



Council Leader's Report

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• EDINBURGH •
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

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Trams to Newhaven: construction timetable now live

Earlier this month we announced the [full construction timetable for taking trams to Newhaven](#), with work getting under way on Constitution Street from mid-November, alongside enabling works on Leith Walk to prepare for the main construction work there next April.

As a local Leith councillor, I know that there's a real sense of anticipation in the community as we embark on this exciting new chapter for the area. It's daunting when major works are in the pipeline, of course, but the project team has been unstinting in their open, transparent approach, putting residents' and businesses' needs at the heart of their plans so that we can keep disruption to an absolute minimum.

Trams will deliver a safe, sustainable, high-capacity and modern transport link to unlock the full potential of Leith and North Edinburgh and connect local communities to major centres of employment in the city – all without impacting on other council budgets.

It's fascinating to think of what may be unearthed by the archaeologists as work progresses, revealing hitherto hidden aspects of Leith's rich history. We're very much looking forward to inviting members of the public along to the dig to explore Leith's dramatic past as we progress our plans to build the area a bright and connected future.

Supporting thousands of EU nationals to stay in Edinburgh post-Brexit

Colleagues from across the Council have been preparing for many months to minimise the impact Brexit might have on our core services and on the residents we serve. But many factors simply remain beyond our control and "no deal" is yet to be ruled out. We will continue to work hard to protect our Capital as best we can – whatever the outcome we're subjected to.

We're home to almost 40,000 EU nationals – more than any other city in Scotland – and our European residents add so much to our city's cultural identity. It's one of the many reasons why we authorised up to £25,000 from the Council's Priorities Fund to support our registration services, and to make sure the right help was in place despite the uncertainty of Brexit.

It's encouraging then that, according to the latest figures from COSLA, more than 1 in 5 people in Scotland who have registered for settled status have done so in order to stay in Edinburgh. That's more than 11,000 out of the 50,000 who have signed up and I'm pleased that we've now directly registered more 1,500 through the Council.

Our EU nationals are a key part of our Capital's current and future social and economic growth and, no matter what, Edinburgh is their home.

Boosting sustainability and tackling poverty with our budget

When we set our budget earlier this year, we committed to creating a fairer and more inclusive Edinburgh by investing in more affordable new homes, a revamped Meadowbank sports centre, major infrastructure works and much needed new schools. We agreed to protect services which support our most vulnerable residents and drive forward our climate change goals.

It's really encouraging, then, to see all of these big issues we've been prioritising over the last eight months take another step forward with a commitment from councillors to keep on [prioritising poverty and sustainability](#) in the future budget decisions we take.

As we look ahead to our budget-setting exercise in February and beyond, we're drawing on feedback from residents to shape opportunities for investing in the future well-being of our city and of our people. And we'll be doing this by looking at all of the decisions we take through the lenses of poverty and sustainability – ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to share in our city's success.

Success of City Region Deal sparks partnership working

It's just over a year since we signed up to the £1.3bn transformative 15-year [Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal](#) with an inclusive programme to help grow and share our success right across the region.

An incredible amount of work has been done since then with huge progress being made, including £704m of spending being approved in the first 12 months for housing, transport, innovation, skills and employability, and culture.

This investment is helping us towards our target of becoming a global powerhouse in data-driven innovation. Already we have over 20 industry partners in residence at the brand new innovation hub at the Bayes Centre, and £49.4m approved for the Fife Industrial Innovation Investment Programme.

This partnership approach has led to a cross-regional working group being set up to ensure we have economic development and infrastructure policies in place to underpin the success of the projects being delivered on the ground.

A framework will be produced by summer 2020 to help shape new regional and national policy and set the strategic direction for inclusive and sustainable economic growth in the city region as a whole.

Initial evaluation demonstrates 20's plenty for Edinburgh

When we first began to roll out a network of 20mph roads across the Capital in 2016 - becoming Scotland's first 20mph city - we envisioned safer, calmer and more welcoming streets, encouraging walking and cycling and increasing social interaction.

I'm delighted therefore to see that slower speed limits are already having a real impact on the safety and well-being of our residents and visitors, as [reported to Transport and Environment Committee](#) earlier this month. Public support for the scheme is up, with 65% of those polled in household survey, now in favour (24% of whom, strongly) compared to 58% (20% strongly) before the rollout. People who walk and cycle report doing so much more frequently now streets are calmer and respondents feel Edinburgh's traffic speeds are "very safe" for cycling.

Speeds are falling across the city, with significantly fewer people driving at 30mph+ and a rise in drivers travelling below 20mph. With an estimated 6% reduction in accidents for every 1mph drop in speed, these figures speak for themselves.

Of course, there's more to be done to encourage compliance and, with the roll-out of 20mph only completed last year, it's still bedding in. But, with new drivers passing their tests every day with 20mph as the norm, communities across the city calling for more streets to be added to the network and support for the scheme growing, I'm confident that we'll see more and more people adhering to speed limits, helping deliver the many benefits that safer, calmer streets can bring.

It's (almost) the most wonderful time of the year

The full programmes for this year's Winter Festivals were unveiled earlier this month and it promises to be another fantastic festive season.

As well as the return of the popular [Edinburgh's Christmas](#) market and attractions, new highlights include Community Christmas, a fun and free celebration which will see 12 locally significant buildings, across all four localities, come alive with festive projections over 12 consecutive nights.

In a great new partnership for 2019, 25p from every ticket sold to the Christmas Tree Maze will be donated to Edinburgh and the Lothians Greenspace Trust's [Tree Time](#) project, which means as much as £15,000 could be raised to help replant or plant new trees in Edinburgh.

The Winter Festivals continue to bring new entertainment and attractions to the city but they also honour our long-held traditions. So whether you join us at Light Night, take part in the [Edinburgh's Hogmanay](#) Torchlight Procession, spend your midnight moment at the street party as part of the [best "bucket list festival in the world"](#) or launch into the next decade with a brave Loony Dook, Edinburgh really has something for everyone.

Looking further ahead, we want residents to be right at the heart of shaping the future of our Winter Festivals, so we'll be launching a public consultation in the New Year – watch this space!

Taking the lead on Dog-Friendly Thursdays

Don't be surprised if you come across four-legged friends in the Central Library over coming Thursdays. George IV Bridge library is one of three (including Stockbridge and Oxcgangs) taking part in our three-month pilot 'Dog-Friendly Thursdays'.

Allowing dogs in encourages people who may not have done so before to visit libraries – as shown on the first day when a woman signed up as a brand new library member precisely because she could bring her dog – and acknowledges the role that dogs play in providing support, companionship and the help they can give people in social situations. As with all our pilots, feedback is always welcome.

And that leads very nicely on to welcoming the newest recruit to the full Council fold... Cllr Howie's new assistance dog, Gucci. I'm sure everyone will give Gucci a warm welcome as she makes her debut in the Council Chamber, following in her predecessor Lloyd's well-practised pawsteps.

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