

#Edinburgh2050 Nick Stewart offers his vision



The latest Edinburgh 2050 City Vision comes from Nick Stewart, manager of the Sneaky Pete's music venue and campaigner for Music Is Audible.

My vision of Edinburgh in 2050 is a place full of music, arts and culture, that is affordable to live in and supportive of its own. The Festival is a cause for celebration, but we need a better year round arts scene.

Edinburgh is in danger of pricing out the next generation of entrepreneurs and artists. It's not right to have a situation where the arts and business are both run by those with the wealth, often inherited, to do so.

We need cheap retail, artistic and music space for independent businesses. Let's instil a culture of entrepreneurship in Edinburgh, where the businesses of the city are individual, independent, and special.

Edinburgh could use its reputation to become a cultural business incubator, a kind of Silicon Valley for the arts.

Independent and cultural businesses need the freedom to fail, to mess up, so they can bounce back with a refined version of the business, just like incubated businesses in Silicon Valley do. In practical terms, that means cheap space, low rates, and access to customers and audiences.

As an example, a place like Sneaky Pete's, whose raison d'être is to showcase great music, not to make money, can only exist when it can afford the rent in a part of town where customers are willing to go.

Keeping Edinburgh culturally attractive and distinct has economic benefits. Cities with cultural amenities attract talent and wealth. To encourage amazing people to invest their talents and skills in Edinburgh, it needs to be more than somewhere to work, it needs to be somewhere to play, and to live.

When Melbourne struggled to get the tech sector workers they needed, they invested in the arts and eased restrictions that made it easier to set up music venues, and soon after the talent they needed moved there.

By 2050 there will be a new St James' Centre and maybe even a development at Caltongate, but who will be able to afford to lease space there?

Once a site has been rented by a PLC, the landlord is unlikely to ever accept a subsequent tenant who is more of a risk than a big company. In other words, once you let a high street operator into an independent site, you'll never get it back.

We are already seeing that occur with St Andrew Square. It's being remodelled to become a centre of retail and dining excellence. But the businesses moving in are big companies from down south.

Overwhelming evidence shows that by 2050, artificial intelligence, digital and mechanical automation will cause massive redundancies in the Western world. It won't just affect mechanical and semi-skilled work either; the professions are in for a shock too.

We don't know whether other forms of employment will be found, whether we will all end up in penury or be saved by a savvy state that sets up universal basic income. Either way, we'll need to consider what we do with our time in the city, because we might all just have a lot more of it.

It's my sincere hope that what we do with our time in the city

is to come together to enjoy art created in Edinburgh for Edinburgh, and I hope City of Edinburgh Council works to facilitate that.

You can take part in the discussion about Edinburgh in 2050 by clicking on the link [here](#).