



Preparing for Coronavirus

We're all watching the news carefully about the spread of Coronavirus, with a number of cases now confirmed in Scotland and, sadly, the first loss of life in the UK.

Our Resilience team has been leading preparations within the Council to deal with any confirmed cases in Edinburgh, working extremely closely with Health Protection Scotland and NHS Lothian to ensure we're as prepared as possible. We're following official advice and guidance and are making sure we keep our colleagues and arm's-length organisations up to speed as the situation develops.

Understandably, many people are concerned and are looking for information on how best to stay safe. The best thing we can all do – and this applies anyway, not just during an outbreak – is to follow simple steps to protect ourselves and others from infection.

Stay up to date with the Council's plans on our [dedicated Covid-19 page](#) and check out the [latest information and advice from the NHS](#).

A balanced budget to deliver for Edinburgh

Reducing carbon emissions and tackling poverty are at the heart of the balanced three-year budget we agreed last month. We've delivered a bold budget which maximises funding for frontline services, protects the most vulnerable in society and provides a fairer quality of life for future generations.

The budget we've agreed also details six specific change programmes with practical steps, each designed to prioritise our residents' wellbeing and allow them to share in our city's success while accelerating our response to the climate emergency.

We'll shortly bring forward proposals to allocate the additional funding following the approval of the Scottish Government's budget in Holyrood. Watch this space.

Future Edinburgh – have your say!

The climate emergency and our growing population mean we need to think differently about what the city could and should be like in years and decades to come and, back in January, Depute Leader Cammy Day and I set out our stall on the [challenges and opportunities ahead in 2020](#) and beyond.

Since then we've been getting to grips with some of the most ambitious plans this city has seen for generations and I'm grateful to all our colleagues and partner organisations for everything they're doing to help us achieve our goals for the Capital.

Last month we appointed the independent [Chair of the new Edinburgh Climate Commission](#), Dr Sam Gardner, who'll be a fantastic champion of the work we need to do and help us to achieve our hugely ambitious targets.

To help us do more to prepare for the city's future needs, we're asking for your help on two draft plans. We want your views on our [Choices for City Plan 2030](#), which sets out options for the sustainable management of future development, and our draft [City Mobility Plan](#), a ten-year strategy for creating accessible, affordable and environmentally-friendly travel in and around Edinburgh.

So far, over 400 people and organisations have attended our stakeholder and drop-in events, while almost 1,000 have engaged online. This is already a good response but there's still plenty of time to have your say before the deadline on 31 March. You can meet the teams involved and find out more about the plans at several [drop-in events](#) being held across the city, or fill in the consultation online.

Meanwhile, young people from across the city have also been getting involved and having their say. The recent Youth Summit held at Dynamic Earth showcased the talent and drive of the next generation and their desire to effect change across the city. I'm very much looking forward to the second summit in May.

Ambitious plans for a sustainable new coastal town

Few projects better illustrate our vision of a more sustainable Edinburgh than Granton Waterfront.

Last month we published [ambitious £1.3bn plans](#) to transform the waterfront into a new coastal town, regenerating a huge piece of former industrial land in North Edinburgh. Working with National Museums Scotland, National Galleries of Scotland and Edinburgh College we're going to make Granton one of Scotland's leading sustainable developments and this regeneration project is the perfect opportunity to help us to meet our commitment to become a net zero carbon city by 2030.

We plan to build around 3,500 new homes (of which at least 35% will be affordable), encourage new businesses, develop a cultural hub and provide new leisure, learning and employment opportunities. We'll make sure everything is built to a high standard and, along with our housing association partners, we're already delivering around 700 new homes for sale and rent in the area.

Two years ago, we purchased the former gas works from the National Grid, which was the final piece in the jigsaw to secure all the land we needed to take things forward. Since then, we've been extensively consulting with the local community on our [vision for Granton](#), approved by Planning last week. This is a massively exciting opportunity for the whole of North Edinburgh and we're raring to go!

Another milestone for Trams to Newhaven

Staying in the North, the Trams to Newhaven project continues to progress well and we're about to reach a major milestone in the project with the [main phase of construction work on Leith Walk](#) getting underway later this month. Our project team has been planning ahead, along with contractors and Lothian Buses, to keep traffic disruption to a minimum, and we've been liaising closely with local residents and businesses to provide support and information.

We've also been drawing on lessons learned from the first stage of the project on Constitution Street, which is now well underway, and where our joint voucher scheme with 'Itison' is proving very popular, alongside a comprehensive package of [business support measures](#). We're now rolling out these measures, including logistics hubs for deliveries and a focused campaign encouraging visitors to spend time in this vibrant part of the city.

Over the coming weeks, work will also start on Ocean Drive and between Newhaven and Melrose Drive, while we continue to excavate Constitution Street for tracklaying and the installation of other infrastructure. Check out the [Trams to Newhaven website](#) for the latest news, traffic management information and plans for the route.

Promoting pedal power across the city

We're proud of our commitment to reducing carbon emissions, improving air quality and boosting public health through a range of projects to encourage and increase active travel in the city. Just this month our [School Streets initiative](#) expanded to three more schools – Leith, St Mary's (Leith) RC and Gilmerton Primaries – where car-free streets at the start and end of the day create the perfect environment for our youngest generations to walk, cycle or scoot.

In the same week, we also saw the [launch of a brand new fleet of e-bikes](#) by Edinburgh's cycle hire scheme, Just Eat Cycles, which will open up cycling to even more people. We're all familiar with the challenges the city's seven hills can pose for some of our citizens, so these bikes are a welcome addition to the increasingly popular scheme.

Hot on the heels of the e-bike launch was the publication of [Sustrans' Bike Life](#) Edinburgh report, which includes data from surveys of 1,400 residents on their cycling habits, satisfaction and desire for change. It's evident from the results that lots of the respondents want to cycle in Edinburgh, but the report makes clear there's more to be done to encourage more people from different backgrounds to take up cycling. That's why we're determined to keep investing in better, more accessible and safer cycling infrastructure in every corner of the city.

LOVE Gorgie

It was brilliant so many families flocked to [LOVE Gorgie Farm](#) for its grand opening last month. It turned out to be a real celebration for everyone who has supported the new enterprise.

Fears that this was the end for this much-loved community asset when it shut down last year thankfully proved to be unfounded and, as I know firsthand from leading the Council's response, LOVE Learning – the education and social care charity now running the farm – is committed to making it a success.

I would urge you to support the organisation in any way you can. So why not pop along there one morning or afternoon (it's open seven days a week, free entry), offer to volunteer or hire the venue for meetings to help Love Learning towards building a sustainable future for the farm.

Making sure everyone can enjoy West Princes Street Gardens

Norman Springford announced recently that he would be stepping down as Chair of the Ross Development Trust (RDT), our partners in the Quaich Project, and I would like to thank Norman for his generosity, support and commitment to our city and the project since it began. Thanks to his donation, the Ross Fountain is now back to its resplendent best and the Gardener's Cottage has been refurbished.

The Quaich Project is providing us with an opportunity to make sure everyone can enjoy the Gardens in the future. If you use a wheelchair or are pushing a pram, access is difficult from most entrances – something that [Ian Rankin highlighted](#) only this week when he joined actor Alan Cumming in getting behind the project.

The Ross Theatre, meanwhile, is no longer fit for purpose, with community use well down on its 1950s and 60s heyday. To be clear, however, we share residents' desire to reduce disruption due to major events and have already announced a cap on the number of event days in the Gardens.

Rather than continue with piecemeal improvements, we welcome the Trust's support and fundraising approach, which aims to take the park back to its original purpose as a space in the heart of the city for everyone to enjoy.

We're listening on major events

Over the years, Edinburgh's forged a global reputation as an events and festivals capital and this will always be a key part of our identity and appeal as a city to live in and visit. It's a delicate balance between sustaining a vibrant events calendar enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of residents and visitors each year and ensuring locals feel their quality of life isn't impacted negatively by these events.

Later in the year, we'll be running a major consultation to find out what our residents want our Winter Festivals to be like in future years, and the plans for next Christmas and Hogmanay celebrations are already being shaped by public feedback. We've agreed to set up a special all-party oversight group on festivals and events, to make sure there's cross-party scrutiny during the event-planning process.

Meanwhile, while the wettest February on record has unavoidably held back work to reinstate East Princes Street Gardens, our Parks team are gearing up to do whatever they can to make up for lost time once conditions improve – bringing the Gardens back to their best as soon as they possibly can.

Get involved

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