



Business bulletin

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 23 February 2021

Virtual - Via Microsoft Teams

Policy and Sustainability Committee

| Convener: | Members: | Contact: |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Councillor Adam McVey</p>  <p>Vice Convener: Councillor Cammy Day</p>  | <p>Councillor Adam McVey (Convener)</p> <p>Councillor Cammy Day (Vice-Convener)</p> <p>Councillor Robert Aldridge</p> <p>Councillor Kate Campbell</p> <p>Councillor Nick Cook</p> <p>Councillor Neil Gardiner</p> <p>Councillor Gillian Gloyer</p> <p>Councillor Graham Hutchison</p> <p>Councillor Lesley Macinnes</p> <p>Councillor Melanie Main</p> <p>Councillor John McLellan</p> <p>Councillor Rob Munn</p> <p>Councillor Ian Perry</p> <p>Councillor Alex Staniforth</p> <p>Councillor Susan Webber</p> <p>Councillor Iain Whyte</p> <p>Councillor Donald Wilson</p> | <p>Jamie Macrae, Committee Officer</p> <p>Louise Williamson, Assistant Committee Officer</p> |

Recent news

Scottish Government proposals for Planning Control Areas for Short Term Lets in Scotland

In December 2020, the Scottish Government published a [consultation report](#) detailing its responses to comments made during its consultation on the definition of short-term lets and detailed proposals for the licensing scheme and control areas.

<https://consult.gov.scot/housing-services-policy-unit/short-term-lets-licensing-scheme/>

Draft regulations were laid in the Scottish Parliament before the Christmas recess. They cover the arrangements for the designation, variation and cancellation of short-term let control areas, as introduced by section 17 of the 2019 Act, alongside a related order for a licensing scheme for short-term lets. Subject to the approval of the Scottish Parliament, the regulations and licensing order will come into force on 1 April 2021.

[The Town and Country Planning \(Short-term Let Control Areas\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2021](#)

[The Civic Government \(Scotland\) Act 1982 \(Licensing of Short-term Lets\) Order 2021](#)

Background

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Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership delivery update for 2020

The Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership (EBP) has delivered a successful and varied programme of biodiversity improvement and strong community engagement across the city through Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAP) since 2000. Despite the challenges presented to us all by Covid-19, Partners have adapted and explored and embraced new and different ways of working. Delivery of the Edinburgh LBAP helps the Council to meet its statutory duty to further the conservation of biodiversity. The Partnership is currently chaired by the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, with governance and facilitation support provided by CEC Place Development. The Partnership has around 40 member organisations from statutory agencies and national nature conservation organisations such as RSPB, to local environmental and conservation bodies.

This summary highlights the key activities and outcomes delivered in 2020 by the EBP. Further information is available in the annual report for 2020, circulated to stakeholders and available online. This full report shows how the work of the EBP links to key Council work programmes and strategies, and how the Edinburgh Local Biodiversity Action Plan helps to meet Scottish and international targets for biodiversity conservation.

The report further outlines the relationship between action for biodiversity, the natural environment and the Council declaration of a climate emergency. A resilient natural environment is a key component in the response to climate change and helps to mitigate and adapt to the predicted impacts on the city. Vegetation stores carbon, absorbs air and water pollution, provides shading and cooling against predicted urban overheating, slows water run-off and flooding in predicted increased rainfall. These benefits are in addition to the well understood health, wellbeing and amenity benefits of nature and greenspaces.

Work is underway to strengthen Planning policy and guidance on green infrastructure and city resilience, in preparation for the City Plan 2030. Strong links exist with the climate and ecological emergency, Zero Carbon 2030, Edinburgh Adapts and the EBP. The new cross-council Green Infrastructure Working Group and Edinburgh Adapts Steering group offer opportunities to deliver work which achieves multiple benefits for climate and biodiversity resilience.

Key Achievements of the Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership in 2020

2020 has been a year that will remain in the memory for many years. Covid-19 has affected the lives of everyone. Across the Partnership, individuals and organisations have adapted to challenges by embracing new and different ways of working. On-site projects and practical conservation management work has been curtailed for most of the year due to lockdown restrictions. On a positive note, the use of online platforms has enabled meetings, seminars, conferences and training events to go ahead. Organisations such as Butterfly Conservation have reported increased participation at virtual events as people do not have to travel. There has been an increase in wildlife records as individuals have focussed on their local area, including gardens and nearby greenspaces. Many previously

unrecorded species, as well as species not recorded for years or decades, have been added to Edinburgh's list of wildlife records. There have been opportunities to improve social media presence and the Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership now has accounts on Twitter, Facebook and a website and blog.

This has not been without negative impacts as greater numbers of people utilise places that may otherwise remain less visited. Litter, disturbance to wildlife and pressure on facilities and infrastructure have been challenges for site managers.

During these challenging times the need for access to greenspaces and connections with the outdoors, nature and wildlife have been brought into sharp focus. People's physical and mental wellbeing has been sustained and supported by experiencing contact with nature. The actions undertaken by the EBP continue to underpin this.

The annual review highlights some of the outcomes and actions from the past year delivered by the Partnership. Further information about the overall action programme and aims is available from the [Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan 2019-2021](#).

Edinburgh Slavery and Colonialism Legacy Review

The first meeting of the Edinburgh Slavery and Colonialism Legacy Review Group took place 15 December 2020, when members discussed their terms of reference and scope of the review, raised process issues for consideration and agreed key areas requiring their immediate attention or action.

Two main strands of work are emerging. The first, to refine and prioritise the parameters of the investigation, audit available research methodologies and values, existing sources and new research identifying the features of the city's public realm which are linked with or commemorate slavery and colonialism. The Group is also exploring options to secure dedicated human resource to undertake this work. The University of Edinburgh, which is represented on the Group, is similarly planning a review of its historic estate and has offered to support the city's work by providing two paid internships for this 'real world' commission. Opportunities to collaborate, to share resources and sources and avoid duplication of effort are

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manifest, and will be explored in detail during the first quarter of 2021.

The second key strand is around public communication of the Review, and opportunity for the people of Edinburgh to participate. The Group is investigating how other UK cities (such as Bristol and Liverpool) and nations (such as Wales) have involved stakeholder communities and progressed similar work to recognise and redress their part in the transatlantic slave trade, and lasting inequalities created through colonial expansion.

The first meeting of the Edinburgh Slavery and Colonialism Legacy Advisory Group, which will provide practical support and capacity for the Review Group, took place in January 2021.

Business Tourism Update

Partners from across the city have continued to meet to discuss plans to support the Business Tourism sector in the city.

The group are working on a partnership model, involving all key players in the sector in the city. The details of this approach are currently being finalised and will be reported to a future Committee.

University of Edinburgh Plans in respect of COVID-19

In October 2020, Committee requested information on the plans being put in place by the city's Universities to ensure the safety of students prior to the Christmas break.

The University of Edinburgh operated a hybrid teaching model from the beginning of Semester 1 in mid-September, whereby the majority of lectures are online while allowing for smaller group or one-to-one activity to take place in-person.

The University actively encouraging its staff and students to follow public health guidance, and published a [Good Citizens Guide](#) for its students, while also reacting quickly to any infringements of public health guidance in its accommodation.

End of Semester 1

At the request of the Scottish Government, and in partnership with Edinburgh Napier University, the University of Edinburgh quickly deployed a process of voluntary asymptomatic Covid-19 testing for students leaving for the

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winter break at the end of Semester 1. The University administered these tests, on behalf of all universities in Edinburgh.

Following the Scottish Government announcement on 8 December 2020 that the return of students to universities after the winter break should be staggered, the University [previously announced](#) there would be a phased return to in-person teaching on campus for its undergraduate students in Semester 2.

However, following subsequent announcements in late December and early January which brought in further restrictions across Scotland, the University has adapted its plans for Semester 2 as set out below

Semester 2

On 21 January, the University made the decision that teaching and assessment for undergraduate students would remain digital for the remainder of Semester 2. There are only a small number of exceptions to this, such as programmes within medicine, veterinary medicine and nursing.

This decision was taken because the Scottish Government guidance was clear that only a very small number of students may be allowed to return to some on-campus teaching from February onwards and that, while more students may be allowed to return to some on-campus teaching from March, this would be subject to further evaluation.

It was also clear that any return of undergraduate students to campus in March would require to be staggered over a number of weeks. However, the University's Semester 2 teaching is scheduled to end on 2 April.

The University took these decisions as early as possible to give students and staff as much certainty as possible, and so that both groups could plan for the rest of the Semester. For instance, the University's accommodation service is strongly recommending that students break their leases, if they will not be returning for in-person teaching, unless there are other extenuating circumstances.

Arrangements for postgraduate students reflect the current guidance.

Similarly, the University has taken the decision to cancel all in-person summer and winter graduation ceremonies in 2021, given the continued restrictions around large-scale events. However, students will be invited to join an online celebration in order to mark this significant milestone.

Voluntary asymptomatic Covid-19 testing

At the start of Semester 2, the University redeployed its voluntary asymptomatic Covid-19 testing programme for the limited numbers of students returning to campus, as well as for those who remained in Edinburgh over the winter break.

The testing programme is currently [due to run until 31 March](#), and is available at the Pleasance Sport Complex and Gym.

Universities Information

All of the city's Universities have published Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and information for students:

[Edinburgh Napier University](#)

[Heriot Watt University](#)

[Queen Margaret University](#)

[University of Edinburgh](#)

Update on the Brexit Working Group

The cross-party Brexit Working Group was convened to assess and plan for the potential impacts of Brexit on the Council, including workforce, procurement, finance and funding, wider economic impacts and the Council's resilience to be able to respond to disruption.

Following the end of the Transition Period on 31 December 2020 and the UK-EU Trade Cooperation Agreement, it was agreed at the Brexit Working Group meeting held on 21 January 2021 that the Group no longer needed to meet, on the understanding it would re-convene at a future date if required. The decision on the future of the working group is to be considered later on the agenda.

In the absence of the Brexit Working Group, any relevant items will be reported to the Adaptation and Renewal All Party Oversight Group.

Contact:

[Mary Ellen-Lang](#)

Corporate Resilience
Manager

Forthcoming activities:
