

Leader's Report

Cllr Cammy Day



May 2023

Edinburgh by Numbers puts city in top spot

Looking for the UK's hotspot for healthy living and a healthy economy? You've come to the right place. That's according to the latest [Edinburgh by Numbers report](#), which not only reveals our residents are living longer – and well – compared to other parts of the UK, but that our businesses are thriving too.

Launched this week, Edinburgh by Numbers is one of our most well-used and well-loved annual publications. I'm pleased to see the latest edition yet again confirms Edinburgh's position as the most economically productive city outside of London, with the strongest local business survival rates of any comparable city, and above average wages for our workers.

When viewed alongside recent news of major investment into the centre and a [business tourism revival for the EICC](#), this all points to a post-pandemic rebound for Edinburgh – not least with the research demonstrating a bounce back in airport passenger numbers, too.

In yet more good news for the city centre, the team at Essential Edinburgh (EE) recently received the overwhelming backing of members to take forward the area's Business Improvement District for [another five years](#). As part of our 'Team Edinburgh' approach to economic recovery, which involved over 60 other organisations, EE has been involved in setting out what was needed for the city to recover sustainably from the pandemic.

Creating good places to live and work

While we're (rightly) working hard to deliver our ambitions for the Capital city – as set out in our [Council Business Plan 2023–27](#) – it's just as important that we focus on getting the basics right.

I'm pleased, then, that the most recent survey by Local Environmental Audit and Management System (LEAMS) shows we've reached pre-Covid levels of street cleanliness and are better than average when compared to similar council areas. Likewise, missed kerbside collections are at their lowest level for three years and reports of overflowing communal bins continue to fall. Great credit is due to our hard-working waste and cleansing teams for making this happen.

We're not resting on our laurels, however, which is why we're using the £3 million additional funding committed in February's budget to set out our new [Cleansing Action Plan](#).

Several new measures are being introduced and we're making improvements to existing services too – including a free uplift service for our residents on lower incomes, additional litter picking, mechanical sweeping, gully emptying, and verge and hedge maintenance on approach and rural roads. We're also putting extra resources into our overnight cleansing services to make sure we all wake up to a clean and tidy city each morning.

Major steps forward for transport in Edinburgh

Another area where we want to do better is the condition of our roads and pavements. For any living, breathing Capital city like Edinburgh this is a challenge – particularly following years of underinvestment from government – but we've made a firm commitment to improving the condition of streets across the city and are doubling our investment in this area to £22 million this year.

Our bridges are part of this too and I'm delighted that the refurbishment of North Bridge reached a milestone last Friday when it [reopened to two-way traffic](#). This is a complex scheme to restore the iconic Victorian structure to its former glory, and the project team is doing a fantastic job.

Our Trams to Newhaven project marked a milestone of its own last week when [daytime testing began](#). It was an exciting experience for passers-by when the first tram for decades rolled down Leith Walk and I'm sure, like me, they can't wait for paying service to begin in the coming weeks. I'd like to thank residents and businesses once again for their patience as teams have been hard at work over recent months.

Both projects will play a central role in our long term plans for movement around the city centre and further afield. Through the City Mobility Plan we want to create a safe, sustainable and accessible transport future for Edinburgh, and we've drawn up a series of action plans to help us achieve this.

We want you to help us shape these plans, and are currently seeking your views on all aspects of travel to, from and around Edinburgh. Please [have your say online](#).

Help is at hand for our most vulnerable

Ending poverty is another key priority for this Council and, following the creation of the Poverty Commission, we continue to lead the way on this work. With the cost-of-living crisis, and rising energy bills, [help is available](#), and I would encourage anyone who feels they need support to visit our website to find out more.

There's also help available from many other organisations across the Capital and I'm always keen to meet as many of them as possible to hear about the work they do to support our residents. I recently met with Scotland's national advice service, [Advice Direct Scotland](#). The charity provides free, impartial advice to anyone in Scotland on issues including energy bills, debt, benefits and consumer rights.

I understand that last year Edinburgh recorded lower-than-average claims compared to our population size, so please don't miss out on any entitlements. If you're struggling to heat your home, you may be eligible for the Home Heating Support Fund. You can [find out more about them, the Home Heating Support Fund, and other support](#) from their website.

'Providing a first-class service to the local community'

I want to pass on my congratulations to the dedicated team at Mortonhall Crematorium, who have just received an outstanding [inspection report](#) from the Scottish Government.

It's never easy to lose a loved one, and the team provide a vital, respectful and sensitive service in the most difficult of times.

The inspectors praised 'a close, united and enthusiastic team', led by experienced and knowledgeable management, which 'performs to a high standard, providing a first-class service to the local community and beyond'.

The Mortonhall Crematorium Management Plan, meanwhile, was found to be of a high standard containing a great deal more than that required by the Regulations.

Supporting our LGBTQ+ Community

Edinburgh has always been a welcoming and inclusive city – and we're rightly proud of our thriving LGBTQ+ community, all of whom have the right to live their lives with dignity and free from prejudice.

Social acceptance of those who identify as LGBTQ+ has, thankfully, increased over recent decades, but discrimination and hate crimes remain sadly all too common. On behalf of this Council, I want to repeat my total condemnation of attacks on anyone because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, or their race, religion or disability.

We're proud to be an LGBTQ+ friendly Council but there is always more that we can do, which is why I was delighted to join other group leaders in welcoming representatives of the Trans community to the City Chambers last week for what was a positive and constructive meeting.

They asked for our understanding and acceptance and to be able to access our (and other) services in the same way as anybody else. I look forward to working together to make sure this happens.

Top marks for digital school revolution

I was delighted to visit Carrick Knowe Primary School yesterday for the completion of our ambitious [Empowered Learning](#) programme, which has seen every school pupil from P6 to S6 given their own digital device.

Thanks to our £17.5m investment, this exciting partnership with our ICT service provider CGI has resulted in over 44,000 digital devices being handed out to pupils and school staff across the city.

Part of our ambitious and inclusive education strategy 'Edinburgh learns for Life', the devices are transforming teaching as our young people discover new and innovative ways to learn.

This is a significant and sustained investment in the future learning, outcomes and achievements of Edinburgh's children and young people and is a vital element of our strategy to increase attainment for everyone and reduce the poverty-related attainment gap.

King Charles's Coronation

As a new Royal era begins, the [Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III](#) promises to be a historic occasion, with celebrations taking place up and down the country next weekend (6–8 May).

The Lord Provost will represent Edinburgh at the ceremony in London and here in Edinburgh we're encouraging residents and visitors to dust off their picnic blankets and come together in West Princes Street Gardens to [watch proceedings live on the big screen](#). Then, on Sunday 7 May, the screen will remain in place and broadcast The Coronation Concert at Windsor Castle to spectators in the Gardens.

I'm aware of various street parties and other events planned across the city and residents are also invited to share their memories and record well wishes for the new sovereign in our Book of Congratulations, online from 2 May.

Let's hope the weather's kind to all those joining in the celebrations.

Rest in Peace, Ken Buchanan

I want to end by remembering one of Edinburgh's finest, boxing legend Ken Buchanan, whose memorial service was held in St Giles Cathedral earlier this week.

Born in Leith, Ken would go on to become Scotland's first undisputed world champion, famously fighting on the same bill as Muhammad Ali in Madison Square Garden twice and was once voted 'Britain's Greatest Ever Boxer' by Boxing News.

As the 10th recipient of the [Edinburgh Award](#), Ken's famous fighting hands were immortalised on a flagstone outside the City Chambers and, last August, large crowds gathered to celebrate as his statue was unveiled at a public ceremony on Leith Walk.

A fitting tribute to a great champion.

Get involved

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