



A very Social Sleep-Out

Homelessness remains a key priority for us in the Council but it takes a citywide commitment to really support those at risk in our city. By working together with partner agencies and charities, we can make an even bigger difference.

That is why I have high hopes for Social Bite's fundraising Sleep-Out. Billed as 'Live Aid' for Scotland's homeless, the event looks set to become the world's biggest ever charity sleepover and raise millions of pounds in the process.

The Council will help to host the event in West Princes Street Gardens this December, and I'm looking forward to taking part. I'll be joined by Depute Leader Cammy Day and the Council's Chief Executive Andrew Kerr as we sleep under the stars on a cold winter's night in Edinburgh. You can [support our fundraising here](#) or why not sign up to take part yourself at [Sleep in the Park](#).

New lease of life for Meadowbank

As one of the city's flagship sports venues, the [renewal of Meadowbank Sports Centre](#) is a major project for the Council and for the many thousands of people who will benefit from our plans for new, state-of-the-art facilities.

The old Meadowbank has served us well in its almost 50-year lifespan and its closure on 3 December will be bittersweet for some as we reach the end of an era.

But this is also the start of a new and improved Meadowbank. If you haven't seen the latest designs – released earlier this week – you can [find them here](#). They will be considered later this year by the Council's Planning Committee.

New Queensferry High School set to make a bigger splash

As councillors, we all know that listening to the views of local people is a vital part of political life. So I'm proud that that's exactly what we've done in the case of the swimming pool at the new Queensferry High School.

The initial proposal was for four lanes but, after feedback from the public, the planning application has been submitted (earlier today) with an additional two. With the population of the Queensferry area expanding, there is a need for improved sporting facilities and that's what we're providing. In addition to the six-lane swimming pool, there will be a larger games hall, new fitness centre, dance studio and floodlit 3G and 4G pitches – all of which will be available for use by the local community.

This is a great example of local democracy in action and, now that the planning application has been submitted, there is still more time for public feedback before it goes before the planning committee early next year.

Protecting our Festivals' legacy

Edinburgh's festivals have been breaking records and welcoming visitors from all over the world for 70 years so, in this crucial anniversary year, it is important that we protect their legacy.

That is why I am delighted that we've joined forces with the Festivals and the Scottish Government to secure [an additional £15m investment](#) to help our festivals thrive over the next five years.

This is an important move following many months of negotiations with the Scottish Government to secure the future success of our festivals. Not only do the events support our jobs market and economy to the tune of £313m every year, they are at the heart of Edinburgh's cultural offering and make us unique. Here's to the next 70 years!

More speed, less waste

So, there's little doubt about the positive impact our festivals have on the city. But the influx of visitors, tourists and performers also significantly increases pressure on our services, particularly waste management.

I'm delighted, therefore, to see complaints over issues like litter, dog fouling, overflowing communal bins and fly-tipping across the city have [dropped by 32% compared to the same time last year](#) – and have more

than halved in the city centre. This is testament to the hard work of our staff, and demonstrates the impact our efforts to manage demand can have.

But while we rely on additional street cleansing staff and extra bin collections during this period, we also count on the public to do their bit. By encouraging everyone to take pride in the Capital by binning their litter, cleaning up after their dogs and disposing of large items responsibly, we want to keep Edinburgh the welcoming place it should be all year round.

Tram to Newhaven

Since being [approved in principle](#) by the Transport and Environment Committee earlier this month, it's now up to all 63 councillors to decide the necessary next steps towards taking the tram to Newhaven and completing line 1a.

All members have had the opportunity to scrutinise the Outline Business Case in minute detail over the past weeks, with officers and an independent expert on hand to give further information or advice.

Of course, no final decision would be made until autumn 2018, giving ample time to incorporate findings from Lord Hardie's Inquiry. We'd also make the most of the intervening time to ensure we build up and maintain useful and transparent two-way relationships with residents and businesses who would be most likely to be impacted by the works.

Leith Street Bridge

Leith Street will take an important step back towards its former self this weekend thanks the removal of the footbridge between the Omni Centre car park and (what was) the St James Centre.

At 120 tonnes and 15m high, this will be no mean feat, but contractors will work through the night on Friday to remove the structure piece by piece, ensuring access to Leith Street for pedestrians and businesses by Saturday morning.

In many ways, the bridge and the current road layout are relics of a different age when the car was king. The new design, part of the wider St James Quarter development, will return the street to a bustling retail area, far more suited to all types of road user, however they may be travelling.

Edinburgh Award

Having spent over 15 years at the helm of Scotland's biggest University, Principal Timothy O'Shea will retire from his role early next year.

He will be thanked by the Lord Provost on behalf of the city with our most prestigious annual accolade – the [Edinburgh Award](#). Sir Timothy is a very worthy recipient of the honour and leaves the University of Edinburgh in good health as an internationally renowned centre of academic excellence.

He will have a cast of his handprints set in stone outside the City Chambers alongside previous recipients J.K Rowling, Sir Chris Hoy, Professor Peter Higgs and Sir Tom Farmer, to name but a few. I congratulate him on behalf of the Council and wish him well for his retirement.

The Outlander effect

With Edinburgh once again taking centre stage on screen, the city is set to reap the rewards of a boom in location tourism.

Close to 1.5 million households across the world are expected to tune in to watch the latest series of [Outlander](#), which features star appearances from Edinburgh's Hopetoun House, Craigmillar Castle and Bakehouse Close, which houses the Council's Museum of Edinburgh. We fully expect to see a spike in 'set-jettlers' to Edinburgh as a result.

This is, of course, the latest in a string of silver screen appearances for the city. Thanks to the Council's establishment of Film Edinburgh, the city is increasingly becoming the Golden Girl of Hollywood. At almost £8m annually in economic benefit to the city, filming in Edinburgh is well worth tuning in to.

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