



## **Street Audit: Tollcross (Edinburgh)**

**Living Streets Edinburgh Group**

**October 2015**



# **Contents**

- 1) Background
- 2) Summary of Recommendations
- 3) Improve pavement surfaces
- 4) Remove unnecessary fixed obstacles
- 5) Reduce movable clutter
- 6) Introduce proper cycle parking
- 7) Effective enforcement
- 8) Install dropped kerbs and tactile paving properly
- 9) Ensure that pedestrians can cross the street easily
- 10) Other issues
- 11) Detailed recommendations
- 12) Appendix: Crossing Times
- 13) References, Acknowledgements and Contact details

# 1) Background

The Living Streets Edinburgh Group was formally launched on 1 June 2015 at a public meeting in Friends Meeting House attended by over sixty people. One aim of the meeting was to ask people to choose an area where Living Streets Edinburgh should conduct a street audit (a street audit is a structured assessment of the 'walkability' of a street, seen from the pedestrian perspective). The new Group was keen to do this as a proactive way of involving communities in campaigning for improvements in local street environments. Tollcross was chosen as the location of the audit by people attending the meeting with 29 'votes'.

There was considerable interest in the audit from the start; a number of people who attended the public meeting expressed an interest in taking part and Tollcross Community Council was an enthusiastic supporter of the audit and three representatives participated. The Edinburgh Access Panel was invited to participate and two members took part. Other members were either people already involved in Living Streets, or members of the public. Altogether, thirteen people took part, requiring two separate audits which took place on Friday 25th and Saturday 26th September 2015, at 10.30 am each day.

In addition to those taking part in the audit itself, a number of messages of interest and support were received from local councillors, MSPs and business organisations.

Home Street and Lochrin Place were chosen as the streets to focus on after consultation with Tollcross Community Council. A major reason for selecting these particular streets was that the City of Edinburgh Council has already committed to improving them as part of a project to link the cycle route from the Union Canal to the Meadows. The project manager for this scheme confirmed beforehand that the timing of the audit would fit with the project timescale, allowing the audit findings to be considered when the detailed design stage of the cycle project was to be carried out.

Specifically, the objectives of the audit were:

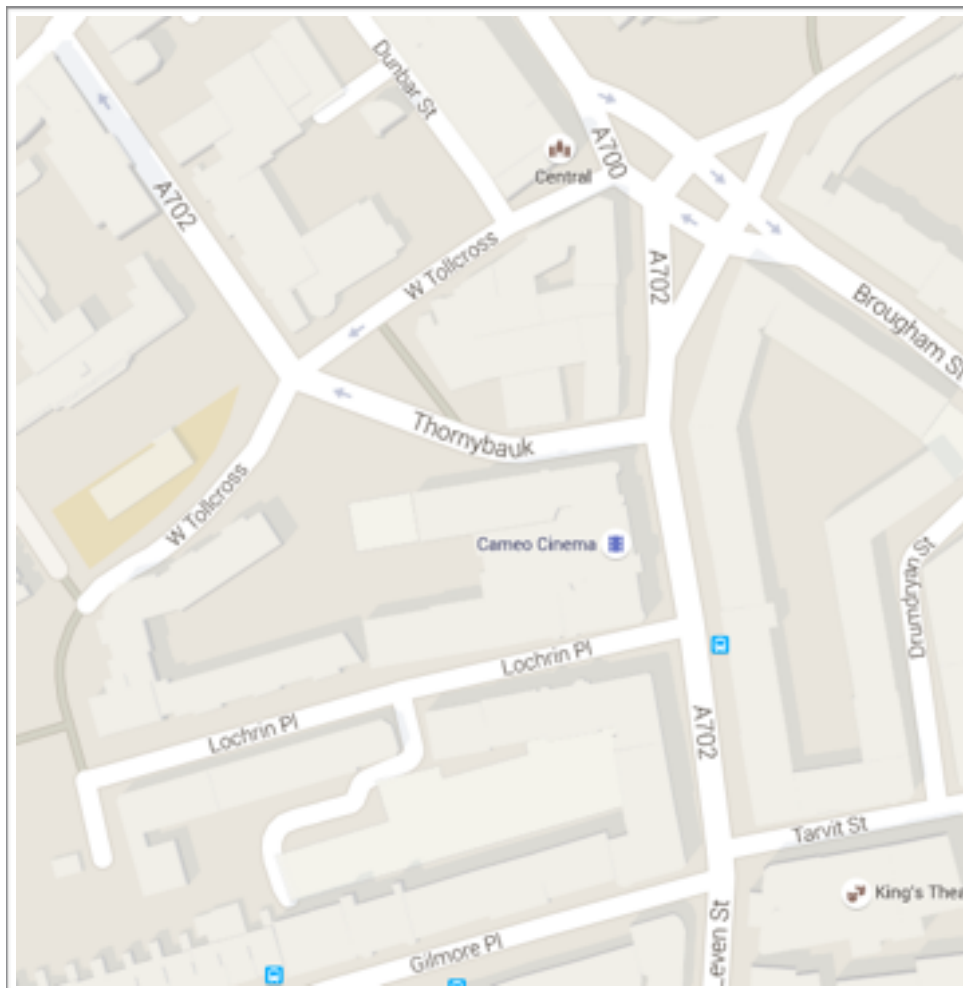
- 1) To identify (mostly short-term) improvements to design, maintenance and management of Home Street and Lochrin Place;
- 2) To build experience in street auditing among LSE supporters and partners, enhancing the possibility of further street audit activity in Edinburgh.

Living Streets Edinburgh hopes that this audit will encourage other local communities to organise audits of their streets throughout the city, to identify improvements to the design, maintenance and management of the walking environment.

## Tollcross

Tollcross is a busy inner-city shopping and residential district of Edinburgh, about a mile from the city centre. Like much of central Edinburgh, the area is busy at night as well as day time, with a mix of residents and visitors. The local population is growing and with a high density; in Edinburgh terms it is diverse, for example in terms of the mix between older residents and students, ethnicity, etc (1).

Home Street is a major trunk road (A702) and the busiest shopping street in Tollcross. It is home to important leisure facilities used from across Edinburgh such as the Kings Theatre and Cameo Cinema. Almost every building is occupied by commercial or community facilities including grocers, banks, hairdressers, restaurants and take-aways, betting shops, charity shops and independent retailers. Lochrin Place, adjoining Home Street to the west, is by contrast almost entirely residential, although a small number of businesses are located near the Home Street junction and a car mechanic/garage is located further up the street.



## 2) Summary of Recommendations

This report is organised around the following themes which were identified during the audit.

- improve pavement surfaces
- remove unnecessary fixed obstacles (signage poles, redundant phone box etc)
- better management of movable clutter (A boards, bins etc)
- introduce a proper cycle parking plan to meet demand (on street where possible)
- effective enforcement - for example, cushioning of scaffolding, management of waste bins and parking controls.
- install dropped kerbs and tactile paving consistently and properly
- ensure that pedestrians can cross the street easily at signalled crossings (especially at Tollcross)

### Street overviews

#### Home Street (East side)

This side of Home Street is narrower than the West side, and the chief issues identified are street clutter from both fixed items (especially signage poles) and from A-Boards outside shops. The condition of the pavement surface is also poor in several places.

#### Home Street (West side)

The pavement to the West is wider than the East side, and the southern section (to Lochrin Place) is relatively free of clutter. However, the next section (Lochrin Place to Thornybank) is exceptionally cluttered with fixed signage poles, phone boxes, cycle parking, exacerbated by scaffolding, A-boards and waste bins at the Lochrin Place junction.

#### Lochrin Place

The main issues affecting Lochrin Place are incorrect or absent dropped kerbs at the Lochrin Autos garage and, along the north side of the street, poor quality of the pavement (especially concrete sections) and the proliferation of parking-related signage poles.

#### Crossings

The Tollcross junction itself is the junction of five major roads and is a major obstacle for pedestrians to cross (see Appendix). In the longer term, a major re-think of the traffic systems which affect this junction is required. In contrast, the junction at the south end of Home Street (with Tarvit Street) is very easy for pedestrians to cross, and this should be maintained when the cycle works are implemented. We acknowledge that the introduction of 20 mph limits should have a positive impact on the pedestrian experience of traffic throughout the area.

### 3) Improve pavement surfaces

At several places along both Home Street and Lochrin Place, the pavement surface is in poor condition. This results in trip hazards and difficulties for elderly and disabled people. Examples of this are in Home Street (East) outside Greggs, the Kings Pantry and Omega Travel (Figure 1) and on Lochrin Place (North side). As part of the cycle way project, defective footways should be repaired or replaced to an adequate standard.



Figure 1

It was noted that some sections of the footway on Lochrin Place (North side) retain vestiges of old kerbs, presumably remnants from former vennels (Figure 2). These should be retained, in order to maintain some elements of the historic streetscape.

There are a number of uneven manhole covers which should be made flush with the footway surface to eliminate trip hazards and provide a better surface for everyone, especially those using wheelchairs or buggies. These include Home Street East at Cuckoo's Nest and William Hill; Home Street West at the Hospice of Hope; and the south side of Lochrin Place.

There is a blocked drain outside William Hill leading to ponding at the pedestrian crossing.

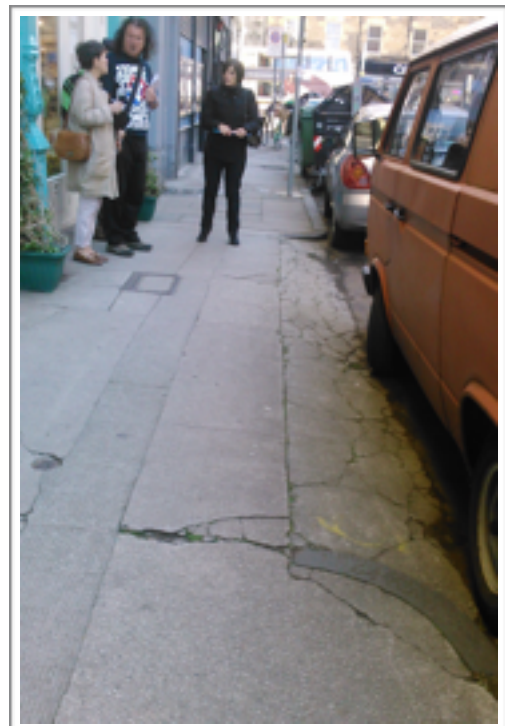


Figure 2



## 4) Remove unnecessary fixed obstacles

Both Home Street and Lochrin Place have too many fixed obstacles. especially in the form of parking, loading and Greenways signs. Proliferation of such fixtures is contrary to both national and local guidance (2). Specific examples include:

- Home Street West (Dukes/Anatolian) - bare pole with no sign attached (Figure 3)
- Home Street West (Cancer Research) - unnecessary 'dead end (except cycles)' sign (Figure 4)



Figure 3



Figure 4

On the East (narrower) side of Home Street, many of the signage poles are located towards the centre of the pavement, further causing an obstruction (see for example at No 1 Sushi, Smoking Fox). As part of the detailed design of the cycle way, all such signage should be reviewed so as to adopt one of the following hierarchy of options, in order of preference:

1. consider if the sign is required at all; if not, remove altogether;
2. if the signage has been assessed as required, consider an alternative location for the sign (eg move the sign to a lamppost, onto another signage pole, or on a building wall)
3. if this is not possible, locate the signage pole as close to the kerb as possible, and group signs onto a single pole. Poles should have sufficient contrast in colour/tone to



Signage poles are not the only fixed obstacles; there are a number of guard rails on the street which should be removed unless there are compelling and genuine reasons for retaining them - these include the south side of Home Street East (outside Cuckoo's Nest) and the north side of Home Street West (outside Omnicare).

There are a number of utility/junction boxes on the pavements - for example, on Home Street East Post Office, Kings Arms, Cuckoo's Nest. As with all fixed street furniture, their need should be assessed and removed if possible. Where they need to remain, it is recommended that they should display some colour contrast to minimise the risk they pose to visually impaired pedestrians - the uniform light grey colouring makes them particularly difficult to see at present.

Cycle parking is covered below - with regard to street furniture, we would emphasise that the current use of guardrails etc for cycle parking is no justification for retaining fixed street clutter.

Finally, near the Cameo cinema, a group of three telephone kiosks forms a particular obstruction. One of these, a BT phone box at Subway (Figure 5) is completely gutted internally (despite the 'temporarily out of order' sign) and should be removed, with any repairs to the footway implemented to reinstate the pavement surface appropriately.



Figure 5

## 5) Reduce movable clutter

Home Street in particular suffers from an excess of temporary clutter in the form of displays, A-Boards and waste bins. This is especially acute in the section between Lochrin Place and Thornybauk (outside the Cameo Cinema, exacerbated by the presence of fixed street furniture too (see above). Examples are outside McGills and Hex and outside the Killer Restaurant (junction Home Street and Gilmore Place) where the pavement display reduces the already-narrow pavement (Figure 6). On-street displays are also present at the Cuckoo's Nest (barrels and an unstable board) and Tollcross superstore (fruit and vegetables). Although a matter of subjective judgement, some advertising displays were also considered unsightly and 'tacky', which does not contribute to an attractive street ambience.



Figure 6

With regard to waste bins, these also present significant and unpleasant obstacles for pedestrians, with the junction between Home Street and Lochrin Place a particular hotspot for this problem (Figure 7). We found 15 bins located at this single junction, a mix of trade and residential waste. One (movable) bin was sited directly on the pedestrian desire line along the small pavement space left on Home Street.



Figure 7

Rubbish constitutes another significant part of obstructions faced by pedestrians. On our audit, we observed a dumped mattress on Lochrin Place (south side) and loose bin bags on Home Street East (at Greggs).

We accept that retailers are entitled to advertise through street displays, and do not advocate 'sterilised' streets; however we suggest that displays or other advertisements should be limited to one per shop. They should also be placed next to the building (not the kerb) as consistent placing will assist blind people navigating the street and minimise the sometimes haphazard zigzag path which pedestrians are currently faced with. Where the pavement is narrowed further because of fixtures such as signage poles (see Figure 8), there should be no A-Boards (unless the poles can be removed).

## 6) Introduce proper cycle parking

The main cycle parking facility in the area audited is located at the congested junction of Lochrin Place and Home Street, which as noted above already suffers from a number of other permanent and temporary obstacles (Figure 7 above). This cycle parking is well-used which suggests a demand for cycle parking at this juncture, but it should be re-located from the pedestrian desire line.

Cycle parking on pavements is evident at a number of other locations, notably at the guard rails outside the Cuckoo's Nest (Home Street East) and Omnivore (Home Street West) and on the cycle hoops attached to signage poles. We would like to see more specially designed cycle parking located at points of evident demand, preferably not on the footway at all, but on the carriageway. If our recommendations to remove signage poles and guardrails (see above) are implemented, this will reduce some of the informal cycle parking options currently used and suitable alternative well-planned provision should be made in order to avoid cyclists parking their bikes randomly.

Views on the merits of cycle hoops attached to signage poles (as present on the east side of Home Street, Figure 8) were mixed. Ideally, as noted above we would like to see cycle parking provided off the footway entirely. However, cycle hoops do make it more likely that bicycles attached to street furniture remain upright, and parallel to the main pedestrian flow. As such, they may have a place to provide cycle parking where pavements are wide enough and there may otherwise be a risk of cyclists leaving their bikes in a less appropriate place. The pavement is too narrow for cycle hoops to be used at #3, 9 and 18 Home Street and we therefore recommend their removal.



Figure 8



## 7) Effective enforcement

Many of the problems we identified about the functioning of the street for people walking appear related to ineffective management and enforcement of legal and licensing requirements. We have noted above the proliferation and poor location of many waste bins and A-Boards; of other examples encountered, one of the most potentially serious is the scaffolding at the corner of Lochrin Place and Home Street. Apart from constituting yet another obstacle to this unpleasant junction, the scaffolding is not properly protected with soft covering as required by Council policy (4) (Figure 9).



Figure 9

One pole - the first encountered by a pedestrian walking north along Home Street - is entirely unprotected and represented a significant hazard to all pedestrians and especially anyone with a visual impairment (Figure 10). This was reported for urgent attention to the council's CLARENCE reporting system (and has since been removed).

Home Street is part of the Council's Greenways (bus priority) network and as such, parking and loading would be expected to be well-enforced. However, our observations suggested that the loading bays on Home Street East were being used for short stay parking. Double parking was also observed at the east end of Lochrin Place (Figure 11) - most likely this practice is encouraged by the presence of skips, scaffolding etc. Red light jumping was in evidence especially at the major Tollcross junction. In the combined three hours of our audit, we did not observe any parking or traffic enforcement activity taking place.



Figure 10



Figure 11

## 8) Install dropped kerbs and tactile paving properly

There are a number of deficiencies in the use of dropped kerbs, tactile paving and other methods to provide safe and easy crossings for pedestrians, including those who have mobility or visual impairments.

The junction of Thornybauk (also known as Lochrin Terrace) and Home Street is wide and difficult to cross. There is no dropped kerb or tactile paving at the south side of this junction which should be rectified (Figure 12). In the longer term, the road should be narrowed if possible to make it easier for pedestrians crossing - especially if travelling northwards along Home Street, where traffic turning left (ie from behind the pedestrian) can be fast. The junction would also benefit from a consolidation of signage and removal of guardrails, it is appreciated that this would require full consideration of the needs of the local Fire and Rescue service which is based further up the street.



Figure 12

On the east side of Home Street, three slabs of tactile paving are missing at the pedestrian crossing at William Hill. In several locations, e.g. at Home Street/Tarvit Street junction, and at the main Tollcross junction, dropped kerbs are not adequately installed currently and should be replaced; outside James Morrow (Home Street East), the vertical drop was measured as 40mm (Figure 13). Remedial works should ensure that kerbs are not merely 'lowered' but are flush with the carriageway surface.



Figure 13



On Lochrin Place (North), there are four dropped kerbs (outside #20, #22 and up to #19 West Tollcross) which appear to be designed for access to waste storage in the tenements. These all have tactile paving incorrectly installed, signalling to someone with a visual impairment that it is a safe crossing point. However, there are no dropped kerbs or tactile paving on the corresponding (south) side of Lochrin Place (as the dropped kerbs are not intended to facilitate pedestrian movement but access to waste bins).



Figure 14

We suggest that consideration is given to retaining the current dropped kerb/tactile paving at the far west (canal) end of Lochrin Place and at 20 Lochrin Place, and installing a similar dropped kerb with tactile paving on the opposite (south) side of the road. This would provide crossing points at these two locations and be intelligible and useful to people with a visual impairment. For the other two dropped kerbs, we recommend that the tactile paving is removed and replaced with a standard paving surface. This would eliminate the misleading signal to blind pedestrians that this has been designed as a safe location to cross Lochrin Place.

On the south side of Lochrin Place, there is a significant problem at Lochrin Autos (Figures 15, 16). Most obviously, the pedestrian route is blocked through a lack of parking controls and the apparently long-term parking of an advertising trailer on the corner of the pavement. There are also old rusty metal bollards, presumably intended to deter pavement parking, and there are no dropped kerbs or tactile paving on either side of the minor junction. Our recommendation here is to make the pavement continuous across the garage junction in order to provide a level surface giving priority to pedestrians (rather than install dropped kerbs). There will be a need for tactile paving to signal to visually impaired people that vehicles might cross the pavement at this point. This would also permit the bollards to be removed.



Figure 15



Figure 16

## **9) Ensure that pedestrians can cross the street easily**

There are three signalled crossings in the area audited, all across Home Street. We recorded a significant amount of data on the crossing times and pedestrian phases which are attached as an appendix. These are our chief conclusions (from south to north).

### **Home Street/Tarvit Street/Gilmore Place**

‘This crossing works very well for pedestrians crossing Tarvit Street, and is the best example of pedestrian prioritisation in the audit area (with 75% of time allocated to pedestrians). We want to see no deterioration in this when the cycle route is implemented (this will block off Tarvit Street to vehicles, meaning a new sequence of pedestrian phases at the traffic signals). At present, there is a ‘green man’ for people walking south on the east side of Home Street across Tarvit Street for 75% of the signal cycle (because there is a ‘red man’ phase only when vehicles are exiting Tarvit Street). However, the 15 seconds of ‘green man’ provided for the diagonal crossing (from the Kings theatre to the Killer restaurant) gave insufficient time for slower pedestrians to cross (including the user of a powered wheelchair). Consideration should therefore be given to extending the green man phase. Ideally, Gilmore Place should be widened at this junction, as the pavement is too narrow to accommodate the pedestrian traffic at Home Street.

### **Home Street Pedestrian Crossing (William Hill to Ladbrokes)**

The middle pedestrian crossing appears to have no phase activated by a pedestrian pressing the button for the green man; the green man phase is determined entirely by the sequence at the Gilmore Place/Tarvit Street junction. We anticipate that this crossing will be replaced by a cycle-friendly signalised crossing as part of the cycle route, and would expect that this should provide an opportunity to introduce an on-demand green man phase for pedestrians.

## Tollcross junction (A702)

We would like to see a strategic review of this junction, which is very hostile for pedestrians (Figure 17). While our focus was on the crossing of the A702 (Home Street), there are important issues affecting the other pedestrian routes which crossing (West Tollcross, Earl Grey Street, Lauriston Place and Brougham Street). We appreciate that such a review must also take into account the flows and volumes of traffic as well as of pedestrians. We recorded detailed timings of pedestrian crossing routes across all roads at the junction; these are set out in the Appendix together with comments.

In essence, we would like to see a greater emphasis on 'place' over 'movement' (4) and a reduction in the time it takes for pedestrians to cross the junction: it takes almost 4 minutes to cross this junction on foot through the 'green man' phases at present, and many pedestrians currently take short cuts through 'red man' phases as a result. We suggest investigating the possibility of installing a central refuge where the clock is, combined with new timings on the green man in all directions at once to allow pedestrians to cross diagonally as desired.



Figure 17

There are also some more immediate improvements we recommend. The traffic islands are small and narrow; this makes pedestrians feel very exposed to the traffic, and was especially uncomfortable for a wheelchair user. The 'red man' light on the northerly traffic island on the A702 (the first as seen from James Morrow) is out. As noted above, the 'dropped' kerb on the crossing (Figure 13 above) was measured at 40mm - a huge vertical drop - making it entirely unfit for purpose - and should be relaid.

## 10) Other issues

### Seating

The only seating currently provided in the areas audited is at the bus stops on the east side of Home Street. We recommend that during detailed design of the cycle route, consideration is given to installing one or two seats on the West side of Home Street (there is no bus shelter on the west side, as protection from the weather for people waiting for a bus is provided by the Cameo entrance). This is likely to benefit the significant numbers of local elderly people in particular who use the street daily.

### Lighting and safety

No audits were carried out after dark but some concerns were raised as to the suitability of lighting. Tollcross is busy at night both as an interchange and as a nighttime destination in its own right. We suggest that consultations with local police officers may be useful to see if there are any specific improvements which might be introduced at the same time as the cycle route, for example any areas which are perceived as dark and threatening, based on public feedback.

### Ambience, building quality, and cleanliness

There are several locations which are particularly unsightly and dirty and require intervention. Between 10 and 12 Lochrin Place, there is an outflow pipe at ground level discharging dirty water onto the pavement. Also along this (north) side, there are several buildings which have loose cables hanging onto the pavement (#15 and 17) This problem can also be observed on the East side of Home Street (eg at #9). There are weeds growing at the Tollcross clock island More generally, several shop fronts are unattractive and poor quality and there are few glimpses of original Victorian features. The north end of Home Street's West side has a number of vacant empty retail units. All these issues clearly detract from the quality and attractiveness of the area and we would encourage business and council partners to work together to improve the ambience of the street.

## Recommendations

This table summarise the detailed recommendations to the Council.

Location	Recommendation	S/L*
All streets	replace broken paving	S
All streets	repair uneven manhole covers	S
All streets	reduce and manage A-boards etc	S
All streets	initiate a fundamental policy review on use of A-boards etc	L
All streets	enforce parking, traffic and licensing regulations	S
Home St E	remove or re-site signage poles	S
Home St E	enforce loading restrictions	S
Home St E (William Hill)	unblock drain	S
Home St E (Tarvit Street)	reduce clutter (guardrails, junction box, signs)	S
Home St E (Tarvit Street)	retain current level of pedestrian crossing prioritisation (S)	S
Home St W (Ime)	remove guardrails	S
Home St W (Cameo)	remove redundant BT box	S
Home St W (Hospice of Hope)	remove 'dead end sign'	S
Home St W (Thornybauk)	install dropped kerb and tactile paving	S
Home St W (Thornybauk)	review options to narrow crossing	L
Home St W /Lochrin Place	enforce soft cladding on scaffolding	S
Home St W /Lochrin Place	re-site/organise waste bins	S
Home St W /Lochrin Place	re-site cycle parking	S
Home St crossing (William Hill)	introduce on-demand pedestrian phase	S
Lochrin Place (north)	resurface defective paving	S
Lochrin Place (north)	fix loose cabling	S
Lochrin Place (north)	fix leaking drainage	S
Lochrin Place (south at Lothian Autos)	extend footway across the carriageway; remove bollards	S
Lochrin Place	remove tactile paving where no crossing point	S
Lochrin Place, 20/19 West Tollcross	install dropped kerb/tactile paving on southern footway	S
Tollcross junction	carry out strategic review	L
Tollcross junction	increase 'green man' crossing times	L
Tollcross junction	re-lay dropped kerbs	S

\* S= Short-term, L = Long-term



## **Appendix: observed timings at signalled crossings**

### **1) Sample journey times**

#### **James Morrow to Omnicare (crossing Home St)**

To cross Home St from James Morrow to Omnicare will take at least one minute as it includes a 53 second wait half way across. Pedestrians may also have to wait up to 83 seconds for the green man before starting to cross the road. Crossing Home St could take 136 seconds (2 ¼ minutes).

#### **Forest Café to Omnicare (crossing Brougham St and Home St)**

It may take 84 seconds of waiting before there is a green man to cross Brougham St. If we allow 10 seconds to cross Brougham St (up to 94 secs all together) plus the 136 seconds to cross Home St, this adds up to 230 seconds, or 3.8 minutes.

#### **Sainsbury's to Forest Café (via Bank of Scotland)**

Crossing from Sainsbury's (across Lothian Road) to Bank of Scotland could involve a 97 second wait for the green man. Then, assuming you are fit enough to cross both halves of the road without stopping half way across the split crossing in the 26 seconds allocated, that makes 123 seconds.

Crossing from the Bank of Scotland to the Forest Café (across Lauriston Place) could take another 94 second wait before crossing. The lights are at least timed so that both halves of the Lauriston Place junction can be crossed consecutively, and there is 9 seconds to cross the first half, and 49 seconds to cross the second half.

To get from Sainsbury's to the Forest Café could involve over 3 minutes of waiting (97+94 = 191 seconds), or twice as long if a slow pedestrian needs to stop at the two half way refuges. This is not including the actual walking time, so again it could take almost 4 minutes to get across the Tollcross junction. A702 King's Theatre (Home Street/Tarvit Street/Gilmore Place)

## 2) A702 Kings Theatre Junction

Location	Green man time (secs)	Max pedestrian wait time (secs)	% of time allocated to pedestrians (secs)
All 4 ways	15	90	15/104 (14%)
A702 (Home St) traffic	48		
Tarvit St and Gilmore Place	24		
Across Tarvit St	78	26	78/104 (75%)

## 3) A702 Tollcross Junction

Timings were taken for each of the pedestrian crossings in a clockwise direction starting from the Omnicare Pharmacy (Home Street west).

Location	Green man time (secs)	Max pedestrian wait time (secs)	% of time allocated to pedestrians (secs)
Omnicare to Sainsbury's (West Tollcross)	9	92	9/101 (9%)
Sainsbury's to BoS A700 (Earl Grey Street)	26 (for both stages either side of refuge - 2-stage crossing)	97	26/123 (21%)
BoS to refuge Lauriston Pl	9 (The sequence of lights allows to cross without having to wait on refuge)	94	9/103 (9%)
Refuge to Forest Café Lauriston Pl	49	53	49/103 (48%)
Forest Café to James Morrow Brougham St	19	84	19/103 (18%)
J Morrow to refuge Home St (A702)	20	83	20/103 (19%)
Refuge to Omnicare	43 (had to wait 53 secs on refuge to cross East to West)	60	43/103 (42%)

## References

(1) Population distribution and density in Edinburgh: Recent trends and comparisons with other cities across Scotland and the UK, City of Edinburgh Council, October 2013

(2) Edinburgh Street Design Guidance, August 2015 [http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20089/roads\\_and\\_pavements/906/edinburgh\\_street\\_design](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20089/roads_and_pavements/906/edinburgh_street_design)

Designing Streets, Scottish Government, 2010 <http://www.gov.scot/resource/doc/307126/0096540.pdf>

(3) City of Edinburgh Council scaffolding application pack  
[http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/file/1522/scaffolding\\_application\\_pack](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/file/1522/scaffolding_application_pack)

(4) Designing Streets (as above)

## Acknowledgements

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Thanks also to Tollcross Community Council, Edinburgh Access Panel and Penny at Living Streets Scotland.

## Contact details

If you would like to know more about this audit, to follow up any of the issues raised or to organise an audit in your own area, please contact one of the following

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