



Council Leader's Report

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November 2021

Ensuring a positive legacy from COP26

Without doubt the most important event the UK has ever hosted, COP26, made the climate crisis and environmental action headline news for two weeks solid. And while the final result fell short of many people's expectations, including my own, we must build on the interest, debate and momentum brought about by the negotiations – as well as continuing to put pressure on national governments.

Whilst the conference was hosted in Glasgow, we did all we could as a Council and as Scotland's Capital City to ensure that we [supported and played a full part in the event](#).

From running a series of fringe events, including the Edinburgh Climate Summit in partnership with the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, to launching a [Net Zero Challenge](#) to help people understand their impact on the environment and inspire them to take action, there was a great deal taking place across the city to celebrate how people and organisations are supporting Edinburgh's ambitious climate targets.

Together with the Lord Provost, Depute Leader and other senior Councillors, I hosted and spoke at numerous events across the central belt, using the opportunity to [highlight the scale and speed of green investment and action](#) already taking place in our city.

Although COP26 may have come to an end, we're continuing to take and plan for climate action. This month, we became the [only city in Scotland to be awarded the highest rating for climate action](#), in recognition of the steps we're taking as a Council to manage the Capital's environmental impacts. Then, on Monday, we'll launch our new multi-media 'Green Christmas' campaign, encouraging residents to buy more responsibly and waste less over the festive season.

And, with the publication of Edinburgh's final 2030 Climate Strategy and accompanying implementation plan coming to committee later this month, I know we'll continue to make strides in helping to deliver a [net-zero, climate-ready capital by 2030](#).

Together we can end violence against women and girls

I make no apology for using this report and my time speaking about it in the Council Chamber to denounce any type of violence against women and to call on all men to consider their behaviour – whether that be physical or verbal.

Most men do not commit violence against women – but they all have a role in ending it. If we all start by making a pledge never to commit, condone or remain silent about men's violence against women in all its forms, that will make a huge difference.

I'm proud to be an ambassador for [White Ribbon Scotland](#) and look forward to promoting their work across our City. Male violence towards women and girls needs every man and boy to be an ally in calling it out and tackling it head on, including other misogynistic behaviours.

Meanwhile, this month sees the start of this year's global 16 Days of Activism campaign, which runs annually from 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to 10 December, [Human Rights Day](#).

The Council will again support and publicise this campaign widely through its channels and I would encourage you to do likewise. Please visit the [UN Women website](#) for more information and the [Improvement Service](#) for details of local action and events.

Edinburgh: a Living Wage City

It's fantastic to confirm that Edinburgh is now a Living Wage City. Awarded by Living Wage Scotland, this recognises the commitment made by the Edinburgh Living Wage Action Group – a collaboration of public sector bodies, trade unions, social enterprises and businesses – to double the number of accredited employers to over 900 in the next five years.

If achieved, it would result in at least 40,000 workers in Edinburgh benefitting from the Living Wage commitments, 10,000 of whom would see a direct increase in their pay as a result.

It was [great to hear directly from so many city employers](#) that have already seen the value of paying a fair wage for a fair day's work. We also heard from key academics from Edinburgh University and others who are encouraging businesses to get on board.

The benefits for businesses and employees are evident on both moral and operational grounds. Businesses see better staff retention, loyalty and reduced absences, while staff have told us it makes them feel valued and allows them to plan for the future, without having to worry about paying their rent and bills.

Becoming a Living Wage City will transform lives, moving people out of in-work poverty and helping them to thrive – and helping us to make Edinburgh a city where all work is fair work.

Real progress in the care of our older people

Earlier this month, the Care Inspectorate and Health Improvement Scotland published their [latest report](#) into our services for older people, citing a clear vision for the future and structured approach to planning, while highlighting real and positive progress against their previous recommendations. So much so, they felt able to bring this latest review to a close.

This is a significant and welcome step forward given the findings of their initial inspection report back in 2017 and I want to thank Judith Proctor and her team for the progress they've made since then. While of course there remain challenges in the system, exacerbated by the ongoing effects of Covid and the arrival of winter, these findings should give us confidence in the strength of the Partnership to navigate the difficult months that lie ahead.

I would also like to recognise the efforts of the great many people who provide care – either directly or indirectly – across Edinburgh. Their hard work and commitment to the most vulnerable in our communities cannot be overstated.

Granton boost

In my last report I welcomed the approval of an outline business case for the creation of a sustainable new coastal town at Granton Waterfront.

Our £1.3 billion vision will transform Edinburgh's waterfront, with the benefits felt right across the north of the city and beyond. It will attract significant new investment and jobs to the area, while ensuring that education, culture and green spaces are very much at its heart.

In a further boost to the project, Edinburgh was successful in one of the six bids submitted to the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund, allowing us to invest in a major restoration of the B-listed Granton gas holder, reinvigorating it into a vibrant community space for all to enjoy.

We've already seen the exciting potential of this iconic structure, which is now [illuminated every night thanks to our partnership with Edinburgh College](#), and I'm sure its restoration will secure further investment, while providing a fitting symbol for the huge ambition we have for the Granton area and its residents.

And the Edinburgh Award goes to...

Congratulations to Edinburgh International Festival director, Fergus Linehan, who has been named as the 15th recipient of the Edinburgh Award in recognition of his major contribution to the arts and our city's cultural heritage.

Following in the footsteps of last year's winner Alexander McCall Smith, as well as fellow festivals' champions Richard Demarco and Timothy O'Shea, Fergus has brought the EIF to a whole new audience, welcoming an innovative and exciting range of performers to our city. He has also weathered an extremely challenging period for our festivals, staging an ambitious and extremely well-received programme this year, despite the restrictions.

Throughout his seven years in charge, he has worked tirelessly to take the Festival to all corners of the Capital, reaching out to international partners while engaging with local communities to deliver multi-cultural yet accessible events for residents and visitors alike.

Fergus has announced that next year's EIF will be his last, making this award even more special.

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