

Leader's Report

Cllr Cammy Day



June 2024

Cleaner, greener, award-winning transport

I was delighted to see the Council so widely recognised at the Scottish Transport Awards last night (20 June). With our fantastic colleagues at Edinburgh Trams and Trams to Newhaven [receiving the Transport Team/Partnership of the Year award](#), the City Centre West to East Link (CCWEL) and the Street Improvements Project [picking up Excellence in Transport Design](#) and our City Mobility Plan and Our Future Streets [winning the Best Practice in Transport Planning category](#), the breadth, quality and ambition of our sustainable travel projects is plain for all to see.

I'm also incredibly proud of two colleagues who both received the 'Outstanding Contribution to Transport' award. Our current Head of Major Projects and Commissioning, [Hannah Ross](#), was pivotal to the success of the Trams to Newhaven project, while [Daisy Narayanan MBE](#), our recently departed Head of Placemaking and Mobility, spearheaded schemes such as CCWEL and George Street and First New Town. Huge congratulations to them both!

Of course, these latest accolades come on the back of yet more recognition for the Trams to Newhaven project, which was recognised at the [Local Government Chronicle Awards](#) earlier this month. This, along with the countless other awards the project has won, is testament to the hard work and dedication of our in-house Council team and partners.

The successful completion of the project last year has already delivered huge economic, social, and environmental benefits to Leith, north Edinburgh and to the city as a whole – demonstrating the value and opportunities the trams bring to the city and our residents. That's why it makes such good sense for us to be looking at expanding the network further to the north and south of the city.

Having just recorded its [busiest weekend on record](#), the tram service has flourished to become a hugely successful transport route used by thousands of residents and visitors each and every day.

All points north

Extending the tram network is central to our ambitious £1.3 billion regeneration of Granton Waterfront, which will contribute significantly towards our goal of becoming a fairer and more sustainable city. I'm delighted, therefore, that the [plans for the first phase](#) of the new coastal town have now been submitted.

With over 800 net zero homes, capacity for a new primary school and low carbon heat network, commercial units, active travel routes and other sustainable transport infrastructure, as well as attractive public and open space, it really is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to develop a new 20-minute neighbourhood from scratch.

The ideas and feedback from our residents have been instrumental in shaping these plans, helping us to get it right for those who will be living in, working in, and visiting this new area as well as their neighbours in nearby communities.

Taken alongside the long-awaited £250m reinvention of Ocean Terminal, [approval of the outline business case for the Forth Green Freeport](#), opening of the new Port of Leith distillery and Vesta's planned investment in offshore wind manufacture, to name but a few, North Edinburgh is well and truly on the up.

Make your vote count

It's now less than two weeks until the [UK General Election](#), and preparations are well underway here in the capital.

It's a hugely complex logistical feat to deliver such an important democratic process, particularly at such short notice, but thankfully our election team has a wealth of experience. With over 365,000 eligible electors, 100,000 of whom are expected to vote by post, [Edinburgh will have 44 candidates](#), 140 polling places, 450 ballot boxes, 800 polling staff and 850 staff at the count.

Please remember that, if you're voting in person, [you must now bring an approved photo ID](#) – of which there are over 20, including Blue Badge, NEC bus pass and driving licence. You can also cast your vote by [applying for a proxy vote](#) which allows a person you trust to vote on your behalf. The deadline for this is 5pm on 26 June.

Don't miss your chance to decide on your country's future! You can [find more information, including where to find your polling station](#) on our dedicated web pages.

Keeping our promise to our young people

Edinburgh's Promise to care-experienced children and young people is that they will 'grow up loved, safe and respected', with a commitment to supporting them within their own families or communities. So I was particularly pleased to hear that, for the first time in a number of years, we have no children in secure care via the children's hearings system.

In the past, many of our young people placed in secure care came from our own children's homes. It's testament to the hard work of our teams across Children's Services who have transformed the care we provide to our young people, who report feeling safe, loved and respected.

Of course, getting it right for every child is something we all strive for, and I know our school colleagues will make sure the new P1s and S1s receive a warm welcome at their new schools in August. And, with exam result season just around the corner, I want to wish everyone nervously waiting for their grades the very best of luck and remind them that there's no wrong pathway into work, further education or training. Enjoy your summer holidays!

A weekend to remember

It probably won't have escaped your attention that Taylor Swift performed in Edinburgh earlier this month, entertaining some 220,000 fans over three days at Murrayfield in what was [the biggest series of stadium shows ever seen in Scotland](#).

These sell-out performances brought huge and wide-ranging benefits to the city – reflected both in terms of the estimated £77m it contributed to the local economy and the generous donation she made to the [Edinburgh Food Project](#).

A phenomenal amount of planning goes into hosting these events and I want to thank the Council teams who worked tirelessly in the lead up to, and during, the weekend to make sure everything ran safely and smoothly. They also worked well into the night to ensure the areas around Murrayfield were clean and tidy and 'Swifties' got home safely.

Overall, this was a real Team Edinburgh approach, with partners including the Scottish Rugby Union, Lothian Buses, Edinburgh Trams, ScotRail, Transport Scotland and the emergency services all playing their part in a hugely successful weekend.

The stage is set

If that wasn't news enough for fans of live entertainment, last week we also saw AEG's designs for a [new 8,500 indoor venue at Edinburgh Park](#) hit the right note with councillors, who gave their unanimous backing to the plans.

We already boast a great set of venues in the shape of Murrayfield, the Usher Hall and our theatres and, increasingly, the world's biggest stars are choosing to perform here. From Beyonce and Harry Styles to Taylor Swift's record-breaking run, and not forgetting our annual world-famous festivals, Edinburgh is proving itself as a top destination for international acts.

For all that, however, we've long been crying out for a larger indoor arena and this site must surely boast the best transport links of any music venue in the country. When it opens its doors in 2027, the stage will be set for even more international acts to wow audiences here in Edinburgh, adding still further to our reputation as a world-class events destination.

Festivals season is upon us

Following another stellar year for the [Leith Festival](#) – a wonderful local festival run by Leithers for Leithers – and the [Edinburgh Canal Festival](#) offering fun free activities for all the family last weekend, the familiar buzz of festival season is making a welcome return to the capital.

Alongside the [Royal Highland Show](#), which began yesterday (20 June), our city centre will once again experience an explosion of colour, love and togetherness this weekend in the form of our annual [Pride Edinburgh](#) march.

Pride month is a significant date in the city's calendar each year and a celebration of the diversity, history and dignity of the LGBT+ community and I'm proud that we will support our colleagues and citizens by flying the rainbow flag above the City Chambers once again.

We're also proud to support our veterans and serving community as we mark [Armed Forces Day](#), with the Band of the Royal Regiment of Scotland leading the annual parade along George Street to St Andrew Square tomorrow afternoon.

Then, coinciding with Royal week in early July, we can look forward to a celebration of [Edinburgh 900](#) – marking nine centuries of our shared history and traditions. We've had a great response to our call for [applications to the Community and Civic Funds](#), and I'm looking forward to seeing the finalised programme of events when it's published later next month.

With the [World Orienteering Championships](#) and the [Edinburgh Jazz and Blues Festival](#) also in July, through to the [Fringe](#), [Art](#), [Film](#), [Book](#), [Tattoo](#) and [International](#) festivals in August, we're truly spoiled for choice here in the culture capital of the world.

A visitor levy for Edinburgh

Whilst the undeniable success of our festivals and wider events industry is something to be celebrated, there are inevitable costs too – both in terms of Council resources and disruption – and so it's vital that we get the balance right, particularly if we are to maintain our global reputation as a great place to visit – and as [a happy place to live](#).

That's why we have long made the case to introduce a visitor levy, a small percentage fee on overnight accommodation, which can then be reinvested in the city. And, with [MSPs voting to give us those powers last month](#), we're working closely with the sector, Visit Scotland and other partners to develop a scheme that we're aiming to introduce from summer 2026.

Just to give you a feel of the scale and importance of this opportunity, had a 5% levy been in place over the weekend of Taylor Swift's concerts, we would have had an (estimated) additional £632,000 to reinvest in our city's culture, heritage and infrastructure – to the benefit of our visitors and, crucially, to the people who live here all year round.

Thank you, Andrew

I can't finish without paying tribute to Andrew Kerr, who retired last week following nine years as our Chief Executive and an impressive 42 years' worth of dedicated public service.

I'm sure you'll join me in wishing Andrew a long, happy and healthy retirement with his loved ones.

I also want to [welcome Paul Lawrence](#) into his new role as Chief Executive. Paul has been a key member of the Council's leadership team for close to a decade now and I'm looking forward to working even more closely with him as we continue to deliver on our ambitious priorities for the people of Edinburgh.

Get involved

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