



Council Leader's Report

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EDINBURGH
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

April 2021

Celebrating all our city has to offer as restrictions ease

Fantastic news that from Monday (26 April) we'll move into [level 3 of the national route map out of lockdown](#). Shops, cafes and restaurants will once again throw open their doors (with hygiene and physical distancing measures in place), we can plan trips to visit loved ones across Scotland and elsewhere in the UK and more services can begin to resume. Edinburgh Leisure is reopening leisure centres and swimming pools and we're drawing up plans to reopen libraries and cultural venues over the coming weeks.

We've already experienced some sense of normality this month when [all children were able to return to school](#), and now we're able to begin reintroducing our programme of extra-curricular activities outdoors, which we know is so important for our young people's wellbeing.

These moves to ease lockdown are very welcome, and we'll be celebrating and promoting all the city has to offer as restrictions are lifted, supporting the local economy's recovery and helping businesses to navigate the changing guidance – as they've done so well throughout.

However, we're not out of the woods yet and we can't lose sight of our goal. [Public health guidance](#) is still in place for good reason, and we need to continue following the rules around hygiene, physical distancing and mixing with other households indoors. I'd also encourage anyone, even if they don't have symptoms, to get a test if they live near an [asymptomatic testing centre](#). This will really help us to monitor and stop the virus spreading so we can return the city to its usual, lively self as soon as possible.

Be a part of Edinburgh's next chapter

With the rules relaxing, and the freedom to socialise and get together with friends and family, our new joint marketing campaign '[Forever Edinburgh – The Story Never Ends](#)' brings to life Edinburgh's rich tapestry of tales and the unique experiences around every corner of the city at all times of the year.

From our buzzing city centre and eclectic neighbourhoods to our colourful coasts and green spaces, we're inviting residents and visitors to explore new parts of Edinburgh and support our attractions, shops, bars, cafes and restaurants. Delivered in partnership with ETAG and VisitScotland, this engaging six-month multimedia campaign will also encourage residents to rediscover and enjoy their home city after months of lockdown.

That's why I'm asking businesses, attractions and residents to get behind our campaign and tell us their favourite #ForeverEdinburgh stories. We've already had an amazing response from local businesses, helping us to inspire residents to adventure in and around their city and be a part of Edinburgh's next chapter.

Working hard to support businesses

It's been an extremely difficult time for many businesses and self-employed people. We know that taxi and private hire drivers have been severely impacted, which is why we've provided nearly £4.4 million from the Discretionary Grant fund to [top up the Taxi and Private Hire Driver Support Fund](#).

Taxi and private hire drivers each received a top-up payment of £1,000, which bolstered the initial grants of £1,500 through the Taxi and Private Hire Driver Support Fund they received earlier in the year.

In addition, £50 million has been paid out to recipients of the Strategic Framework Business Fund and Business Top-up scheme, which I hope goes some way to getting businesses back on the road to recovery and ready to welcome back and support their customers as restrictions lift. This takes the total amount distributed by the Council to over £250 million – supporting 19,000 businesses across Edinburgh.

Helping keep our busy parks and beaches beautiful

With the weather warming up and lockdown easing, we recognise the need for greater public toilet provision so that residents and visitors can spend longer enjoying our beautiful parks, beaches and open spaces.

I'm pleased, then, that we've agreed a £450,000 plan for temporary public toilets in busy 'hotspot' areas, including the Meadows and Portobello, to help people enjoy them more and help deal with some of the antisocial behaviour that's impacted on our residents. We're asking elected members to approve funding for this at next week's Council meeting (29 April).

The reports of people using gardens as toilets are unacceptable and I really hope that having these additional facilities will help put a stop to that. If agreed, a list of the exact locations will be publicised as soon as we have it. We'll make sure the temporary toilets meet accessibility needs, too.

We've also reviewed permanent provision and a plan for new and improved facilities across Edinburgh is also proposed. There are [currently seven public toilets open](#) in busy areas and we'll reopen more as soon as we possibly can.

Earth Day spurs the world on towards climate action

Yesterday was [Earth Day 2021](#) – a global movement highlighting how we can all take action against climate change. Timely, then, that we published our [draft Council Emissions Reduction Plan](#), setting out the first steps we will take to deliver on the city's net zero carbon target by 2030. It highlights the changes required in how we think about and tackle climate change and builds on the progress we're already making in reducing our emissions (62% - well in excess of our 42% target by 2020). Although our own emissions only account for 3% of Edinburgh's total emissions, we need to lead by example.

Tackling climate change is a chance to face into other societal issues, from poverty to people's health and wellbeing. That's why becoming a sustainable, net zero city is a core priority of the Council Business Plan, along with ending poverty by 2030 and ensuring wellbeing and equalities are enhanced for all.

['Growing Locally', Edinburgh's first food growing strategy](#), examines ways in which Edinburgh can tackle food insecurity and improve people's access to fresh food. It also takes a look at the role food plays in our lives – from the benefits it has on our physical health and emotional and mental wellbeing, to improving the city's biodiversity and mitigating the effects of climate change.

Our Capital – in numbers

We've been working extremely hard over the last year to maintain our services, so I was delighted to read the results of our [Capital Residents Survey](#). The poll of 1,000+ residents showed that 80% of Edinburghers were satisfied with how we've delivered services during lockdown. Sixty-seven per cent of people who contacted us over the last year also said they were satisfied with the service they received. I know that colleagues across the Council will be really pleased that their tireless efforts have been recognised.

This new survey also sheds light on things like people's changing working habits during lockdown – 58% of participants are now working from home – and how they'd like us to deliver services in future. It's invaluable information for our own future planning so we can deliver services conveniently and sustainably, providing the best possible quality of life for residents.

Meanwhile, we also reflected on life, business, education and the state of our economy pre-pandemic through the [14th annual Edinburgh by Numbers report](#). This year's report, covering the time period 2009 to 2019/20, gives us a sense of optimism as we look to build back a fairer, stronger and greener economy for the benefit of all our residents.

It was great to see that the vast majority believe, as we do, that climate change is an immediate and urgent problem with 73% expressing their concern, while the city recorded the fourth largest reduction in carbon dioxide emissions per population of UK major cities* between 2011 to 2018, as we work towards our [ambitious target to reach net-zero emissions by 2030](#).

Culture on the menu again this summer

Over the last year, our vibrant and world-renowned cultural capital faced huge changes, with the cancellation of the festivals as we knew them and the closure of our venues.

Happily, though, our festivals are now able to plan their careful return as restrictions are slowly lifted again. The Edinburgh International Festival will welcome audiences back to live performances with temporary outdoor pavilions throughout the city in its [reimagined Festival for 2021](#). Meanwhile the [Edinburgh Festival Fringe](#) has also announced its return from 6 to 30 August. Registration for acts opens next month and a range of scenarios are being planned for, from physically distanced live events to digital offerings.

As we continue to navigate the roadmap out of lockdown, much is still unknown about what the festivals will look like this August. But the great news is that they're coming back and with ticket numbers likely to be limited due to public health needs, performances will be a more intimate experience with most audience members being local residents. We'll do all we can to support our city's creatives and help their recovery.

Edinburgh bids farewell to its Duke

Earlier this month, the Capital joined the rest of the nation in mourning the passing of the Duke of Edinburgh, with the Queen's Royal Representative in Edinburgh, Lord Lieutenant Frank Ross, leading tributes on our behalf.

Throughout his lifetime, Prince Philip showed great appreciation for this city and its people, regularly reaching out to fellow veterans and serving personnel and thousands of our children and students, both through his longstanding links with our universities and, of course, the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

If you'd like to pay your respects, you can post a message on our [virtual book of condolence](#), which includes tributes from people all over the world.

Have your say on 6 May

With less than two weeks to go until the Scottish Parliament Election, our team is hard at work preparing for the Edinburgh count – a very different experience from previous years. The count will take place over two days, with final results for Edinburgh expected in the late afternoon/evening of Saturday 8 May.

On polling day itself (6 May), there will be additional hygiene and distancing measures at polling places to keep voters and staff safe. These include a fresh pencil for each voter, protective screens for polling staff, one-way systems in some venues, additional ventilation and limits to the number of voters in polling places at any one time.

This year, more than a quarter of Edinburgh's electorate (102,138 people) have opted for a postal vote. If you're voting this way, please make sure you post your vote in plenty of time – they must be received by

10pm on Thursday 6 May. If you need to [apply for a proxy vote](#) – letting someone you trust vote on your behalf – the deadline for this is 5pm on 27 April.

[Find out more about candidates, voting and the election](#), including the measures we're taking to ensure polling stations are safe and Covid-secure. It's important that everyone has their say, so don't miss your chance to cast your vote.

Get involved

Keep up to date with all council news via our [news section online](#). You can watch live council and committee meetings via our [webcast](#) service and join the debate on Twitter using #edinwebcast. If you wish to unsubscribe, please [email](#) us.

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