

Digital world 'killing curiosity'

Gillian Bowditch

PETER IRVINE, author of the Scotland Best travel guide and the man behind Edinburgh's Hogmanay festival, has warned that the digital world and virtual experience is robbing young people of their natural curiosity and curtailing their critical faculties.

Irvine, founder of festival organiser Unique Events, says the commodification of the visitor experience is depriving the younger generation of the joys of independent travel.

"The zeitgeist now lives online," he says. "It lives in your phone. I don't understand people who don't have a natural curiosity but most people these days aren't curious. We've lost that, that whole ability to be critical and hence to be discriminating."

"People these days go places on their phones. Life should be experiential. The trouble is that it has all become so commodified. When I travelled the world, I was on the road. Now you pay and someone will take you and guide you all the way."

Irvine also says Edinburgh should focus more on its heritage.

"I think we should value Edinburgh more as a World Heritage Site, not in a dead, historical way. The city must come alive but we need consideration and respect for the city's heritage."

Scotland the Best can be pre-ordered at harpercollins.co.uk/STB now, £5 off pre-orders

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Austin Powers's Fat B'stard, above, need not apply, but Diabetes Scotland thinks a celebrity that the public can relate to would be an ideal figurehead for a plan to reduce waistlines across the city

It's a big job — and someone big's got to do it: charity seeks an overweight figure to head Glasgow-wide mass diet

Julia Horton

IT IS NOT a role many people will be queuing up to fill: you must be overweight and there is no pay.

A larger than life figurehead is being sought to lead the people of Glasgow on a mass diet to reverse its growing reputation for being no lean city.

The idea has been inspired by an American initiative dreamt up by the mayor of Oklahoma City, who challenged citizens to join him in collectively losing one million pounds in weight.

Mick Cornett was spurred into action by a report ranking his city among the least healthy in the US, and the realisation that he too was obese and that diabetes levels in the city had almost doubled in a decade.

His campaign, including a website offering support and a programme of building parks and footpaths, turned the city from one of the fattest to among the fittest in the US within five years.

Diabetes Scotland hopes to emulate that success as part of its new five-year plan, still in the early planning stages, to transform Glasgow into a "diabetes-friendly" city.

More than 60,000 people in Glasgow have been diagnosed with diabetes, equating to around a fifth of 276,000 patients nationwide, while at least another 140,000 city residents are either at risk of developing the condition or are related to someone with it.

Daniela Breiting, project leader at Diabetes Scotland, said: "We're modelling some of our ideas for Glasgow on the Oklahoma City mayor's diet, which was really successful there. We would like someone to lead it, possibly a politician too, or a city celebrity."

"It needs to be someone whom people can relate to, who is overweight, who may have diabetes, and who under-

Wanted: stout leader to trim no lean city

stands the issues of exercising in Glasgow where the weather really puts people off being more active."

The project, officially launched in January, aims to involve a range of organisations including the council, faith groups and supermarkets, in a "whole society" approach to reducing diabetes and helping existing patients avoid serious complications.

Ideas to reach deprived communities, who are more likely to develop diabetes, include encouraging football clubs to offer fans healthier

snacks. A recent Glasgow University study showed that educating supporters to adopt better eating habits improved participants' well-being.

Jill Muirie, public health programme manager at the Glasgow Centre for Population Health, a partnership between the university, the local health authority and the city council, said that the Oklahoma idea "might work, but Glasgow has a particular culture and something that works somewhere else may not work here".

She added that the organisation already employed a whole

city approach. She said that while more work was needed, the council was already improving cycleways and footpaths to encourage more cycling and walking.

Annie Greenwood, whose son George, seven, has type 1 diabetes, suggested that a children's TV presenter could lead Glasgow's diet.

She said: "What our grandparents did affects our health now and whatever our children do will have a profound impact on the next generation, so it should be someone children can relate to."

Backing calls to further improve cycling and walking safety, Greenwood said that more should also be done to ensure that patients receive adequate health checks to reduce potentially fatal heart and kidney problems.

The Oklahoma challenge, set in 2007, was met in 2012 after nearly 50,000 people joined the website, entitled This City Is Going On a Diet, and shared details with one another of their progress and about linked events.

Glasgow city council declined to comment.



Separately, experts have previously suggested that Glasgow could learn from the US to shake off its mean city crime tag.

In 2008, think-tank Reform Scotland urged police here to adopt the zero tolerance approach taken by US "supercop" Bill Bratton in New York.

The initiative was credited with reducing violent crime there to a level which at that time was less per head of population than in Glasgow.

Diabetes Scotland will be speaking next month about the Glasgow project at an event entitled Healthy, Happy Cities at the Edinburgh International Science Festival.

Persia buff Charles makes first official visit to Iran in 40 years

Roya Nikkhal

PRINCE CHARLES is set to make a historic visit to Iran — the first official royal trip there for more than four decades.

The Prince of Wales has expressed a keen interest in travelling to the country in the autumn. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Clarence House are in talks with Tehran about a tour, which would mark a major diplomatic coup.

A royal source told The Sunday Times: "The prince is very keen to visit Iran. He hopes he would be able to use his role as a diplomat to further encourage the relationship and dialogue between the two countries."

While Charles had visited the Iranian city of Bam in 2004 — after a devastating earthquake there the previous year that had killed 40,000 people, according to some reports — officials said that particular trip had been made in his capacity as president of the British Red Cross.

The last official royal visit to Iran was by Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother in 1975, four years before the revolution that deposed the Shah, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi. The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh last visited the country in 1961.

The proposed trip by the prince, which officials hope

will boost trade and commercial links, has been made possible by the thaw in Anglo-Iranian relations since a deal to curb Tehran's nuclear ambitions was agreed last year.

In August last year Philip Hammond became the first foreign secretary to visit Iran for 12 years. At the time, however, he said that the warming of relations would take place "within the confines that will always be imposed by the fact that we have fundamentally different views on some issues".

It is thought likely that Charles — who has a strong interest in Persian history and culture and previously helped to fund a film about Rumi, the 13th-century Persian poet — would use a trip to meet President Hassan Rouhani and Iranian business leaders.

He might also visit historic cities such as Isfahan and Shiraz, as well as the ancient ruins at Persepolis.

Despite the improved relations, however, there is still widespread resentment of Britain in Iran.

During elections last month, for example, the regime's hardliners warned against foreign "interference" in the polls and billboards appeared in Tehran portraying the Queen as a camel.

A Clarence House spokesman said: "The autumn tour is not confirmed."



Prince Charles is assisted by a security official during his 2004 visit to the Iranian city of Bam after a devastating earthquake

Top businessmen deny signing for Vote Leave

business and the economy. It also pointed out that Vote Leave's letter was not signed by any FTSE 100 chief executives, while 36 had signed the "remain" camp letter.

Meanwhile, it emerged that one of the Vote Leave signatories, Michael Geoghegan, a former chief executive of HSBC, is resident in Barbados, about 3,500 miles from Europe.

Emma Reynolds, a Labour MP backing Britain Stronger In Europe, said: "The 'leave' campaigns are so desperate to pretend they enjoy any busi-

ness support that they are literally making it up as they go along."

Nick Herbert, chairman of Conservatives In, said: "Less than 24 hours after its launch, the Vote Leave business letter is falling apart. Some of those named on the letter say they never actually signed it, many are not business 'leaders' at all — there isn't a single FTSE 100 [chief executive] among them — and others have publicly admitted Brexit would cause severe damage to Britain's economy."

"That's why surveys show eight out of 10 businesses — and more than 80% of small firms — want to remain in the EU. They know we will be stronger, safer and better off in a reformed Europe."

Vote Leave said: "Mr Ross's name was included on our supporters' list in error. We apologise for any confusion that has been caused. This is a list of our supporters and John Caudwell signed up as a supporter of the campaign in October."

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Ross: name included in error

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