



December 2015

## Are you ready for winter?



It's safe to say that winter is officially upon us. Here at the Council we've been preparing for months, stocking up on salt and testing gritting routes. Our teams are already regularly out treating roads, pavements and cycle routes to minimise icy conditions.

But are you ready for winter? It's important that residents make their own plans too to make sure they stay warm over the chillier months, ensuring that their homes are weather-proofed and that there are arrangements in place should wintry weather cause disruption to travel, schools or any other services.

We've got lots of [tips and information](#) on our web pages to help the public prepare, and you can find the Scottish Government's advice on their [Ready Scotland website](#).

What's more, you can *save time, do it online* this winter by using our web forms to request a new grit bin, report an empty one or find out about our priority gritting routes.

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## Tram project update

At next week's council meeting, we will be considering the potential next steps for extending the tram in Edinburgh.

I'm satisfied that the latest recommendations offer a viable way forward for the project, which we are confident is set to offer a range of benefits for the city.

Obviously we want to provide best value to the citizens of Edinburgh, and by re-phasing the first stages of project development we will be able to deliver this within financial constraints, and ensure as much preparation as possible is carried out before any physical work gets underway.

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## Small Business Saturday

This weekend is the annual [Small Business Saturday](#) which encourages residents to shop locally. In support of this, there are a number of events taking place in town centres across the city, including Christmas light switch-ons in Stockbridge and Portobello.

Edinburgh is home to numerous independent retailers and small enterprises across our nine town centres and beyond. Over 200,000 people live within 1km of our town centres and they support 25,000 jobs.

I would encourage everyone to support their local shops and other businesses every Saturday but particularly on Small Business Saturday – strong and vibrant town centres play a crucial role in a successful city economy.

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## Still time to have your say

There's only two weeks left of this year's [budget consultation](#) and I would like to thank the 2,000 of you who have already taken the time to have your say.

Last week, attention turned to our Question Time event, giving members of the public the opportunity to quiz our panel of senior councilors (including me!) on the budget proposals that mattered to them. It was a lively debate with the Chair, Scotsman and Evening News editor Frank O'Donnell, taking contributions from the floor and from those watching at home. [Archive footage](#) of the event is available to view on our website.

Please take the time to have your say on the proposals, if you haven't already. The consultation period runs until **17 December**, and we *will* consider all feedback prior to setting the final budget on 21 January 2016.

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## The Missing Link

As you know I'm a keen cyclist and walker and so it's always of great interest when I read reports on how we can help to make Edinburgh even more bike and pedestrian friendly.

Our latest proposals for a 'family-friendly' cycle link between Roseburn and Leith Walk will plug a gap in the city's extensive cycle network, providing a new European-style cycle route connecting the west to the east, running through the city centre via George Street. By creating a cycle lane that's mostly segregated from traffic we want to encourage people who aren't confident to get on their bike.

We now want to [hear your views on our proposals](#) for the route, which it has been estimated would increase cycling along the corridor by 90%. Our public consultation closes on 5 January 2016.

## Cooperative Capital – continued

Our Communities & Neighbourhoods committee recently learned of further good progress against the Council's [Cooperative Capital Framework](#), which has now reached the end of its third year.

Ten schools have earned the 'schools of cooperation' award; tenant-led inspections are now taking place in housing; two new care cooperatives have been established – the Encompass Cooperative and the Care at Home Collaborative; and, as I mentioned last month, the hugely successful launch of the [Edinburgh Community Solar Cooperative](#)'s £1.4m share offer has just taken place.

In total, 16 coops have been developed in the first three years of the framework, with six receiving business development support from the Council.

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## Farewell Alastair Maclean

Our Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Governance, Alastair Maclean, is moving to pastures new in the New Year; returning to the private sector to become Baillie Gifford's Head of Legal.

Alastair joined us as head of legal in 2009, becoming director two years later. Since then, he has been instrumental in solving some of our most high-profile challenges, from tram settlement negotiations to resolving the large number of complaints from the former property conservation service, to name just two.

He has also made a huge contribution to service improvement, transforming critical services, such as procurement, audit and risk and ICT, and leading the Council-wide transformation programme. His drive, energy and commitment will be greatly missed and we wish him every success for the future.

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## Season's Greetings

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you a merry Christmas and all the very best for 2016. I can think of nowhere better to enjoy [Christmas](#) or bring in the [New Year](#) than right here in Scotland's great capital city.

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