

Edinburgh's crackers...

Christmas

✘ Edinburgh is promising sparkle galore today with the unveiling of spectacular Christmas plans for the city centre, backed by the Capital's biggest winter marketing drive ever. Recognising the standing of Edinburgh's Christmas worldwide, big names such as Cadbury and Nintendo have signed up to take part with their own special attractions.

From a magical chocolate workshop to the brand new Edinburgh's Ice Rink, Edinburgh's Christmas, one of the highlights of the Edinburgh Sparkles campaign, will enjoy a programme packed full of old favourites and new additions. The traditional German Christmas market will be a key feature, Light Night on 25 November will include entertaining street theatre and an awe-inspiring aerial display to light Edinburgh's Christmas Tree. This year is the 25th anniversary of the tree being gifted to the city by the people of Hordaland in Norway which will give the celebrations a special poignancy in marking the special relationship between the two countries.

To promote the events, alongside the shopping, dining and cultural scene of the city, local organisations have joined forces, through an initiative coordinated by the Destination Edinburgh Marketing Alliance (DEMA) to fund a £170,000 UK-wide winter marketing campaign. Edinburgh Sparkles is the largest ever public-private investment in the city's marketing and again underlines the importance of the festive season to the local economy. Edinburgh Sparkles will be promoted throughout November and December with support from City of Edinburgh Council, Essential Edinburgh, Edinburgh's Trams, Edinburgh Airport and Lothian Buses. Giant billboard advertising will appear throughout the Central Belt, as well as London, Manchester and Newcastle, in a bid to attract more day-trippers and visitors to the city centre.

Commenting on the overall programme of investment and attractions, City of Edinburgh Council's Lord Provost, Councillor George Grubb, said: "Edinburgh at Christmas continues to be an enormous draw for visitors and residents alike, and research shows that it ranks high on the list of top places to celebrate the season. The city comes alive in a very special way and gives everyone the opportunity to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas as well as enjoying a great programme of events and attractions."

With St Andrew's Day falling within the Edinburgh's Christmas programme, four days of free events for all the family, topped off with a rousing ceilidh finale, are planned from 27 to 30 November. Santa will visit East Princes Street Gardens from 4 December onwards to collect his post every day and meet the children for some special storytelling. The popular Great Scottish Santa Run will once again encourage everyone to get in shape for the holidays, while turning Princes Street Gardens into a sea of scarlet and white. The new Edinburgh's Ice Rink Experience, set against the backdrop of Edinburgh Castle and the iconic Edinburgh Wheel, will be the perfect place to take to the ice with friends and family and enjoy stunning displays and stage shows.

Nickie Gott, managing director of She's Gott It!, Edinburgh's Christmas producers, enthuses: "Everyone loves a spot of magic and sparkle at Christmas, and we have worked hard all year to make sure that there will be plenty of that on the streets of Edinburgh. With chocolate from Cadbury and fun and games from Nintendo, we have two unique new reasons to come into town, and Light Night promises to bring a real wow factor to kick everything off."

Alan Johnston, Chair of DEMA, the body behind Edinburgh Sparkles, said: "Nowhere else can compare to this city at Christmas. The Christmas programme is exciting and the beauty of Edinburgh is the sum of its parts – the experience, the events, the shopping and the dynamic cultural scene. In times

like these, it is more important than ever before that organisations throughout the city work together to maintain the quality of our winter celebrations. This is a world-class capital and we're set for a world-class Christmas."

More information on what is happening in Edinburgh throughout the winter period can be found at www.edinburghsparkles.com.

Edinburgh's Christmas is sponsored by Forth One and the Edinburgh Evening News and continues over the Christmas and New Year period until 4 January 2010. Full details of all events, including timings and prices, can be found at www.edinburghschristmas.com

 Photo courtesy of Edinburgh Inspiring Capital