



Item 7  
19th March 2026

**Glasgow Community Planning Partnership**

**Safe Glasgow Partnership**

**Report by Chief Superintendent Emma Croft**

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**Glasgow City Centre Dispersal Zone**

**Purpose of Report:**

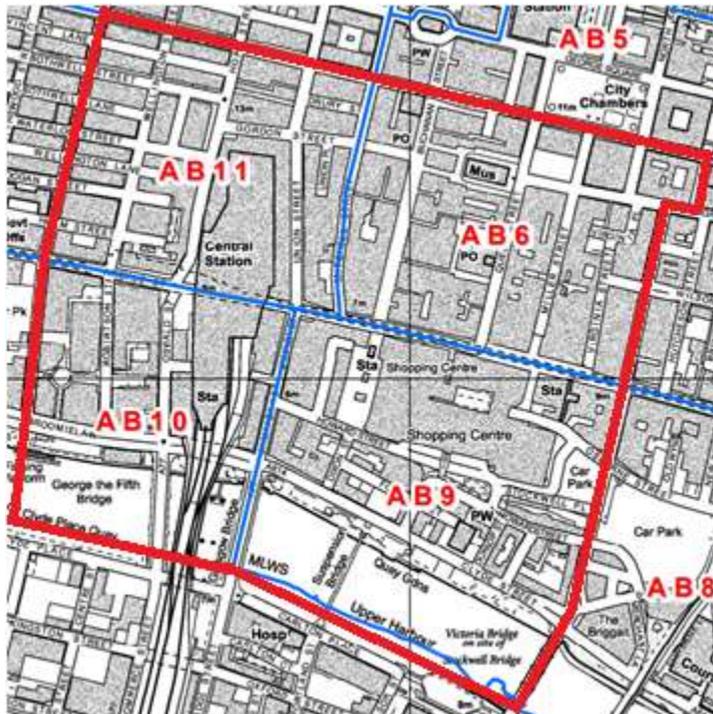
To provide members with an overview of the Glasgow City Centre Exclusion Zone.

**Recommendations:**

The Safe Glasgow Partnership are asked to note the contents of this report.

## **1 What is a Dispersal Zone and when will it be in operation?**

- 1.1 A dispersal zone is being introduced in Glasgow City Centre on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2026 in an effort to support a safe, welcoming city centre and curb anti-social behaviour and associated criminality.
- 1.2 The zone, under the Anti-Social Behaviour (Scotland) Act 2004, provides police with temporary, heightened authority to manage problematic group behaviour within a specified location. It gives extra powers to police to direct groups of two or more people to leave a designated area. Officers require reasonable grounds to suspect the group is engaged in anti-social behaviour or that their presence will lead to anti-social behaviour and if they refuse to leave, or return within 24 hours of the instruction, they face a fine or can be arrested.
- 1.3 Police activity will be focussed in the designated zone that in broad terms is a square bounded by St Vincent Street/St Vincent Place, Glassford Street/Stockwell Street, to the far side of the riverbank, to York Street/West Campbell Street. Areas of particular concern, such as Glasgow Central Station, St Enoch Square and Union Street all fall within the zone. A map is shown below.
- 1.4 The dispersal zone is a preventative tool which will allow Police Scotland to take further proportionate, targeted action to address anti-social behaviour and associated criminality within Glasgow city centre and will assist police and partners to address issues that are of longstanding concern to residents, businesses, and members of the public.
- 1.5 This temporary measure will be in place for a period of three months and is an additional tool to allow officers to tackle anti-social behaviour, reduce disorder, lessen the fear of crime and enhance community safety.



## 2 Why is this needed?

- 2.1 A policing operation has been ongoing for a number of months within Glasgow City Centre. This operation has involved officers undertaking focussed enforcement activity to address drug dealing and criminality. A range of overt and covert policing tactics have been deployed as part of the operation.
- 2.2 Between Wednesday, 12 November 2025, and Friday, 6 February 2026, officers searched 21 addresses across Glasgow linked to city centre drug dealing. 50 arrests were made and 117 people were reported to the Procurator Fiscal or given Fixed Penalty Notices in connection with drugs offences.
- 2.3 Drugs including cocaine, cannabis, and heroin, with an estimated street value of over £110,000 destined for our streets were recovered, along with more than £39,000 in cash.
- 2.4 As part of the operation, between Friday, 21 November, and Monday, 22 December 2025, officers also focused activity in and around Union Street.
- 2.5 During this period, officers detected 93 crimes and made 35 arrests, including 23 arrests in connection with drugs offences. Quantities of cocaine, cannabis and suspected etizolam were seized over the course of the month.
- 2.6 This targeted action has disrupted those involved in drug dealing within Glasgow city centre, however, despite the best efforts of the officers, after dealing with any overt criminality, they were left powerless to deal with

residual groups congregating to potentially buy drugs and who invariably thereafter engaged in anti-social behaviour.

- 2.7 Over 68,000 people visit the city centre on an average weekend day. This figure does not include residents and does not include people under 18 years of age. Some will be workers. The data is a snapshot taken on a random Saturday between 1800 and 1900 hours. The vast majority of visitors will not be impacted by the dispersal zone. Only the minority who are migrating towards the city to engage in criminality and/or anti-social behaviour risk being dispersed.
- 2.8 Reassurance patrols formed part of the policing operation with local police officers visiting business premises to gauge local sentiment. Impact statements were noted from some while others, fearful of recrimination, gave candid verbal accounts of their experiences.
- 2.9 A review of police systems shows that anti-social offences have risen by 3.2% in the last year. Violent crime by 1.1% and crimes against society (drugs/weapons) by 23.8%. These statistics should not cause alarm and may be driven by pro-active police detections, but together with the anecdotal accounts from locals and open-source reporting, it does evidence a pattern within the city centre.
- 2.10 Officers engaged in the policing operation spoke of the challenges to fully disrupt and deter anti-social behaviours within the city centre. Also through our community engagement it became evident that a different approach was required with a focus on reducing the opportunity to commit crime and engage in anti-social behaviour. A dispersal zone offers a sustained approach, using a wide range of interventions including engagement and enforcement, to have a positive impact and reduce harm within our city.

### **3 What governance measures are in place?**

- 3.1 The introduction of a dispersal zone has the potential to disproportionately affect certain groups or communities or could be perceived to negatively impact certain demographics.
- 3.2 There is the potential for certain demographic groups to feel they are being unduly impacted. An Equality Human Rights Impact Assessment is underway and a number of contingencies are being considered as part of the plan.
- 3.3 A partnership approach has been adopted to ensure that we consult and work with key partners, businesses, and alongside third sector organisations operating within the city.
- 3.4 A communication and engagement plan is underway to inform stakeholders and those living or working within the city about the zone and what the legislation means. Posters and literature are being made available in a range of languages (QR code translates to default language used on the phone). A

Community Impact Assessment has commenced and will be monitored for the duration.

- 3.5 Officers have been briefed on their powers and responsibilities and will be required to document their rationale for each dispersal which will be recorded for audit and review purposes in line with data retention requirements. A series of supervisory briefings are scheduled, and bespoke messaging has been circulated internally to officers, reinforcing the desired style and tone of policing.
- 3.6 Fortnightly oversight meetings will remain in place and using an evaluation framework, will monitor operational activity such as frequency of dispersal zone use, demographics, officer discretion, Body Worn Video (BWV) or complaints against the police (CAPs). Outcome and impact will be scrutinised and focus on initial results, unintended consequences, displacement, community mistrust or reduced legitimacy.
- 3.7 Community and stakeholder feedback will be ingathered throughout with ongoing reassurance visits and partner consultation. To ensure transparency and accountability, a communication plan is in place with frequent media releases scheduled to keep the public updated on effectiveness. If at any point the risks outweigh the benefits, the powers will be reneged and a revised approach explored.

#### **4 What outcomes do we anticipate?**

- 4.1 A sustained reduction in anti-social behaviour within this area is expected. Increased public reassurance and a heightened feeling of security is anticipated due to the proportionate increase of and visibility of uniformed police officers. It is expected that drugs detections may be sustained resulting in ongoing supply disruption and increased intelligence opportunities.
- 4.2 Some displacement is expected and as alluded to, will be monitored and resource flexed accordingly.

#### **5 What longer term activity is planned?**

- 5.1 As part of the measures to improve the feeling of safety within the city, qualified Crime Prevention Officers have commenced an Environmental Visual Audit (EVA) breaking the wider city into manageable segments. The area covered by the dispersal zone will be prioritised and using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, a full assessment of the city centre space will be undertaken resulting in a detailed and complex product to support partner agencies and statutory bodies alike.
- 5.2 Through identifying points of concern, areas that fall below accepted standards or locations where criminality thrives because of design gaps, we can assist and enable our partners to deploy their resources in a cost and

time effective manner to resolve these making our city centre a safer space for all.

- 5.3 An EVA of this size and scale is unique and will offer an in-depth assessment of Glasgow. Findings will be shared live time with relevant stakeholders, such as Glasgow City Council, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service or the Simon Community, to support any immediate remedial recommendations.

## **6 Conclusion**

- 6.1 Dispersal zones have been used previously in specific neighbourhoods in the Greater Glasgow area as part of the partnership response to Bonfire night. Dispersal zones have also been used in other cities across Scotland with success and it is expected that this multi-faceted partnership approach to operational policing, combined with the longer-term problem solving has the potential to improve the experience of those who live, work and visit the City of Glasgow. In a broader context, the dispersal zone will deliver against the Violence Against Women and Girls strategy and support a number of community safety outcomes.

## **7 Recommendations**

- 7.1 The Safe Glasgow Partnership are asked to note the contents of this report.