

# **Comment – looking ahead to 2030**

**by Council Leader Adam McVey and Deputy Council Leader Cammy Day.**

**For over a thousand years Edinburgh has grown and thrived, balancing adaptation with conserving strengths. Great projects have been conceived and implemented to benefit all citizens : creating the New Town, improving public health through proper sanitation, revolutionising mass transportation from horse to powered vehicle – the list goes on.**

The start of this new decade heralds another period of evolution for the Capital as we grapple with the twin challenges of climate change and population growth.

We're aiming to make Edinburgh carbon neutral by 2030 – no mean feat, especially in the fastest growing city in Scotland.

Since we formed this administration in summer 2017, Edinburgh's population has grown by over 10,000. The status quo is not an option – we must adapt to thrive.



Councillors McVey and Day sign the new coalition agreement a month after the Council elections in 2017 PHOTO The Edinburgh Reporter.

Poverty remains a challenge, despite our strong economy, and the work of the Edinburgh Poverty Commission highlights that we still have much to do to make sure everyone benefits from Edinburgh's success.

That's why it's critical to set out our stall clearly and emphatically now.

Australia's devastating bushfires have brought home the urgent need to act on climate change and cities all over the globe have a huge part to play in tackling it.

This isn't something any one organisation, city or even country can handle on its own. We as a Council can shape and influence the pace of change through our policies and plans, but this needs to be a team effort, a pulling together of resources – a change of mindset for all of us.



### West End Tram Stop

Today we're publishing a ground-breaking new 10-year transport strategy – the draft City Mobility Plan – to significantly transform the way people, goods and services move around the city. The plan seeks to make stress-free, sustainable transport the most convenient and desirable option.

This will not happen overnight; it'll depend on us providing accessible and realistic alternatives, working closely with Lothian Buses and Edinburgh Trams to make our excellent bus and tram services even better while continuing major investment in active travel.

Be in no doubt, however – a lack of action now will mean more congestion and pollution, as well as failing as a city to play our part in tackling the global climate crisis.<sup>a</sup>

In the next couple of months, the administration will set out a three-year balanced budget, with record levels of investment in our schools, public services and social care. Agreeing the budget will mean making difficult choices but only by doing so and by having the strong platform of a robust Council budget can we rise to the challenges facing the city.

This plan is inextricably linked to our equally radical plan, Choices for City Plan 2030, to be published next week. This

sets out how we manage future development so Edinburgh can adapt and flourish during this time of major change.

It stresses that despite a growing population and major pressure on housing, we need a new approach.

We need to work with our partners in the development sector to make the best use of the limited space available to us in Edinburgh.



Princes Street Gardens and Edinburgh Castle Photo: Martin McAdam

Finally, at the end of January we and our partners will publish a new tourism strategy for the next decade. This strategy will recognise the massive benefits tourism brings to Edinburgh while acknowledging that recent growth cannot continue unchecked.

The new strategy moves away from promoting Edinburgh as a destination towards better managing our busy city. We must strike a better balance between the needs of the city,

tourists and residents.

The tourism strategy is the first step in a more detailed conversation with our residents later this year to allow us to shape future plans for events and festivals around what residents want and need, for example how the city thinks we should celebrate Christmas and Hogmanay in future years.

As with our successful push to secure national legislation to regulate short-term lets, we've led calls for a tourist tax to help us reinvest in public services for everyone's benefit.

Of course, some will say we need to have fewer big ideas and concentrate on the basics.

We completely agree that everyone deserves high quality services and our track record, particularly over the past 12 months, shows we're improving and getting the basics right.

We've driven down waste collection complaints to a five-year low, we've almost halved delayed discharges from hospital and, thanks to significant investment, the condition of our roads and pavements has seen its greatest annual improvement in more than a decade.

But our incredible history as a city that punches well above its weight shows that just doing the basics won't cut it: we are at our best when we take brave steps into the winds of change. The truth is that, for the poorest in the community and for the future of the planet as a whole, we can't afford not to.

Just last week we were named the most forward-thinking city in the UK. Given Edinburgh's pioneering track record, this is perhaps an accolade the city could have won countless times over the centuries.

Looking ahead into the 2020s, it's exactly how we mean to go on.



Edinburgh City Chambers. Photo: Martin P. McAdam  
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