

Tuesday 27th July 2010

News around Edinburgh, for Edinburgh and about Edinburgh.



But we make no apology for starting with Lockerbie again. This is a very important issue. It was a horrific disaster which affected the people of Scotland as well as people from all over the world, and, importantly, Americans who were travelling home for Christmas.

But the jurisdiction in the prosecution of the man responsible for the bombing (and one can only suggest that there might have been more than one) was referred to the Scottish justice system as a result of the locus of the crime. It was Scottish judges who convicted Abdelbaset Al-Megrahi and thus the Scottish Justice Minister, Kenny McAskill, who dealt with his release on compassionate grounds. It makes for interesting reading then to read the correspondence which First Minister Alex Salmond has sent to Senator Robert Menendez who is chairing the Senate Committee on 29th July to which Scottish representation was invited. You can read the letter by going to the Scottish Government website [here](#).

Sunday papers apparently released correspondence between the US and Scottish Governments, reports of US negotiations over the Lockerbie bomber and campaign donations to the US senators involved in the inquiry from BP organizations.

In response SNP MSP Christine Grahame repeated her call for the US Government to allow the release of documents and for the Senate investigation to call the right witnesses:

“As a newspaper appears to have obtained this document it is ridiculous that the public and the US Senate Committee are unable to see it.

“At the very least the US Government must release its correspondence with the Scottish Government to its own Senate committee and lift the embargo on Scottish Government publication. Senator Menendez has asked for this document and the Obama administration must give permission for it to be released. The families of victims on both sides of the Atlantic deserve to know the full position of the US Government on this issue.

“If this senate inquiry is to be taken seriously it must ask the right questions of the right people and along with revisiting its failure to formally invite Tony Blair and his former adviser, now UK ambassador to the US, Sir Nigel Sheinwald, they should ask the US government to set out what discussions it had with Libya over Mr Megrahi and if US officials were in contact or even accompanied UK officials in discussions around the deal in the desert.”

[BBC online](#) now report that the correspondence has been released but it becomes clear from it that the US supported the release of the prisoner on compassionate grounds to an address within Scotland, fearing the welcome he would receive on return to his home country. The papers on the Scottish government website clearly demonstrate that such an option was discounted by the Scottish Justice secretary.

Hitting a rather surprising note is one George Foulkes. His website states that “George Foulkes MSP has urged that the enquiry into the release of the Lockerbie bomber be reopened. In light of the increasing speculation, on both sides of the Atlantic, that BP was involved in the decision to release Al-Megrahi, George Foulkes believes it is essential that there is a thorough re-examination of the detail surrounding his release. In his letter to Bill Aitken, Convener of the Justice Committee, he asserted ‘*an inquiry is necessary due to the ill-informed speculation in the London media and US Congress*’.” Actually we believe the information is already available on the Scottish Government website. You can access that [here](#).

The Transport, Infrastructure and Environment Committee meets today at the City Chambers. One of the matters on the agenda is the reopening of Shandwick Place. [The Scotsman](#) reports that New Town residents from Great Stuart Street and surrounding streets have complained of increased CO2 levels due to the closure of the main route to Princes Street.

Meanwhile [Deadline](#) has the story of the court case being heard at Edinburgh Sheriff Court yesterday of a fight over the release of the Lockerbie bomber between an American tourist and a hotel owner who broke a glass over his head.

A man is being treated in hospital for burns to his hands and feet following a fire at his home in Edinburgh.

The alarm was raised at 3.50am after a report of a house alight in East Barton Gardens.

The 28-year-old man managed to escape the fire at his two-storey semi-detached house but he sustained burns and smoke inhalation.

He was taken to Edinburgh Royal Infirmary for medical treatment.

Ten firefighters, four using breathing apparatus, tackled the blaze in the bedroom on the first floor of the house for an hour-and-a-half. The bedroom was badly fire damaged with the rest of the first floor badly smoke damaged.

The Cabinet of the Scottish Government is meeting in Dornoch today for the second day running. Although the parliament itself is in recess the cabinet continues to meet and the itinerant summer holiday style cabinet meetings allow for local visits by government ministers at the same time. They will meet in Stirling, on the Isle of Bute and in Kilmaronock during August and September. Apart from the formal cabinet meeting there will be public meetings with opportunities for Q and A sessions and a focus on Scotland's year of Food and

Drink and the promotion of Scotland's products.

A drugs courier caught in March 2010 on Ferry Road with £144,000 of cocaine was sentenced at The High Court yesterday for four and a half years. [The BBC online](#) reports.

SNP councillor Tom Buchanan has accused critics of the Edinburgh airport chief executive Gordon Dewar of personally attacking Mr Dewar rather than concentrating on the issue of increased aviation taxes. [The Scotsman](#) carries the story.

[BBC online](#) tell us that BBC Scotland is commissioning two new dramas one to be set in Edinburgh and one in Glasgow.

Tory Councillor for Southside & Newington, [Cameron Rose](#), explains the rationale behind the fencing erected in the city to allow for festival posters to be put up there rather than on buildings.