

# Leader's Report

## Cllr Cammy Day



August 2023

### Festival buzz

All too soon, August will draw to a close and the curtain will come down on another frenetic festival season here in the Capital. It's been brilliant to feel the familiar buzz around us once more. The quality of performances, shows and street acts has been superb and there's no question the atmosphere is as welcoming as ever.

It's fair to say the city has looked fantastic and this is thanks to everyone who has worked tirelessly, day and night, to make our festivals happen and keep the city looking its best. I'd like to thank those involved in keeping Edinburgh safe, moving and clean – including the [extra helping hands](#) we brought on board to help our waste and cleansing crews.

I'd also like to pay tribute to our award-winning Forever Edinburgh team. Guided by Edinburgh's Tourism Strategy but delivered entirely in-house, their campaigns and promotional work encourage responsible and sustainable tourism, while shining a light on our communities right across the city. They've recently launched an [excellent new website](#) to encourage visitors – and [residents](#) – to enjoy everything our beautiful city has to offer.

We are, of course, extremely proud that Edinburgh is one of the world's most popular visitor destinations, but we're equally aware that this appeal comes at a cost. It's crucial, then, for us to strike the right balance between promoting our visitor economy while looking after the people that live here all year round.

That's why we need a visitor levy to help us manage the impact of a successful visitor economy while benefiting our residents and businesses, and it was great to see strong support from councillors when our latest plans were [reported to committee](#) this week. We'll continue to work closely with the industry and other stakeholders to fine-tune our proposals in the coming months.

Equally, we remain committed to better managing the impact of the growing number of short-term lets in the city and, while acknowledging the strength of feeling on both sides of this debate, I continue to believe that fair and effective controls are an important step in the right direction.

### Getting the basics right

Edinburgh is the fastest-growing city in Scotland, with more than 50,000 new residents expected over the next 20 years. While this is undoubtedly a sign of the city's success, it really does put pressure on our communities, on housing, schools, care services, and on the infrastructure we all rely on – not least when we continue to be the lowest-funded Scottish local authority.

These are major challenges so it's important that we set ourselves major targets. Our aims to eradicate poverty and become net-zero by 2030 are ambitious, but we need to be aspirational to make sure equality and sustainability stay at the top of our priority list. As is abundantly clear from our latest [Annual Performance Report](#), we've still got a lot of work to do, but setting these challenging targets has already helped us transform the way we (and our partners) work and think.

While we plan and prepare for the future, we're also focused on getting the basics right. We've improved street cleanliness – with [plans agreed for further measures](#) – and are performing well when it comes to fixing roads and street lights, both of which are on or above target. Missed bin collections are reducing and our parks are being recognised as the best in country. In fact, Edinburgh now boasts almost half of Scotland's [Green Flag parks](#) (38) – more than we've ever had before.

### Smart city, smart choices

One way we can adapt to some of the challenges that lie ahead and improve our core services is to embrace and introduce new technology.

Take [our trailblazing Operations Centre](#), for example, launched at the end of 2022, which is allowing us to analyse events and traffic in real time while helping us to keep the city moving and our communities safe. We've now installed 11,000 smart sensors in waste bins to make sure our collections are efficient, and a further 500 sensors are being introduced in council homes to monitor damp levels. The final few are being rolled out in the next week.

All of these projects are in place or almost complete – a great achievement – with the next phase allowing us to place sensors in even more homes. The whole operation is helping us to make services more sustainable and fit for the future, lowering carbon emissions while stepping up our capabilities as a council.

---

## Staying on the right track

It's less than three months since we launched Edinburgh Trams passenger services between the city centre and Newhaven and I've heard from countless Leithers and people from across the city who are enjoying and benefiting from the new route.

The proof is in the pudding too – after doubling in the first weeks after the new line opened, Edinburgh Trams passenger numbers remain high. And their success isn't going unnoticed – in June they scooped [Public Transport Operator of the Year](#) at the Scottish Transport Awards and are [in the running to become UK Tram Operator of the Year](#) at the UK Awards in October.

We're putting the finishing touches to improvements to public spaces near the new line, including Elm Row, where we're creating a safe, relaxing space to walk, wheel, cycle and spend time. Meanwhile, eagle-eyed travellers may have spotted the [appearance of a mysterious tarpaulin-wrapped figure](#) on Picardy Place island. While the statue will remain under wraps for now, you don't have to be our most famous sleuth to work out who it is.

We've worked closely with local stakeholders, accessibility groups and heritage organisations to develop the designs and I'm really excited to see these great public spaces brought back into use.

---

## Learning lessons from our past

This week the Lord Provost hosted a civic reception at the City Chambers to mark the [UNESCO International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition](#), and officially launched the work of the Edinburgh Slavery and Colonialism Review Implementation Group (ESCLRIG).

In 2020, we agreed to carry out an independent review of the city's historical links with slavery and colonialism. This, in turn, led to the creation of the Edinburgh Slavery and Colonialism Review Group, chaired by Sir Geoff Palmer, which [returned ten recommendations](#) for the city – unanimously agreed by councillors in August 2022.

In March, I was pleased to welcome the nomination of Irene Mosota to chair the ESCLRIG and, following an extensive recruitment drive, I'm delighted that we have such a diverse and forward-thinking group who will now take forward the Review's recommendations.

I'm under no illusions that racism and the legacies of slavery and colonialism continue to impact the lives of Black and Minority Ethnic people who live in and visit Edinburgh, which is why this work deserves our unconditional attention and support.

---

## Marking Ukrainian Independence Day – День Незалежності України

Yesterday (24 August) marked Ukrainian Independence Day. It has now been 32 years since the Ukrainian Parliament ratified the Declaration of Independence. Today, sadly, also marks 18 months since Russia illegally invaded their country and caused the greatest humanitarian catastrophe in Europe since the Second World War.

Since then, we've welcomed over 11,000 displaced Ukrainians through our Welcome Hub and continue to be the primary entry point to Scotland. Alongside the Scottish Government and partners, we provided sanctuary to over 1,500 people aboard the MS Victoria and continue to support the thousands of Ukrainians who now call Edinburgh home.

[The Lord Provost laid a wreath](#) in commemoration at the City Chambers alongside the First Minister, Ukraine Consul and members of the Ukrainian community. As we celebrate Ukraine's independence, their national flag will proudly fly above the City Chambers as it has done since the first days of this terrible war.

---

## Back to school

It's the start of the new school year and I want to extend a warm welcome to all our young people, families, carers and teaching staff who returned this month – especially to those who will have started at a new school or nursery where I'm sure you were warmly received on your first day.

Pupils at Sciennes Primary School were especially excited as their new classroom block opened its doors. It's one of the first Passivhaus school buildings in Scotland, designed to reduce the amount of energy needed for heating.

For some, the first day back was slightly different, with Brunstane Primary School pupils travelling to four other schools following a precautionary closure, and several classes at Trinity and Cramond primary schools learning in new high quality temporary classrooms due to ongoing building works.

It's been a huge logistical exercise by so many different teams across the Council to get these temporary arrangements in place and I want to thank them for all their hard work over the summer break to ensure the first few days went off as smoothly as possible.

Lastly [congratulations to everyone](#) on their achievements with their exam results. It's important to remember, of course, that there's no wrong path and every career path is unique.

Initial analysis of our results also shows that the attainment gap is reducing between the most and least disadvantaged pupils. That's something to be welcomed and I look forward to many more successes in the coming year.

---

## A life of sport and leisure

The Summer Festivals may have headlined August, but it's been a busy and hugely successful month for sport, too.

It all kicked off with the UCI World Cycling Championships, which brought the spectacle of the [Elite Road Race](#) to the city centre early in the month. The Rugby Summer Tests at Murrayfield were great spectacles and we've watched Hibs and Hearts compete in Europe.

Then, to top it all this week, our very own Josh Kerr stunned Olympic champion Jakob Ingebrigtsen to take 1500m gold at the World Championships in Budapest. Josh has been supported by Edinburgh Athletics since the tender age of nine and the role clubs like them play in nurturing the next generation of athletes shouldn't be underestimated.

Someone who knows that all too well, of course, is June Peebles, Chief Executive at Edinburgh Leisure, who has just [announced her retirement](#) at the end of the year.

Beginning as the Assistant Manager of the Jack Kane Centre back in 1985 and part of the original team that helped establish Edinburgh Leisure in 1998, June has been keeping us in shape for almost 40 years. I'm sure you'll join me in wishing her a long, happy – and active – retirement.

---

## Get involved

Keep up to date with all [Council news online](#). You can [watch live Council and committee meetings](#) on our webcast service and join the debate on Twitter using #edinwebcast. If you wish to unsubscribe, please [email](#) us.

[Follow us on twitter](#)



[Follow us on Facebook](#)

