



A Programme for the Capital

Earlier this week, I joined deputy leader, Cllr Cammy Day, in publishing ambitious plans to deliver improved services for the Capital's residents and communities.

The '[Programme for the Capital](#)' is the proposed business plan for the Council for the next five years and is built around the 52 commitments we set out in our coalition agreement signed just before summer recess.

Edinburgh is recognised as one of the world's most successful and prosperous cities and we have many strengths to build upon. Yet we know that if we are to maintain these successes, and meet the many challenges we face, the city needs a Council that shows strong leadership.

We're now working to deliver measurable progress on a range of areas across health, education, transport, environment and housing to make Edinburgh the best capital city it can be for everyone.

£1.1bn boost for the Region

On 20 July, we were able to tick one of the key commitments off our list with the greatly anticipated news that an ambitious £1.1bn [Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal](#) had been secured from both the UK and Scottish Governments.

Signing the deal with my counterparts from across the other five local authorities and other partners was an important first step in this process to drive investment and address inclusion across the whole region.

The deal will create up to 21,000 new jobs, much needed housing, critical infrastructure, a new skills programme, and a world class concert hall. The significant investment in innovation and culture is also to be welcomed as they are both hugely important to the region's economy. This will put us at the forefront of data driven innovation – ensuring we stay ahead of the game in a technology driven world.

Fantastic Festivals

Staying on the subject of culture, the 70th anniversary of the Edinburgh International Festival (EIF) has provided us with the ideal opportunity to enhance and spread the festivals this summer, and initial visitor figures suggest festival-goers have travelled from all over the world to party with us.

Of course, Edinburgh in August wouldn't be complete without the annual Festival Fireworks display. Set to a live orchestra, this month's [Virgin Money Festival Fireworks Concert](#) with the EIF will take place on 28 August. With more than a quarter of a million people due to attend the display, it is sure to bring our 70th summer season of festival celebrations to a spectacular close.

Waste improvements

This is heading towards being one of our busiest Augusts on record and so it was heartening to hear this week that [enquiries about waste are down by over a quarter](#) (27%) compared to the same time last year and by over a third in the city centre. This includes calls regarding litter, communal bins, dog fouling and fly-tipping.

As ever, we want to ensure Edinburgh is as clean and tidy as possible for both residents and visitors and, thanks to our hard-working staff, this is a really positive start to one of the City's busiest times of the year. It is also clear evidence that measures such as increased staffing and the *Our Edinburgh* campaign are working well.

We hope to be able to continue to manage this demand, however, we rely on the public doing their share too. We would encourage people to always take care when disposing of their rubbish to help make the Capital as beautiful as we all know it is.

Tram to Newhaven?

You may have read last week that trams are back on the agenda, with my fellow councillors and I currently considering the feasibility of completing the line to Newhaven.

As the fastest growing city in Scotland, and with our existing system nearing capacity, we have to look at ways of enhancing our public transport system.

The planned route down Leith Walk takes in Scotland's most densely populated area and, taken with low car ownership, developing high capacity transport to Newhaven would bring a range of local benefits in terms of boosting economic growth, creating jobs, enhancing accessibility, reducing congestion and improving air quality.

That said, we're very aware of the mistakes of the past and will only proceed to the next stage if the business case is robust enough to give us confidence that the project can be delivered on time and on budget.

20mph roll-out continues

Elsewhere on our transport agenda is the [rollout of 20mph zones across the city](#). We're now three quarters of the way through with the third phase, which went live on Wednesday, seeing streets from Ravelston to Baberton, Clovenstone to Silverknowes becoming calmer and safer, while retaining a strategic network of roads at 30mph and 40mph.

We're in excellent company internationally in bringing down speeds: Paris, Milan, New York and London, to name but a few, are all embracing 20mph or 30kmph limits.

This scheme benefits everyone, making places more pleasant to spend time in, boosting local centres and communities and helping to keep the most vulnerable road users, such as children, older people and those with mobility issues, safer. It's a sobering thought that you're SEVEN times more likely to survive if you're hit at 20mph than at 30mph.

Top of the Class

As those of you with children will be well aware, [exam results came out](#) earlier this month. And, once again, a really positive picture emerged across the City with strong levels of attainment being maintained or improved, particularly at 'Higher' level.

By the end of S5, 38% of the S4 roll achieved 3 or more Highers – a 1% improvement on last year and a 7% improvement since 2012.

Well done to everyone who makes this happen: teachers, pupils and, of course, families with all the support they provide at home. Good luck to everyone who left school in the summer on your next steps in life whether that is further education, training or employment.

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