

# Five things you need to know today



If you were thinking of being in the area of the Canongate Kirk on July 30, then you might like to think again. [The Scotsman](#) reports that the police have issued a warning to the public that when Zara Phillips gets married to her fiance, England rugby captain Mike Tindall, that it will be a private family affair. (Notwithstanding that although she does not have a title she is nonetheless the Queen's granddaughter.) Pity that we were looking forward to a wee bit of a 'do'.

As global concern mounts about the millions of people affected by the Horn of Africa's worst drought in six decades, city residents are being urged to give what they can in aid.

Today, the city council launched an urgent appeal for donations to help millions of people facing hunger and severe malnutrition in East Africa.

The Edinburgh Disasters Response Committee appeal – led by Edinburgh-based charity Mercy Corps and the City of Edinburgh Council – will bring desperately needed aid to people in the grip of the worst drought the region has seen for 60 years.

The drought, brought on by two consecutive poor rainy seasons, has caused a severe food crisis across East Africa.

The Council is urging residents to make a donation to this or other charity appeals aimed at bringing relief to the drought-stricken region.

Lord Provost George Grubb said: "I'm pleased to have seen action from the British Government and aid agencies to deal with the impact of this crisis. For our part, we want to lend

any help Edinburgh can give to the millions of people in need in East Africa. I would ask the people of Edinburgh to give everything they can spare. The capital has a long and proud tradition of reaching out to those in less fortunate circumstances, and I hope we will see that compassion and generosity in action as a response to this crisis.”

✘ Festivals in Edinburgh are not restricted to the arts. We also have a Festival of Politics coming up in August.

“Scotland’s freedom of information laws give everyone the right to receive information from Scotland’s public authorities, but how has the internet changed access to information? Are we getting more than before, and are we getting what we want, or just what public authorities want us to see? Join us at this **FREE** seminar to find out how new media make it easier for people to ask for information, and how they have led to the creation of new kinds of information using government data.

Attendees will hear from local Edinburgh man, Michael Traill, who became interested in FOI when asking Lothian and Borders Police for information some years ago, and now regularly makes FOI requests online, sharing the information he obtains on his blog and in the local press. There will also be live demonstrations of websites which take raw government data and use it to provide new and useful services for the public.

For example, [www.tellmescotland.gov.uk](http://www.tellmescotland.gov.uk) is based on an archive of Scottish public notices and allows members of the public to check e.g. local planning notices in their area, or roadworks on a route they plan to travel.

The event will round up with a chance to discuss the issues raised with a panel including the Commissioner and speakers, chaired by Kirstie Shirra, a freelance campaigner who started out on her career as Scotland’s only full time FOI lobbyist, when she was at Friends of the Earth Scotland.”

The book deal signed by Wikileaks founder, Julian Assange, with Edinburgh publishers Canongate has reportedly collapsed according to [The Guardian](#).

Stills Edinburgh is looking for some dancers – actually particularly male dancers....on Sunday 24 July for a voluntary performing opportunity in Festival Square. [Queue here....](#)