

Five things you need to know today



Lazarowicz raises energy bills at Westminster – Green MSP wants better childcare system – Blackadder painting to be auctioned next week – Big Book Bash – Balerno Village Screen **flashmobbed!**

Edinburgh MP Mark Lazarowicz has raised in Parliament the way that low energy users could be hit by the simplification of tariffs promised by the Government.

Ofgem has said that bills should simply consist of a standing charge (which can be zero) and a price per unit but people who use less energy could actually be faced with higher bills than before.

Mark said:-“I and many other MPs have been calling on the Government to take action to cut energy bills and its answer was to simplify tariffs but that could actually mean that some customers actually face higher bills.

“That’s because people who use less energy, often because of the cost, could face a disproportionately high standing charge even before they have started in place of their old two-tier tariff.

“Government figures show that households have cut their use in reaction to soaring bills over recent years but I was contacted by one constituent who found that, if he spent less

than £27 on gas and £12 on electricity a month, with the new standing charge introduced by his energy supplier he would actually see his overall bill rise by 50-60%.”

“This will especially affect people in debt and a quarter of people in a new poll said that they had had to put up with unacceptably cold temperatures this year because they struggled to afford bills: at this stage simplification doesn’t look as if it will offer them much comfort.”

In its review of the energy market, Ofgem initially proposed a standard standing charge so that energy companies would compete only on the unit price but after representations from the ‘Big Six’ companies, it dropped the idea.

It has said that companies remain free to set a zero standing charge but varying standing charges will mean that comparison will not be as simple as expected either.

Sheila Gilmore MP for Edinburgh East spoke in the debate on Energy Prices and Profits during the week and said:-“People are also finding it increasingly difficult to find out how to get their home better insulated and how to find out what sort of help is available. While it is absolutely right that energy companies should be expected to contribute to all that, whether the systems that are put in place actually work is another matter. Often the local authority is best placed to know where the problems are in their areas—where the types of housing are that need the most help. That is not just because councils are landlords. They know about all the other properties in the private rented sector where the problems are at their worst and where the difficulties lie. In my [constituency](#), where a large proportion of the properties

are tenements and flats, people face difficult issues about how to improve insulation.”



Alison Johnstone, Green MSP for Lothian and a member of Holyrood’s economy committee, challenged the First Minister to do more to help women play a full part in economic recovery.

Alison highlighted the fact that the UK Government’s welfare reforms have a significant impact on women, including for many the loss of financial independence. Alison pointed towards childcare and apprenticeships as key areas for the Scottish Government to tackle.

Alison said:-“Investing in a transformative, affordable

childcare system would provide hundreds of jobs and would enable thousands of women to pursue work and education, boosting economic recovery. I pointed out to the First Minister that the most popular modern apprenticeships are severely gender segregated and that while the number of women apprentices may have increased women are still doing the poorly paid jobs.

"I'm glad the First Minister accepted my point that sectors such as construction remain male-dominated and I will continue to press for women to be given the chance to play a full and fair part in Scotland's economic recovery."

Bonhams is to sell a painting by Dame Elizabeth Blackadder specially commissioned by the First Minister as his official 2012 Christmas card. The painting will be sold as part of the Scottish Pictures sale in Edinburgh on 12 September.

The donated artwork is estimated at £4,000-6,000 and is being auctioned to raise funds for Breakthrough Breast Cancer, Dyslexia Scotland, the Sick Kinds Friends Foundation and the Scottish Steelworkers Memorial Fund.

The piece – entitled *Still Life* – is a delicately painted watercolour of wild flowers in Dame Elizabeth's distinctive style

☒ Dame Elizabeth Blackadder was the most recent recipient of the Edinburgh Award by the City of Edinburgh Council at a ceremony earlier in the year.

Why not add your own event to [@BookWeekScot](https://twitter.com/BookWeekScot)? Throw a Big Book Bash at work, home or in your community: <http://t.co/ZvkJLR5Car!>

– Scottish Book Trust (@scottishbktrust) [August 19, 2013](#)

The Scottish Book Trust want you to hold a Big Book Bash. This is what they say [on their website](#) where they give you full details of how to get involved:-

What is a Big Book Bash, exactly?

✖ A Big Book Bash is a celebration of reading of any kind, in any shape or form, at any time or place. It could be as simple as a book swap or a book group, or as elaborate as a literary fancy dress dinner party, the only thing you need to make it happen is YOU!

We are asking you to celebrate the joys of reading in your own unique way during Book Week Scotland 2013, by holding an event that helps you express what makes reading fun for you.

[Balerno Village Screen](#) put on films in the village on a big screen...this much is not surprising... but their audience at the screening of Les Miserables were indeed given a big surprise last night when members of the Balerno Theatre Company suddenly 'flashmobbed' ...Watch what happened here!

Les Miserables 'At the End of the Day' [#Flashmob](#) by Balerno Theatre Company [#edinburgh](#) [#balerno](#) [#superb](#) <http://t.co/a1TDd4rSdQ>

– *BalernoVillageScreen (@BalernoCinema) [September 8, 2013](#)*



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