

Five things you need to know today



West Princes Street Gardens – Flood warnings – Remploy – Farepak – Holiday reading

It has emerged that the Crown Estate are to give up ownership of West Princes Street Gardens. (Who knew they owned it anyway?) They said:-“Following our transfer in 1999 of 25 historic assets to Historic Scotland plans have been announced to transfer further interests in Scotland to Scottish organisations, working within the constraints of the law: these are land at West Princes Street Gardens in Edinburgh and the rights to fish wild oysters and mussels, assets mentioned in the recent Scottish Affairs Committee report.” What it does not tell us however is which “Scottish organisation” the ownership will be transferred to. We have asked and we will let you know if and when we hear in reply, although the likely candidate might well be the council who lease and run the space.

Meanwhile the SNP are unhappy with the result of the decisions made about Crown Estate. They had wanted assets devolved to Scotland and feel that what has transpired is less than acceptable. The SNP has condemned the LibDems for betraying Scotland by failing to fight for devolution of the Crown Estate after the UK Government confirmed it will not give Scotland full control of what the SNP views as its own assets.

Westminster’s response to the Scottish Affairs Select Committee on Crown Estate details no further devolution of responsibility or revenue and rejects cross party calls from both the Scottish and UK Parliament’s for full devolution of the Crown Estate to communities across Scotland.

Rob Gibson, SNP MSP for Caithness, Sutherland and Ross and a long-term campaigner for devolution of the Crown Estate's assets, said:

"Once again the LibDems have betrayed Scotland and, in particular, let down our highlands and islands communities. The UK Government's response is extremely disappointing – we have no additional devolution, no transfer of real responsibility and no progress for communities affected by the Crown Estate. This is not responsive to Scottish interests and nor does it serve the needs of our communities. We need complete responsibility for the Crown Estate but it is clear the UK Government does not want to deliver this.

"For those highlands and islands and coastal communities seeking influence over the Crown Estate it is clear the only way they will see local control is with a Yes vote for independence. The bitter irony is that in opposition the LibDems were active in agitating for devolution of the Crown Estate. Today's underwhelming announcement shows that they have abandoned their campaign.

"Not only has the party turned its back on its own beliefs, it is also ignoring the cross-party calls from the Scotland Bill committee supporting Scotland gaining full control."

Councillor Andrew Burns, Council Leader, said: "With more rain forecast over the next day or so, the Council is taking steps to protect residents' homes and properties. In Stockbridge we are working with the contractor to make the temporary flood defences at the Water of Leith more robust. Sandbags have been given to residents in this area whose homes may be at risk of flooding.

"Across the city we are also shoring up defences and will be deploying sandbags as a precaution. Council teams are on

standby over the next few days to respond to any incident of flooding.

“We would ask everyone to remain vigilant and ensure they take all the necessary precautions to protect themselves and their property.”

MET Office issue weather warnings here:
http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/uk/dg/dg_forecast_warnings.html

SEPA flood alerts can be found here :
<http://floodline.sepa.org.uk/floodupdates/info/group-id/4830>

The UK Government has confirmed the closure of 27 factories employing disabled workers, saying sites could not be subsidised any longer. The minister for disabled people, Maria Miller, said that the money spent on Remploy should be spent elsewhere in the departmental budget.

The minister also announced further consultation on the future of nine other Remploy factories which have been the subject of bids, including the Remploy centre in Edinburgh.

The previous Government worked closely with trade unions, Remploy management and staff to ensure that over 50 Remploy factories could continue to provide employment opportunities for disabled people and provided £555 million until 2013 to support Remploy.

Edinburgh South MP Ian Murray said:- “I find this decision by the Government utterly disgraceful, they are hurting some of the most vulnerable people in society, whilst giving tax cuts to millionaires and driving this country back into recession. Unemployment is going through the roof. Back to work schemes are sinking under the weight of spiralling unemployment. And the government thinks this is a good time to sack disabled workers across the country. Remploy workers in

Edinburgh do a fantastic job, and the uncertainty the Government has created around the future of Remploy in Edinburgh is symbolic of the lack of respect that this out of touch Government has shown them”

Customers and agents of Farepak, the Christmas savings firm, will ultimately receive half of the money they lost when the company collapsed – after liquidators BDO said that final payments will be made to those who lost out at the end of August.

The news comes after SNP Business and Enterprise spokesperson Mike Weir MP – who has campaigned on behalf of the victims of the collapse to secure compensation – received confirmation from the firm’s liquidators that 207 agents and customers of the Christmas saving scheme have died since the collapse six years ago.

Farepak collapsed in October 2006 owing £37m to more than 119,000 savers (20,000 of those customers are in Scotland). While savers are to recover just half of their money back the final bill for the administrators and their legal advisers has already exceeded £8 million. It is understood that the UK Government will also meet the costs of the company directors who have been cleared – costs estimated as much as £6million.

Were you a Farepak saver? If you were we would like to hear from you with your comments. Either add them below or get in touch by email:- theedinburghreporter@gmail.com

Are you about to go off on holiday? Then did you know you can borrow an ebook through the library? [Tales of One City](#) have details on their blog.
