



Council Leader's Report

Adam McVey

• EDINBURGH •
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

August 2019

Making the Festivals work for everyone

We're right in the thick of festival season, with performers, visitors and residents flocking to enjoy the world's biggest and best cultural extravaganza. And while it's fantastic that so many people want to share in the excitement, there's no doubt that the swell in population puts additional pressure on the city centre.

This year we've put a number of measures in place to help maintain a [welcoming and enjoyable atmosphere](#). Under Summertime Streets we've restricted motor vehicle access to some of the most popular areas in the Old Town, helping to keep pedestrians safe and opening up historic streets like Victoria Street and Cockburn Street for people to relax and wander. We're also working to keep our streets as clean and clutter-free as possible, with extra cleansing staff patrolling the city and our bad joke-themed campaign encouraging people to bin their rubbish.

On Sunday night, Madness will close this year's [Summer Sessions](#) – which, despite the changeable weather, have brought some amazing acts to Princes Street Gardens. Following feedback from last year, we made sure that public access to the Gardens was increased on concert days and that security measures needed on Princes Street were adapted to limit the impact as much as possible. It's worth reiterating that the Gardens are open as normal to the public more than 98% of the time. It's also worth noting that nearly 11,000 local residents attended last year's summer sessions and with such a fantastic line up this year, we expect even more Edinburghers to have attended.

While we're already past the midpoint of the busiest month in Edinburgh's calendar, the next six months aren't going to see any let-up in our workload, as we continue to deliver on our [ambitious programme for the Capital](#).

Our plans for a sustainable Capital

A significant chunk of this work revolves around our commitment to making real, transformative changes to our city, and it's essential that we involve the people who live, visit and work here. That's why I'm delighted with the level of participation in recent consultations on Low Emission Zones, City Centre Transformation (CCT) and the Meadows to George Street project, which together received more than 8,000 responses.

There's no question we need to act radically to tackle climate change and reduce carbon emissions, and we've set ourselves a super-ambitious target of becoming [carbon-neutral by 2030](#). Our game-changing plan to introduce a Low Emission Zone will help us get there by limiting the most polluting vehicles in our city, while our ambitious CCT proposals include major improvements to the Meadows to George Street route, prioritising movement by foot, bicycle and public transport and creating a liveable city centre.

Our George Street and New Town public realm design project is very much part of this vision, and last month we were delighted to receive more than £20m of funding towards the scheme from Sustrans Scotland and Transport Scotland's [Places for Everyone](#) programme.

Timetable for shaping Edinburgh's future

Earlier this month we agreed a timetable to progress our next local development plan, [City Plan 2030](#), to help shape a sustainable, inclusive and successful Edinburgh.

The main consultation stage 'Choices for City Plan 2030' will run from December to February. When adopted in 2022, it will provide guidance to the development community about how they can contribute to the long-term future of our city.

We're also reviewing our planning guidance for retail in the city centre to make sure we move with the times and respond to retail trends. Our ongoing consultation asks if we should make planning policy more flexible for different types of businesses in areas such as Princes Street. I'd really encourage you to tell us what you think so we can [make the most of our historic city centre](#) and this iconic thoroughfare.

We'll make sure that all these plans tie in to City Centre Transformation, Low Emission Zones and the overall City Mobility Plan so that we're taking the city forward in a joined up, strategic way.

We're changing lives

We should all be proud of the coverage this week about a delighted family of five, who have just moved into their brand new, three-bedroom Council house.

The family moved into their new North Sighthill home from temporary accommodation – and reading about what these homes mean for families was a moving and poignant reminder of why investment in our ambitious programme to build 20,000 homes along with housing association partners is so worthwhile.

The [North Sighthill development](#) is part of a major regeneration project including almost 100 homes for social rent with the rest for mid-market rent and private sale.

Higher and higher

Pupils and staff returned to school this week after yet another positive set of exam results achieved by our young people.

Our pass rate for Highers was above the Scottish average, National 5 passes were up on last year and there were several other improvements with especially strong levels of attainment in S6.

So, my thanks go to the dedicated teachers and staff who worked so hard to prepare pupils and parents/carers who supported their children over the past year. For some the results may not have been what they were hoping for, but there's no wrong pathway for our young people #MyLearnerJourney.

Growing success of garden waste

The sign-up window for the next service year of our garden waste collections closed last week and we're now planning the collection routes and getting permit stickers printed and sent out in time for the 19/20 collections to begin from 7 October.

We'll now have [over 75,000 brown bins](#) to collect all over the city every fortnight, up from the current service year. This increase shows people really value and appreciate the service we're providing – while also generating £1.7m of additional revenue that we can reinvest in vital Council services.

Our two waste transfer stations (Seafield and Bankhead) and the new waste collection depot at Bankhead will allow us to continue to drive improvements in the collection of all waste and recycling materials – giving households the reliable and effective service they rightly expect.

Praise for flooding response

It won't have escaped your attention that we've been hit by some pretty extreme weather this summer, with storms during June, July and August. Due to the localised, freak nature of the storms (a fortnight's rain in half an hour) it's not always possible to avoid some surface water and flooding, and my thoughts are with anyone who experienced damage to their homes or property.

We've done everything we can to limit the impacts and it's down to the hard work of our roads and flooding teams that we've been able to minimise disruption during this period. Officers have worked round the clock to attend to flooding issues and monitor watercourses, such as the Water of Leith, while squads have rapidly responded to repair any damage to roads and pavements. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank them for their efforts.

A new chapter

You may have read this week that my partner and I are about to adopt – and that I'll be taking leave to start the hardest and most rewarding job I'm sure I'll ever have.

I'm acutely aware of my duty to the people of Edinburgh and I look forward to returning to the City Chambers to continue delivering the change our future generations demand of us.

In the meantime, I'll be asking my fellow councillors to approve cover arrangements while I'm on six weeks of adoption leave to cover my responsibilities. I'm confident our Council can demonstrate that we can be a modern, progressive workplace.

I'd like to thank my colleagues, family, friends and the hundreds of people who have got in touch to offer their good wishes and support as we enter this exciting new chapter of our lives.

Get involved

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