

Business Bulletin

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10.00am, Tuesday 9th January 2024

Dean of Guild Courtroom, City Chambers, High Street, Edinburgh

Policy and Sustainability Committee

Convener:	Members:	Contact:
<p>Convener: Councillor Cammy Day</p> 	<p>Councillor Cammy Day (Convener) Councillor Danny Aston Councillor Alan Beal Councillor Fiona Bennett Councillor Marco Biagi Councillor Kate Campbell Councillor Sanne Dijkstra-Downie Councillor Phil Doggart Councillor Kevin Lang Councillor Lesley Macinnes Councillor Adam McVey Councillor Jane Meagher Councillor Claire Miller Councillor Alys Mumford Councillor Ben Parker Councillor Mandy Watt Councillor Iain Whyte</p>	<p>Jamie Macrae, Committee Officer</p> <p>Jacqueline Boyle, Assistant Committee Officer</p>

Recent News

Background

Visitor Levy Update

Engagement on Visitor Levy

Engagement sessions were held from July 2023 to collate views on the range of parameters outlined in the draft Visitor Levy (Scotland) Bill, which will help inform the development of Edinburgh's scheme.

A [survey](#) was launched 23 November 2023 and will gather views on the Council's latest proposals for a Visitor Levy, helping to inform a formal consultation exercise in 2024. The survey forms part of ongoing engagement work, seeking views from residents and visitors on the shape and size of the levy, who it should apply to and how it should be spent. Information for residents, visitors, businesses and other stakeholders [about a visitor levy](#) has been developed for the Council's website.

Engagement between industry and local government continues through the work of the [Visitor Levy Expert Group](#). The Group held its first meeting on the 6 September 2023 and aims to develop guidance and best practice for local authorities on elements of the Visitor Levy (Scotland) Bill. This will help ensure the new discretionary power works for both businesses and communities.

Progress of Visitor Levy (Scotland) Bill

Between October and November 2023, the Scottish Parliament heard evidence from over 30 witnesses including community groups, general business organisations, organisations representing the tourism and hospitality sector, local authorities, the Council of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and the Scottish Government. The Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee will set out its findings in a report on the [Visitor Levy \(Scotland\) Bill](#) by the 18 January 2024, that will be followed by a debate in Parliament. Then, a decision on whether the Bill continues to Stage 2 will be made.

Cruise ships as possible addition to the Visitor Levy (Scotland) Bill.

The Scottish Government are [open to adding a cruise ship levy](#) to the Visitor Levy (Scotland) Bill. This decision on whether such amendments would be within the scope of the Bill will be for the Scottish Parliament to decide.

Telematics Update

On 23 May 2023 Policy and Sustainability Committee [approved](#) the Driving for the Council - Telematics Policy. In addition, a further update was presented to Committee on 22 August 2023. This note provided further content regarding the relevant systems associated with fleet telemetry data and departments relevant.

The implementation of telematics has been ongoing following approval of the policy, with over 500 fleet assets now operating in

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service with the system live. There are a number of fleet assets scheduled for replacement during the first two quarters of 2024. As the new vehicles enter service, this will significantly increase the number of overall vehicles fitted with the system. Prior to introducing the system, toolbox talks and communications have been shared to help vehicle users understand the purpose of the system and the information it captures.

The Fleet Compliance team handles all enquiries and requests in relation to telematics and determines whether the request is valid to review the movements of the vehicle. In addition, with the number of vehicles that are now installed with the hardware, the Fleet Compliance team are working with service users to report, monitor and improve key elements including vehicle utilisation, speeding infringement and unauthorised journeys. Since the implementation of the policy, approximately 30 vehicles have been withdrawn from service as a result of underutilisation. It is anticipated that a further 20 vehicles will be removed from service over the next 12 months.

Fleet Council Emissions Reductions Plan (CERP)

Targets

The target for fleet assets in the CERP is for all Council operated cars and light commercial vans that are currently internal combustion engine powered to be replaced with zero emission tailpipe variants (fully electric or hydrogen powered) by the end of 2024.

On 21 November 2023, Finance and Resource Committee approved the [Fleet Asset Management Plan 2023 – 2029](#). With this plan now approved, the fleet asset CERP targets must be realigned to reflect the approved plan.

The Plan seeks to maximise the number of electric vehicles, wherever possible, but recognises that it is not possible to replace all vans with electric versions within the current funding available. This is due to continued pressures associated with increasing prices of vehicles in general but also the continuing gap between electric and combustion powered vehicles.

The Fleet Asset Management Plan outlines that all cars will become fully electric in 2024 and that target will be met. However, the aim for vans is to increase the number of electric vans to a minimum of 200 by June 2024 (there are currently 54 electric vans in the fleet) with the target for all vans to be electric by 2030.

This target will be updated within the upcoming revision of the CERP to reflect this change.

Statutory Biodiversity Duty report 2021-23

As a public body, the Council is required to report every three years on biodiversity conservation. The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 places a statutory duty on all public bodies to

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“further the conservation of biodiversity in the course of delivering its functions”. The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 requires the publication of a report, every three years, on how public bodies are meeting this duty. The most [recent report](#) for the period 2021-2023 has been produced and is summarised here.

The Council has delivered a range of biodiversity outcomes in the reporting period. Core activities for biodiversity are reported, such as the management of Natural Heritage Parks and Local Nature Reserves, engagement with schools by the Outdoor Learning Team, improvements to greenspace, designation of Local Nature Conservation Sites and production and delivery of the Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan (EBAP). In addition, positive biodiversity outcomes have been embedded in strategic programmes, projects and policy work. This includes Thriving Green Spaces, Edinburgh Nature Network programmes and City Plan 2030 policy work.

The Council declared a Nature Emergency in February 2023. Closer alignment of the response to the Climate and Nature Emergencies is found in the draft Climate Ready Edinburgh plan, EBAP 2022-27 and Green Blue Infrastructure Strategy. Working with stakeholders, partners and community groups is embedded in the EBAP 2022-27. The EBAP is now in its third decade of delivering conservation action for priority species and habitats across the city, through the work of the Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership.

A summary of these and other highlights contained in the report:

- Production of a new Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan 2022-27;
- Revised and improved biodiversity policies in City Plan 2030, linked to National Planning Framework 4;
- Management of Local Nature Conservation Sites designations;
- Management and enhancement of natural heritage parks, including Local Nature Reserves and Pentland Hills Regional Park;
- Declaration of a new Local Nature Reserve at Little France Park, taking the total to 8;
- Edinburgh Nature Network project;
- Green Blue Network strategy;
- Outdoor Learning Team delivery of education and biodiversity outcomes in schools;
- Million Tree City project; and
- Creation of Wee forests.

Edinburgh Community Climate Fund

At the meeting of the Policy and Sustainability Committee on 22nd August 2023, in considering an interim evaluation of the Edinburgh Community Climate Fund, members requested a Business Bulletin update in two cycles on the Improvement Plan, addressing in particular plans for an improved registration experience for voters, which was deemed 'poor' by one in three users, and proposed strategies for better inclusion of underrepresented groups in participatory budgeting.

Integration of Google and Facebook

In future PB processes, CONSUL users will now be able to log in using their Google or Facebook accounts, alongside a local or "lazy" login option for voting. The local or lazy login allows people to vote and create an account at the same time and does not require email verification. This is expected to streamline the login process and encourage more users to participate in online votes in the future. The Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) and privacy statements have been revised and approved to support this enhanced functionality.

Focus on Digital Inclusion

The Edinburgh Partnership's work on digital inclusion will provide learning for future PB initiatives and will guide strategies to support individuals in participating online, particularly those who lack access to devices, internet connectivity, or digital literacy.

Offline Voter Support

Further evaluation will be undertaken in early 2024 to understand the perspectives of colleagues who assisted offline voters, with the aim of refining this process for greater efficiency. Lessons learned will be published as part of the final evaluation report.

Collaboration with Young Scot

Ongoing discussions between Young Scot and COSLA focus on maximizing online systems to further improve the user experience. Young Scot's insights will be integral in shaping future processes and will be included in lessons learned for continuous improvement.

System Upgrades and Intuitive Design

Learnings from other local authorities and internal discussions have highlighted areas for system upgrades. Future enhancements will focus on improving navigation and making the system more intuitive. Testing and implementation of these improvements will take place before CONSUL is used again.

Targeted Communications

Results from the Edinburgh Partnership Survey will inform communications strategies aimed at individuals who are less likely to have the necessary resources or skills for online engagement.

Equalities Monitoring

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COSLA has confirmed that equalities monitoring will be available through the Improvement Service in future processes. Additionally, when using local login options, there will be functionality to include customised questions, allowing for more tailored and inclusive engagement.

Promotion

The impact of supported projects has been promoted widely and published on the online system. This will assist with transparency and showcase the outcomes of the ECCF to both engage the community and demonstrate the tangible benefits of their environmental efforts.

Next steps

Engagement with the Edinburgh Climate Action Network is planned for January 2024 to discuss opportunities for collaboration and how learning from the ECCF can inform any future green PB processes in Edinburgh. A final evaluation report which will provide an assessment of the impact of the process and outcomes achieved will be published in spring 2024.

Forthcoming activities:
