

On Earth Day – a message from Cllr Adam McVey

Today marks Earth Day 2021 – a global day highlighting ways we can take action against climate change.

Climate change is already making its impact on the natural world and our city. With weather changing dramatically, the impact on our buildings, local spaces, roads and pavements can now be seen. Our health, the food we grow and eat, our water network and even our energy demand are all seeing the impact.

The subject is set to become the defining issue of our generation and those to follow. And the way we act now as a city to reduce our emissions and become more sustainable will directly influence the quality of life of our children and grandchildren.

Tackling climate change is a chance to tackle other issues faced by our society, from poverty, to people's health and wellbeing.

That's why becoming a sustainable, net zero city is a core priority of the Council Business Plan, along with ending poverty by 2030 and ensuring wellbeing and equalities are enhanced for all.

It is important to recognise though that becoming a more sustainable city is more than just looking after the environment.

Sustainability is also about looking after Edinburgh's social and economic needs. It means meeting the needs of the people who live and work in Edinburgh right now. It means making sure

communities and families are healthy and secure. That everyone has access to the resources they require, from financial help to local services which support their wellbeing. And, it means doing this in a way which doesn't compromise on the ability of future generations to do the same thing.

The publication this week of 'Growing Locally', Edinburgh's first food growing strategy is a great example of sustainability in action.

It takes a holistic look at the role food plays in our lives – from the benefits it has on our physical health and emotional and mental wellbeing, to improving the city's biodiversity and mitigating against the effects of climate change. It also examines ways Edinburgh can tackle food insecurity and improve people's access to fresh food.

So is the Council's draft Emissions Reduction Plan, which sets out some of the first steps the Council will need to take across its major emissions sources to deliver a net zero organisation by 2030.

This highlights the culture shift required in how we think about and plan for climate change and builds on the success of the Council reducing its emissions by 62% – well in excess of our 42% target by 2020.

Although the Council's own emissions only account for 3% of Edinburgh's total emissions, the Council Emissions Reduction Plan recognises that we need to lead by example in our own work to show others what is possible.

And our City Net Zero Strategy, which is set for public consultation this summer, will outline some of the challenges Edinburgh faces in its journey to becoming a more sustainable city, and to meeting the target of net zero emissions by 2030.

We look forward to talking more with residents and business in

Edinburgh about how we can work together to achieve this aim. Because we know that by taking action on climate change, we have the potential to deliver wider social, health and economic benefits for the whole city.

By Cllr Adam McVey, Leader of City of Edinburgh Council.