



Council Leader's Report

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EDINBURGH
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

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We're all in this together

With Covid cases rising across the country and a new six-person rule introduced by the Scottish Government, it's clear that we all need to keep on top of the latest health advice and look out for one another.

We've come a long way since March, and our city and our residents have done an incredible job of adapting to changing circumstances and, of course, looking after their communities and those around them in many ways. We've all missed Edinburgh's buzz and it's great to see people out and about again. After many challenging months for our local businesses, the last thing we want to see is a need for more stringent local restrictions, so let's keep up the effort.

Our efforts are ongoing to help us return to our high streets in a safe and comfortable way and the city's [Forever Edinburgh campaign](#) provides advice for making the most of a day or night out in the city. We can all do our bit to support our favourite local businesses, so let's continue to shop local and see them through this crisis.

With residents, visitors and new and returning students, there are of course a lot more people in our streets. So we're working closely with universities and colleges to provide all students with a warm welcome and [clear information](#) on keeping themselves, their classmates and our communities safe.

It's a united effort from everyone involved, and we must come together for the good of our city. [#AllTogetherEdinburgh](#)

Challenges facing our schools

Ensuring our schools were safe to reopen last month was an enormous task and I want to recognise the tremendous amount of effort from many Council teams making sure this happened. It's certainly welcome to see learning and teaching continuing where it should be taking place – in the classroom.

There have been a number of positive Covid cases in our schools, as there have been across the country, and I want to reassure everyone that our response on each occasion has been swift, robust and in line with the latest advice from Health Protection Lothian. Parents can have confidence in this approach.

We take the safety of our schools extremely seriously in these challenging times and have measures in place to keep our young people and school staff safe including keeping groups apart as much as possible, appropriate use of face coverings and regular hygiene measures. As always, we'll follow the very latest national guidance and I want to wish everyone who has tested positive a swift and full recovery.

Setting our sights on a fairer future

As we gradually work to rebuild our communities and our economy, we're also taking the opportunity to adapt the way we do things as a Council. Edinburgh has always been a progressive, welcoming city – it's one of the things that attracts people to want to come and live, work and study here – myself included – and we're building on this to create a fairer city beyond the current Covid crisis.

We're still living through a great deal of change and uncertainty. However, our recovery strategy for the Council puts [Edinburgh's 2050 City Vision](#) at its heart and we're already embracing many lessons learned from lockdown – such as [the role better technology can play](#) in breaking down barriers to support our most disadvantaged residents.

For a more equal Edinburgh we're also making strides in our equalities work, recently launching a [new employee campaign](#) to champion diversity and inclusion in everything we do. Alongside our united and ongoing [response to the Black Lives Matter movement](#), we're fast progressing plans to make our own workplace culture one of the most inclusive in Scotland.

The last six months have served to highlight the things which are most vital and important, like looking after one another and prioritising the protection of our young, old and most vulnerable and the protection of our planet. For Edinburgh, that means setting our sights on a fairer, greener future.

Green light for sustainable transport

We're continuing apace with an ambitious package of measures to make it easier and safer to travel by foot, bike or wheelchair in the Capital. These schemes will result in some change on our streets to prioritise all of us in our City.

We know there are some concerns around these measures, not least the plan for the first Low Traffic Neighbourhood in East Craigs, but there is also significant support in our communities for better active travel conditions, including in East Craigs, and we're eager to see these take shape across the city. An LTN,

which builds on traffic modelling, research and consultation as part of the West Edinburgh Link project, will make for a quieter, safer and healthier area and ensure residents' spaces are prioritised. Of course, we're listening to concerns, and we've taken away a range of themes from input from residents and stakeholders which will change the temporary scheme before it's implemented.

Under the [Spaces for People](#) project we're in the process of installing more than 30km of pop-up cycle lanes, we've introduced access improvements at 67 schools, with many more to follow, and we're creating more space in nine local shopping streets to help people spend time in businesses as they reopen.

We want to help people to travel safely by public transport too as services, shops and some workplaces begin to reopen. That's why we're delighted to be [receiving £1.2m from the Scottish Government's Bus Priority Rapid Deployment Fund](#), along with neighbouring local authorities, as part of the South East Scotland Transport Transition Group. This funding will help us to progress a series of temporary measures to help make bus journeys as quick and reliable as possible as restrictions are eased and traffic increases. These improvements, along with Spaces for People, will support the city's sustainable recovery by incentivising clean, environmentally friendly travel.

Phased reopening for libraries

I'm sure everyone will be pleased to hear the news that we're starting a phased reopening of our libraries from next month (Tuesday 13 October) with doors opening at Central, Kirkliston, McDonald Road, Fountainbridge, Stockbridge and Newington.

We know how important this service is to our local communities and this is the first important step in our plans to reopen these valuable community assets across the city. They'll offer a range of services including the borrowing and returning of items, free access to computers/internet/wifi and *Hey Girls* free sanitary products. As you would expect, numbers will have to be limited, social distancing measures will be in place and some services will only be available by booking in advance.

We're working very hard to get the rest of our libraries open safely and want to assure residents that we will open their local library as soon as possible if it's not already scheduled. We really appreciate everyone's support and patience and look forward to welcoming people back.

Welcome back to the City Art Centre

Our City Art Centre is also reopening soon, with two new exhibitions [City Art Centre at 40: Highlights from the City's Art Collection](#) and [Bright Shadows: Scottish Art in the 1920s](#) available to visit from Saturday (12 September).

Over the past 40 years the City Art Centre has housed over 500 exhibitions, hosted treasures from across the world as well as priceless paintings made by Edinburgh children and has welcomed hundreds of thousands of visitors through its doors. We're all keen to see our museums up and running again too and we're aiming to do this as soon as possible.

Like our libraries, this will involve a range of new safety measures and procedures, including a one way system, hand sanitiser stations, extra barriers and signage and staff will, of course, be wearing masks while offering visitors a very warm, socially distanced welcome. Visitors too will be asked to wear face coverings and to [pre-book a free allocated time slot](#).

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