

# Five things you need to know today



## **Election candidates – Portobello High School – Buses (may) Stop – Gypsies – The Edinburgh Reporter**

Today we will be publishing the profiles for all Edinburgh Council candidates. Some are less complete than others. We have spent some time putting these together but even now exactly one month before the election, there are some candidates who have not established their identities on anything other than the list published on the council website. If you know of any candidates then please check out their profiles when they are published later this morning and help us fill in any blanks. We would also welcome copies of any election leaflets that you may receive. [The Edinburgh Evening News](#) meanwhile points out how few women candidates there are... Meanwhile [Better Nation](#) has analysis of the local election.

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Almost 1,000 Portobello High School parents have signed a petition to ask the campaign group PPAG to stop their plans to appeal last month's court decision, which may result in delaying the start of the new building, according to the [BBC](#).

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The SNP has expressed disappointment at the announcement from First Scotland East that it is to discontinue some services in East and Mid Lothian and that it may close its Dalkeith depot, with resulting redundancies.

The bus company, which has entered consultation process with Trade Unions on the possible job losses at its Dalkeith and Musselburgh bus depots, has cited its reason as poor trading performance and increasing fuel costs. The Scottish Government is holding a Bus Stakeholders meeting tomorrow to address the problems facing commuters and the industry.

Colin Beattie, SNP MSP for Midlothian North and Musselburgh, said:

“This is extremely disappointing news for residents and employees, as community transport plays a vital role in these communities.

“I will be in regular contact with First Scotland East and welcome their efforts to minimise redundancies. It is good to see that the Scottish Government’s PACE team has been in touch to offer assistance to anyone facing redundancy.

“It is encouraging to hear the Scottish Government is in talks with the company and I hope the surrounding local authorities will co-operate in finding the best solution to protect services and support jobs.

“In tough times for bus companies the best action all parties could take would be to back the fuel duty regulator proposed by the SNP as an amendment to the Budget Bill, which would deliver relief on soaring fuel prices and help hard-pressed commuters.

“The Scottish Government’s bus stakeholders group will get everyone round the table to work out a sustainable future for the industry and it is that kind of practical action we need to protect future services.”

Christine Grahame, SNP MSP for Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale, said:

“This is very unwelcome news for residents, commuters and

staff employed by First Scotland East.

“Hopefully we will see a sale of the operations and the continuation of the services.

“I will be in contact with the company to urge for no compulsory redundancies and to seek further information on the impact of these cuts and hope Lothian buses, new operators or local authorities are able to assist.

“The main problem facing bus companies, as highlighted by First Scotland East, is increasing fuel prices at a time when the economy is also struggling.

“This is why we urge the UK Government to deliver urgent action to tackle the crippling cost of fuel. Prices need to be brought permanently under control as soaring prices don’t just hit car drivers but are pushing up the prices for bus companies and hindering economic recovery.”

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Amnesty International Scotland yesterday launched two reports on Scottish Gypsy Travellers at the City of Edinburgh Council’s City Chambers. Both reports are available [to download here.](#)

The reports outline findings on local authority service provision and practice and media coverage of Scottish Gypsy Travellers throughout Scotland, and are the result of the organisation’s campaign to highlight the widespread and systematic discrimination suffered by this community throughout Scotland.

The event was chaired by Mary Fee MSP, Convener of the Scottish Parliament’s Equal Opportunities Committee. As well as the report launch, the event featured contributions from the Scottish Gypsy Traveller community as well as organisations working with the community. There were also

contributions from the City of Edinburgh Council and Perth and Kinross Council.

The research which forms the basis for the reports was based on the 2001 report and recommendations from the Scottish Parliament's Equal Opportunities Committee.

Amnesty International Director in Scotland, Shabnum Mustapha, said:

"It is extremely disappointing that, after so long, this community is still suffering such direct and indirect discrimination. Whilst our research has found that there are some positive steps being made, and we welcome this, there is a long way to go to tackle the deep-rooted inequalities which Scottish Gypsy Travellers face every day. It is time that all local authorities learn from the good practice that is being developed, with the community, in certain parts of Scotland. We also want to see the Scottish Government adopt a much more prominent and public role on Scottish Gypsy Travellers, showing clear national leadership to ensure this community's rights are being met.

"Unfortunately much of this discrimination is being fuelled by an irresponsible media that uses loaded language and stereotypes to stoke an already hostile environment and maintain tensions between Scottish Gypsy Travellers and the settled community. Whilst there are professional journalists who are responsible in their coverage of Scottish Gypsy Travellers, they are sadly overshadowed by sensationalist reporting which does not adhere to ethical guidelines. "

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