

LATEST NEWS: Edinburgh's Christmas goes digital

The City of Edinburgh Council and event producers, Underbelly, have today announced an update on this year's Edinburgh Christmas, following latest advice and discussions with Public Health experts.

Following the recent national restrictions and taking into consideration the likely additional strain on services over winter, it has been agreed that any sort of event which could attract a gathering or crowd will be avoided. This includes market stalls, rides and all other attractions.

Instead, the focus will move to celebrating Edinburgh's Christmas 2020 online.

In August, Councillors unanimously agreed proposals to adapt this year's festivals to prioritise Edinburgh's residents and businesses whilst also recognising the uncertainty of running live events during a pandemic. All parties committed to continue with developing plans in order to meet the significant changes required to follow appropriate public health guidance.

Planning continued to reflect up-to-date government guidelines with the intention to have a far smaller scale physical presence in the city centre, however it is now clear that the best place to experience Edinburgh's Christmas and Hogmanay will be from home.

Further details of the revised plans for both will be announced in due course.

Cllr Adam McVey, Council Leader at City of Edinburgh Council, said: "As we've continued to adapt to the changing circumstances presented by the pandemic, we've continued to work with our partners to develop potential plans for events, which could meet public health guidance, to mark the end of what has been one of the most challenging years in living memory.

"However, as we've maintained throughout, our utmost responsibility is to keep our residents safe. Following the latest restrictions and through the development of plans, it became apparent that activities for Christmas were not going to be possible.

"Christmas is a special time in our city and hugely exciting for individuals and families who take advantage of the City's winter offer. Whilst we understand the absence of popular events will bring some disappointment, we want to be clear that Edinburgh's Christmas isn't cancelled and our businesses right across the City will be offering their usual festive cheer for us to take advantage of. We look forward to announcing details of an innovative digital 2020 programme soon to help in these celebrations."

Cllr Cammy Day, Depute Leader at City of Edinburgh Council, said: "Christmas is usually an extremely special time for our Capital City and, as well as contributing to the wellbeing of our residents, our Winter Festivals deliver real economic impact, benefitting tourism, hospitality and leisure sectors in particular.

"Whilst, of course, we're extremely disappointed we won't be able to go ahead with public events and the city centre sites this year, our absolute priority must always be the health and wellbeing of the public, traders and the city as a whole.

“I would like to thank Underbelly and our other event partners for all their work as we tried to plan for Christmas in an evolving situation and, whilst Christmas 2020 will take a different shape this year, rest assured the city of Edinburgh will celebrate Christmas.”

Charlie Wood, director of Underbelly, producer of Edinburgh’s Christmas and Edinburgh’s Hogmanay said, “We very much wanted to bring some festive cheer and light to Edinburgh this Christmas and to support local makers and producers, at the end of what has been a challenging year for everyone.

“Public health is our absolute number one priority, and with the ongoing uncertainty concerning Covid-19 and the possibility of further restrictions, we have taken the collective and very sad decision with the Council, NHS Lothian and Scottish Government not to proceed with this year’s Edinburgh’s Christmas sites in the city centre. There will be no public events which might encourage gatherings of people at either Edinburgh’s Christmas or Edinburgh’s Hogmanay.

“We appreciate today’s announcement will be disappointing to the many people, particularly families, who come each year to enjoy the Christmas sites; but we are exploring a different Edinburgh’s Christmas this year which will deliver a series of digital opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy from their own homes. We will share more information on the revised winter festival programme in the near future.”

On Edinburgh’s Hogmanay Charlie Wood added: “We announced back in July that the world-famous Street Party would not be taking place this year. Since then, we have been developing plans to mark New Year in the world’s home of Hogmanay, and to help Scotland celebrate with a sense of hope and new beginnings. We’ll be making further announcements in the coming weeks.”

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