



August 2015

Top of the class



Early indications from the Scottish Qualifications Authority are that 2015 has been another positive year for exam results in Edinburgh. It's a real achievement to have not only sustained but built on the successes of last year.

Our pupils should be very proud of themselves – all their hard work has certainly paid off and praise should also go to parents and carers who have supported their children over the past year.

I also want to congratulate all our teaching staff on their commitment to delivering learning experiences of the highest standards, particularly given the introduction of the new exams.

We are committed to making sure all school leavers enter a positive destination of employment, training or further education. This year a record 93.1% of young people achieved and sustained a positive destination through initiatives such as the Edinburgh Guarantee.

New Chief Exec takes the reins

Our new Chief Executive, Andrew Kerr, began work on 27 July. He joins us from Cornwall Council, succeeding Dame Sue Bruce who retired following 40 years of public service.

It was clear from the recruitment process that he had the qualities required to take on the role and I look forward to working closely with him to ensure the continuing success of our city.

Andrew brings significant experience of leading and delivering change in the public sector and has achieved recent success in securing a Devolution Deal for Cornwall – all of which is very encouraging as he moves into his new role.

City Deal business breakfast

This Monday, 17th August, the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region – comprising ourselves, East Lothian, Fife, Scottish Borders, Midlothian and West Lothian Councils – will be hosting a [business breakfast](#) at the EICC.

We will be encouraging business leaders to pledge their support for our proposed £1bn city deal, designed to accelerate growth across the region. It is important that we align our ambitions with the business community and we want to keep them fully involved in the process.

In shaping the deal, we want to build on our strengths across the region, whilst tackling persistent inequality and other constraints that threaten to hold us back. If successful, we could potentially unlock an additional £3.2bn worth of private sector investment.

Usher Hall success

Congratulations to the team at the Usher Hall, who this week reported a [record-breaking year](#), with bumper ticket sales of £2.7m and total income breaking the £4m barrier. The council-run venue has seen an increase in both sales income and events held at the venue during 2014/15.

Fitting, then, that our premier concert hall should play host to the [Harmonium Project](#), the quite stunning launch of this year's Edinburgh International Festival – Director Fergus Linehan's first programme. Running until 31 August, the Festival welcomes 2,300 artists from 39 nations to perform in the city.

Not forgetting, of course, the irrepressible Fringe, our biggest yet, and the International Book Festival, which promises to take us 'around the world in 18 days' – opening tomorrow (15 August) in Charlotte Square.

ICT deal

A new [ICT contract](#), approved last week, is set to transform our services and save a minimum of £45m over the next seven years. It will also deliver an estimated £46m worth of essential services at no extra cost.

Our preferred bidder – CGI – is one of the largest independent suppliers in the world and bring vast experience of transforming ICT services and accelerating channel shift, which will be hugely important in supporting our objectives for change.

Our schools will benefit greatly with bandwidth in secondary schools set to increase by up to 50 times, and primary schools by up to 100 times. The contract will also create over 200 jobs locally, plus over 60 new modern apprentice opportunities.

A first for Leith – and Scotland

Leith Walk constituents are being asked to elect two councillors on 10 September – a Scottish first.

The [by-election](#) will use the Single Transferable Vote (STV) system, where voters use numbers to rank candidates in order of preference rather than using a single cross. Voters can express 'preferences' for as many or as few of the candidates as they wish.

If this is your ward, I would urge you to have your say on who represents your interests locally. You have until Tuesday 25 August to register to vote or apply for a postal vote for the by-election. Contact the [Electoral Registration Office](#) or phone 0131 344 2500

Edinburgh Partnership Community plan

As Chair of the Edinburgh Partnership, I am pleased to introduce our new three-year [Edinburgh Partnership Community Plan 2015-18](#).

Central to the plan is our vision for Edinburgh to be a thriving, successful and sustainable city in which all forms of deprivation and inequality are reduced

It has been informed by feedback from communities and partnerships across the city, underlining the Board's commitment to working with partners across the public, private, community and third sectors to plan and deliver better services and improve the lives of local people.

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