

Five things you need to know today



Jewellery theft – International Right to Know Day – Heriot Watt on a high – Lifeboat out on a shout – Fire in Livingston

[Jewellers Lime Blue](#) on George Street lost £27,000 of jewellery yesterday when a thief ran out of the store with a tray of rings that an assistant had just brought out of a display case.

Today is International Right to Know day. Our Freedom of Information legislation is being revised at the moment by [The Scottish Government](#) with Stage 1 of the amending bill to be completed by mid-November. Our Scottish FOI legislation has been in force only since 2005, and while this bill seeks to amend the Act it is not really clear that it will extend the scope of the laws, rather it might constrain its overall effect.

The Information Commissioner, Rosemary Agnew, recently opined that the Scottish Government should release the legal advice it received about an independent Scotland's membership of the EU, but that information has not yet been laid out in the open, and the matter is back in court for further decision.

[The most recent reported decision](#) of the Information Commissioner is, curiously, a case against The City of Edinburgh Council, which finds that the council failed to comply with the statutory time limit of providing information within 20 working days of being asked to do so. This case related to information requested from the Property Conservation Department which is to be disbanded in Spring

2013 and is set to be replaced following consultation. [You can offer your views on the consultation here](#) until the end of October 2012.

Scottish Greens are urging the Deputy First Minister to commit to a timescale for discussing ways to extend Freedom of Information (FoI) laws.

Alison Johnstone, Green MSP for Lothian, has written to Nicola Sturgeon, whose new cabinet responsibilities include FoI.

Existing powers to extend FoI to other organisations have never been used, and a previous plan by the SNP government to do so was shelved following opposition from private bodies.

However, Deputy First Minister Nicola Sturgeon recently told Holyrood's Finance Committee that she was happy to discuss extension of coverage, but only after the current bill on FoI has completed its parliamentary process.

Alison Johnstone MSP said:-

"In the decade since Freedom of Information came in, public accountability has clearly been eroded. There are now more than 130 private and arms-length organisations delivering public services such as leisure and sports facilities and they are not covered by FoI.

"I have written to the deputy first minister welcoming her comments and asking her to outline why she feels a delay is appropriate and if she would be willing to set a timescale for the start of a discussion. There is a keen public appetite to look at extending FoI sooner rather than later."

Heriot-Watt has been named Scottish University of the Year for the second year running, [according to the BBC.](#)

Scotland's busiest inshore Lifeboat the " Jimmie Cairncross" was called out for the third time this week. At 10.25pm. the crew went to the aid of a yacht with a fouled propeller. The 26feet Westerley yacht " Nerthus" from Port Edgar Marina with two men on board suffered engine failure with a fouled propeller off North Queensferry.

The RNLi Queensferry Lifeboat towed the vessel safely in to the pier at North Queensferry.

A woman [had to be evacuated from her flat](#) and given oxygen after waking up this morning to find the room filled with smoke.