

Item No 6.1



A tourist levy wouldn't deter tourists

Yesterday was a productive day in our quest to secure powers to introduce a tourist levy for Edinburgh.

I appeared before the Scottish Parliament's [culture and tourism committee](#) at Holyrood, re-stating the many benefits a levy could bring to the city while responding to questions around our engagement to date.

In my evidence, I stressed that our work has involved, and will continue to involve, key stakeholders, particularly those in the hospitality trade. This includes a series of round-table meetings to discuss the details of what an Edinburgh scheme could reasonably look like and options for implementing it.

Of course, while hoteliers and businesses are key stakeholders, so too are our residents and visitors and the [independent research](#), published by Marketing Edinburgh in recent days, was particularly timely.

It found that 92% of visitors questioned would still come to the Capital if they faced a levy of £1 per room per night. It also found that the majority of residents were in favour.

The results reinforce our thinking – and add weight to the evidence from other international cities – that visitors will not be discouraged from visiting Edinburgh should we introduce a TVL. This evidence dispels many of the fears voiced by some in the industry and is a valuable contribution to the debate.

I'm not surprised by the strong support amongst our residents for the proposals – it is entirely fair to expect tourists to contribute to the city maintenance, to cultural and tourist investments, and to marketing the city so that it remains globally attractive.

We continue to believe that a TVL is in the best interests of our residents, our tourism industry and those who visit us, and we fully expect the robust, professional approach we are taking to achieve a positive result for the Capital in due course.

My name's Doddie: Edinburgh Award winner

At well over 6ft tall dressed in his trademark tartan suit, Edinburgh born George 'Doddie' Weir is a man of great standing in more ways than one. A Scottish rugby legend for almost 15 years – earning over 60 international caps for his country and touring South Africa with the British Lions – Doddie is also an inspiring public speaker, [fundraiser extraordinaire](#) and a true ambassador for anyone affected by MND.

So, I'm delighted that, following many nominations from residents, the Lord Provost's panel has chosen Doddie to receive the Edinburgh Award 2018. Following in the footsteps of JK Rowling and Sir Chris Hoy, he will be presented with an engraved Loving Cup and have his handprints set in stone at the City Chambers when he receives this esteemed honour later this year.

In recognition of his sporting success, bravery and tireless charity work, this will be a fitting award for an outstanding man and he deserves our warmest congratulations and best wishes.

My Edinburgh will...?

A lively and inventive debate is gradually taking over the city with trams, buses, billboards and newspapers 'wrapped' with potential visions for the Edinburgh of the future.

Launched last week by the Lord Provost through Marketing Edinburgh, this eye-catching campaign is all about asking residents to share their hopes and ambitions for the city they live in, to help us shape a new City Vision.

As part of this, local cafes will be offering free coffees in return for residents' feedback, while City Cabs has created a 'taxi to the future' to take passengers on a journey through predicted advances. Based on a futuristic view of how we'll experience culture, grow food, build housing and travel by 2050, this free interactive experience swaps a fare for a frank chat with a taxi driver.

The ultimate aim of the whole project is to reach as many residents as possible so we can steer the city in the direction you want it to go. We'll be producing a blue-print for Edinburgh that we can all buy into. If you've already shared your 2050 vision, thank you. If not, please help us [shape the Edinburgh of the future](#).

Get on our bikes

I'm extremely excited to be launching Edinburgh's brand new [cycle hire scheme](#) on Monday, when I'll be joining record-breaking cyclist and broadcaster Mark Beaumont to formally unveil the fleet of 200 'Just Eat' bikes. These will be available at 19 locations across the city for everyone to use and, by the end of the year, the fleet will increase to 1,000, with further hire points to be added over time.

This is something we've wanted to introduce for some time so I'm delighted that, thanks to the hard work and determination of this administration, these bikes are now ready to go. I know from my own sneak preview earlier this year that they're comfortable and easy-to-use and I'm looking forward to seeing them in action as residents, visitors and commuters take to the saddle.

As a city we are 100% committed to encouraging cycling as a healthy, environmentally-friendly and accessible mode of transport, and we're continuing to invest in a range of exciting projects to this end. Now we're joining major capitals across the world as we launch this scheme, which I know will help a whole new audience take to two wheels, creating a cleaner, greener and more active city.

Help us transform the heart of Edinburgh

Edinburgh's city centre is world-beating. We have stunningly beautiful architecture, award-winning parks and thriving retail and hospitality industries. It's also pretty unique compared with other similar-sized cities in terms of the proportion of residents who call our city centre home. As well as being a mecca for more than four million visitors each year, tens of thousands of Edinburgh residents live in the very heart of the Capital.

So, very much in tune with our 2050 Vision, it's vitally important that we make the right decisions now for the kind of city centre we want, how we want it to look, feel and function. That's why I would urge you to have your say in our major new consultation "[Edinburgh: connecting our city, transforming our places](#)", in which we'll be putting forward a series of options and ideas, ranging from more or less the status quo to a more radical proposal involving things like bus and freight hubs and pedestrianised streets.

The [consultation goes live on our Hub](#) on Monday (17 September) and lasts for eight weeks. Please give us your views and help transform the centre of Edinburgh for generations to come.

Turn the grey green

We may live in a capital city but there's no shortage of nature amongst the urban landscape – from otters in the Water of Leith to wildflower meadows lining Sighthill Park.

Now, our parks team wants *your* take on the city's biodiversity for their new Instagram competition in celebration of [Edinburgh Living Landscapes](#) – a long-term project that aims to encourage investment in the natural environment to 'turn the grey green', helping make sure the birds and the bees remain at the heart of the city's future nature.

So, whether you're a budding Instagrammer or a keen photographer, share your images for the chance to win up to £50 in high street vouchers. From a selfie in Starbank Park to a portrait of the Pentlands, enter by following Edinburgh Outdoors and post photos with the hashtag #eophotocomp on Instagram, posting on the Edinburgh Outdoors Facebook page, on twitter @EdinOutdoors or by emailing parks@edinburgh.gov.uk by 12 October.

Get involved

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