

Leader's Report

Cllr Cammy Day



February 2024

Fairer funding for our capital city

We have hugely ambitious plans for Edinburgh – playing our part in the global fight against climate change, tackling poverty once and for all and getting the basics right for our communities – and, last month, [I laid out our priorities for 2024](#).

Having received various national and international awards and accolades recognising our actions, and the Edinburgh People's survey telling us that [94% of residents feel satisfied](#) with Edinburgh as a place to live, we're clearly moving in the right direction.

There's no doubt that the condition of roads and pavements across the city is of concern to residents, and thanks to the [additional £11m investment](#) agreed in this year's budget, we're now on track to carry out improvements to the largest ever area of roads and pavements in one financial year.

I want to make sure we keep this kind of spending up and, later this month, we'll be taking decisions about where we invest – and where we save – when we set our budget for 2024/25. We've made good progress since the start of our budget-setting journey – with solutions found to help [close the gap](#), while supporting Edinburgh Leisure to pay their staff the living wage and to avoid any venue closures.

However, with a £10m reduction in funding from the Scottish Government, Edinburgh is set to, yet again, enter the new financial year as the lowest funded local authority in Scotland, making our financial choices as challenging as ever.

It's our duty to protect vital services which our most vulnerable residents rely upon, while tackling the housing and cost of living crises and facing into the climate emergency – but we can't do this alone. These are national crises that demand national action, which is why I will continue to call upon the Scottish Government to provide fairer funding for our capital city.

A cleaner, greener city

As our population continues to grow, rethinking the way we move people and goods around the city is essential if we're to achieve our climate goals, and in recent weeks we've progressed our plans to do just that.

At yesterday's [Transport and Environment Committee](#), members voted to progress a public consultation on proposals to expand our tram network between Granton and the BioQuarter. Building on the success of the Trams to Newhaven project, this will provide a high capacity, clean and affordable transport link from north to south, supporting local regeneration, boosting economic growth and connecting to educational and cultural venues along the length of the route.

Alongside this, committee agreed to move forward with [Our Future Streets](#), which sets out an approach to how space is allocated on the city's streets to help create a more people-friendly place, while accelerating a series of measures to reduce through traffic in the city centre. They also heard an update on the [West Edinburgh Transport Improvements Programme](#), a major plan to improve active travel and public transport in the area.

Meanwhile, following an extensive awareness campaign, we're now the [first local authority in Scotland to enforce against pavement parking](#), as well as parking at crossing points and double parking. I'm delighted that drivers are generally adhering to the rules, and it's fantastic to hear from people with visual impairments, those using wheelchairs and parents with buggies who are now able to get around without having to step on to the road.

Adapting for the future

While reducing our carbon emissions is crucial to the future of our city, the recent storms have reminded us, once again, of the ever more extreme weather we're experiencing – and the need to prepare ourselves for the new challenges climate change will present in the years ahead.

I was pleased, then, to take a trip to Granton this week alongside Scottish Water's Net Zero General Manager, Gordon Reid, to see first hand our plans to adapt our coastline. Gordon has led the group of partners working with us to prepare our draft [Climate Ready Edinburgh Plan](#), which is currently out for consultation.

The £1.3bn transformation of Granton Waterfront into a net-zero coastal town, complete with 3,500 new, sustainable homes, will deliver a vibrant, green and sustainable coastal quarter, offering a major

opportunity for us to think differently and make sure we are climate ready. With plans to create Europe's largest new coastal park, we have the chance to build in natural resilience to flooding from rising sea levels and storm surges as part of those designs.

Climate change is an issue that will affect every one of us and our communities, so please take part in the [online consultation](#), which runs until 7 April.

Scotland's economic engine room

Last week I was pleased to represent Edinburgh at the [Scottish Cities Alliance conference](#) – a collaboration of Scotland's eight cities and the Scottish Government working together to promote the country's economic potential.

When measured by GDP, Edinburgh's economic success is the highest in the country, and of anywhere in the UK outside of London. According to Skills Development Scotland, the Capital accounts for the largest share of Scotland's total employment (14.2%), helped by our leading universities and world-renowned festivals.

Of course, in the current cost of living crisis, a healthy employment market is hugely welcome – so long as our workers are receiving a fair wage for a fair day's work and everyone can benefit from the city's success.

We're also the [best place in the country](#) to start a business and the most attractive region in the UK outside London for entrepreneurs. I was particularly pleased to see our female founders flying high – with Edinburgh boasting more than the national average of businesses started by women (20% compared to 17.8%) and, with over 700 high-growth companies employing more than 30,000 workers, our start-up businesses are an important driver of our economy.

Similarly, the success and resilience of our tourism industry is to be celebrated – not least its ongoing recovery from the pandemic. I'm very much looking forward to addressing the [ETAG Annual Conference](#) at the EICC on Tuesday – reflecting on this success and the opportunities that lie ahead, in particular the [huge potential benefits](#) that a Visitor Levy for Edinburgh would bring.

Tackling graffiti together

It was really encouraging to see so many partners come together last month as I chaired the [city's first Graffiti summit](#) as we aim to address this blight on our beautiful city.

There were constructive discussions around the role we can all play in tackling the issue – bearing in mind, of course, that the majority is on private property. It was interesting to learn more about the difference between vandalism and street art, and how 'tolerance zones' and murals like Colinton Tunnel and Marine Parade could be part of the answer.

One of the key outcomes was the need to [work with both the private and public sectors](#) to solve the problem, whether that's sharing data with the police to help them to identify the extent of the issue or working with stakeholders to provide a specialist paid-for service. This is only the start of the conversation, and we'll report back soon on next steps.

Keeping our communities safe

You will probably have seen or read about the evacuation of the Anchorfield tenement on Lindsay Road in Newhaven last week.

I want to stress again that keeping the community – and the residents – safe was our number one priority and, given the serious concerns about the structure of the building, the safest course of action was to evacuate all households immediately.

Having visited the site on Wednesday, I want to pay tribute to our council teams who have, once again, acted swiftly and decisively and are doing everything they possibly can to support the residents, who are clearly going through the most stressful of times.

Work to install scaffolding and make the building secure is nearly complete and should allow us to reopen the surrounding areas, including Lindsay Road, in the coming days.

Proudly flying the flag for LGBT+ History Month

I was pleased to attend the [raising of the LGBT+ rainbow flag](#) at the City Chambers yesterday, above which it will fly proudly for the duration of LGBT+ History Month.

Edinburgh has always been a welcoming and inclusive city – and we're rightly proud of our thriving LGBT+ community. And while we've undoubtedly made progress in recent years, sadly parts of the community still come under attack, which is why it's more important than ever for us to demonstrate the city's support.

Thank you, Andrew

I want to end with a word on our outgoing Chief Executive, Andrew Kerr, who announced last month that he is to retire in June.

I've enjoyed working with Andrew, both when I was Deputy Leader and now as Leader, and I want to thank him for his hard work and leadership over the past nine years in particular – but also for his 42 years' worth of commitment to public service.

The recruitment process is already underway to find a high-calibre successor, with a report outlining next steps going to Council next week.

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