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the old town across the geological depression of the former nor loch overcrowded and unhygienic the city s upper classes envisioned a new standard of living which would embody the progressive ideals of the enlightenment an intellectual and philosophical movement that had come to dominate european culture this led to the creation of the spacious georgian new town history of edinburgh s new town prior to the mid 18th century edinburgh was a cesspit of filth disease and crime with tens of thousands of citizens squeezed into cramped living conditions within the city walls of the medieval old town edinburgh capital city of scotland located in southeastern scotland with its centre near the southern shore of the firth of forth an arm of the north sea that thrusts westward into the scottish lowlands the city and its immediate surroundings constitute an independent council area 1 2 history 3 government 4 economy 5 demographics 6 society and culture 6 1 places of interest looking to the future 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