

## Appendix 1

### Full Consultation Responses

#### Q1. Are you?

Resident	74.6% (88)
Business	9.3% (11)
Visitor to Reading	8.5% (10)
Busker/street performer	2.5% (3)
Religious or faith group	0.8% (1)
No answer	0.8% (1)
Street/religious preacher	0% (0)
Campaigner	0% (0)
Other	3.4% (4)

#### Q2. How far do you agree that having a Busking Guide is helpful?

Strongly agree	44.1% (45)
Agree	36.3% (37)
No answer	9.8% (10)
Neither agree not disagree	6.9% (7)
Strongly disagree	2% (2)
Disagree	1% (1)
Don't know	0% (0)

#### Q3. Do you feel there is anything missing from the guide?

A bit of a stronger guide on rotation of pitches may be good. It seems to work well in Bath.

A friendly reminder about tolerance.

A map showing the areas that busking can take place in

A section addressing the rights of buskers is currently absent. Especially a section focusing on the right to work and not be harassed. I unfortunately have experienced harassment on the street while busking and, at times, have felt helpless. A statement emphasizing that "all buskers, regardless of their musical skill, deserve to be treated with human dignity and should not be subjected to harassment (including verbal abuse and destruction of musical equipment)" - I believe is needed and would be most appreciated.

Amplification should be completely banned by all performers. It's unnecessary and invasive.

Auditions

Buskers should have to audition to gain a licence, the cost of the licence should be in proportion to the happiness of the songs. Miserable buskers should have to pay more. If this is deemed to be discriminatory, then perhaps a zonal system might be considered; only happy buskers should be allowed to perform within earshot of the Alehouse- where people are enjoying themselves. With regards to repetition, this should be extended to song content- when they've done eighteen songs about a certain topic it would be nice if they changed it around a bit.

Does not directly address street preachers, who are more likely to cause a nuisance to the public by attempting to engage with individuals directly. Generally needs to be clearer on who the guidance is aimed at.

Enforcement.

Guidelines to what a busker is. It's not a singer with an amp. They must have accompaniment or be a pure instrumentalist.

Have left comments below.

Haven't read it - this survey could have given more information in its questions.

I think the repetitive performances should be more prominent. I am a town centre business and I hear the same song over and over again...

I would emphasise the need to avoid creating a nuisance more than it does (see below)

I'm sorry I have not read the guide. The survey came up first.

Include religious preachers using microphones and loudspeakers

It would be good to cover (either in this or a separate document) groups who hold information stalls. There has occasionally been an anti-abortion group in Reading who have had pictures up which was upsetting. Also something about chuggers please! (again - maybe this needs a separate document). Happy to have them but they should be static and not approach members of the public. It's exhausting going down Broad St sometimes as you can be approached by several charities who can be very persistent.

It would be nice to have the same busker for a few hours as they provide a continuous background sound to the shopping experience

It's not enough to have guidelines, buskers should audition before being accepted or be made to sign an agreement promising to adhere to the guidelines and any breach risks a performance ban for e.g. 6 months. How will you 'police' or enforce the guidelines? Will you register all performers and they have to show proof of admittance? Will pitches be limited and they can only perform in certain places?

Make it clearer that noise should be moderate and never loud to the point that customers inside shops are bothered by it/ can be heard from another street.

Making sure that there are not lots of performers in same area

More explicitly broadening the scope to include other sources of irritating amplification - shops with large speakers blaring music onto the street, religious groups with amplified singing/messages.
No
No
No
No, it seems very reasonable.
No, seems comprehensive
Noise level should be related to context. For dance music with a beat, I think it's generally OK if it is relatively loud. For songs where the singer wears their heart on their sleeve, it should be much quieter, in keeping with the nature of what is being expressed and to alienate as few people as possible. I often try to get beyond earshot of the latter, but occasionally can still hear it even when I've taken refuge in WH Smiths for example. It can make shopping in the town centre an unpleasant experience for anyone who is sensitive to music.
Not really
Registration
Should have consideration as to who is likely to be around.
Should have more information such as not to busk on any one location for more than 1 hour and not return within 2 hours Should have a upper limit of decibel that is permitted Need to say if they refuse to turn down the level, or turn it down and then increase the level then they must leave when asked to do so Need to have more constraints around the buskers - the guide should ensure that busking is welcome but they must take direction from an authorised person when asked to
The aggression and open discrimination demonstrated by some street preachers needs stopping
The guide is good but I think it is difficult as a resident (or passerby) to talk to buskers if they are being too loud. The busking is often so loud that I have to avoid entire streets on weekends or whenever someone is busking, as it causes me migraines. It would be good to have clearer safety limits or guidelines on maximum decibel levels, or limits on the strength of amplification. A "small" amplifier can still be heard 3 streets away. It may be good to have a designated person to ask to get them to turn down volumes, or regular check-ins, to prevent the volume from getting so loud as the default.
There is a fine line between some of the people in the street peacefully (sometimes even silently) protesting or gathering handing out leaflets about their cause whilst also busking. Advice should be given that small (<10 people - or the point at which existing protest laws take precedent) protests should not be considered as busking.

There is no quantify information on noise level (e.g. dB level), which leads to argument on big noise or what kind of speakers are recommended.

There is nothing in relation to religious performers and the content they are allowed perform.

There should be a time restriction such as 12-14 or 15 especially at the weekend. There should not be allowed more than 2 singing at one time and definitely not more than 1 religious or other arrangements at one time. I had stopped going for therapy on Saturday's because of how loud the music is. I am a nurse and do night shifts as well as I cannot think how people who live in that perimeter must feel. They should be the first to be asked about how their quite time and life is affected.

There should be further restrictions on some aspects of religious groups. I have seen groups with signage that can be upsetting and distressing, such as anti abortion. This sort of content should not be allowed

There should be more advice on volume levels - very often the amplified music can be heard all the way along broad street AND Kings Road. If the performer is bad then it feels like there's not escape from the noise, it's not just the immediate vicinity

What the situation is when there are multiple buskers a short distance apart

Where I used to live, the busking guidelines had a clause where you weren't allowed to be heard beyond a certain distance as a means to limit volume to near the performer only

Yes - it does not go far enough at all. Reading is plagued by buskers and it makes me not want to walk down the road without headphones as sometimes it is so loud.

Yes - the guidance does not says anything about the buskers/street performers' rights. \*There is little which explicitly states the street performers have a right to perform or a right to work. (Many of the street performers I have spoken to work on the streets professionally - it is their livelihood - not a hobby). \*There is one sentence under 'Resolving issues' which says 'buskers permitted by law to perform' not that busker 'are' permitted by law to perform. Where the guide says 'This guide has been created to:', it does not list buskers/street performers as stakeholders. Rather it implies that all street performers are the cause/source of unreasonableness and dispute. There is a priori view against street performers that all complaints made are valid. Case and point: the guidance given is about actions street performers should take to reduce complaints made against street performers (which has its merit.) However, there is no guidance on how to deal with unreasonable complaints; what should a street performer do when they follow the guidelines and still receive complaints? Unreasonable complaints are experienced by everyone, street vendors, bystanders, and street performers alike. The difference is that 'any' complaint against street performers seems to be taken seriously/to be true (which shows a bias - see your own section on Resolving Issues which is dedicated to businesses/resident but not buskers). As I understand it, being 'too loud' is the most common complaint and it is extremely subjective, and sometime abused (i.e. some people who do not want any street performers, full-stop, will complain about the volume levels regardless of the actual volume). The 'performance noise level' being described as 'background street noise' is somewhat vague. From what distance? From how busy a street? Does this include road works etc.? A measurement could be given: E.g. an average volume of 60 decibels (average talking volume) from a distance of

10m in an open street could be a useful yard stick for both performers and the public. There is vagueness in the accountability of the stakeholders and parties involved. Under 'Resolving Issues', if a complaint is made, what is the process and consequence? Will performers have a right to defend their case(s)? How will the council mediate issues? Under 'Resolving Issues' direct address is used and shows a bias. If 'you [a business owner] are disturbed by a busking performance' is written. None of the guidance there is written for if 'you' [the street performer] are disturbed or harassed by a resident or business. What if a shop or vendor turns up their volume to drown out a busker, affecting the busker's temporary performance?

Yes. No drum-only busking. Drums are maddening. Also, if residents who live in earshot complain, the busker should go somewhere else.

You need to have a specific focus on religion. Preaching is far more disruptive than musicians.

no

yes, there should be a formal sound level added (e.g. no more than X decibels when measured 1m away from the amplifier or singer). is 50m between buskers sufficient? that feels rather close. Could busking spaces actually be painted on the floor, like they are on the underground? also, it feels a bit toothless: what measures can be taken if someone breaches the code?

#### **Q4. Are there any elements of the guide that you disagree with?**

Amps aren't needed in the case of acoustic guitars or drums like that one guy where a skeleton plays the drums. In these cases, having an amp should be treated as overkill and as going against the guide.

Buskers should be allowed to use backing tracks as they have a quality that adds to the vocal performance

Haven't read it - this survey could have given more information in its questions.

I believe this survey is not worded in the right way. In fact is misleading.

I disagree with this: "Buskers should not sell merchandise such as CDs, t-shirts, posters, etc. without an occasional street trading consent". Too much bureaucracy just for selling some CDs

I do not think that performers should be limited to an hour's performance time only. I'd prefer it if it were longer, say 2 hrs or more

I don't believe that amplification should be allowed at all. Busking should be a purely acoustic endeavour. I also think there needs to be a restriction on how many performers there can be in a day - some sort of formalisation of pitches and timings like in Covent Garden.

I feel that the noise nuisance to businesses, residents and visitors would be dealt with better if there were more prescriptive levels of noise permitted. Just above background levels is very subjective and open to a large amount of interpretation. It doesn't describe from what position the performance should be at that level. If there is to be 50m between performers this means that after around 20m (not 25m otherwise there won't be a 'background level' - performances would mix the entire length of the street) both performances either side should be barely audible above background noise. Personally, I've experienced a busker beat-boxing at average noise levels of 85 decibels (using an approx measurement through an app) from about 15m away. On the other hand I've seen a magician with an amplified microphone that couldn't be heard more than 10m away (make sense, it's close up work). Although if they were there on the same day the magician would struggle to be heard even close up. Having an average decibel level would help as due to these being guidelines only you wouldn't need specialist equipment like you would for a statutory nuisance claim. Anybody could use an App or a cheap meter from a hardware store.

I think moving pitches after an hour would be challenging for some performers - for instance our family love seeing the steel band (and other live musicians). It would be very impractical for them to move pitches after an hour! Therefore, I think there needs to be a caveat about bands with multiple musical instruments having a 2-3 hour slot instead to allow for setting up/taking down and performance time.

No

No

No

No

No

No guide on DB(decibels) limits of safety and what is good within crowds. Limit on what wattage an amp should be. Definition of what a busker is.

No this seems reasonable.

Powers of BID enforcement officers should be clear

See above. Rather than providing advice on amplification equipment, amplification should not be permitted.

The licence to sell

The part I would say I disagree with is the moving pitches after an hour. Sometimes moving to a different pitch is just not practical - unless Reading will introduce people to patrol buskers like they do in Oxford. Moving to a different pitch after an hour could mean you run the risk of not be able sing for the rest of the day in town, especially if other buskers refuse to move on after an hour (which is a huge possibility unless enforced by the council). This affects me because I am a professional busker (busking is my full time job & pays my rent) and I need to be able to sing

longer than an hour to earn a daily wage. It takes me roughly two hours per day to make a living wage from busking. I can do that within two hours as I build a rapport with people who listen - I do not repeat songs during that time, so some people will listen to my entire set. But an hour is just not long enough to build up a rapport and earn the money required to live in this economy and it is a risk to move location.

There is an assumption that buskers contribute to the life of the town centre, rather than prove a detriment to shoppers. The current situation is intolerable in loudness, number of buskers and lack of ability - it actively discourages myself and other visitors to the town centre.

Volume - it's a bit vague. What is loud for one is not for others. maybe add Db guidance (some performers will be aware of this)

While polite for a busker to engage with nearby businesses directly, most performances happen near multiple businesses so it would be impractical for someone outside multiple business to introduce themselves, especially with the proposed time limits. The one hour time limit is too short, a two hour period in spaces is better, in case performers struggle with set up. I do agree with the no return in 3 hours policy

Yes I do not believe that any amplification should be allowed. A genuine busker should be able to make themselves quite adequately heard.

due to unprecedented adverse economic context of our local grassroots music scene, I don't believe it is the right thing to do to restrict product selling by buskers. I would advise to have those whose products are related to supporting arts and culture be exempt from sales restrictions.

no

no

- Change locations after one hour and avoid returning to the same location for three hours. A culture of sharing and swapping pitches with other performers is encouraged. [This is somewhat unreasonable. Most performers travel to their areas of work and require time to set up. Most performers that I have seen work for 90-120 minutes before moving on or taking a break. Asking street stall vendors to move every hour, even when they are playing Christmas music 12-hours a day in December, would not be reasonable).

**Q5. Do you have any other comments**

A strong emphasis should be placed on the street preachers. They regularly spread fear and hate on broad street.

Amplification needs to be monitored as some are much too loud and drown out the acoustic sets.

BID need to audition potential buskers

Buskers are a positive for the town and should be encouraged. However most of them are a little loud, and when they dominate the street they should be removed if they refuse to turn down. There is also a quality issue, some are great, some not so much. Quality control would be good but no idea how this can be done!

Buskers are not the problem, beggars are. You are wasting time, money and effort on the wrong issue!

Buskers are pretty awful and too noisy. They are a distraction and spoil my shopping experience in Reading. They do not add any vibrancy just annoyance.

Buskers blatantly ignore the guide. Working in a shop on the high street, I frequently get headaches and earaches from the sheer volume of particular performers. They also ignore the 'repetitive performance' clause, with every single performer repeating their songs over and over on an almost daily basis. I'm sure all other workers in shops along the high street agree with me when I say that we want the singers to go away. Musicians are welcome as they usually adhere to the volume rules. Singers think everyone in Reading is there to watch them, but in reality they are just a hindrance on the pavement and a pain in our ears. Please, please stop.

Busking adds to the vibrancy of the Town and it's lovely to see people sit and appreciate the variety of music.

Busking does not always add to a positive shopping experience and not everyone appreciates the use of amplification. In fact, there are considerations to be made for those with sensory issues, as well as those working in the shops in front of popular busking areas. Recently performances seem to be getting louder.

Excessive volume is a real problem with buskers in Reading, making being seated outdoors in a cafe on Broad Street near the Oracle or near Waterstones pretty unpleasant.

Good to have genuine buskers but not street scammers.

Having a business in Reading town centre we are obviously affected by busking. Most of it is really enjoyable and creates a positive atmosphere. It's just the odd occasion it is just way too loud.

How do buskers know about the guide? And how do they access it?

How will you enforce this? I've never seen anyone asked to stop. If this is to have any impact it has to be enforced.

I disagree with buskers using an amplifier and feel it's completely unnecessary

I don't think religious groups should be allowed to preach in the centre of the town. I think religion is a personal choice and you don't have the right to inflict your beliefs on someone just trying to go about their daily business. I also think charity workers should not be allowed to harass shoppers. Stand with a collection tin or bucket, but asking people to sign up to monthly direct debits is uncomfortable, especially when they follow you down the street!

I enjoy the buskers when I go into town, but do not enjoy being told I am going to hell if I don't conform to a religion, Christianity in particular

I have been busking professionally since 2015 (so coming on nine years). My hometown is Reading, but I also busk in eleven different towns across Berkshire, Hampshire, Surrey and Oxfordshire. I try to busk in Reading twice a month. I sing many different genres and songs (from pop to jazz) but specialize in musical theatre and classical crossover (I am a trained classical singer with a degree in Music theatre). I sing with a portable amp and use backing tracks. I love my job



and am successful as a busker. I can do it for a living because a lot of people like to listen to my voice and are generous. I do firmly believe that busking done right can really bring a positive atmosphere to a town. I know many other buskers who also report that they are told regularly that they have made someone's week, and occasionally even their year, through their performances. It matters a lot to many people, as there is also a social element to busking; I interact with many people on the street who come up to chat with me – some will share their life stories. I have even had homeless individuals give me coins, and once, a man gave me a sandwich and drink because they said they really enjoyed my singing. These are just a few of the positives interactions I have had with people on the street. I understand that noise levels can be an issue at times, but I do not believe that all Reading buskers should be penalized simply because some performers are excessively loud. Additionally, I feel that there should be a balanced approach to handling complaints, as not all complaints are valid; sometimes, people simply do not like street performers regardless of volume or repertoire. Below are suggestions I believe could help control excessive noise from busking: 1. Designated spots similar to those in London (for example Covent Garden). This would greatly help reduce sound clashes between buskers. If there were designated spots spaced suitably apart, it would significantly lessen noise interference among performers, which is an annoyance to everyone, including the buskers themselves. Buskers would respect these spots since having them would work in their favour by legitimizing their presence in the high street. 2. Hiring a council representative trained to interact as a go between buskers and businesses. This approach was effective in Newbury about seven years ago (sadly it is no longer in place). There was a woman named [REDACTED] who worked for Newbury BID. She would go out and engage with buskers and local businesses, checking in on how everything was going and asking if anyone had any issues. If there was a complaint against a busker, she would listen to both sides, if she deemed the busker was in the wrong they would be asked to move or lower their volume, and if there were issues of harassment, she would help solve them. Because she genuinely cared about the welfare of everyone involved; buskers, residents and business owners respected her authority. 3. Return to the system where you have to book a slot to busk in Reading. [REDACTED] who worked at the council was amazing at replying to busking requests. When I first started busking in Reading (2015), she would reply within a day to a busking slot request. A slot was two hours and there were specific locations in the high street that were advised to set up. By requesting a slot the council had a busker's contact information on their books, and if a complaint is made they can contact the busker in real time through email, text or phone call. It also helped greatly with the problem of having too many buskers on same street. If there was another busker on the street, you could legitimately ask a busker to leave if they hadn't booked the spot for that time. Most would comply if you had a council email confirming the time and date. In conclusion I believe and know buskers do add value to a town. I believe they can change an atmosphere for the better. I also believe that problems arising from excessive noise could be solved with mutual respect, some of the suggestions above being implemented, clear guidelines, and council mediation. I believe this would be good for all parties involved.

I like living in a town that is vibrant and creative, more should be done to support the music and arts scene to get performers into venues, not just on the streets

I live between Reading and Newbury, I love the buskers but visit Reading less now. I go to Hare Hatch every week but no longer stop at Reading due to the parking fees, yellow lines, restrictions and fines. Please read the Reading Today facebook page. I think today 8/8/24 there are 168 comments about the buskers with 99% of people loving them. Please don't move them on or make them pay a fee, that would be terrible. Note.. I do not like the religious activists in the street and sometimes feel threatened by them.

I strongly agree that there needs to be some regulations regarding buskers in Reading. On a regular basis we can't hear what our customers are saying as the noise from the buskers outside is

so loud. We also have an office based above our shop and the noise from the buskers regularly disrupts zoom calls and meetings. We also regularly receive complaints from customers regarding the noise and customers find it hard to browse in peace.

I think bikers are causing more dangerous and disruptive compared with busking lol

I think buskers should be licensed (at minimal cost). This will prevent the few cases where the busker is either breaching the guide or, in some cases, just no good.

I think it would be worth having designated busking spots marked (like you do on the underground and in some other places). I appreciate hearing all the music but depending where people pitch up sometimes you get caught in the crossfire between where people are posted and the sound coming from all directions. I recognise people tend to mostly stick to certain spots, but it would be helpful to make them more formal and in a way, I think it helps encourage it too by saying this is the spot to come listen to someone rather than people pitching up in different places each time.

I think it's brilliant to have live music in Reading centre as it can give it a sense of community atmosphere and brightens up my trips to the centre. I agree that performers should respect their surroundings. Guidelines for volume and avoiding obstruction, without undue restriction, will help them to know what is expected and allow them the freedom to perform into the future.

I think there needs to be some kind of distinction between busking/musical/theatre, and religious preaching. I've never had an issue with buskers, etc., but I dislike preaching being allowed.

I thoroughly support the maximum volume for PA sets - I love buskers, lets have more. But the volume is uncomfortable for me at times and drowns out other activities.

I would prefer that no amplifiers are used. They are always too loud and intrusive. I avoid Broad Street completely when there are amplified performers.

In general, many buskers are often far too loud. There seems to be no quality control. In London buskers have historically had to audition for a license to perform and the quality of the performers is generally much higher. I enjoy buskers but I would like to see an improvement in the quality and a lowering of volume. It can often feel like an assault and I/we sometimes feel discouraged from venturing into town for this reason. I say this as a musician who teaches contemporary music. Listening to buskers is meant to be a pleasure not an assault

Increases the risk of overcrowding and possibly pickpockets.

No

Not all buskers enhance the atmosphere of the town centre and should be vetted for quality, ability to hold a note, and repertoire variety. Many a caterwauler has ruined a day out.

People do not seem to realise this guidance applies to street preachers as well as more typical performers. Restricting use of public furniture could be beneficial but performers should be able to sit down in the benches if desired. Recently, Samsung set up a double decker bus in town with activities. It lasted several days and took up much of the street view. I found it very annoying since its located directly opposite the oracle it took up most of the street width and view in a particularly busy area. More direct limitations would be beneficial than simply encouraging mindfulness

Quality street entertainment is to be welcomed, as is regulation. I have read the document and it seems to clarify how things should be and make sense. There have been several occasions in recent years where volumes have been too loud, and spread way beyond the intended audience.

Regular enforcement will be essential otherwise the rules will be ignored by the many 'scammers' and bogus buskers operating in the town centre.

See above re amplifiers

Seems like good advice

Street vendors have designated areas for conducting their profession and work. Street performers currently do not. There should be should be dedicated areas. These could be several painted spots somewhere on the highstreets more than 50m apart, with timeslots/sessions that could be booked. This would help reduce noise clashes/complaints, legitimise and promote busking street performing in Reading which could reduce public complaints as it would be seen as 'they have a right to be there'. Tube buskers have spaces, and cyclists have cycle lanes which validate their presence (and reduce what are seen as 'valid complaints'). Some street performers should be respected as skilled professionals because that is what some street performers are [skilled professional]. You made a note about performers adding to the vibrant culture of Reading to which I agree. It may be anecdotal, but I think an over looked part is that people feel safer with performers around. Overall, there is some good guidance in there from the perspective of a street performer and resident/bystander. Specifically, not repeating songs, blocking entrances to shops and public buildings and keeping distance from other performers. Some of the comments on volume levels and distortion are definitely sensible. The gaps in the document are mostly about the protections for street performers and their right to make a living through their profession.

Thank you!

The aggression and open discrimination demonstrated by some street preachers needs stopping

The current buskers are appalling. They range from teenage public school kids with absolutely no talent, to middle aged men on guitars with absolutely no talent. The noise, particularly around John Lewis and outside Sainsbury's would be considered a genuine environmental nuisance in other location. It is far too loud, far too frequent, and also makes Broad Street a much more cluttered space. I don't want to listen to these people. Neither does anyone else. These people (note I don't use the word performers) are obviously deeply ignorant - I am very sceptical that a voluntary guide without genuine enforcement will encourage them to moderate their ways. Get rid of them!!!!

There are too many singers turning up with a mic and karaoke tracks, more concerned with filming their performance for social media than actually fulfilling the traditions of street performance. As someone who honed their musical craft in part by getting out on the street with nothing but an acoustic guitar and a voice, I find it disheartening that these singers are taking pitches away from "proper" street performers.

There should be a minimum standard for buskers and maximum timeframe that they can play on any given day. We recently visited town for an appointment at Trailfinders. The noise from a very amateur and loud busker just outside who repeated the same noise for almost one hour drive us utterly bonkers. We couldn't take any more after this time, wrapped up the appointment, left town and came home. I'm Reading born and bred and can't bear to see how awful our town

centre has become. It makes me feel ashamed to be from here. The awful busking is further dragging the place down.

There should be people of the council present especially at the weekend to stop all this going too far.

Town centres should serve as places of peaceful public gathering, commerce, and civic life. However, the increasing prevalence of busking in these spaces has turned what should be calm environments into chaotic noise-scapes. It's time to seriously consider banning busking in town centers, and here's why. Firstly, the noise pollution created by buskers is overwhelming. While some buskers might be talented musicians or performers, many are not. The constant barrage of loud, unpolished performances can be incredibly disruptive to businesses, shoppers, and residents alike. Imagine trying to have a quiet conversation at a café, only to have it drowned out by the off-key wailing of an amateur guitarist or an aggressive drumming performance echoing through the streets. This constant cacophony detracts from the atmosphere of the town center, which is meant to be a welcoming and relaxing environment. Secondly, busking often leads to congestion and disorder. Crowds gather around performers, blocking walkways, and disrupting the flow of foot traffic. This creates unnecessary bottlenecks in already busy areas, leading to frustration and potential safety hazards. Town centers are often bustling places that need clear pathways for people to move freely, but buskers and their audiences create obstacles that impede this. In the event of an emergency, these crowded areas could become dangerous chokepoints. Furthermore, busking invites a problematic mix of competition and territoriality among performers. Popular town center spots become coveted territories, leading to conflicts between buskers over who gets to perform where and when. This can result in aggression and tension spilling over into the public space, creating an uncomfortable environment for all who pass by. The town center is not the place for turf wars. In addition to these logistical and noise-related issues, there is a growing concern about the professionalism of town centers. As businesses strive to create an attractive, polished environment for visitors, street performers undercut this effort with a makeshift and often disheveled aesthetic. Tourists and shoppers seeking a pleasant experience are instead confronted by an array of street performers that often do not reflect the desired tone of the area. Moreover, the unregulated nature of busking opens the door to questionable acts and inappropriate behavior. Without oversight, some buskers resort to offensive or inappropriate performances to capture attention, further degrading the quality of the town center. What may be seen as "art" to some is often experienced as a public nuisance by others. Ultimately, while some may argue that busking adds a vibrant, artistic element to public spaces, the negative consequences far outweigh any potential benefits. Busking in town centers creates noise pollution, disrupts traffic flow, fosters conflict, and detracts from the overall aesthetic of these areas. It is time to take a firm stand against this growing problem and ban busking from town centers to preserve the peaceful and orderly nature of these important public spaces.

Very helpful. Actually, having designated pitches might be helpful. Especially in central areas like Broad Street

Very much in agreement on noise nuisance. I am often listening to podcasts/radio and have to stop because of volume in the street.

Volume from amplification is the biggest issue. Guide puts an undue onus on the public to monitor & discuss with buskers: most won't feel filling to engage in such a discussion. Would prefer more defined (black / white) volume limits & monitoring by council

We have several irritations that would be well addressed by this guidance, mostly not in the street performers groups, but other sources of amplification and over enthusiasm. The worst offender in the 'shop blaring loud repetitive music' is the former Hotter unit on the junction of Broad Street

and Union Street. The speakers are positioned to output to Broad Street, not to play music in the shop, and the volume and highly repetitive nature of the output is deeply frustrating. On the 'religious groups' front - the particular issue I have is with evangelical behaviour. The group who wear bright yellow T-shirts/Jumpers have fairly regularly accosted my more diverse looking customers (Trans/queer/non-conforming/costumed etc) and been overly insistent that they stop and talk about saving their souls. We have had several come into the shop to get away from them, literally characterising it as 'escaping to somewhere safe'. I have witnessed pairs of the evangelicals leading people they have stopped in the street through a catchism (repeat after me style) about 'Letting the Lord into their souls' to be forgiven for their past sins. This happened in the middle of Union Street in the late afternoon outside the shop door. There have been other groups who have conducted amplified preaching on Broad Street, which is usually repetitive and not nearly as pleasant as a decent busker. My biggest issue with amplified noise of any kind is that I and my staff have no choice about having to listen to it. We can't move away from something we don't like or disagree with, and if I can hear it half way down Union Street from a Broad Street source, it's got to be too loud.

What about Charity fundraisers (Chaggers) who approach people for donations often not taking no as an answer. Also religious groups - they are not busking - what is the standing with them

What is currently defined as a busker is a street performer. However with the advances in technology it's quite normal now for a sub par singer to rock up with some karaoke backing tracks and just drown the street with obnoxious noise. If the busker has no instrument and is just loudly singing over prerecorded music that should not be allowed. It should be a rule that the musician has to play an instrument whilst singing. Also instrumentalists playing with backing tracks have been seen to be fake on multiple occasions which should just make an outright rule of no backing tracks. 50w maximum on speakers or amps and noise to never go above 70Db.

When the Reading Bagpipers were in town, they were loud but it was brilliant. It was fairly brief and fairly repetitive (ans bagpiping can be..) I'm pretty sure they did not ask for money. The whole town stopped. Please make sure this guide does not prevent things like that! Buskers are fairly harmless, it's more street preachers and those charity people who are trying to stop people and get 121 attention from people I find irritating. Please get rid of those.

When you combine the noise guidelines with the actual length of Broad Street, the above rules about allowing access for emergency vehicles, not using existing street furniture and leaving 50m between performances, practically there's only at an absolute maximum, 5 spaces in which buskers can use. This doesn't even take into account space taken up by existing and long established street traders such as the flower stall, children's merry-go-round and food trucks by Chain Street. It would be far easier to just break the street up into 'zones' in which one performance can be. The guidelines won't then be wide open to interpretation and buskers would (literally) know where they stand regarding the various rules. Whilst a culture of swapping busking spots is something I applaud and hadn't thought of previously. Clearly the most popular spot is outside John Lewis or Marks and Spencer. Maybe a tiered system might be worth exploring so that 1 day outside John Lewis equals 2 days at the end of Broad Street near KFC. I'm not sure how they decide who goes where at the moment but if they have 3 'days' a week, you could use all 3 at the end of broad street or choose 1 day outside John Lewis and 1 day elsewhere.