

Five things you need to know today



Full council meeting today – Defence Secretary in Edinburgh – Debate – POP 2 – Police win award

There will be a deputation today by the pupils and campaigners who want the council to spare Castlebrae Community High School. There is a report being brought to the meeting this morning which recommends its closure, but the campaigners say that even if the council decide on closure today they will [not give up their fight.](#)

The Defence Secretary Philip Hammond is due in Edinburgh today to make a speech about the future of Defence in Scotland. The SNP say that this follows last week's 'long awaited and the discredited basing review' and in light of a newly released survey, they say that this shows once again a majority of Scots are totally opposed to the renewal of the Trident nuclear weapons system still based on the Clyde.

Commenting on the visit and speech, Angus Robertson MP SNP Westminster Leader and Defence spokesman said :- "This rare visit to Scotland by Philip Hammond will give him the perfect opportunity to apologise to the people of Scotland for the shameful breach of trust that was last week's basing review announcement. That broken promise has been compounded by a letter from Prime Minister David Cameron in reply to the First Minister Alex Salmond yesterday.

"The brazen nature of the basing review took everyone aback, and Mr Hammond should say sorry to Scotland.

“On the 18th July 2011 Dr Liam Fox committed to a major increase in the military footprint in Scotland with up to 7,000 armed forces personnel coming from Germany. There was absolute clarity in that promise. The decision by the new Defence Secretary to renege on that has now been backed by David Cameron in his letter supporting the flawed conclusions of the basing review.

“All the way through the process the Scottish Government responded positively and constructively on the basis that the original plans, in which although there were some disappointments, appeared to be made in good faith. All the way along there were discussions on the promised developments at Kirknewton, about new training facilities, and on how to reverse the decline in Scotland’s defence footprint – the headcount declining by 36% between 2000 and 2012 in Scotland, compared with 15% in England. That is a shocking disparity.

“These broken promises were compounded by the assertions by Philip Hammond that the reduction in commitment to Scotland was in the context of further reductions to the army made since that original announcement. This is quite simply misleading, as it had already been stated that the regular army would be reduced to 82,000 before Dr Fox made his promises. Philip Hammond should start by putting the record straight on those comments alone, and apologising for his misleading comments.

“Communities in Scotland affected by these u-turns will be appalled at the level of disregard and dissembling and the cavalier way in which Mr Hammond simply brushes aside concerns about cancelled investments, and his continuing refusal to answer questions about basic baseline numbers of personnel at the MoD’s remaining locations in Scotland. For unionists from the Prime Minister down to claim that Scotland’s defence needs are in good hands is now shown to be laughable.

“Of one thing we are sure however: Westminster’s continued

determination to spend billions and billions of pounds on the obscene Tory fetish that is Trident. Mr Hammond may recall that these grotesquely expensive weapons of mass destruction are just half an hour from Scotland's main centre of population, and designed for enemies from the days of Brezhnev. All polling evidence, including the most recent this week, shows that the overwhelming majority of people in Scotland are opposed to Trident.

"On his brief trip to Edinburgh Mr Hammond will have the opportunity to put the record straight on some of his misleading comments at Westminster – and above all to apologise to Scots about the broken promises and shameful conduct of the basing review. We know that the only way to rid Scotland of Trident and get a defence policy that truly meets Scotland's needs is to vote Yes next autumn for an independent Scotland."



Pedal on Parliament has announced that agreement has been reached with The City of Edinburgh Council and Lothian and Borders Police on a traffic-free route, with road closures including the historic Royal Mile and George IV bridge, to ensure the large gathering of cyclists, young and old, can

proceed in safety. This requires a change of date from the previous announced date, and the event will now take place on Sunday 19 May 2013.

In May this year cyclists young and old will once more be converging on Holyrood to urge the Scottish Government to make Scotland a cycle-friendly nation. Pedal on Parliament, the grass-roots organisation which brought thousands of cyclists onto the streets of Edinburgh in April last year, have announced a second mass demonstration in support of their call for safer cycling conditions in Scotland. 'POP2' will start from the Meadows in Edinburgh at 3pm on Sunday 19 May 2013 and end at the Parliament building where politicians will be presented with an eight point manifesto that the organisers believe will help make Scotland's towns, cities and villages fit for cyclists from eight to 80.

This will be a light-hearted ride, but with a serious purpose. The most recent road safety figures for Scotland show that the numbers of cyclists and pedestrians killed and seriously injured has actually risen. Experts have warned that the numbers of pedestrians and cyclists killed or seriously injured on Scotland's roads are set to exceed those in cars within a few years.

The Olympics and the success of Scottish cyclists Sir Chris Hoy and Paralympians Aileen McGlynn, Karen Darke and Neil Fachie have created a huge interest in cycling this year, with thousands more Scots taking to two wheels – but they will quickly give up if the conditions they encounter on the roads aren't safe and inviting, and that will require real investment. The Scottish Government has a target of 10% of all journeys to be taken by bike by 2020, yet despite some high profile announcements of investment in cycling in the wake of the last Pedal on Parliament, it still spends barely 1% of the transport budget on cycling. The organisers comment that you will have seen the step change announcement from the Mayor of London last week, to bring investment in cycling

infrastructure in London in line with Dutch and German levels, and target a doubling of journeys by bike by 2023.

Pedal on Parliament urges anyone who cycles in Scotland, or who would like to cycle in Scotland but doesn't feel safe to join them for POP2 and maintain the pressure on The Scottish Government to put cycling at the heart of its transport policy.

"Together we can make Scotland a cycle-friendly nation."



A Lothian and Borders Police operation to tackle serious and organised crime groups in Edinburgh has won a top award at the Scottish Policing Awards, which were held at the beginning of the week.

Operation Advance, which targeted drug dealers operating in the Capital, won the Making Justice Work award at a ceremony held at Tulliallan Castle.

The operation led to the arrests of 56 people, and to date, a total of 47 convictions have been made and 50 years of custodial sentences passed down. Approximately £48,000 worth of drugs and cash was recovered as part of the operation.

Officers from Operation Advance attended the ceremony to collect their award from the Justice Secretary, Kenny MacAskill.

He said: "Congratulations to Lothian and Borders Police and the Serious and Organised Crime Unit, which has rightly received recognition for the excellent results of Operation Advance, which has seen 47 convictions and 50 years of custodial sentences issued so far for drug dealing, violent crime and firearms offences.

“Hard work and dedication are not in short supply across the police service in Scotland and there are countless ways police officers and staff serve our communities every single day.

“So much of what they do remains under the radar but the Policing Awards offers a chance to celebrate and recognise some of the fantastic work, such as Operation Advance, which regularly takes place across Scottish policing.”

David Strang, Chief Constable of Lothian and Borders Police, said: “I am delighted that all those involved in Operation Advance have been recognised for their hard work and professionalism, and I congratulate them on their success.

“The use of intelligence, coupled with effective liaison with partner agencies, helped to ensure that criminals who were seeking to establish themselves in Edinburgh were brought to justice, and our communities have been made safer as a result.

“Operation Advance struck a major blow against serious and organised criminality in the Capital, and this award is a fitting tribute to the efforts of all those involved.”