

Five things you need to know today



Dalai Lama – Edinburgh International Book Festival – Festival of Politics – Wifi on the trains! – Planning application at Fort Kinnaird

Tickets to see His Holiness the Dalai Lama at the Usher Hall have already long since sold out, but the Tibetan spiritual leader is going elsewhere in Edinburgh today and so you might be able to catch a glimpse of him either at the Signet Library just after 8.30a.m., or the Usher Hall about 10.15a.m. before making his speech at 10.30 this morning. Some roads are closed and diversions in place in these areas.

The Edinburgh International Book Festival was launched yesterday although you can only start buying tickets next Friday 29 June 2012. In a fast-paced world filled with ever-changing soundbites and 140 character opinions, the Edinburgh International Book Festival provides the perfect environment to carefully consider the society in which we live. In 2012 the Book Festival will rethink some of the issues facing the world today, offering audiences the opportunity to engage in thoughtful discussion with leading writers from across the globe. Charlotte Square Gardens will welcome Nobel Laureates, Booker and Pulitzer Prize winners and Poets Laureate as well as a stellar line up of the world's leading writers, poets, thinkers and commentators. With Guest Selectors, the Anobii First Book Award, the Edinburgh World Writers' Conference, the gamut of outstanding authors from Ali Smith to Zadie Smith, and a third year of the late night Unbound events, the Book

Festival promises a summer of contemplation, inspiration and entertainment.

Nick Barley, Director of the Edinburgh International Book Festival said "In 2012, the Year of Creative Scotland, we are delighted to showcase some of the best Scottish writing, from well-established authors to debut novelists, as well as welcoming some extraordinary literary talent from around the world to help us rethink aspects of society that affect our everyday lives. This is a year for taking stock about what matters to us in a time of uncertainty, doubt and data overload. It is also, of course, a time when Scotland is preparing to make a big decision about its own future. All this and more will be discussed, deliberated, considered, broadcast live online via the Edinburgh World Writers' Conference, and disseminated around the world – we look forward to a lively, informed and informative debate."

In Edinburgh to launch their brand new books will be Ian McEwan, James Kelman, Will Self, Pankaj Mishra, Pat Barker, Gavin Esler and Louise Welsh while Zadie Smith, Howard Jacobson, Val McDermid and A N Wilson will offer exclusive previews of their forthcoming novels. Joining them in a packed programme will be over 800 authors appearing in 750 events and representing 44 different countries from Australia to Russia, Argentina to Nigeria. The prestigious James Tait Black Memorial Prize will be announced at the Book Festival, together with the Edwin Morgan Poetry Prize and the Scottish Mortgage Investment Trust Book of the Year award. Former Prime Minister Gordon Brown will deliver the National Library of Scotland's Donald Dewar Lecture and John McCarthy will speak at the inaugural Frederick Hood Memorial Lecture.

You can start buying tickets today for the Festival of Politics which starts on 17 August at Holyrood. Some big names will appear at the Festival but we thought this might appeal

to some of you who are interested in music.

The Future of the Music Industry

Saturday 25 August, 17:00-18:00, Debating Chamber, £4.00/£2.50
In an age when music is commonly available via the internet and CD sales are declining, this event will explore what this means for the future of the industry and asks what it means for future generations of musicians. What can we learn from countries such as Norway and Canada? Join panellists including Scott Cohen, founder The Orchard; Scott Hutchinson, Frightened Rabbit; Caroline Gorman, Rage Music and the Scottish Music Industry Association; Olaf Furniss, Wide Days; and Inger Dirdal, Music Export Norway in a lively discussion on the future of the music industry in Scotland. Chaired by the Deputy Presiding Officer Elaine Smith MSP.

Programme availability and tickets

- * Tickets will go on sale at 10am on 22 Friday June.
- * Online via www.festivalofpolitics.org.uk
- * A limited number of tickets are available via the Scottish Parliament in person and via telephone on 0131 348 5405.
- * Full details of the festival programme are available from www.festivalofpolitics.org.uk

Cutting edge technology will be used on Scotland's rail network to significantly enhance the experience for passengers on the network. As part of the significant £5 billion package of investment announced today for the new rail franchise from 2014, significant new technological improvements will be required.

Smart ticketing technology will be rolled out across the network by the end of the franchise period. Bidders will be encouraged to develop plans to link with other forms of transport, including bikes, and efforts will be made to better integrate rail journeys with connecting ferry and bus

services.

In addition to this, the new franchise agreement will also include a requirement to install Wi-Fi technology across the network by 2019. The results of the trial which began this week on the Edinburgh-Glasgow line will help to establish which technological solution will be used.

Commenting on these developments, SNP MSP Kevin Stewart said:

“It is right that Scotland should learn from innovations around the world and bring the best of technological solutions to our rail network. Improving the experience for passengers should always be at the heart of improvements to Scotland’s railways.

“Smart ticketing has clearly worked well in London and other areas, so I am delighted that we will be bringing the technology to Scotland’s railways. It is clearly a far more convenient and efficient solution and I am confident it will be warmly welcomed by passengers across the country.

“It is also important that we do more to integrate the various types of transport available in Scotland as far as is possible and I am sure that requiring the next ScotRail franchisee to develop plans for this will bear fruit.

“The warm welcome that the rollout of Wi-Fi on the Edinburgh-Glasgow line received this week shows the strength of demand for internet access on the move.

“Rolling the technology out across the network by 2019 is an ambitious step forward and I am sure that the lessons from the current trial will be well learnt.”

The owner of Fort Kinnaird Shopping Park says it has taken a vital step forward in the continued regeneration and improvement of the park with the submission of four planning

applications to The City of Edinburgh Council.

The applications represent a £24 million investment in Fort Kinnaird with 285 new positions created on opening, in addition to a significant number of jobs during the construction period. Fort Kinnaird employs 1,600 people, rising to 2,500 during the Christmas peak.

The applications seek detailed consent for the design of a number of new shops and restaurants which already have planning permission, a new seven screen multiplex cinema, new toilets and a security office to replace the existing offices.

The applications also propose upgrading and revitalising the public areas throughout the park with a fully equipped children's play area and cafe to provide a new heart for the centre and major improvements to the pedestrian crossing on Newcraighall Road.

If approved, it is anticipated that work will start on site in early 2013 with completion scheduled for summer 2014. The location of the cinema and restaurants on the same site as the retail creates opportunities for linked trips between the various elements on the park, creating new jobs but also safeguarding existing ones.

Liam Smith, Centre Manager at Fort Kinnaird, said: "These plans demonstrate our commitment to continued investment in Fort Kinnaird and will release its full potential, making spending time here an even better experience for our customers.

"As well as creating vital new jobs and local investment and improving public areas, the new shops and restaurants will enable us to attract and accommodate new and exciting retailers which are not currently represented in the area.

"There was previously a cinema at Fort Kinnaird and this replacement will provide a modern, digital cinema with stadium style seating; something not possible with the previous

building.”