



## *Two years on...*

Edinburgh is a vibrant city full of opportunity and, since forming the SNP-Labour coalition two years ago, we've worked extremely hard to ensure that **all residents can share in this success**; investing in the things that support and sustain growth while confronting the challenges that come with it.

Our city's attractiveness contributes to its continued growth: by 2023, there will be 4,000 more children in our schools and our total population will have increased by 23,000 people. And while we can feel proud of our world-class status, we must also recognise and address the pressure on our core services and on the people who live and work here.

At the heart of this coalition is our commitment to **improve opportunity, increase inclusion and tackle inequality and poverty**. Building thousands of new affordable homes, opening outstanding new schools and supporting hundreds of young apprentices each year are just some of the ways in which we are ensuring everyone has the best chance to be involved in and benefit from that growth.

Our five-year programme remains a bold one that will still take a great deal of hard work to deliver. But, as I set out below, we've made great progress across a number of areas since 2017.

## *Ambition on a global scale*

Edinburgh has become synonymous with ambition over the past two years. Whether it's our transformative vision for **putting people at the heart of our places**, our pioneering monthly [Open Streets](#) events, our bold 2030 carbon neutral target or our nation-leading push for both a tourist tax and tighter regulation of short-term lets to protect our communities – we're making people in Scotland and far beyond sit up and take notice of what we're trying to achieve for current and future generations.

The climate emergency and, crucially, the impact of worsening air quality on our health and wellbeing are a critical focus and we're asking for feedback right now on our ambitious [Low Emission Zones](#) and [City Centre Transformation](#) plans – please [have your say](#) on our Consultation Hub if you haven't already.

Our emphasis on reducing private car usage by investing in walking, cycling and public transport to **cut emissions, reduce congestion and boost people's health**, is at the heart of ongoing projects such as the City Centre West East Cycling Link, West Edinburgh Active Travel Network and Meadows to George Street route.

Taking [trams to Newhaven](#) is all about future-proofing our transport network to manage the population growth expected here – much of our city's growth will be focused around Leith and north Edinburgh. It's that growth that will double overall tram passenger numbers in the first year to 16 million, bringing **economic, social and environmental benefits** to the city. And, crucially, the project will not divert money from other Council services.

Just along the waterfront, plans to unlock the incredible potential of the [Granton Waterfront](#) are beginning to take shape and we're very excited to work together with the public and our partners to revitalise this underused part of the city.

Of course, our ambition extends far beyond the city limits, having played our part in securing the transformational [£1.3bn City Region Deal](#), which will bring much-needed **investment in housing, transport, skills, innovation and culture** across the region over the next 15 years.

We're already hailed as the UK's greenest city, but we can't rest on our laurels. We're very pleased to have secured nearly £900k in [Future Parks](#) funding to ensure our wonderful parks and greenspaces continue to thrive for generations to come. This work goes hand in hand with our commitment to planting and looking after more and more trees in Edinburgh – with more than **12,000 trees planted in the last two years**.

Food security is another major challenge for all cities and our fantastic Edible Edinburgh project aiming to make sure everyone in the city has access to good, healthy food is making real progress. It was brilliant to see the partnership scoop a bronze [Sustainable Food Cities award](#) earlier this month – a great example of organisations from all over the Capital pulling together to make a real, positive difference.

## *Getting the basics right*

Of course, all this effort to secure a thriving future for Edinburgh would be pointless if we weren't also looking after the city and our residents in the here and now. Delivering core services to the best of our ability is an absolute priority and I'm pleased to see significant improvements in the services that matter most to our residents as a result of our hard work.

We experienced an inevitably bumpy period when we introduced new collection rotas and other changes to our waste service late last year but, in recent months, complaints have fallen to their lowest level in five years. Our focus now is on building on that progress to ensure **residents continue to receive the high standard of service they expect and deserve**.

Making streets and paths as safe and accessible as possible is crucial if we're to encourage more active travel. Although there's still clearly a way to go, our Roads Improvement Plan is already paying dividends in improving the condition of roads and footways across the city. We've committed to invest more than £120m in our road and path network over the life of this Administration and just this week we learned that our official **Road Condition Index is now at its highest level since 2012** – a great result for all road users.

We've put extra resources into preventing homelessness, and with initiatives such as our new Rent Deposit Scheme, we're putting a real focus on creating more routes out of it. We're also investing in services to **support our most vulnerable residents** through Housing First while our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan gives us a framework to end the use of temporary accommodation completely.

It sounds obvious but house building is the ultimate solution to the housing challenges that we face in Edinburgh. And we're doing this through one of the **most ambitious council-led housebuilding programmes in the UK**. Together with our housing association partners, we've committed to build 20,000 new affordable homes over the next ten years. Over the last two years we've built over 2,000 affordable homes with our partners and the Council alone has another 3,000 under construction or design.

We're **investing heavily in our property estate** and, as part of our budget, we have approved over £150m worth of investment in the upkeep of council buildings across the city, including schools, libraries, community centres and offices.

Investment in **education remains a priority** for this Administration, with Boroughmuir and St John's both having opened their doors to pupils, and work on a new Queensferry High well underway. Planning permission has now been granted for a new St Crispin's and we're waiting for planning consent for a fantastic new Castlebrae High School, with construction work due to start on both later this year.

We're also making great progress in meeting the expansion of early years and childcare provision to 1,140 hours with 49 of our centres providing the additional hours to over 2,000 children. Further, as part of our drive to tackle child poverty we've set up a Pupil Equity Framework, the first local authority in the UK to do so, increased school uniform grants to £100 and established our Child Poverty Action Group so we can help those most in need.

Addressing the consequences of **poverty continues to be one of our biggest challenges**. Sadly, too many of our residents' lives are affected by not having enough to support themselves and their families. We are determined to confront this and, late last year, we launched the [Edinburgh Poverty Commission](#), tasked with defining the steps the city must take to reduce and prevent poverty.

Turning to social care, we've seen significant improvements in performance across a number of areas. The number of **people waiting for care in their home has halved in the past year**, while the number of people delayed from leaving hospital has dropped by more than a third. Given the Edinburgh Health & Social Care Partnership's focus on helping people to live their lives in their own homes wherever possible, these are particularly welcome results.

## ***Celebrating our diversity***

One inescapable issue dominating news headlines over the past two years (and before) is Brexit. Even more reason, then, for our continued efforts to reinforce Edinburgh's position in the UK and Europe as a **thriving, vibrant and welcoming place to live and do business**.

While uncertainty in Westminster endures, the one certainty we do have is that every Edinburgh resident, no matter their nationality, will continue to be treated on equal terms post-Brexit. It's a mark of Edinburgh's appeal and diversity that the Capital is home to far more EU nationals than any other Scottish city and we've taken action to make it easier for our 40,000+ citizens to sign up to the [European Settlement Scheme](#).

Edinburgh is known as a welcoming city and it's thanks to how we **embrace our cultural diversity** that many people are drawn to stay. All of our wards have a higher ethnic diversity than Scotland's average and, dozens of languages are spoken by young people in our schools.

Over the last two years we have rolled out Confucius classrooms, celebrating and promoting Chinese language and culture in schools. We have brought communities together with Scotland's largest ever celebrations and parades for [Chinese New Year](#) and [Diwali](#), the Indian Festival of Light, and even today for the [UN International Day of Yoga](#), a free mass yoga session is taking place next to the Scott Monument backed by the Lord Provost and Indian Consul General.

Earlier this month, we celebrated the graduation of a further 22 interns through the [Edinburgh Project SEARCH](#) programme, an invaluable approach to helping those who have additional needs when they are beginning new careers. Since 2017, 65 interns have taken part in the project and, of those who graduated, well over half have found permanent employment.

This month also marks one year since **our streets were filled with colour** for [Processions](#), when tens of thousands of women and girls took part in a massive commemoration of a century since the first votes for women and continued their march for full gender equality. It seems apt then that, on Saturday, Edinburgh's [PRIDE Scotia](#) takes place, marching for full equality for LGBT+ communities at home and around the world. This comes after our Council chose to fly the trans inclusion flag for the first time above the City Chambers in February – a move to be repeated this weekend as part of the Pride celebrations.

All of these events are free and welcome anyone to join in, and all of them take pride in the many diverse **people and communities who make our city so great**. What could be more Edinburgh than that?

## ***Get involved***

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