

Five things you need to know today



Trams by May 2014 – MSPs claim less expenses – Edinburgh MSP secures debate about Edinburgh University – Whisky pioneer up for two awards – Vote for Edinburgh Castle

It has been announced this morning that the trams will be running in Edinburgh by May 2014. The Council has set out plans for the handover of a section of the route between the Gogar depot and Edinburgh Park Station for testing in early October and for full route testing to take place during December. The Council's project team has forecast that the service will be up and running for passengers by May 2014, two months sooner than the original summer 2014 target. More news soon...

The figures for amounts claimed in expenses by MSPs for the fourth quarter in the financial year 2012/13 have been published today. The end of year total of £12,261,819 represents a 4.35% decrease on the previous year's figure.

A Scottish Parliament spokesman said:-“The decrease in expenses of more than half a million pounds is a reflection of one-off election costs in the previous year, but also that 2012/13 represented year two of a two year pay and expenses freeze for MSPs.”

You can read all about amounts claimed in expenses [here.](#)

Jim Eadie, MSP for Edinburgh Southern, has secured a members' debate in the Scottish Parliament after tabling a motion at Holyrood to highlight the University of Edinburgh's rise to 17th in the latest edition of the QS World University rankings.

Mr Eadie highlighted that the University successfully attracted record levels of competitive research grants in 2012-13, bringing international prestige and academic talent to Edinburgh from all over the world. Mr Eadie additionally commended the hard work and dedication of the University's staff and students.

In a statement, Jim Eadie said:-

"The University of Edinburgh's rise to 17th in the QS rankings is truly a fantastic achievement, and is testament to their pioneering work in research and development.

"Not only is the University attracting top students and staff globally, but their research and innovation arm, by spinning out companies, is helping to bolster Scotland's economy, having generated £140 million and supporting over 2,400 jobs.

"Together with ranking rises for the Universities of Glasgow and Saint Andrews, our universities have again demonstrated the success of Scotland's higher education sector."

The full motion is:-"That the Parliament congratulates the University of Edinburgh on rising to 17th place in the 2013-14 QS World University Rankings; applauds the university on, it understands, receiving a record £300 million in competitive research grants in 2012-13, a 20% rise on the previous year; welcomes what it sees as the benefits of it being ranked among the world's best universities; believes that it brings international prestige to Scotland and attracts the most talented students and staff from across the

world, particularly in what it sees as essential research and development areas such as life sciences, which is conducted at the Edinburgh BioQuarter, and renewable energy, which is carried out at King's Buildings; understands that the commercialisation activities of the university's research and innovation arm has generated over £140 million in gross value added for Scotland and supports over 2,400 jobs; believes that the University of Edinburgh is a credit to Scotland's education system, and commends what it sees as the quality, hard work and dedication of the staff and students."

Scientist Professor Martin Tangney has been nominated for two prestigious awards for his pioneering work converting whisky waste into biofuel.

The President of *Celtic Renewables* is shortlisted for the *Scottish Resources* Outstanding Contribution award. The accolade is a "people's award" decided by members of the public in an online vote. If you would like to vote then you simply have to [click here](#).

The Scottish Biofuel Programme, of which Professor Tangney is founding director, has also been nominated as Best Green Public Service or Public Sector Provision at the *Scottish Green Awards*.

Professor Tangney recently returned from Hong Kong where he was guest speaker at the *TED* series of events for inspirational speakers.

TED (Technology, Entertainment and Design) is a non-profit making organisation devoted to spreading new influential ideas. Previous speakers include Bill Gates, Al Gore, Billy Graham and Bono.

Last year Professor Tangney was named Innovator of the Year by the *Institute of Chemical Engineering* for the breakthrough which could herald the launch of a £60million-a-year industry.

Edinburgh-based [Celtic Renewables](#) signed a memorandum of understanding with *Tullibardine Distillery* in Perthshire, which became the first whisky distillery in the world to have its by-products converted into advanced biofuel, capable of directly powering vehicles which run on petrol and diesel.

The company is currently undertaking commercial trials on the process, in partnership with *Tullibardine*, at the *Centre for Process Innovation (CPI)* at Redcar, in Teesside, with funding from *Zero Waste Scotland*.

Here is Professor Tangney delivering his TED talk.



Last chance to vote for Edinburgh Castle to win Top UK Heritage Award!

The countdown is on for people to vote for Edinburgh Castle to win the Top UK Heritage Attraction award in the prestigious British Travel Awards.

The competition closes on 30th September 2013.

The castle, which won the accolade in 2011 and 2012, is the only Scottish heritage attraction on the shortlist and is facing competition from the National Maritime Museum in Cornwall and the Titanic Belfast.

Nick Finnigan, Executive Manager of Edinburgh Castle said:-
“It was a huge honour for Edinburgh Castle to be voted the top UK heritage attraction in 2011 and 2012. We are hoping that people will support us again as it would be fantastic to bring the trophy back to Scotland for the third year running.

“We hope as many people as possible will vote for us by visiting the Historic Scotland website on www.edinburghcastle.gov.uk by pressing the ‘Vote Now’ button.

“This has been a record-breaking summer for Edinburgh Castle. August was our busiest month ever recorded, with 229,940 visitors. There was also a 26 % increase in visitors from June to August in comparison with the same period last year.

“The castle is Scotland’s number one paid-for visitor attraction and we welcome more than 1.2 million visitors a year from around the world. Nothing can beat the spectacular setting of the castle for the Edinburgh Military Tattoo, the summer concerts and the fireworks to mark the end of the Edinburgh International Festival.

“Edinburgh Castle has a wealth of attractions for visitors to enjoy from the Scottish Crown Jewels, which are amongst the oldest regalia in Europe, the Stone of Destiny and St

Margaret's Chapel, the oldest building in Edinburgh, as well as our costumed performers who bring history to life, making it Scotland's must-see historic attraction."

