

Temporary Street Measures during the Coronavirus Crisis: Revised Guidance, October 2020

1. The Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS) welcomes the measures that Transport Scotland and many local authorities are taking to encourage safe and sustainable travel during the coronavirus crisis. MACS wants to ensure that the mobility and accessibility needs of disabled people are fully considered in the planning and delivery of such measures and has therefore produced this second Briefing Paper. It updates and expands on guidance we produced in May 2020: <https://bit.ly/3bwIBaT>.
2. In terms of process, it is essential to consider the impacts of any temporary measures on disabled people, including people who have difficulty walking, wheelchair users, people with cognitive impairments, dementia, autism, etc. and people with sensory impairments. This is a legal requirement under the provisions of the 2010 Equality Act. An equality impact assessment (EqIA) can be done quickly and with minimum bureaucracy, so long as it takes account of the needs of disabled people. It is essential to consult with local disabled people, local disability organisations and/or local access panels.
3. We are aware that many disabled people have found the pandemic extremely stressful - this is evidenced for example in the studies by the Office of National Statistics, which last reported on this in July: <https://bit.ly/2FRsdb3>. Changes to usual travel patterns, to public transport services, parking arrangements, etc. can add to anxiety. Spaces for People initiatives should therefore be seen in this context - continual changes should therefore be avoided where possible, and should be effectively communicated to the public including disabled people in a variety of formats to enable everyone to access the information.

4. In terms of specific measures, please consider that:

4.1 many disabled people depend on cars (both to drive and as a passenger) and taxis. Road changes shouldn't prevent disabled people from being able to stop near their destination. This is not only about 'disabled parking bays' but also considering if measures may reduce vehicle access to kerbs and the flexibility for blue badge holders to park on single or double yellow lines.

4.2 safe space for pedestrians should be separate from cyclists as far as possible. Any shared-use paths or areas must be designed so that cyclists understand the need to give way to pedestrians and maintain a reasonable distance. Cyclists should be encouraged to ring bells as a warning, but must also be prepared to slow down or stop as some pedestrians may not be able to hear or see them.

4.3 pavements should be kept free of obstacles/clutter, including roadwork barriers, signs, bins, vegetation, etc. which are a particular hazard for visually impaired people and constrain footways for everyone. Unnecessary signage poles, guardrails and other fixed items of street furniture should be removed. Regular, frequent monitoring is needed to ensure that traffic cones, sandbags, cylinders etc do not stray onto pavements and extended walkways.

4.4 tables and chairs on pavements may be a hazard for disabled people so must therefore be well located and their space clearly defined with solid barriers which can be detected by long cane users to show delineation from the walkway/pavement.

4.5 any areas separated off to provide extra walking or cycle space must take into account how disabled people can get on or off the pavement. The best option may be to maintain new, extended pavements at the same height as current pavements; provision of ramps, dropped kerbs or other access features at appropriate intervals may be suitable alternatives, as long as they avoid trip hazards.

4.6 moving (or removing) bus stops should be avoided if possible as it may disrupt and confuse passengers who are familiar with them. The bus stop itself must be designed to minimise the risk of conflict between passengers boarding or alighting and other road users, including cyclists. Bus stop 'boarders' or 'bypasses' may introduce uncertainty or hazard for disabled people.

4.7 barriers (for example used to mark a temporary pavement from a traffic lane) should be detectable by a blind person using a long cane.

4.8 attention should be given to making sure enforcement (for example of traffic speed, parking or cycling on pavements) is effective.

4.9 pedestrian crossings need to give enough time for people to cross who may move more slowly. Audible signals and tactile cones remain important for visually impaired pedestrians and other disabled people so must not be turned off.

4.10 with autumn and winter approaching, extra care needs to be given to keeping footways clear of leaf litter and ensuring that lighting is appropriate for darker evenings. Winter maintenance must also be provided across the extended pavements/walkways.

Further resources

Other guidance is available to help ensure that temporary measures are designed as 'inclusive streets'. See for example:

IMTAC: Basic guidelines for the development of inclusive walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure in response to COVID-19

<https://www.accessibletravelni.org/your-experiences/basic-guidelines-for-the-development-of-inclusive-walking-wheeling-and-cycling-infrastructure-in-response-to-covid-19/>

Guide Dogs for the Blind/RNIB/Thomas Pocklington Trust:

<https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/about%20us/what%20we%20do/research/policy%20and%20guidance%20for%20businesses/street%20design%20guidance%20for%20local%20authorities>

Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/our-approach/accessible-transport/mobility-and-access-committee-for-scotland-macs/>

October 2020