks” have addressed the safety aspect and people have to duck and dive and weave around to feel safe.
- Few cyclists use the lanes.
- She is aware it is a pilot – when do we think the blocks will be removed? She welcomes the alterations already being done but considers it to be a mess. Feedback from her constituents, suggests a lot are not at all happy about it. When can we tidy up a bit?

- On Academy Street is there accommodation made for delivery vehicles?
- **DH** commented that there is a difference between Space for People and other projects. The City Area Recovery Group are tackling this issue.
- There is an unrepresentative sample of cycle use due to businesses and schools being closed.
- Traffic has increased since Christmas
- Permanent counters that automatically recognise registration plates are being installed so movement can be monitored.
- There has been a reduction from 12,000 to 8,000 cars using Academy Street due to the West Link bypass. A lot of the remaining cars are just travelling through the city centre and not stopping or subsequently spending.
- The monitoring data will be presented to the CIAC on 18<sup>th</sup> February for discussion.
- **NY** commented that he was pleased the businesses agreed in principle on the measures.
- There are some problems, but these are being addressed and Members will have a chance to comment on the future proposals.
- **IM** agreed the city has its challenges and people do not like change.
- Starting with the early years, at primary and secondary levels, they should be encouraged to cycle. People should have the confidence to cycle in the city centre.
- **IM** wondered if some of the spaces for people funding be used to create a legacy in educational encouragement and welcomed any questions about this.
- **JE** commented that the Sustrans plans were presented at a BID breakfast meeting 2 years ago and finds it frustrating that time has passed by and it has not progressed. He asked when would permanent improvements be made on Academy Street everyone wants so why are we continuing to wait?
- **DH** confirmed that the project is underway as are negotiations to get the planning consent. Sometimes it takes longer to get the detail right. The Council is committed to getting this right.
- Young people in general are more positive about active travel but the car is the priority in the Highlands at the moment.
- **JE** commented that the younger generation are more environmentally aware than the previous generation.
- **DH** welcome the Groups input and confirmed that comment will be sought from the broadest and widest cross section of the public.
- Summarising he stated that we have an avenue to the businesses in the VM for feedback and the wider message is to engage.

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|    |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Happy with the Highland Councils direction.</li> <li>• The right people are in the team.</li> <li>• The CIAC will make the final decision.</li> </ul>   |  |
| 2. | <b>Market project update and Next Steps – Jason Kelman</b> | <p>Jason Kelman was unfortunately unable to join the meeting due to IT problems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At present there is nothing further to report to the Group and as it stands, without knowing if there will be any further restriction announcements tomorrow by the First Minister, the Hall development will start as planned on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> January.</li> <li>• Jason Kelman will be available to update the Arcade Trader Group on the Project at a later date.</li> <li>• <b>JM</b> to facilitate the next Arcade Trader meeting via Microsoft Teams and will liaise with <b>WM</b> and <b>JE</b> on an appropriate date for this within the next two weeks.</li> <li>• <b>WM</b> is fully supportive of the Hall project and considers it marvellous that it is going ahead. He is concerned however, about part of his shop front being disrupted during the works. Now the Christmas lighting is being removed he asked for an update on the extra Arcade spotlighting that was agreed.</li> <li>• <b>JM</b>: has a site meeting tomorrow to agree the arrangements around Morrison Jewellers shopfront and to organise the two contractors on site at the same time to install the Arcade spotlighting and entrance lighting replacements.</li> <li>• <b>IM</b> commented that Jason Kelman needs to have a gold star for the variety and scope of projects that he is managing at the moment.</li> <li>• Queries and questions should be directed through the Highland Council via <b>JM</b> or <b>DH</b>.</li> <li>• There is a schedule of works and a story board will be available and on display as discussed previously in due course.</li> <li>• Jason Kelman and <b>JM</b> will give an update to the Trader Group at the next meeting.</li> <li>• <b>DH</b> thanked <b>JE</b> and <b>WM</b> for all their support and participation.</li> <li>• <b>JM</b> will be the liaison between the contractor (WGCS) and the VM businesses.</li> </ul> |  |
| 5. | <b>AOCB</b>  | <p><u>Entrance Canopies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>WM</b> asked if the entrance canopies could be addressed as part of the works as they are unsuitable and unsightly. Can they be replaced or at the very least removed?</li> <li>• <b>DH</b> noted the point and wants to make sure that this is addressed. He asked the Group to bear with them as the Hall project takes priority and resources need to be managed.</li> </ul> <p><u>Date of next meeting</u></p>   |  |

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|  |  | <b>Date of Next Meeting – Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February at 5.30pm</b> |  |
|  |  | The meeting ended at around 7.10pm                                       |  |