

# Five things you need to know today

✘ More money for Festivals – Bike Hire Scheme – Cycling safety – Live Webchat with the Tories – Assembly buys two city venues

Artists and audiences attending Edinburgh's Festivals this year have reason to celebrate after an ambitious programme of additional world premieres, new commissions and international gatherings was given the green light.

In a unique initiative, the major public funders of Edinburgh's Festivals – The Scottish Government, City of Edinburgh Council, EventScotland and Creative Scotland – have combined forces to agree an increased investment of £3.2 million into Edinburgh's Festivals 2012 programmes. As part of this, the Scottish Government is expanding its Expo Fund for Edinburgh's Festivals this year, providing a total of £2.25 million in support.

The world premiere of a new work by James MacMillan, a series of major public art commissions in the New Town, a World Dance Feste, the first ever World Fringe Congress, a World Jazz Orchestra directed by Joe Temperley, and The Edinburgh World Writers' Conference 2012 are amongst the highlights announced today.

This increased programming support for the Festivals is in addition to significant levels of core revenue and project funding, and aims to maximise the impact of overall investment as demonstrated in last year's Festivals Impact Study.

Taking advantage of the unique alignment in 2012 of the Olympics and the Year of Creative Scotland, these programmes illuminate the ambition and vision of the world's leading festival city. With the Festivals' peak summer period

coinciding with the Olympic and Paralympic Games, the world's elite and emerging cultural talent will gather in Edinburgh as their sporting equivalents compete in London.

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The Council will [discuss the possibility of a cycle hire scheme at next week's council meeting](#), but not a cycle hire scheme such as there is in Paris, Washington, Dublin and London. Why not we ask? The scheme in Dublin did not cost the council anything as it was offered by JCDecaux in exchange for the advertising which they are allowed to put up on the bike stations. We really like the idea of having hop-on, hop-off bicycles in the city for residents and tourists alike. We regularly cycle around the city and the benefits both to us and to the environment are obvious. What do you think?

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Cycling safety has come under the spotlight in recent months in Edinburgh. This will now be the focus of a council campaign to improve cycling safety next month. The Transport Minister has also indicated that there will be a cycling safety summit [later this month](#).

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In anticipation of the local government elections we are hotting up our political coverage. Next week we are running a liveblog on Wednesday 14 March 2012 at 6.30 p.m. with the Conservative Group on the council along with some of their prospective candidates. Do you have questions for your councillor? Then email us [theedinburghreporter@gmail.com](mailto:theedinburghreporter@gmail.com) or submit your comments on the evening!

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Finally it seems that the Fringe operator, Assembly, is buying two venues in the city the Roxy Art House and the premises

which were formerly home to Forest Cafe, in what [The Chortle](#) says will give them a permanent home.