

Application to levelling up fund might raise millions for Edinburgh

Edinburgh's theatres and concert venues could get a £22 million boost as the council prepares to submit a funding bid to 'level up' the capital's cultural buildings.

And a separate application will be submitted in an effort to secure investment for a major redevelopment of Inch Park.

Officials are preparing the council's entry to the second round of the UK Government's Levelling Up fund ahead of the 6 July deadline.

This week councillors will be asked to approve the application to the £4.8 billion fund, which has been reserved for investment in local infrastructure across the country until 2025. In a previously successful bid by Edinburgh £16 million was awarded to the restoration of the Granton Gas Holder.



The Granton Gasholder. Photo: © 2021, Martin P. McAdam
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This time, the council is turning its attention to the city's festival venues and will seek £22.1 million to "renew and revitalise" cultural infrastructure and boost artistic opportunities in Edinburgh's most disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

If Westminster backs the bid, funding would be spread across several existing projects including the regeneration of the King's Theatre, Leith Theatre, the Queen's Hall and the Usher Hall.

It would also close the remaining funding gap for the completion of the Macmillan Hub, a new community arts centre for Pennywell and Muirhouse, as well as cover some of the costs of an extension to the WHALE Arts building in Wester Hailes.



Macmillan Hub where building is underway

The bid states: “The first Edinburgh Festival was held in 1947 to ‘provide a platform for the flowering of the human spirit’ by bringing people and artists together through culture after a period of global turmoil. As we emerge from the Covid pandemic, this is the moment to revitalise this ambition.

“Adding to recent investment such as the flagship city-centre Dunard Centre and the University of Edinburgh’s Futures Institute, this project would broaden cultural engagement and help revitalise communities.”

The Council is also recommended to apply for £20 million of levelling up cash for an ambitious revitalisation of Inch Park which is backed by local politicians, Ian Murray MP and Daniel Johnson MSP. An agreed masterplan says the project will comprise a restoration of Inch House “to improve its current function as a community centre”, redevelopment of the park’s plant nursery to include retail and café space and the construction of a new indoor gym hall for Inch Park Community Sports Club.

In addition the park’s playground will be relocated and ‘significantly upgraded’, and paths and benches will be

improved, and sustainable drainage systems and net zero energy solutions installed.

The [report](#) says: “A regenerated Inch Park will be a major destination park in the south-east of the city. The development will bring significant improvements to the health and well-being of adjacent communities, some of which suffer significant levels of deprivation. The park will be an important venue for sports, culture and a range of community activities and events.

“The park will also be an exemplar site for climate mitigation and adaptation through the use of “greenspace” renewable heat, and through the use of green infrastructure for flood mitigation and will be a nodal point for the city’s Nature Network and Green-Blue Network.”

It says the cost plan is “in the process of being finalised”, adding that if the bid is successful then £2 million in match funding will probably be required.

The Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee under Convener Cllr Jane Meagher, meets on Thursday to approve the terms of Edinburgh’s bid. Other members of the committee are Cllr Graeme Bruce, Cllr Jack Caldwell, Cllr Kate Campbell, Cllr Stuart Dobbin, Cllr Pauline Flannery, Cllr Simita Kumar, Cllr Ben Parker, Cllr Susan Rae, Cllr Mandy Watt and Cllr Iain Whyte.

by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter

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