

Five things you need to know today

 **Councillor plays Solitaire at Petitions Committee – Penguin Cam – The Edinburgh Reporter's Weekly Sports Round up – Southsiders – Flodden**

The council's petitions committee is one of those which is filmed, which is unfortunate if you are Councillor Jeremy Balfour who was caught on camera playing Solitaire during the discussion about banning cycling on the pavements during last week's meeting.

The Edinburgh Evening News revealed this story with an excerpt from the video which we have for you here:-

The Edinburgh Reporter asked Councillor Balfour what he had to say. He said:- "I can only apology for doing this. It was wrong and will not happen again."

Jeremy Balfour is the former Conservative Group leader but stepped down from that position to take up a role as Convenor of the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee. That committee is responsible for the development of draft corporate debt and anti-fraud policies at the council along with improvements in the key financial systems used to run it. [Councillor Balfour](#) studied law and then theology before becoming a councillor in 2005.

The petition being discussed at the time of his apparent inattention was the possibility of a ban on pavement cycling by someone over the age of 12. The petitioner Alison Adamson Ross spoke at the meeting, but it is clear from the [webcast record](#) of the meeting that Councillor Balfour did not make any spoken contribution, despite the fact that his Ward of Murrayfield neighbours the area of Haymarket which is where

the petitioner has her kilt business.

Mrs Adamson Ross raised the matter of cycling on pavements in the light of discussions held during the tram works with local businesses in the Haymarket area, and the dangers which this poses to pedestrians. She related the story of one blind lady who had stopped for a rest at a bus stop and who was then given a scare by a passing cyclist.

The petitioner pointed out that the local authority is responsible for traffic and for pedestrians and cyclists within their area, but admitted that The Scottish Government would also have a role in this if a change in the law was needed.

Mrs Adamson Ross said:-“From my understanding it is the council who are responsible for the pavements. Without doubt health and safety is an issue that we deal with in our everyday lives but walking along a pavement in complete safety is a basic requirement and we should not need legislation to make this a reality.”

She then mentioned that in May 2011 she had discovered that the council investigated the possibility of allowing cyclists to use the pavements in a shared use initiative, and that 5% of the council's transport budget is devoted to cycling which is almost £1m.

“In one half hour period 10 cyclists were photographed on the pavement on Clifton Terrace at Haymarket. My customers come from all over the world and I am appalled at the reaction from the visitors to this city. It is an embarrassment. The signs are not working; polite signs do not work.”

The petitioner explained that in England the police have the authority of issuing fixed penalty notices to cyclists who ride on the pavements or who go through red lights and she suggested that environmental wardens could be enlisted to help enforce this.

A council official explained the difference between an adopted and unadopted roads. An adopted road is one which the council maintain. In terms of legislation there are definitions of footpath or footways, and it is illegal for people to cycle on these. Enforcement of this does not sit with the council as the legal power to enforce sits with Police Scotland.

Cycling is allowed on what is known as the Core Path Network as defined by the Land Reform Act, and includes areas such as The Meadows and Portobello Promenade.

Councillor Edie asked when Haymarket is likely to reopen, and he enquired about the existing powers to enforce and the number of people caught in this way. The answers were initially inconclusive, but it is obvious that the situation at Haymarket will depend on completion of the tramworks.

[In Leith](#) the police did try to enforce the guidance on no cycling on the pavements on Leith Walk in May 2012, although we do not have any statistics on how successful that was. The Police Scotland representative at the Petitions Committee said that there is an Edinburgh-wide initiative planned for the end of the month, just ahead of the autumn and the darker nights.

Councillor Jim Orr who leads on cycling matters for the council, responded to the petitioner that Shandwick Place should be free of works by October which ought to help matters, but he recognised the problem arising from cyclists using the pavements. He said:-“We have an education and marketing campaign as to where the cycle path network is and we work in partnership with the police who stop cyclists without lights for example. We then provide them with a light, and use a light touch approach rather than enforcement. If we had well-designed roads then the cyclists would use these, and so the more we can improve the roads intelligently for cyclists, the fewer will use pavements. We are doing a lot but we do not condone cycling on pavements at any time.”

The committee decided that the petition would be referred to the Transport and Environment Committee to request that they highlight the matters discussed in their action plans. They will also ask Neighbourhood safety groups and Neighbourhood Partnerships to take action at a local level.

It was the [Edinburgh Guardian](#) in the shape of journalist Michael MacLeod who caught out former councillor Eric Barry when he was playing Sudoku during a full council meeting when the disastrous Gathering was being discussed and the future of council leader, Jenny Dawe and her deputy, Steve Cardownie was being questioned in a motion of no confidence.

Since then councillors have been supplied with iPads at a one-off cost of £18,000 in a 'spend to save' initiative by the council. In May 2012 the council announced that they would be issuing all councillors with the devices as it would save around £200,000 and 1 million sheets of paper each year.

Council meetings are now run on a paperless basis, and all councillors now seem skilled at using them. Often they can be heard beeping during meetings, so it appears that some councillors have yet to discover how to turn the sound down, but it appears that generally the move has been an organisational success as well as a financial one.

The panda cam at Edinburgh Zoo has been turned off just now while the world awaits news of the birth of a panda cub. There is still no definite news that Tian Tian the female panda is pregnant, but we are all crossing our fingers.

In the meantime you have to make do with the [Penguin Cam](#) for entertainment!



The Edinburgh Reporter's Weekly Sports Round up is back! John Hislop who is in charge of this has returned after a spell of ill health. We are so glad to have him back and would urge you all to read the [weekly report](#) on Edinburgh's sport. If you play or watch a sport that you think should be included then do let us know. theedinburghreporter@gmail.com

We interviewed photographer Peter Dibdin about the wonderful Southsiders project which was launched at the weekend. This is an exhibition of 9 portraits around The Causey which is in our main photograph today. They have also published a very good newspaper which we would recommend you get your hands on (it's free!) and have a very well-designed website with audio from all the interviews too.

The Riding of the Marches in Edinburgh yesterday had a particular significance as today marks the 500th anniversary of Flodden. We weren't around to take any photos but there is a lovely selection here on [Flickr](#).

The Lord Provost Donald Wilson wrote on his blog last week how much he was looking forward to the event:-“This ancient tradition was performed from 1579 until 1718, when the Provost, Bailies and members of Council gathered at the Provost’s house before setting out to inspect the Marches of the Common Land. Whilst the format is no longer the same as it was, this is still an important and colourful event in Edinburgh’s calendar and I am proud to be playing a role in honouring those who sought to protect the integrity of Edinburgh’s Common Land, in this the 500th anniversary year since the Battle of Flodden.

This year, Ride Captain Stuart Nicoll will carry a replica of the ‘Blue Blanket’ Banner, which is the affectionate name for the ‘Standard of the Crafts with the Burgh’ of Edinburgh. Legend has it that the blanket (hand embroidered by Queen Margaret) was presented to the craftsmen of Edinburgh by King James III after they rescued him from imprisonment in Edinburgh Castle.”

Earlier today the battle was commemorated at St Giles on the High Street.

[#OnThisDay](#) in 1513 the Battle of Flodden was fought in [#Northumberland](#) and changed the course of British history <http://t.co/Uv55w0d4hg>

– Keith Merrin (@kmerrin) [September 9, 2013](#)

Scotland's clan chiefs outside St Giles, commemorating 500th anniversary of the Battle of Flodden. <http://t.co/VKX6yn9MQA>

– David Cowan (@stvdavidc) [September 9, 2013](#)

How James IV became Scotland's forgotten king after dying at Battle of Flodden, exactly 500 years ago <http://t.co/IHbNqtzwSh>

– BBC News (UK) (@BBCNews) [September 9, 2013](#)

