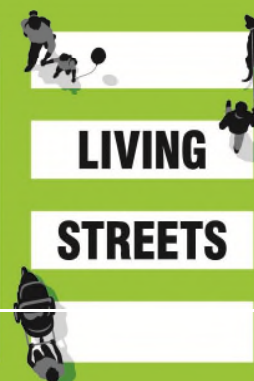


Summary Report – Walkable and Accessible Perth City Centre Community Street Audits

Delivered as a part of the Walkable Communities Project 2016
March 2016



We are Living Streets, the UK charity for everyday walking. We want to create a walking nation where people of all generations enjoy the benefits that this simple act brings, on streets fit for walking.



Living Streets

We have been the national voice for pedestrians throughout our 86 year history. In the early years, our campaigning led to the introduction of the driving test, pedestrian crossings and 30mph speed limits. Since then our ambition has grown. Today we influence decision makers nationally and locally, run successful projects to encourage people to walk, and deliver services and projects that help to reduce congestion and carbon emissions, improve public health, and make sure every community can enjoy vibrant streets and public spaces.

Living Streets Scotland's Walkable Communities project, funded by the Scottish Government and Paths for All, supports local authorities, community planning partners, and communities in Scotland to deliver the National Walking Strategy¹ to improve the local walking environment and enable and encourage people of all ages and abilities to walk for every day journeys.



Introduction: Accessible and Walkable Perth 2015

In response to reports of issues affecting pedestrians with both visual and mobility disabilities walking in the city centre of Perth, the Senior Engineer for Road Safety and Design at Perth and Kinross Council contacted Living Streets Scotland to for support to assess city centre streets for access and walking. A partnership project was developed with Living Streets Scotland, Perth and Kinross Council and the Centre for Inclusive Living Perth and Kinross (CILPK), with input from Vision PK, whose members were able to provide insight into the difficulties they experience walking and using footways in the city centre. In addition, participation was sought from additional stakeholders both within the council and externally. This included input from the City Centre Team at Perth Council, as well as NHS Tayside Falls Service Manager providing insight on issues potentially affecting elder and frail older pedestrians. In total, the project was supported by participation of over 40 people, including local residents with mobility and visual disabilities and professionals.

Living Streets Scotland facilitated a series of **5 Community Street Audits** of city centre streets. The Community Street Audits allowed for an assessment of the overall quality of the accessibility and walkability of key city centre streets, in order to identify opportunities to capitalise on existing characteristics and deliver a more accessible and walkable city. The project group also considered routes linking Perth rail and bus stations to the city centre, considering how well connected the city centre and key public transport interchanges are for those making the journey on foot.

Audit 1 – Pedestrian zone, High Street, St. Johns and City Hall

Audit 2 – South Street, Charterhouse Lane and Canal Street

Audit 3 – Kinnoull Street and Scott Street

Audit 4 – Mill Street, Bridge Lane and George Street

Audit 5 – Perth Rail Station and Bus Station to High Street

¹ Scottish Government 'Let's Get Scotland Walking – The National Walking Strategy
<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0045/00452622.pdf>

Assessment of Overall 'Walkability' of Perth City Centre

Walkability can be thought of as a measure of the extent to which the public realm provides for movement and other activity on foot in ways that are both efficient and enjoyable. The walkability of a place can be understood by considering 5 C's: that walking facilities are **Connected; Convenient; Convivial; Comfortable; Conspicuous.**²

When assessing the quality of walking facilities against these criteria, it is important to consider factors that affect a broad range of pedestrians including those who may be using various modifications and aids to walking such as wheelchairs, motorised scooters, rollators or walking frames, crutches or canes. Pedestrians in this group require adequate space to manoeuvre when walking, and have additional needs with regards to accessing pavements and other facilities provided at a different grade to the carriageway. In addition, pedestrian provision should take account of the needs of pedestrians with sensory impairments including blind and visually impaired pedestrians. Tactile markings indicating hazards and crossing points, colour contrast of street furniture, removal of temporary and permanent obstacles from footways and design features that aid navigation of streets and public spaces are important for this group of pedestrians. Some older pedestrians may have additional needs while walking city streets, including provision of seating areas, and crossing facilities that either reduce the distance to be crossed, or that ensure adequate time to cross at signalised crossings.

Overall, Perth city centre possesses characteristics that go a long way to making the city a **'Walkable City'**. The city centre is flat and compact, with retail, leisure, green space and civic amenities all to be found within comfortable walking distance. City centre streets are attractive and interesting to pedestrians, with a variety of architectural styles and historical buildings, and a good mix of building use encouraging a variety of people into the city centre. Public realm in general is of a good standard, with the High Street and St. John's Kirk areas noted by the audit groups to be high quality and successful public spaces. The River Tay to the east, South Inch and the location of local landmarks including Perth Concert Hall coupled with a grid-like layout of streets aids orientation and legibility for pedestrians. For those traveling in to the city centre, public transport interchanges are located within a walkable distance from the city centre. The city centre is also a walkable distance from many residential areas of Perth, making walking a good option for some local residents as a mode of transport in and out of the city centre, and to public transport interchanges.

The Community Street Audits allowed participants to identify barriers to walking that have the potential to either discourage or prevent walking in and to the city centre. A large number of issues ranging from low impact and small scale to high impact issues requiring physical improvements on the ground were identified. A full list of all issues identified is provided in the appendices of the Community Street Audit report. The following issues were considered to represent the 'priorities for action' that, if acted upon, have the potential to generate the greatest impact for pedestrians of all ages and abilities in and to Perth city centre.

² 'Improving Walkability – A Good Practice Guide on Improving Pedestrian Conditions as Part of Development Opportunities' Transport for London 2005

Priorities for Action

Tables of all issues identified by auditors participating in the 5 Community Street Audits are included in the full Community Street Audit report. A fuller examination of the issues identified as 'priorities' is included in the report, along with detailed recommendations. The following section summarises the key findings and recommendations.

Connectivity – Drop kerbs, tactile paving and pavement access

Auditors note that drop kerbs are provided at the majority of side street junctions along audit routes, however the location and quality of treatments varies greatly, with provision ranging from good to unusable depending on the level of mobility of an individual and the type of mobility aid used by audit group members with mobility disabilities. Tactile marking is provided at most, but not all, side street junctions. In many cases tactile paving indicates a clearway to the building line, however in some locations paving is limited to 1 or 2 tiles deep and is therefore not adequate for the needs of visually impaired pedestrians.

Priority locations where improved pavement access and tactile paving would improve accessibility are listed below.

1. City centre to Perth Rail and Bus Station – Leonard Street route, including:

- Leonard Street, at the vehicle entrance and exit points to Perth Rail Station car park
- Leonard Street, at the vehicle entrance and exit points to Perth Bus Station
- Leonard Street, at pedestrian islands and crossing points allowing crossing from east/west
- Cross Street junction
- St. Andrews Street junction
- Pomarium Street junction
- Alexandra Street junction
- Exchange Lane entrance
- Kinnoull Causeway junction
- Hospital Street and New Street junction

2. City centre to Perth Rail and Bus Station – King Place and King Street route, including:

- St. Leonards Bridge junction
- Victoria Street junction
- Charterhouse Lane junction
- Albert Place junction

3. Canal Street, at Speygate and Charles Street Junctions

4. Car park entrances across the city centre and including:

- Canal Street Car Park (Perth and Kinross Council)
- Charles Street Car Park (Perth and Kinross Council)
- Speygate Car Park (Perth and Kinross Council)
- Leonard Street Car Park (Perth and Kinross Council)
- Library (East) Car Park (Perth and Kinross Council)
- Canal Street Multi-Storey Car Park (Unknown)
- Kinnoull Street SMART Car Park (Unknown)

Recommendations:

- Identify an 'accessible route' between the rail and bus stations and the city centre and prioritise this route for improvements including drop kerbs/raised table crossing facilities, and provision of tactile paving identifying safe crossing points.
- Consider raised-table crossing facilities at car park entrances and vehicle entrances to Perth rail and bus stations

Convenience – Crossing Facilities

Being able to cross the street is a key aspect of creating walking friendly environments that are both inviting and easy to walk in. The quality, provision or absence of crossing points affect people's ability and desire to walk. When crossing the street is difficult, dangerous or involves walking further than necessary, people may feel unable to make a journey on foot or by public transport, which will always include an element of walking. This is particularly the case for more vulnerable pedestrians, including pedestrians using mobility aids, pedestrians with a visual impairment, older pedestrians, and children.

1. City centre to Perth rail and bus stations, ST. Leonards route and Kings Place and King Street route:

For pedestrians with a visual impairment, walking to the station from King's Place independently may not be possible without taking a significant detour as a result of a lack of appropriate crossing facilities on King's Place and at the St. Leonards Bridge junction. However, auditors using mobility aids suggest that they would be more likely to make the journey into the city via Kings Place and King Street due to better quality pavements and drop kerb facilities along the route. Providing an 'accessible route' for all pedestrians from the rail station to/from the city centre may require physical improvements on at least one route, including provision of a signalised crossing facility on Kings Place and within closer proximity to Perth rail Station than the current facility adjacent to King Street.

2. County Place, South Methven Street, South Street, King Street and Hospital Street junctions:

The junction of County Place, South Methven Street, South Street and King Street, and the adjacent Hospital Street junction, are important access points to the city centre for both vehicles and for pedestrians. Pedestrian crossing facilities are provided at each arm of the junctions, however no facility is provided to enable pedestrians to cross directly on the diagonal from County Place/Hospital Street to/from South Methven Street and South Street, and on the opposing diagonal. Pedestrians making this journey are obliged to undertake the journey in 2 or more stages, which can require waiting for 2 pedestrian light phases and can be time consuming. Auditors report feeling intimidated using the crossing facility provided at the entrance to King Street due to volumes of traffic and impatient driver behaviour at the junction. Vehicles have been observed moving onto the crossing while pedestrians are still on the facility, and auditors using mobility aids note feeling harried at this crossing facility with insufficient time to cross. The length of green man crossing time was not recorded at this crossing or at the facilities on County Place, South Methven Street or South Street during the audits however indications are that for more vulnerable pedestrians, light phasings and crossing times may be inadequate as configured currently.

Tactile markings at all arms of the junction of County Place, South Methven Street, South Street and King Street (excluding Hospital Street) are showing wear, with cracked tiles and loose tiles and uneven kerb edges creating potential hazards for pedestrians, and increasing difficulties for vulnerable pedestrians. Tactile paving at the Hospital Street entrance was noted to be only 1 or ½ tiles deep.

3. Canal Street, Princes Street and Scott Street Junctions

In both locations, auditors note that tactile paving and the condition of pavement surfaces and kerbing is worn, with loose and cracked tactile paving and uneven kerbs presenting a possible hazard for some pedestrians. Drop kerb up stands at crossing points were of varying heights, with a number posing difficulty for pedestrians using wheelchairs and other mobility aids. The location of push button signal boxes on traffic light poles at various locations was reported by both auditors using wheelchairs and those with a visual impairment as being difficult to locate and/or reach from the kerb. Narrow pavements, particularly on Princes Street from Canal Street, compound difficulties for wheelchair users who had difficulty manoeuvring both onto the pavement and then to reach the signal box. Pedestrians crossing Canal Street on all four arms of the crossing were observed standing on the carriageway while waiting to cross due to a lack of room on the pavement.

Recommendations:

- Identify an 'accessible route' between the rail and bus stations and the city centre and prioritise this route for improvements including drop kerbs/raised table crossing facilities, and provision of tactile paving identifying safe crossing points.
- Assess the requirement for provision of a controlled or other suitable crossing facility within closer proximity of Perth Rail Station on King's Place
- Assess feasibility of measures to reduce vehicle speeds on Kings Place/Leonard Street in the vicinity of the station
- Assess feasibility of enhancing crossing provision at Leonard Bridge junction; including kerb build outs to reduce the width of the junction for crossing, and relocating the crossing point closer to the junction entrance to improve driver/pedestrian sightlines.
- At the entrance to St. Andrews Street, assess the feasibility and options to reduce pedestrian crossing distance, by providing kerb build outs or by relocating the existing crossing facility.
- Monitoring pedestrian flow and volumes, light phasings and green man crossing times at County Place and Hospital Street facilities to understand how a better balance can be achieved between vehicle and pedestrian movement.
- Repair/replace loose and damaged tactile paving at both Princes Street and Scott Street facilities.
- Reconfigure crossing provision at the Princes Street junction to better accommodate pedestrians, including relocating controlled crossings and drop kerbs to the corners of the pavement, and enabling crossing on the diagonal.

Convivial – Vehicle Access to Pedestrian Zones

Vehicle access to the pedestrian zone is provided from Tay Street onto High Street. At this point, an automated bollard has been installed to manage vehicle access into the pedestrian zone. The bollard links to a staffed command centre at Canal Street car park, with staff responsible for allowing vehicles access to the street depending on permissions. At present, the bollard is not functioning and any vehicle approaching the entry will trigger the bollard to lower, allowing vehicles to enter unchecked.

Anecdotally, auditors report numerous incidences of vehicles accessing the pedestrian zone and using streets as a through route to avoid traffic, with some travelling at speeds that are intimidating to pedestrians.

Vehicles traveling at any speed above walking pace through the pedestrian area force pedestrians to give way and move to the sides of the street. For pedestrians with a visual impairment and those using mobility aids, as well as pedestrians walking with children in pushchairs, this means leaving the central clearway and negotiating street furniture including benches and bins located along the north and south sides of the street. In this situation, vehicle movement again takes priority over pedestrian movement, detracting from the safety and amenity of the space for pedestrians.

Recommendations:

- Repair/activate automated bollard so this functions as intended, ensuring managed vehicle access to the High Street. Unless this facility is operating as it should, it is unlikely that any further action to manage vehicle entry to the High Street or to enforce existing traffic restrictions will be effective.

Comfortable – Obstacles on the Footway

Unnecessary clutter makes life difficult for vulnerable pedestrians such as older people, disabled people and parents with pushchairs, as well as making streets unattractive and taking up space that should be available for pedestrians. On the other hand, well designed and placed lighting, benches, and other on-street facilities are necessary to create ‘age-friendly’ neighbourhoods, and can contribute to attractive streets and a sense of place.

Temporary obstacles reported during the audits included:

- A-boards - West end of High Street, St. John's Street
- Siting of tables and chairs, outside seating areas – High Street pedestrian zone; St. John's Place
- Commercial and residential bins and bin bags
- Deliveries left on street while unloading
- Shops displays on pavements

Permanent obstacles reported during the audits included:

- Benches – High Street pedestrian zone
- Litter Bins – High Street pedestrian zone
- Bollards – Vicinity of St. John's Kirk
- Public Art – High Street pedestrian zone
- Design features that present a hazard to wheelchairs/visually impaired – High Street pedestrian zone
- Traffic signage located on pavements – Watergate/Canal Street junction
- Information and maps located on the line of travel - Skinnergate and at St. Johns Kirk
- Guardrail – Canal Street, various locations; County Place/South Methven Street/Scott Street junction; other locations

Recommendations:

- GILPK and Town Centre Team - undertake engagement with local traders and other stakeholders to promote good practice and current council guidance/policy with regards to A-boards, placement of outdoor seating, and other temporary obstacles.
- Road Safety and Design Team - provide tactile hazard marking around the 'Circle' Statue on High Street to enable visually impaired pedestrians to locate and avoid the obstacle safely.

Conspicuous – Tactile Marking and Vehicle/Pedestrian Transitions

A lack of appropriate tactile marking at the vehicle entrance and exit points to the pedestrian zone was highlighted as of particular concern to visually impaired pedestrians using the space.

Transition points exist at the following locations:

- High Street, at the automated vehicle entry adjacent to George Street;
- High Street, at the junction with Scott Street;
- Kirkgate;
- King Edward Street;
- St. John's Street at the junction with South Street.

Of additional concern at the Scott Street junction is the layout of the transition, with a signalised crossing facility provided at the vehicle exit point. The lights and signal button are located in line with the pavement that runs along the east side of Scott Street, however surface materials and the layout of the intersection do not indicate to pedestrians that this is part of the carriageway or that pedestrians traveling along Scott Street should stop and give way to vehicles emerging from High Street. Tactile paving is provided at either side of the crossing point, potentially adding to confusion at this location for visually impaired pedestrians.

Installation of corduroy tactile paving at each vehicle entry way to the pedestrian zone is recommended as a priority.

However, consideration should be given to the current configuration of the High Street/Scott Street junction and the location of a controlled crossing facility at this location. The provision of a controlled crossing facility and tactile markings indicating a crossing facility mean that introducing additional tactile paving may create confusion for visually impaired pedestrians and compound existing confusion for pedestrians and drivers over who has priority at the junction. Removal of the controlled crossing facility and attendant tactile markings indicating a crossing may be necessary to ensure no confusion to visually impaired pedestrians. It may be necessary to reconfigure the junction such that either pedestrians or vehicles are clearly prioritised.

Recommendations and Next Steps

It is fully understood that, especially with regard to any recommendations that require physical improvements to streets, there is at present very limited budgetary resource to take forward improvement activity. A small annual budget is available to Perth and Kinross Road Safety and Design team to take forward small scale physical improvements to drop kerbs and other facilities to enhance access for pedestrians with disabilities. The Road Safety and Design team have expressed an ambition to seek support and additional budget and potentially external funding for some improvements in the short, medium and long term. This will include seeking funding from the Community Links programme to enhance facilities for active travel along one 'accessible route' linking the city centre to Perth rail and bus station. The aim of these improvements will be to provide an enhanced, safe and accessible route for walkers, cyclists and pedestrians with mobility and visual impairments on an equal footing

Living Streets Scotland has agreed to facilitate further engagement with CILPK and other key stakeholders as part of the Walkable Communities Project 2016 to further prioritise locations where investment in physical improvements has the potential to deliver real impact for vulnerable and all pedestrians in Perth city centre and between the city centre and public transport interchanges. Further engagement activity will be undertaken in the Spring. In addition, Living Streets Scotland will be happy to facilitate a review of the chosen accessible route between the city centre and the rail and bus station to provide recommendations to achieve ambitions for active travel and improved access for everyone.

