

The city 'must face up to Edinburgh's past'

by Joseph Anderson Local Democracy Reporter

Council leader Adam McVey says Edinburgh has 'a responsibility to face up to our city's past', as part of a review into the capital's links to the slave trade and colonialism.

In his weekly update to councillors, which will be presented at this week's full meeting of The City of Edinburgh Council, Cllr McVey also calls on Edinburgh residents to 'celebrate the good and acknowledge the bad'.

Last month, the council appointed Professor Sir Geoffrey Palmer, Scotland's first black professor, and well known activist, to lead a review of Edinburgh's statues and street names which commemorate those with close links to slavery.



Professor Sir Geoffrey Palmer at the Black Lives Matter Protest in Holyrood Park in June 2020. Photo: Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

Sir Geoff, who is a leading human rights activist, will chair the Edinburgh Slavery and Colonialism Legacy Review Group, which is due to meet for the first time before the end of the year.

The move comes in the wake of protests over the Melville monument in St Andrew Square, which commemorates 18th century Home Secretary Henry Dundas, 1st Viscount Melville, who is regarded as responsible for delaying the abolition of slavery in Britain by 15 years from 1772 to 1807. This may have led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of slaves.

In his report to councillors, Cllr McVey writes: “Last month we appointed eminent professor and human rights activist Sir Geoff Palmer to chair the new independent Edinburgh Slavery and Colonialism Legacy Review Group.

“Sir Geoff brings a wealth of experience, knowledge and leadership to the post and is currently recruiting further members to the group.

“Together they will consider any features within the council boundary that commemorate those with close links to slavery and colonialism including, but not limited to, public statues and monuments, street or building names.

“The group will ultimately make recommendations to the council about the short and long-term measures we might take to redress this history.

“We have a responsibility to face up to our city’s past – celebrating the good and acknowledging the bad.

“Our history must be honest so we can best understand its impact on modern-day Edinburgh.

“This review is about the story of our capital – it’s not just about statues, it’s about people living here now and the place that they call home.”

The full text of the Leader’s Report is shown below. You can watch the council meeting on Thursday 10 December [online](#).



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