

PRESS RELEASE 08.01.2020 at 8am

City residents flock to Edinburgh's Christmas as footfall soars and more EH postcode holders than ever enjoy their 20% discount!

- Footfall up 4.85% as 2,631,154 people enjoyed the Christmas Market in East Princes Street Gardens
- More locals than ever used their 20% EH postcode discount, buying 196,656 tickets: a 23.9% increase on the same events in 2018.
- Brand-new free event Community Christmas brought festive cheer to 12 local communities across the capital.
- Edinburgh's Christmas gave out 17,559 free tickets to Edinburgh and Scotland-wide charities and community groups, an increase of 173% on the same events in 2018.
- The Christmas Tree Maze raised £9,104 for local charity, Edinburgh and the Lothians Greenspace Trust's Tree Time.



Clockwise from top left: view on the Christmas Market from Scott Monument; Light Night; Christmas Market; Winter Windows; Community Christmas.

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2019 marked the seventh year of Underbelly producing Edinburgh's Christmas on behalf of City of Edinburgh Council.

A total of 2,631,154 people passed through Edinburgh's Christmas in East Princes Street Gardens, representing a significant 4.85% increase in footfall on 2018. Thanks to the re-design of the space, this year's Christmas Market was not only able to easily accommodate the increased number of visitors but also protect the Gardens and improve its accessibility through new accessible pathways which were met with a great response from visitors with additional mobility requirements. For the first time, and in partnership with the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, free to hire sensory backpacks were also available for adults and children with additional needs, making Edinburgh's Christmas 2019 the most accessible yet.

Edinburgh residents snapped up 196,656 tickets using their 20% EH postcode discount, an impressive increase of 23.9% on the same events in 2018. (The total number of EH postcode discount tickets sold in 2018 was 186,799 and the 23.9% increase to 2019 is calculated by excluding Silent Light, ice skating in St Andrew Square and shows in Festival Square Spiegeltent, events which didn't recur in 2019).

648,397 tickets were sold to the various Edinburgh's Christmas events, attractions and rides, a 1.5% increase on the same events in 2018. (The total number of tickets sold in 2018 was 771,004 and the 1.5% increase is calculated by excluding Silent Light, ice skating in St Andrew Square and shows in Festival Square Spiegeltent, events which didn't recur in 2019).

An estimated audience of 3,000 enjoyed **Community Christmas**, a **free**, family celebration which brought festive cheer to 12 different communities around Edinburgh, including The Inch, Wester Hailes and Gilmerton, as they enjoyed performances from their local choirs and singing groups alongside festive projections designed by Double Take Projections.

Other highlights included Father Christmas literally flying up the Royal Mile on his sleigh at **Light Night** (17 November), wowing all present as he sprinkled festive spirit and switched on the city's Christmas lights. This spectacular free family afternoon also saw **175 local singers and dancers from 5 community groups perform on stage in front of a crowd of 15,000**.

Chosen out of **1,680** superb entries, the 40 winning Winter Windows designs, this year themed around 'A Festive Welcome', adorned Edinburgh streets showcasing the talents of the city's budding young artists.

The season also saw Edinburgh's Christmas give away **17,559 free tickets**, including 6,000 to the **The Trussell Trust's** food banks, 5,000 to groups supported by Edinburgh's **OneCity Trust**. A further 2,379 tickets were donated to looked after and cared for children in Edinburgh, 897 to **Goodtrees Community Centre** which works directly with families affected by poverty offering free food and activities and aims to reduce social isolation and 754 tickets to **Canongate Youth** supporting children and young people who face the challenges of multiple deprivation, with many of them a victim of abuse or negligence, struggling with mental health issues, or having learning or physical disabilities.

(The total number of free tickets given away in 2018 was 27,360 and the 173% increase is calculated by excluding Silent Light, ice skating in St Andrew Square and shows in Festival Square Spiegeltent, events which didn't recur in 2019).

Edinburgh's Christmas raised over £10,000 in support of Edinburgh and Scotland-wide charities, including:

- **25p from every ticket sold for the Christmas Tree Maze**, a Santa Land favourite and the most Instagrammable festive spot in the capital, **went to support Edinburgh and the Lothians Greenspace Trust's [Tree Time](#)**, an initiative enabling and encouraging people to donate towards the replacement of street trees. The **£9,104** raised will go towards planting new trees in Edinburgh.
- **OneCity Trust**, Edinburgh's Christmas' official partner charity, is an Edinburgh-focused trust led by the city's Lord Provost, Frank Ross; the Trust works towards fighting exclusion and inequality in Edinburgh. Through voluntary donations over £1,000 was raised for the Trust as well as 5,000 tickets donated to allocate to the numerous groups the Trust supports.
- Through bucket-shaking and carolling at Edinburgh's Christmas, various charities and community groups such as **Thistle Foundation, Preston Street Primary** and **Scottish Association on Mental Health** raised £1,297 in support of their work.

Every year, Edinburgh's Christmas works very closely with **The Trussell Trust food banks** around the city, encouraging residents to donate non-perishables, toiletries and unwanted Christmas gifts to a food bank donation point located at the Christmas Market in Princes Street Gardens.

Edinburgh's Christmas also works to **maximise local sourcing** from within Edinburgh and Scotland. **In 2018/19, Edinburgh's Christmas spent over £1.22m with 105 Edinburgh suppliers** and a further amount of £721,000 with 10 suppliers from other parts of Scotland. Figures for 2019/20 will be released in due course.

The Christmas Market de-rig, currently underway, is scheduled to complete on 20 January. Underbelly is contracted to meet the costs of reinstatement within East Princes Street Gardens and Underbelly has been in discussions with City of Edinburgh Council about how to re-turf the Gardens as quickly as possible following the end of the de-rig period.

Charlie Wood and Ed Bartlam, Directors of Underbelly and Edinburgh's Christmas said: "We are pleased to be able to report on the success of Edinburgh's Christmas: once again people voted with their feet and more visitors and significantly more locals than ever before came to enjoy the event in East Princes Street Gardens. This is a testament to the enduring, award-winning appeal of Edinburgh's Christmas and its world-class offer.

"We acknowledge some of the concerns voiced around the event and we look forward to working closely with the City of Edinburgh Council, Edinburgh residents and other stakeholders to review the event and to look at where and how we can make improvements; and also to contributing to the public consultation on the future of Edinburgh's winter festivals from 2022. We are proud of the fact that our production of both Edinburgh's Christmas and Edinburgh's Hogmanay has saved the local taxpayer £1 million a year compared to the previous contract and projects to save over £5 million over its five-year lifetime."

The Lord Provost, Frank Ross, said: "Edinburgh's Christmas is enjoyed by tens of thousands of residents and visitors every year, and this year the event proved to be more inclusive than ever with community events taking place across the City.

"The provision of 18,000 free tickets to charities and community groups at Christmas has allowed as many residents as possible in Edinburgh and the Lothians to take part in the celebrations. This collaboration also provided much-needed support for the Capital's official charity, the OneCity Trust. This goes directly towards supporting community initiatives in all

corners of the Capital, helping us to fund fantastic projects which tackle poverty, inequality and exclusion.

“The Christmas Tree Maze also raised just under £10,000 for local charity, Edinburgh and the Lothians Greenspace Trust, these funds will go towards planting new trees in Edinburgh.

“We look forward to working with Underbelly, residents and stakeholders to review this year’s event and conducting our wider conversation with the City to help shape our Winter Festival offer from 2022.”

Charlie Cumming, Chief Executive, Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust said: “The Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust were delighted that Edinburgh’s Christmas supported the Tree Time Edinburgh initiative that will make a positive difference towards Edinburgh’s landscape for future generations. Through the contributions received from the Christmas Tree Maze we will be able to plant new street trees within the City of Edinburgh this coming spring and help address the 22% decline in street trees since the 1990s.

“Edinburgh’s urban trees have many benefits including carbon capture, reducing airborne pollutants and rainwater interception and there is still an urgent need to increase the number of trees within the City.

“Tree Time Edinburgh raises support from public and corporate donations to assist with the care and planting of trees along Edinburgh’s streets and roadsides, recognising the relative expense of street tree planting through a range of packages that are available for people to adopt an existing tree or plant a new tree.”

Bethany Biggar, Director of Edinburgh Food Project said: “Tickets for the Christmas Market rides, kindly donated by Underbelly, were such a welcomed treat for people who access our services. I believe everyone should get the opportunity to experience the magic of Christmas.”

Roddy Smith, Chief Executive of Essential Edinburgh said: “Essential Edinburgh is delighted to hear of the success of the 2019 Edinburgh’s Christmas activity. The Christmas market is a major footfall driver for the city centre and the increase this year to over two and a half million visitors is testament to its importance to the city and our businesses at a crucial trading period. The increase in EH postcode holders purchasing tickets proves the attractiveness of the event to both residents and visitors to Edinburgh. We look forward to working with the Council, Underbelly and other city stakeholders to review and improve this successful event in years to come.”

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Notes to editors:

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About Underbelly

Underbelly is a UK based live entertainment company. Their events and festivals division operates one of the largest operations at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, selling over 460,000 tickets for over 200 shows, in 22 venues over 25 days in 2018.

2018 was the sixth year Underbelly produced Edinburgh's Christmas for City of Edinburgh Council which saw 771,074 tickets sold to visitors from more than 40 countries, and the second year of producing Edinburgh's Hogmanay also on behalf of City of Edinburgh Council, which welcomed 160,000 over 3 days.

2019 marked the eleventh year of Underbelly Festival on the Southbank - one of the biggest multi-arts offerings in London and London's original pop-up festival, with over 140 shows programmed over 6 months on the South Bank.

Underbelly also produces Christmas in Leicester Square, Underbelly Festival in Hong Kong, West End Live in Trafalgar Square for Westminster City Council and the Society of London Theatre. In 2018, Underbelly sold over 1.5 million tickets to their various events.