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COMMUNITY INVITED TO HAVE THEIR SAY ON CITY CENTRE RENAISSANCE

Preliminary proposals for a £2 million transformation of Inverness city centre – involving a reduction of traffic and an enhancement of the streetscape – were unveiled today (Thursday).

At the heart of the City Centre scheme is the creation of a traffic reduction and pedestrian friendly area in Church Street, Union Street and Queensgate and environmental improvements, which will boost local businesses and make shopping a more enjoyable experience for the public. This scheme complements the work currently underway in High Street and Eastgate.

Also involved is the introduction of enhanced commuter train services between East Ross and Badenoch and Strathspey and Inverness to reduce traffic congestion in the city centre.

Funding has been attracted from the Scottish Executive Public Transport Fund, The Highland Council and Inverness and Nairn Enterprise to undertake the work between the spring of next year and the summer of 2005.

Highland Councillor Eilidh MacDonald, who represents the City Centre, said the proposals had been included within both the adopted and the new Inverness Local Plans for a number of years and there were now funds available to allow the work to start in the near future.


In view of the recent investment in Eastgate and the High Street, it was important that the city centre area was brought up to the same high standard.

She said "This project is a key element of the City Vision, drawn up by the Inverness City Partnership, which aims to make the city centre a thriving, safe and liveable area, containing a mix of retail, professional, cultural and residential uses, operating as a bustling 24-hour-a-day space.

"The Partnership firmly believes that improving the city centre environment by reducing through-traffic on the main shopping streets will bring significant benefits to local businesses and pedestrians."

It is estimated that traffic accessing the city centre between 8 am - 6 pm can involve 350 delivery vehicles, 330 buses, 200 taxis and 2,500 private cars, many of which are seeking the 30 short-stay parking spaces.

Plans are to: -

-  Enhance the pedestrian environment in Union Street, Queensgate and that part of Church Street linking them by reducing vehicle lanes and providing one running lane and lay-bys for bus stops, loading, taxi rank and disabled parking;

- ✚ Distribute bus stops more evenly and reduce waiting times. This will be achieved by providing additional stops on Academy Street and Church Street. In order to re-route long-distance buses from these streets, a right turning egress from Margaret Street will be investigated.
- ✚ Improve pedestrian priority in Academy Street by surface treatment and raised platforms at key crossing points;
- ✚ Improve inter modal transfer between bus, rail and pedestrian;
- ✚ Provide street furniture and travel information in keeping with the historic environment;
- ✚ Reduce traffic in Union Street, Church Street and Queensgate by 75% by restricting traffic to buses, taxis, disabled vehicles, delivery vehicles and cycles;
- ✚ Prohibit delivery vehicles between 10 am – 4 pm on weekdays and 10 am – 6 pm on Saturdays; and noon – 6 p.m. on Sundays;
- ✚ Restrict access by private cars, motor cycles and vehicles with no business in the area between 8 am – 6 pm Monday – Saturday and noon and 6 pm on Sundays, but they will be free to enter the area in the evenings;
- ✚ Remove on-street parking, of which there are 30 spaces at present, other than for disabled vehicles during this restricted period (8 am – 6 pm). Replacement short stay and motor cycle parking will be provided at Strothers Lane.