

Creative Climate Cities Profile  
EDINBURGH



GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

263 sq. km



POPULATION

513,210



GDP

\$27,958  
(PPP) million

CITY STRATEGY LINKS

Sustainable Edinburgh 2020

Edinburgh Culture Plan





# Welcome to Edinburgh



## Culture Fact

Edinburgh's Old Town and New Town together are listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site<sup>1</sup>, which has been managed by Edinburgh World Heritage since 1999.



## Climate Fact

Scotland emitted just over 60 megatonnes of greenhouse gases in 2011 which equates to 11.7 tonnes of greenhouse gases per person<sup>2</sup>. In Edinburgh, carbon emissions have reduced by 33 per cent since 2005 and the council is on course to meet the 2020 target of a 42 per cent reduction.



## Introduction

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The city of Edinburgh is Scotland's capital – known for its striking architecture and hilly and compact cityscape. Its medieval Old Town and elegant Georgian New Town are shadowed by Edinburgh Castle, home to Scotland's crown jewels and the Stone of Destiny which was used in the coronation of Scottish rulers. Arthur's Seat, the remains of an extinct volcano that erupted 350 million years ago<sup>3</sup>, offers one of the best views of Edinburgh's urban sprawl. Beyond the city lies the landscapes: towering mountains, vast lochs, golden beaches and woodlands; these features have supported Scotland in being voted the world's most beautiful country by Rough Guides readers.

It is famous for its contribution to culture, including the National Galleries of Scotland, the Scottish Poetry Library, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop; as well as world-famous city festivals, including the Edinburgh International Festival and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, the world's largest arts festival. Edinburgh is also a UNESCO City of Literature and was the first ever designated city (awarded in 2004). It exemplifies natural as well as cultural heritage, hosting more listed buildings than anywhere in the world and more trees per person than any other UK city<sup>4</sup>. However many of Scotland's most famous ancient sites, from Holyrood Park in Edinburgh to the Neolithic village of Skara Brae on Orkney<sup>5</sup>, are at high risk from the effects of climate change.

## Environmental Ambition

According to the Sustainable Cities Index 2018, Edinburgh is the third most sustainable city in the world<sup>6</sup>. Its vision, articulated in [Sustainable Edinburgh 2020](#), is for the city to be a 'low carbon, resource efficient city, delivering a

<sup>1</sup>Visit Scotland. "Edinburgh-World Heritage Site". Visit Scotland. Archived from the original on 22 February 2013. Retrieved 10 February 2013.

<sup>2</sup>Keep Scotland Beautiful. <https://www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org/climate-change/climate-change-the-facts/><sup>3</sup>C40.

<sup>3</sup>Earth Trekkers. <https://www.earthtrekkers.com/arthur-seat-volcano-edinburgh/>

<sup>4</sup>World Strides. <https://worldstrides.com/blog/2016/07/12-facts-edinburgh/>

<sup>5</sup>Historic Environment Scotland Climate Change Risk Assessment (Jan 2018)

<sup>6</sup>Arcadis. <https://www.arcadis.com/en/united-kingdom/our-perspectives/sustainable-cities-index-2018/united-kingdom/#>

resilient local economy and vibrant flourishing communities in a rich natural setting'. The city government aims to deliver this vision by balancing equitable access and sustainable management of natural resources, human development and prosperity, and an innovative and collaborative spirit. In addition, a report approved by the City Council aims for Edinburgh to be carbon neutral, ideally by 2030, with a hard target of 2037<sup>7</sup>. Edinburgh has a long history of engaging its arts and cultural communities in sustainability, frequently in partnership with **Creative Carbon Scotland** – the charity working to embed environmental action within the Scottish arts and cultural sector and to enable the sector to play its full part in Scotland's overall work addressing climate change. Edinburgh has the opportunity to use this leadership platform to inspire other cities and cultural communities across the world.

## Connecting Creative & Climate Action in Edinburgh

### 1. Creative Programmes & Campaigns

#### Creative content and activities that engage audiences on themes of climate and the environment

- Each year, artists at Edinburgh's selection of festivals use their events to explore issues of climate change, sustainability, and humanity's environmental impact. Recent examples of environmentally-focussed work include:
  - **Staffa**, presented at the 2017 Edinburgh International Festival, a work for full orchestra and large screens depicting three simultaneous visions of the uninhabited Hebridean island of Staffa created by filmmaker Gerry Fox and composer Ned Bigham.
  - **Whales**, an interactive experience at the 2017 Edinburgh Festival Fringe, which invited the audience to take part and become either a whale rescuer or a stranded whale.
- Year round, artists are creating numerous works which explore the natural world and climate change through a range of art forms, including:
  - Alice Cooper's **Puffin**, a theatre piece for children that deals with themes of profound change and loss due to climate change.
  - Coburg House Gallery's **Transform** exhibition which features Scottish-based artists and designers, presenting original and challenging work made from recycled and repurposed materials.
  - Cryptic's **Below the Blanket** that explores Scottish peatland and its role in climate change mitigation.
  - The **Royal Lyceum Theatre** and the **Festival Theatre** both have beehives on their rooftops.
- **Out of the Blue** combines practical carbon reduction of its building and activities with creative programming. **Out of the Blue(print)** is a print studio specialising in RISO printing – an affordable, eco-friendly print process with a unique aesthetic.

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<sup>7</sup>The City of Edinburgh Council. [http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/60682/item\\_74\\_-\\_sustainability\\_approach](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/60682/item_74_-_sustainability_approach)

- In 2011, the Edinburgh Festivals came together with the Federation of Scottish Theatre and the Scottish Contemporary Art Network to establish Creative Carbon Scotland, now the main agency for sustainability in the arts in Scotland. Creative Carbon Scotland's *culture/SHIFT programme* brings together a range of projects exploring the connections between culture and climate change with arts and sustainability practitioners. Furthermore, the *Green Tease* programme offers regular informal opportunities for cultural and sustainability practitioners to meet, share ideas and collaborate e.g. working with cycling organisations Sustrans on how public art can encourage sustainable travel.

## 2. Resources & Support

### Investment, training and materials that support environmental knowledge and practical action

- In its first year, Creative Carbon Scotland worked with the Edinburgh Festivals to create a Green Venue Guide, aimed at Edinburgh venues participating in the festivals. The guide successively expanded its reach to other arts companies, individual artists, agencies and organisations – leading to the creation of the Scotland-wide *Green Arts Initiative (GAI)*<sup>8</sup> in 2013. Now, the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society produces an annual and comprehensive *guide* to producing Fringe shows in a sustainable and environmentally positive way.
- Supported by Creative Carbon Scotland, the 121 organisations receiving Regular Funding from the funder Creative Scotland are also required to submit annual energy data and an annually updated Carbon Management Plan; this is used to track the progress of the sector in reducing its emissions.

- The Edinburgh Festivals jointly employ an Environmental Sustainability Officer to drive and support the Festivals in their ambitions to be the world's leading green festival city<sup>9</sup> and serve a regular Environmental Sustainability Working Group.
- The recent Desire Lines consultation with the cultural sector recommended appointing a cultural champion to be a high-profile advocate for culture within the City. This role would lead a taskforce comprising of top professionals from key sectors such as health, education, environment, business and technology<sup>10</sup>.
- Creative Carbon Scotland's annual *Green Arts Conference* took place in Edinburgh in October 2018 with 150 delegates discussing climate change mitigation, adaptation and Creative Carbon Scotland's *culture/SHIFT* programme.

## 3. Partnerships & Innovation

### Diverse disciplines and communities sharing and co-developing ideas and resources that accelerate environmental action

- Conscious of the large amounts of paper used to promote their events each year, Edinburgh Festivals are increasingly working towards a paperless future. This includes offering a range of apps and mobile sites to enable festival fans to find out everything they need to know without needing a huge brochure or a bagful of flyers<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>8</sup>There are already over 225 members across all regions of the country and range of artform: from large-scale producing theatres to independent art galleries, working on everything from carbon emissions to creating Green Teams within their staff. Read more in the World Cities Culture Forum Climate Change Handbook for City Leaders.

<sup>9</sup>Edinburgh Festival City. <https://www.edinburghfestivalcity.com/news/513-8-green-things-about-the-edinburgh-festivals>

<sup>10</sup>Desire Lines. [http://desirelines.scot/DesireLines\\_booklet\\_SCREEN.pdf](http://desirelines.scot/DesireLines_booklet_SCREEN.pdf)

<sup>11</sup>Edinburgh Festival City. <https://www.edinburghfestivalcity.com/news/513-8-green-things-about-the-edinburgh-festivals>

- The City of Edinburgh is in the process of developing a ‘City Centre Transformation’ plan, to provide a more strategic and coordinated approach to how the City Centre is managed. This will be delivered via an action plan for a vibrant and people-focused capital city centre to improve community, economic and cultural life. The plan includes the development of baseline social, economic and environmental performance indicators, including reduced traffic, better cycle and public transport options and improved air quality.
- The [Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation](#), hosted by the University of Edinburgh, is a unique low-carbon hub for start-up and early-stage businesses, agencies and research organisations working in the low carbon and climate change field.
- From 2019 onwards, organisations receiving regular grant funding from the Cultural Services division of the City of Edinburgh Council will be required to develop and submit a Carbon Management Plan that sets out the aims and objectives to reduce each organisation’s carbon emissions. Creative Carbon Scotland is supporting the organisations in developing their Carbon Management Plans and meeting their funding requirements.
- Edinburgh Festivals has environmental targets as part of its funding agreement, including hosting partnership events that highlight the contribution of the Festivals to an environmentally sustainable cultural sector. It also has to develop at least three resources e.g. guidelines and case studies for local, national and international cultural organisations that demonstrate the positive impact of environmental sustainability activities.

## 4. Policy & Strategy

### Guiding policy and strategy frameworks that drive climate and environmental action, investment and accountability

- [Sustainable Edinburgh 2020](#) aims to address social, economic and environmental issues in an integrated way, recognising and utilising all Edinburgh’s strengths, including culture, citing: outdoor leisure, unique built and natural heritage, and world-famous festivals.

# Highlights

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## Creative Programmes & Campaigns

The Sustainable Fringe Awards 2019, hosted by Creative Carbon Scotland in collaboration with Staging Change, recognises innovative ideas that seek to tackle issues of climate change or environmental sustainability at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

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## Resources & Support

The Edinburgh Festivals jointly employ an Environmental Sustainability Officer who serves a regular Environmental Sustainability Working Group which co-ordinates action.

3

## Partnerships & Innovation

In 2011, the Edinburgh Festivals came together with the Federation of Scottish Theatre and the Scottish Contemporary Art Network to found Creative Carbon Scotland, now the main agency for sustainability in the arts in Scotland.

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## Policy & Strategy

From 2019 onwards, organisations receiving regular grant funding from the Cultural Services division of the City of Edinburgh Council will be required to submit a Carbon Management Plan to reduce emissions.

ABOVE: David L. Harris  
(Edinburgh Jazz & Blues Festival)

# Where Next?

## Spotlight

### GREEN ARTS INITIATIVE

The **#SustainableFringe** campaign launched in 2018 by theatre company, **Poltergeist**, to challenge fellow Edinburgh Festival Fringe shows to commit to three challenges around plastic, paper and material waste. Over the summer, the campaign rallied over 100 individuals and theatre companies around green action. The campaign has since developed into **Staging Change**, a network of performers and makers in theatre and entertainment, working together to improve the environmental sustainability of the industry.

The new **Sustainable Fringe Awards 2019**, hosted by Creative Carbon Scotland in collaboration with Staging Change, recognises innovative ideas that seek to tackle issues of climate change or environmental sustainability at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Artists and venues are invited to submit new, novel, creative or ambitious ideas for increasing the sustainability of their work.

It is proposed that the following elements should be incorporated into the forthcoming updating of the [Edinburgh Culture Plan](#):

1. **Collaborate**

The Council's cultural department could convene a meeting between cultural staff and those working on sustainability and climate change from across the Council to identify points of overlap between the environmental and cultural strategies and examples of good practice and develop a joint action plan.

2. **Collect and communicate data**

Draw out and collate data from existing surveys relating to Edinburgh's cultural organisations and attitudinal insights on environmental issues such as climate change, biodiversity and environmental justice.

3. **Provide professional development opportunities**

Work with [EPAD](#) and other agencies to provide cultural professionals with development opportunities relating to climate change.

## With special thanks to:

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