

What effect do the festivals have on Edinburgh's finances?



✘ Ahead of the [Budget Question Time event](#) being run from the City Chambers this evening at 7 till 8pm, the City's Festivals and Events Champion, Councillor Steve Cardownie, writes about the Council's Budget decisions.

Edinburgh's Christmas is in full swing and it is only a matter of weeks until 75,000 people flock to the Capital to experience Edinburgh's world famous Hogmanay festival.

✘ Last winter, a footfall of 1.5m was measured at the East side of Princes Street Gardens as residents and visitors took in the various winter attractions on offer in the centre of town.

The Council supports these events and many others throughout the year because Edinburgh is a unique and proud festival city.





From the summer festivals all the way through to the Science, Storytelling, Film, and Jazz and Blues Festivals, Edinburgh's year-round calendar of events is what our city is renowned for. There is always something different due to take place, whether it be international diving competitions at the Royal Commonwealth Pool or cycling events with thousands of spectators in the heart of the city. There is no other place on earth that rivals Edinburgh's quality and quantity of festival and events programming, and nobody does it better.

But I don't believe there is room for complacency. Edinburgh has been working since 1947 on expanding and bettering our festivals, and this longevity is one of the greatest reflections of their success.

Some people may wonder why the Council should be funding the festivals at all, but my argument is that the Council doesn't fund these events – it invests in them.

For every pound invested by the Council in cultural services, twelve times as much spending is generated in the city's economy. The benefit of all of this to hotels as occupancy rates rise and to bars and restaurants in the city is huge in August and December in particular.

As a Council and a city there are difficult decisions to be made about where to spend and save money in the next budget. I believe a big reduction in Edinburgh's cultural spending would not only knock the city's international reputation and tourism, it would hit our local economy and jobs market too.

Almost four million people came to Edinburgh to attend the city's 12 biggest festivals last year, generating £245m for

the local economy and £261m for the national economy, and importantly supporting 5,242 full time jobs in Edinburgh. Yet the percentage of the Council's budget spent supporting these events is just 0.6 per cent.

The support of the Council for events can quite often act as the lifeblood for some organisations. Council support of an event can mean agreeing to cover basic, yet crucial, elements of an event that commercial sponsors aren't quite so excited by. Support for necessities like cleaning products, waste disposal and electricity bills can mean a great event taking place when otherwise it couldn't. The Council's support of events means help with public safety, and road and traffic management as well as securing significant national and international profile for the Capital city.

Aside from the obvious economic benefits, the festivals make Edinburgh a great place to live and work.



This winter, hundreds of local people will be enjoying a special discount that is in place for EH postcode holders for Christmas and Hogmanay events – something that has been initiated by the Council. Significant reductions in the funding to Edinburgh's Festivals could potentially result in higher ticket prices and no concessions on tickets for residents.

The Great winter run in January, which is supported by the Council, also attracts significant national and international media exposure every year and provides the ideal platform for people across the city to get physically active after the Christmas and Hogmanay party is over.

I hope those who enjoy these events each and every year join in the Council's budget debate and let us know how important the city's events offering is to them. A panel of Councillors will be answering questions during a live Question Time

Debate this evening from 7:00pm. [Join in here](#) or on Twitter using the hashtag #edinbudget.

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