

Five things you need to know today



Energy savings – Lothian Sound celebrates its 25th birthday today – Nurseries making a splash – Stiglitz to give evidence to Holyrood Economy Committee – Edinburgh Lectures

Scots Together will officially launch today. Representatives from Changeworks will be on hand at the Princes Mall Shopping Centre rooftop from 11am this morning to show people how they can take part and save money on their energy bills. The official launch will take place from 1.30pm.

The organisers explain that the more people that take part, the better the deal will become and there's no obligation to switch. People who join up at the start will still be able to benefit from the price achieved by the total number of people switching at the end.

The Scots Together team wants people coming to the launch event to bring along a recent energy bill so they can see how Scots Together works. Those interested can also visit the website at www.Scotstogether.com and join. It's free, it's easy and there's no obligation.

Lothian Sound celebrates its 25th birthday today. Local MSP Jim Eadie lodged this motion at Holyrood asking that the birthday be marked.

S4M-04877# Jim Eadie: Lothian Sound Talking Newspaper Celebrates 25th Anniversary—That the Parliament congratulates Lothian Sound on its 25th anniversary on 18 February 2013; applauds the dedicated work of all the volunteers at Lothian Sound who bring talking newspapers to people who are blind or

partially sighted; understands that it serves over 600 listeners, providing them with news and current affairs taken from the Edinburgh Evening News; commends Lothian Sound on its work to provide high quality recordings from its recording studio in Newington; recognises that recordings are provided in different formats to suit the needs of individual people, and wishes Lothian Sound well as it continues what it considers its valuable work, providing a lifeline service directly to people in the community.

Lothian Sound [has a website here.](#)

Forty nurseries and early years centres in Edinburgh are benefiting from an investment into garden water features to give young children the opportunity to experience natural, active play outdoors. £68,000 has been set aside to support improvements to nursery grounds for water play over the next few months as part of the Outdoor Play and Active Learning programme that over the last two years has made significant enhancements to the outdoor play experience for children.

Twenty nurseries and early years centres will work with a children's play consultant in order to develop their ideas and implement their plans. Another eighteen establishments will be given funding to design their own imaginative water play environments and support will be provided by the Council's outdoor play and learning staff. Garden water features have already been installed in the grounds of both Spinney Lane Nursery School and Gilmerton Child & Family Centre in recent months as part of the project.

Councillor Paul Godzik, the city's Education Convener, said: "We firmly believe that young children should have the best available play environments and we want more children to experience outdoor, natural play during their time with us. The investment will benefit young children for many years to

come and put this Council at the forefront of delivering high quality nursery provision for the city's children."

Spinney Lane Nursery School was the first nursery to have a water feature installed as part of the project and it has proved an instant success with the children. The design features a dry river bed and hand pump that allows pupils to interact with the installation. Gilmerton Child & Family Centre have also benefited from a new outdoor water play space for the children that was installed earlier this month.

Depute Manager, Nick Reynolds, said: "The children have loved the opportunity to experience outdoor water play. The feature has opened up a whole range of new opportunities for the nursery garden – a place to find materials for bridges and dams or a simple fishing rod. It's been fantastic to watch them invent so many different ways to use it."

The Council is committed to enhancing the outdoor play environments of children as part of the Early Years Strategy launched two years ago. Officials visited Berlin last year as part of a study trip with [the Grounds for Learning scheme](#) to examine the different approaches taken to enhancing outdoor space in kindergartens.

The programme has helped make small grants available to the council's nurseries and early years centres, as well as helped train teachers in how to bring more natural and outdoors play into the learning environment.

Professor Stiglitz to inform the work of the Economy Committee

Nobel prize winning economist Professor Joseph E. Stiglitz will give evidence to the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee to inform them on the adequacy of current measures of economic performance.

Professor Stiglitz, who has advised both the French and American Governments, will give evidence to the Committee via video link at its meeting on the 27 February.

The Committee will be asking Professor Stiglitz for his views on alternatives to gross domestic product (GDP) as a measure of economic activity and of the wellbeing of society more generally. This will be a one-off session which will help the Committee further their understanding of what work can be done in this area.

Convener of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee Murdo Fraser MSP said:

“Professor Stiglitz is a world renowned academic who has advised the French and American Governments as well as the World Bank and the United Nations. So his expertise in alternative measures of economic growth is unparalleled and our committee is delighted that he will inform our understanding of this subject.”

Professor Joseph E. Stiglitz said:

“I am delighted to advise, for the first time, a committee of the Scottish Parliament. My work with the international Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress has underlined the concerns over the adequacy of gross domestic product as a measure of well-being, and I hope that my knowledge and expertise in this area will convince the Committee to consider this issue in more detail.”

The council has just launched news of the forthcoming Edinburgh Lectures series which begins this month. [More information here.](#)