



Council Leader's Report

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• EDINBURGH •
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

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Lots to be hopeful about as we enter Level Two

This month marked a key milestone in our fight against the pandemic as we got the long-awaited chance to hug our loved ones after more than a year. It was also the moment when many hospitality businesses across the city were able to truly throw open their doors and welcome customers again.

While there's lots to smile about as we [move to level two of the Scottish Government's restrictions](#), it's no secret that the coming months, and even years, are going to be a struggle for many businesses. The Council is continuing to offer support through the [Forever Edinburgh – The Story Never Ends campaign](#), encouraging everyone to enjoy our beautiful Capital and rediscover all it has to offer. Just last week I visited one of the city's top attractions, the newly reopened Royal Yacht Britannia, and it didn't disappoint. There's so much on our doorsteps just waiting to be discovered – and rediscovered.

I'm delighted to see [our own cultural services opening again too](#), as well as Edinburgh Leisure centres, and I know this will be a lifeline for so many residents. All of this is to be welcomed, and of course we will be making the most of our freedoms, but I would urge people to take care when doing so.

We've come this far, after so many sacrifices, it would be a real shame to take a step back. So, remember to continue washing your hands and using hand sanitiser, following physical distancing guidelines and observing the rules on social gatherings so we can all enjoy a more 'normal' summer.

Welcome back to the City Art Centre

Our much-loved City Art Centre reopened its doors last weekend (Saturday 15 May) and visitors can now enjoy three great exhibitions – the brand new retrospective [Charles H. Mackie: Colour and Light](#); the continuing collection display [Bright Shadows: Scottish Art in the 1920s](#); and, from tomorrow, [Marine: Ian Hamilton Finlay](#), which is presented as part of the Edinburgh Art Festival 2021.

Over the past 40 years the City Art Centre has housed over 500 exhibitions and hosted treasures from across the world. It's fantastic to be welcoming visitors again and to be able to run a programme of events alongside the exhibitions. I would encourage everyone to book a slot for a visit and find out more about [what's coming up](#) at the gallery, as well as our digital lecture series.

This is just one of the many free attractions you can now visit, with or without the kids. Check out the [Forever Edinburgh](#) website for more ideas and please book ahead to avoid disappointment.

Perfect ten for Edinburgh Guarantee

In its first decade, the Edinburgh Guarantee scheme has worked with more than 550 employers across the city to get over 3,500 young people into apprenticeships or training opportunities. This policy has been so successful that the Scottish Government is looking to adopt it Scotland-wide.

[This invaluable initiative was re-launched to mark its 10th birthday last week](#), expanding to help people of all ages access fair work, training and employment opportunities in the wake of the devastating impact the pandemic is still having on job prospects across all sectors and age groups.

The [new look Edinburgh Guarantee website](#) is a one-stop-shop to connect and sign up employers across the city, offering people quick and easy access to job boards and information on training opportunities and additional support. There's a specific focus on those facing additional barriers to employment, with the overall aim of giving equal access to job and education opportunities.

This is an extremely worthwhile initiative that will help offer people a better future, as well as strengthen our economic recovery, and I urge city employers to take a serious look at the Edinburgh Guarantee today.

Investing in our priorities

When we set a balanced budget for 2021/22 back in February, we acknowledged that more funding might still be available as a result of central government's own budget-setting process.

Now we're in the welcome position of having around £20m in additional funding that we can direct towards our key priorities in the coming year. Councillors will decide the allocation at next week's Council meeting and I'm looking forward to constructive debate in the virtual chamber before we make a final decision.

I have no doubt that all councillors will want to invest this funding in ways that best serve Edinburgh and the people who call it home and, as an Administration, our proposals will stay true to our core priorities of tackling poverty and inequality, boosting efforts to tackle carbon emissions and enhancing wellbeing for our citizens.

All eyes on Granton as gasholder lights up

Edinburgh's skyline gained another stunning landmark this week when the [iconic Granton gasholder was lit up for the first time](#) thanks to a partnership with Edinburgh College.

The gasholder sits at the heart of our transformative £1.3bn regeneration project for Granton Waterfront and I'm sure the dazzling light shows designed by the College's Creative Industries students will draw all eyes towards the Forth and this hugely exciting coastal development project.

We've also launched a [consultation to name a new public square in Granton](#). The area is steeped in history and heritage and we want the square to become a real focal point in our wider regeneration of the area – somewhere the local community and visitors can enjoy for generations to come. Please take the chance to have your say by 8 June.

Brewing up a bright future in Fountainbridge

Our flagship regeneration scheme in Fountainbridge reached another major milestone this week when councillors [approved the appointment of a development partner](#) for the next stages of the project.

Ahead of the full development starting in early 2022, Cruden Homes will bring our masterplan to life, transforming the site into a mix of uses, including new homes, offices, shops, social enterprise and community spaces, all knitted together by high quality public space. The development will complement both the new Boroughmuir High School to the west and the 'New Fountainbridge' development to the east.

We couldn't have got this far without the support of the local community and we're really grateful for their valuable input through the Fountainbridge Sounding Board. This engagement and partnership working have built a strong foundation as we take forward this important part of Edinburgh's future.

Great new chapters for Tron Kirk and Portobello Town Hall

While we're innovating and creating new buildings in some areas, we're also exploring sustainable futures for older properties in our care. The [Tron Kirk, one of the Royal Mile's key landmarks, is set to be restored and managed by the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust](#). The Trust has an impressive track record and has been extremely effective working with us to secure a viable and sustainable future for other historic properties like Riddle's Court, so I know the Tron's in good hands.

As well as approving the Tron's restoration, the Finance and Resources Committee also gave the green light in principle to Portobello Central Ltd to work on a Community Asset Transfer for Portobello Town Hall. Their exciting plans to use the space for a food market are a fantastic example of communities taking ownership to find positive solutions for local assets. I wish them all the best.

An election like no other

Running an election is a tall order at the best of times but to do it safely and securely in the midst of a pandemic is a tremendous feat. The [2021 Scottish Parliamentary Election](#) earlier this month certainly felt very different from previous elections but thanks to the meticulous planning and hard work of countless Council staff, we delivered a very successful and Covid-secure election in Edinburgh.

This year we had the largest electorate we've ever had for an election in the Capital (401,321 registered to vote) and more than a quarter of these (102,138 people) opted for a postal vote. There was a fantastic turnout citywide, including a final postal vote turnout of nearly 90%.

This was a huge undertaking and my thanks go to the Election Team for ensuring a Covid-safe election, putting in extensive additional health and safety measures. I'd also like to congratulate the successful candidates from all parties preparing to represent our Capital City in Holyrood for the next five years.

Good luck Hibs!

Half of the Capital will be on tenterhooks this weekend as Hibs travel to Hampden to face St Johnstone in the Scottish Cup Final. Having waited so long before they lifted the cup in 2016, it would be a brilliant achievement if the team brought more silverware back to Easter Road just five years later.

We know Hibs fans will be ecstatic if they win on Saturday and people's natural instinct is of course to share the celebrations with others. However, the safety of everyone in the city must remain our number one priority and our message to fans is to enjoy the cup final, and any celebrations, responsibly and in line with public health guidance. I know they will want to represent their club and our Capital as ambassadors for their community, whatever the result.

We're working closely with Hibs, Police Scotland and other key partners ahead of tomorrow's final to make sure we can monitor and deal with any issues. But I'm hopeful that we can all enjoy the match safely – and remember the day for all the right reasons.

Get involved

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