

Sleeping out at Edinburgh Zoo tonight!



Edinburgh's Lady Provost will brave a cold night at the Zoo in September in a bid to raise thousands of pounds for local causes, and The Edinburgh Reporter is among the 250 people braving the cold (and now wet!) conditions.

On a crusade to raise awareness of homelessness in the city, the Lady Provost Elaine Brand has challenged local businesses and individuals to join her as she swaps her bed for a sleeping bag and experiences a night with the nocturnal sounds of the RZSS Edinburgh Zoo's animal inhabitants.

[‘The Lady Provost’s Sleep Out at Edinburgh Zoo’](#) will raise vital funds for Four Square and the Rock Trust to help young people get off the streets and into work. Already, over 150 people have signed up to take part including teams from Edinburgh companies, members of the British Army and Lord Provost Donald Wilson.

The Lady Provost said she wants people to “open their eyes” to what it is like for young homeless people during the colder months but admits the challenge will be nothing compared to the struggle faced by those who sleep rough every night.

She said: “In spite of Edinburgh’s continued growth as a successful and affluent city, homelessness remains a pressing issue. Nobody can truly experience the struggle of homelessness based on one night in the cold, but I hope our eyes can be opened to what it is like to spend a night outside. We’ll be sleeping out in September when the nights get longer and the temperature drops – I hope this shock to the system will emphasise just how difficult this year’s colder months will be for our young homeless people.

The Lord Provost Donald Wilson added: “Elaine is determined to raise awareness of youth homelessness in Edinburgh and this event is an attempt to raise as much money as possible for Four Square and the Rock Trust. These charities are very close to her heart and I hope we can help to make a big difference.”

Edinburgh Zoo, owned by the charity the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS), is home to more than 1,000 endangered animals and is one of Europe’s leading centres of conservation. The sleep out will take place outside the Zoo’s historic Mansion House, close to the popular Penguins Rock and Lemur Walkthrough.

Chris West, Chief Executive of RZSS, said: “We are delighted to support worthy causes of this nature. We wish every success to all those involved in raising awareness of homelessness in Edinburgh.”

While the number of people presenting to the City of Edinburgh Council as rough sleepers is the lowest of any Scottish city – having reduced by almost 15 per cent over the last five years – almost 4,000* people were assessed as homeless in the Capital last year. A quarter of those are aged 24 or younger.

[The Rock Trust](#) Chief Executive Kate Polson said: “We support approximately 400 young people from across Edinburgh and the Lothians every year, which shows that youth homelessness is a real problem. For the majority of people who become homeless, the main reason behind it is family breakdown or problems at school. It can really happen to anyone. This event will help raise awareness of the hardships faced by those forced to sleep rough and the Lady Provost and all the participants are helping to highlight the devastating issue of youth homelessness.”

[Four Square](#) Chief Executive Heather Arni said: “Every night in Edinburgh we provide a safe haven for 40 young people aged 16-24 in two hostels and 18 training flats. But simply giving

them a roof over their head is not enough. We give them skills to fend for themselves, like cooking, budgeting and the chance to take a training course or volunteer. The Zoo sleep out facilitated by the Lady Provost and RZSS Edinburgh Zoo will enable both charities to continue their work.”

‘The Lady Provost’s Sleep Out at Edinburgh Zoo’ will take place overnight on **Thursday 24 September**.

Show your support on social media *#ZooSleepOut* and by making a donation: www.virginmoneygiving.com/SleepOutAtEdinburghZoo