

November start for Christmas in Edinburgh

Tickets for Edinburgh's Christmas run by Underbelly on behalf of The City of Edinburgh Council have gone on sale on Friday.

There will be three locations if the producers receive planning permission from the council : George Street and two locations in Princes Street Gardens with festivities running until 4 January 2022.

The ice rink sponsored by Lidl GB and partnered by Essential Edinburgh will be placed on George Street with food and drink available at "skate up" locations.

The market will be placed in East Princes Street Gardens with the Forth1 Big Wheel and the Star Flyer next to the Scott Monument.

In West Princes Street Gardens you will find Santa's Grotto and Santa Land with family friendly attractions including the Christmas Tree Maze.

Underbelly Co-Directors, Charlie Wood and Ed Bartlam said: "The Underbelly team has been working tirelessly to create a bespoke Edinburgh's Christmas programme that not only provides unforgettable memories and experiences, but also makes visitors feel safe and at ease at all times.

"It's been a very challenging couple of years for everyone but our proposed plans for Christmas are designed to support economic recovery throughout the capital, and to help

Edinburgh be together again.”

This year’s festivities will also support Edinburgh’s Social Inclusion charity, the OneCity Trust with donations being taken at point of sale on the Edinburgh’s Christmas website and collection points at bars.

The Rt Hon Lord Provost of the City of Edinburgh and President of the [OneCity Trust](#) Frank Ross, said: “The festive season is a very special time for our city and our communities and I’m sure this year’s programme will be warmly welcomed by residents and visitors.

“Whilst the safety of everyone remains a priority it will be fantastic to see people coming together again and enjoying Edinburgh’s Christmas this year where there really is something for everyone. Festive favourites like the big wheel and the Christmas market will be back and it’s great that the fun is spread out a bit further this year, with Santa Land in West Princes Street Gardens and a magical festive ice rink at the west end of George Street. It promises to be a cracking Christmas party for everyone to enjoy.

“After months of lockdowns and social distancing, tackling the challenge of social isolation and inequalities has never been more pressing. Partnerships such as this with Underbelly and Edinburgh’s Christmas are crucial to our work. Not only will the return of Edinburgh’s Christmas help bring people back together and promote social inclusion, but the money raised will be a vital lifeline for so many community projects across Edinburgh through our main grant funding programme.”

Tickets are on sale here. Those with an EH postcode will get a 20% discount on prices.

Payment during Edinburgh’s Christmas is by contactless card before you ride.

Winter Windows – stained glass windows designed by school

pupils on the theme of Connections and Kindness – will be on display throughout the city.

The Nativity Scene will be in St Andrew Square where the Nativity Carol Concert will take place on 28 November.

There will be no Light Night event but a contemporary art installation will be placed on The Mound.

Underbelly says it is “meticulously planning Edinburgh’s Christmas with Covid-19 in mind and is dedicated to creating a safe and fun environment for the 2021 Christmas celebrations. Working closely with the City of Edinburgh Council and Essential Edinburgh, Underbelly has created an unmissable festive programme, helping to boost domestic tourism and reinvigorating Princes Street and the surrounding areas. Edinburgh’s Christmas is designed to support economic recovery across the capital, driving footfall to the wider city centre area, bringing some much-needed cheer and happiness to both residents and visitors to Edinburgh”.

www.edinburghschristmas.com



East Princes Street Gardens at the end of October 2019 Photo: Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

PLANNING MATTERS

A couple of years ago it was The Broughton Spurtle, a fellow ICNN member, who revealed that Underbelly had failed to obtain planning permission in time for Edinburgh’s Christmas opening.

This year (the final year of Underbelly’s existing contract) there are three separate planning applications and the deadline for determination is 19 November – which is the day that Edinburgh’s Christmas begins.

- [21/04950/FUL – George Street](#) – Erection of Edinburgh’s

Christmas at George Street including an ice rink, Christmas market stalls associated site offices, stores and ancillary facilities (Proposed Application for one year 2021 – 2022 & variation on granted planning permission ref 20/03708/FUL).

[21/04953/FUL – East Princes Street Gardens](#) – Erection of Edinburgh's Christmas at East Princes Street Gardens and the Mound Precinct including Christmas market stalls, fairground rides associated site office, stores and ancillary facilities (proposed for 1 year 2021-2022 and variation on Ref: 20/03707/FUL).

- [1/04954/FUL – West Princes Street Gardens](#) – Erection of Edinburgh's Christmas at West Princes Street Gardens including Christmas market stalls, fairground rides, Santa's grotto, Christmas tree maze, Associated site offices, stores, and ancillary facilities (Proposed for one year 2021 – 2022).

The Cockburn Association is Edinburgh's civic body. In relation to the applications it says that there are common issues for each application and that the separation in to three articles is "unhelpful when considering the cumulative impact of the proposals". It has lodged formal objection to the George Street plan, and while it supports the other two the organisation says it has "significant concerns".

The Cockburn also commented that other cities have cancelled their Christmas events and note that it is the council's responsibility to manage civic spaces during the pandemic.

Underbelly were criticised for the size of the market in Princes Street Gardens last time it was staged there – and the recovery time was months not weeks. The Cockburn doubts that the damage will be any less bad this time round. They say: "It must be said that we have little confidence in either Underbelly or the City Council in restoring the area of ground post-damage or in preventing it in the first place."

There are also concerns about the effect that pop up bars and food outlets will have on existing businesses which have had such a tough time over the last year or so.



East Princes Street Gardens – new lawn on 31 May 2020. Photo: Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com