



Progress review of older people's services

Earlier this week, the Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) published their [progress review](#) of the joint inspection of health and social work services for older people in Edinburgh.

Whilst their review reported some areas where important progress has been made, it also highlighted many others where they found the services had not progressed as quickly as they would have liked.

This was a fair snapshot of where the service was in the spring but, since then, we have begun to see signs of improvement with new Chief Officer Judith Proctor's plans moving in the right direction. Notably, since the inspectors' visit, there have been reductions in the number of people delayed in their discharge from hospital, waiting for an assessment and those waiting for care following an assessment.

We will continue to work closely with our partners to ensure older people in Edinburgh receive the highest possible quality of care.

Improving our core services

As well as looking after our older residents, there's been a real focus on the way we deliver core services to the citizens of Edinburgh recently – and rightly so. How we collect bins and repair our roads and pavements matters to everyone, whatever part of the city they live in.

While I share residents' frustrations over missed bin collections, I'm confident that the hard work and actions we're taking now is leading to real improvements. The recent introduction of four-day bin collection rotas alongside the new garden waste service will lead to an improved service for everyone, as well as making essential budget savings to protect key services such as education and social care. The team have worked extremely hard to deal with the recent challenges and will continue to do so until the benefits of the new practices are realised.

Just as relevant to residents is the state of our roads and pavements. Our £100m investment programme is having a real impact on the ground for maintaining and improving road and pavement quality. We've forecast a 66% increase in repair and resurfacing projects compared to last year, equating to 314,000 square metres of carriageway enhancements. In parallel, we're investing in more staff and design work, meaning we can increase our workload, delivering long-term benefits citywide.

The future's greener

We take trees seriously. It's a little-known fact, but we boast more trees than people here in Edinburgh – that's almost 650,000 across the Capital. Since forming a coalition 18 months ago, we've already far surpassed our pledge to plant 1,000 additional trees, with a net increase of more than 7,000 in the city so far and plans for more, in part thanks to the additional £75k committed in

this year's budget.

So, I was delighted to support a motion by Councillor Miller last month to sign up to the Woodland Trust's Charter for Trees, celebrating trees in the city, committing to planting more and protecting irreplaceable trees and woods.

Having already achieved our pledge, we will now bring forward a report to the Transport & Environment Committee by next summer on how we build on this success with plans to increase trees in the city centre and across our communities.

Tackling poverty head on

One of our fundamental aims as an Administration is to ensure that all residents have the opportunity to share in our city's undoubted success; that they have enough money to live on, a good place to live and access to education, training and work.

Tackling poverty is a key part of this and, last week, Edinburgh's [Poverty Commission met for the first time](#) to define the long-term responses needed to address this unnecessary blight on our society.

The commissioners have been selected for their strong skills and experience across a wide range of fields including business, housing, trade unions, third sector, project delivery, health, and education – alongside those with lived experience of poverty. Indeed, Commissioner Chris Kilkenny brings a powerful and thought-provoking view of the world of poverty to the group.

Each session will focus on different areas related to the experience of poverty in Edinburgh, including child poverty, education and attainment, work and incomes, living costs, health and wellbeing, housing, transport, places and communities.

A final report with recommendations for action will be agreed and published by the end of next year and I'm very much looking forward to seeing this Commission spearhead a new approach for the Capital. I know other cities will be looking on with interest.

Spotlight shines on Edinburgh for EUROCITIES

It was a real privilege to take part in [EUROCITIES 2018](#) and for the event's young ambassadors to share their aspirations for the Capital with First Minister Nicola Sturgeon. This was also very timely as we're asking all of our residents about their vision for Edinburgh in 2050.

Edinburgh, and the EICC, was hugely honoured to play host to EUROCITIES. This network of major European cities brings together local governments that lead 130 million citizens across 39 countries. More than 500 delegates from 120 cities took part in the event, including 70 Young Ambassadors. The conference explored how culture and creativity can deliver successful, inclusive and prosperous cities that enrich the quality of citizens' lives.

It also gave us an invaluable, and timely, opportunity to share ideas and insights with other European cities on how to tackle some of the big issues that we all face.

From the big screen to the backlot: time for a film studio in Leith

Edinburgh's appeal to film makers has never been greater so [today's announcement](#) that Screen Scotland is searching for a film studio operator couldn't come at a better time. They have struck a deal with Forth Ports which opens doors for a new film studio in Leith at the old Pelamis building.

The Capital's links to the film industry are already strong – thanks to our film-friendly city approach, annual international film festival and spectacular backdrop – and, of course, Leith is already awash with the kind of creative and tech talent that the film industry needs.

Such a facility would undoubtedly provide hundreds of new jobs, which would of course rise when filming takes place, and bring great economic benefits to the whole area.

Filming in Edinburgh generated over £16m for the local economy last year alone and we know that 40% of visitors to the UK are attracted to places they have seen on screen – so it's highly likely a new studio would boost Edinburgh's 'seen on screen' appeal to tourists too.

Still time to have your say on our plans for a TVL

As you know from this report, across the media and elsewhere, we have spent the past few months seeking views around how Edinburgh might be able to introduce a Transient Visitor Levy (TVL), or 'tourist tax'.

Based on a £2-a-night model, we estimate the scheme could generate around £11m a year for the city – additional funding that could support the continued success of our visitor economy and improve the liveability of the city for residents, particularly during peak tourist seasons. If implemented, it would be the first of its kind in the UK. But these schemes are actually very common – and successful – in many European cities, from Berlin to Rome.

We know from two independent studies conducted by Marketing Edinburgh that the vast majority of visitors would not be put off coming to Edinburgh if a levy were introduced. These also demonstrated support at home, with most residents welcoming the proposals.

In parallel to this, and ongoing engagement with industry, our [online consultation](#) has already attracted close to 2,500 responses. This runs until Monday (10 December) so please take the time to have your say if you haven't already.

Festive greetings

Finally, as we reach the final council meeting of the year, I'd like to take the opportunity to wish all residents and council colleagues a Merry Christmas and all the very best for 2019.

While most of us turn our thoughts to gift-giving and a few well-deserved days off, the work doesn't stop to keep the city moving throughout winter and to plan for the New Year. In fact, this can be one of the busiest times of the year in Edinburgh. From gritting the roads to keeping them safe and collecting Christmas trees and wrapping paper for recycling after the big day, right through to facilitating Edinburgh's winter festivals, our frontline staff will be working round the clock.

We expect 75,000 people to descend on our world-famous Hogmanay street party alone, with the three-day festival predicted to bring £39million into the city. Meanwhile Edinburgh's Christmas continues to draw thousands of locals and visitors into the city centre to enjoy a great day out, providing a valuable boost to the local economy and a bit of welcome Christmas cheer for our high street.

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