

Leader's Report

Cllr Cammy Day



June 2022

Delivering change for Scotland's Capital city

This is my first report since becoming Council Leader last month. It's a huge honour and a privilege and I want to stress just how committed I am to promoting our great Capital City while working hard to address the issues that matter most to the people we serve.

I stated consistently in the run-up to the election, and throughout the negotiations that followed, that I'm keen to develop a cross-party way of working and, as the first meeting of our Policy and Sustainability Committee showed, a collaborative approach can lead to far more consensual and co-operative decision-making.

We want to agree a shared programme of work that will allow us to prioritise the prevention of poverty and homelessness and reduce the deep levels of inequality that persist in our city, meet the demand for affordable housing and play our part in tackling climate change by becoming a net zero city.

This requires a robust, green and fair recovery from the pandemic that supports our city and its communities and ensures Edinburgh's children are safe, supported and well educated.

We'll also be looking to protect and improve our front line services and make sure we get the basics right, complete the final sections of the [Trams to Newhaven](#) project and deliver the pioneering regeneration of the [Granton Waterfront](#) and north Edinburgh.

So, there's a lot of work to do and we're already pressing the Scottish and UK Governments for better funding for Edinburgh as a growing city. With a population of over 500,000, we're the lowest-funded local authority (per head) in Scotland. This needs to change.

I look forward to working closely across all parties, delivering positive changes and policies for the good of our great Capital City and its residents.

A warm welcome for our friends in need

On a recent [visit to the Ukrainian Community Club](#) with the Consul General, Yevhen Mankovskyi, I was able to spend some time with people who have fled the war and are now settling in Edinburgh.

From landing and being immediately received by volunteers at the Airport, to getting bespoke help with accommodation and other needs at our Welcome Hub, to receiving ongoing support at our advice centre and within the local Ukrainian community, we're here for Ukraine's refugees every step of the way. It's clear that the processes we have in place are working – and very much appreciated – and we need to keep adapting and responding as the conflict continues and more people arrive.

We've now [welcomed around 5,000 people](#) to and through Edinburgh, with over 2,500 arriving through the Welcome Hub. We know that Edinburgh's population near enough doubles every August, so we're already looking at how we can manage capacity during festival time – something the Chief Executive and I are speaking to the Scottish Government about. We've also been able to recruit some incredible new Ukrainian colleagues who've gone through the process themselves to help us with interpretation and customer care.

Seeing all of this work in person is humbling and we all have a great responsibility to those in our care. I want to thank volunteers and officers for going above and beyond the day job to support people in such desperate need of our help. As we see the scale of our response continue to grow, we'll need to rely on the goodwill of our people and city even more.

On your marks, get set for the new Meadowbank

I was delighted to confirm that the brand new [Meadowbank](#) will open its doors to the public on Tuesday 19 July. The new £47m state-of-the-art community sports facility is built on the site of the original Meadowbank, which closed its doors back in December 2017.

Participation and accessibility are at the heart of the new venue, which has the facilities to host a wide range of activities and sports. Boasting improved facilities to the previous centre, the new Meadowbank includes an outdoor eight-lane athletics track, with a 499-seat stand and outdoor throwing and jumps areas, two multi-sport halls with fixed and moveable spectator seating, a dedicated hall for trampolining and dance, two fitness studios and two squash courts.

Meadowbank has, of course, been an important part of the city and Scotland's sporting history for decades and I have no doubt that the new centre will continue to build on this proud history. More detailed plans on opening times and how to sign up for memberships will be announced on [Edinburgh Leisure's website](#) and social media channels in the coming weeks.

Transforming transport in Edinburgh

Another project that's rapidly approaching the finishing line is [Trams to Newhaven](#), as fantastic new drone footage of the route shows. The [fly-through video](#) highlights just how much has been achieved, from the laying of tram tracks to completed tram stops and lots of improvements to public spaces along the way.

We've now laid 3.8km of track (82% of the total to be laid), completed three of the eight new tram stops and largely finished construction on several key sections of the route, including Constitution Street, between Constitution Place and Queen Charlotte Street, and Ocean Terminal to Rennie's Isle. It's thanks to the hard work of the project team and contractors that, despite the challenges of the last few years, we're still on track to begin revenue services in spring 2023, delivered within the £207.3m budget.

Elsewhere, construction on the [City Centre West to East Link](#) is already well underway and, last month, we formally introduced a [Low Emission Zone](#), which will significantly reduce air pollution across the city. Plans for other key projects, like [George Street and First New Town, Meadows to George Street](#) and [West Edinburgh Link](#), are also making great progress, helping us to create a greener, safer and more welcoming city for future generations. You can find out more from our new [Future Edinburgh website](#).

75 years a Festival city

2022 marks the 75th anniversary year of Edinburgh's first festivals and the city's emergence as a world leading festival city. Formed in the shadow of World War Two, our forefathers sought to use culture as a way to bring people and nations together and help 'the flowering of the human spirit' and I hope, this year, as we continue to recover from the pandemic, they'll work their magic once more.

We're already seeing a return of the Festival buzz to the city and things begin with the [Edinburgh Jazz and Blues Festival](#) on 15 July. It will be wonderful to see (and hear) the return of the [Edinburgh Military Tattoo](#) at the Castle and programme announcements for August's [Art](#), [Book](#), [Fringe](#), [Film](#) and [International](#) Festivals fill me with confidence that Edinburgh will once again be the culture capital of the world in August.

We're also looking ahead to the winter festivals with the appointment of new producers. I'm sure Angels Event Experience will build on the success of Edinburgh's Christmas to offer a rich and varied range of festive activities, events and experiences for residents and visitors of all ages. Unique Events, meanwhile, return to the helm of Edinburgh's Hogmanay having been involved right from its beginnings back in 1992/93 and, as we mark its 30th year, I'm excited to work with them on a programme of events fit for the home of Hogmanay.

We'll continue to listen to feedback from our residents and local businesses on our festivals, allowing their benefits to be shared right across our Capital City. Getting it right for Edinburgh's people first and foremost will make sure our festivals are enjoyed by all citizens and our visitors for many years to come.

A greener future on the menu

Our ongoing work to help Edinburgh become a greener, healthier city has reached another milestone this week, with the award of silver status by the Sustainable Food Places Network.

The award bid was led by [Edible Edinburgh](#) – a city-wide partnership building new approaches to food in the capital – and we're just one of two cities in Scotland to have earned a silver ranking, recognising the scale and ambition of the food-related activities undertaken in the city since we achieved the bronze award in 2019.

These have included delivering over 65,000 free, fresh and nutritious meals to those most in need during the pandemic, launching a Sustainable Food Directory and agreeing Edinburgh's first food growing strategy.

Of course, Edinburgh is already a well-known 'foodie' city and, from our award-winning restaurants and food retailers to our thriving community growing spaces, there are hundreds of initiatives running right across the city helping to contribute to our vibrant food economy.

This award recognises the pivotal role that healthy, sustainable and locally grown food has to play in helping to meet our priorities to end poverty, become a net zero city and promote wellbeing and equality for all our residents.

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