



Remembrance reflections

Sunday will live long in our memories as an extremely poignant day with people across the length and breadth of Scotland and the United Kingdom paying their respects to mark Remembrance Sunday and 100 years since the signing of the Armistice that led to the end of the First World War.

I was privileged to attend both the Leith Armistice Service and the national service at the Stone of Remembrance outside our City Chambers in tribute to all those who fought and died. Thousands of our citizens attended to show their gratitude and appreciation for these enormous sacrifices by so many courageous men and women.

The Council worked extremely hard with partners to stage one of the city's biggest commemoration programmes in recent history. My thanks to Poppy Scotland, Legion Scotland and everyone across Edinburgh who worked and volunteered their time to make it so special.

Change Strategy – join the debate

We're nearing the end of the second month of public engagement on developing a four-year strategy to meet the changing demands of our city and its services – my thanks to those of you who have taken the time to submit your views so far.

If not, there's still time to have your say before the consultation closes on 7 December. There are lots of ways to put forward your views whether it's by using our [online planner](#), [online survey](#), social media or speaking with your local councillor. We want to hear from every community in Edinburgh as we not only deal with our budget challenges but deliver inclusive public services across our City.

You can also [book a place on one of our four Budget Group Challenge sessions](#) taking place in communities across the city over the next fortnight. This new approach of face-to-face discussion and debate is a great way to find out about your spending priorities and the feedback will help us shape our plans for the next four years as well as balance our budget for 2019/20.

Ready for winter

The nights are drawing in and there's a chill in the air – winter is almost upon us. We're well prepared for whatever it has to throw at us, with salt – more than 14,500 tonnes of it – stocked up, gritters, ploughs and mini tractors ready to go and Road Services and volunteer crews on standby 24 hours a day should bad weather strike.

This year we'll benefit from new technology too, thanks to a digital 'thermal map' of the city's routes created using data from previous winters, helping us to better direct gritting resources. This, along with recently-installed telematics devices allowing teams to respond more quickly to the public, will help improve the efficiency of the service during cold snaps.

We also rely on YOU to help us by looking out for one another. As we saw earlier this year, communities rallied to check in on neighbours, clear snow from pathways and grit local routes, helping to keep Edinburgh moving. I'd encourage you to [check out our winter weather web pages](#) for advice.

Christmas cheer

Staying on the wintry theme, the Mound tree is up, the markets are built and Edinburgh's Christmas is now open with [Light Night](#) taking place on Sunday.

The latest figures released by Underbelly this week show local people are enjoying what Christmas has to offer. Over 142,300 tickets were snapped up last year by residents with their 20% discount, and 69% said Edinburgh's Christmas offering was the main or only reason they came into the city centre that day.

The same research also highlights how important the event really is to our local economy, injecting the city with a Christmas bonus of £113m last winter, or the equivalent of 2,260 FTE jobs.

Of course, as more and more people come to experience these events, from Edinburgh and beyond, we need to continue to monitor the impact Edinburgh's Christmas and other festivals have on our infrastructure. We're always looking to strike a better balance, which is why a report considering the options and strategies to better manage our festival city will be discussed at Thursday's Council meeting.

People friendly plans

Earlier this month we revealed the draft concept designs for George Street and the New Town, which we hope will result in a more people-friendly future for this historic part of the city.

These bold proposals have become a real talking point in the city – artist's impressions of a tree-lined George Street, widened pavements, two-way cycle lanes and space to sit and soak up the atmosphere really are a striking contrast to the existing layout. Ultimately, our aim is to create a safer, more welcoming and relaxing environment worthy of Edinburgh's status as a major European capital, and [we want to know what you think of this vision](#).

This progress is part of a wider policy. And my thanks to the 5,000+ people who responded to our city centre transformation consultation [Edinburgh: connecting our city, transforming our places](#). We're now working through the feedback on our recommendations to create a healthier, more active and connected city and will report back next year.

Edinburgh by Numbers

The 12th annual [Edinburgh By Numbers](#) has just been published and, once again, it highlights that our city is prosperous, growing and competitive.

Not only are our economic and business indicators some of the strongest outside of London – in some cases better – our environmental credentials remain strong too. Average wages remain attractive as do opportunities for higher education and, unsurprisingly, our visitor economy is stronger than ever.

Of course, with this continuous success and growing population comes added pressure on our infrastructure and we are clear on our responsibility to respond to and manage this level of growth in terms of providing housing, transport and other frontline services – while also seeking further powers to raise additional revenues through a potential tourist tax.

Our vision for Granton Waterfront

Our ambitious [plans to transform Granton Waterfront](#) into a vibrant, well-connected, new city quarter with around 4,000 new homes, services, retail and high-quality public realm are taking shape.

This 15-year regeneration project is about so much more than just building new homes – important as that is – and we recently agreed to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) alongside Edinburgh College, National Galleries Scotland, Scottish Futures Trust, Scottish Government and National Museums Scotland to strengthen collaborative working with key public sector partners who have an interest in the area.

Following our first (very well-attended) public drop-in event last week, there will be further events in January and March and we're also asking people for their views online until 22 November. Comments will be fed into the high-level masterplan over the next six months and presented to the Planning Committee in the spring.

Saughton Park re-energised

The fantastic Saughton Park restoration project has received a further boost – this time in the form of almost £500,000 worth of funding from the Scottish Power Energy Networks Green Economy Fund, which will help build a mini hydro-electric scheme on the Water of Leith.

This innovative system will generate electricity for the park's new and refurbished buildings, including a café and community venue, as well as park lighting, and will not only save on energy costs but will lower carbon emissions by providing a fully-integrated renewable energy solution.

Since its inception, Saughton Park's restoration has benefited from the dedication of its project team, the Friends of Saughton Park and other partners, who have sought funding, engaged with the community and contributed to designs. Now, thanks to their hard work, we will not only be able to see this historic park upgraded and restored to its former glory when it is fully reopened next year, but can also be assured of its long-term energy efficiency through this state-of-the-art scheme.

An even bigger Sleep-Out

After its phenomenal success last year, raising a staggering £4m for homelessness in one night, the Council is supporting the return of Social Bite's 'Sleep in the Park' on 8 December. Amy Macdonald and KT Tunstall will be flying to four cities in one night with Lulu headlining the Capital's event in Princes Street Gardens.

Homelessness remains a key priority for us in the Council but it takes a citywide commitment to really support those at risk and, by working together with partner agencies and charities such as Social Bite, we can make an even bigger difference. For further information and to sign up, visit the [Social Bite](#) website.

Get involved

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