

Five things you need to know today



MSP to be sentenced today – At the Scottish Parliament this week – Thinking of volunteering? – Floating village in Leith – Ian Rankin’s play Dark Road

Dunfermline MSP Bill Walker who was convicted at Edinburgh Sheriff Court last month of 23 counts of domestic abuse against his former wives and his step-daughter is due to be sentenced later today in Edinburgh by Sheriff Katherine Mackie.

There is likely to be a big press presence outside the court for his arrival, and perhaps his departure in a security van. The court has the authority to sentence Mr Walker for a maximum of 12 months, which would have meant that he could have retained his seat in terms of the parliamentary rules.

Following pressure from the public and MSPs Bill Walker resigned and there will be a by-election on 24 October 2013.

Holyrood also voted to change the rules on MSP pay, so that any MSP who is convicted of a crime, or who is detained awaiting trial will have their parliamentary pay reduced by 90%.

Former Edinburgh MSP Shirley-Anne Sommerville has just been confirmed as the SNP candidate in the by-election this week.

Parliamentary Motions and Questions are a way of MSPs bringing some matters to the attention of Parliament and offering a chance to debate some of these in the Chamber.

The questions provide a means for MSPs to get the facts and figures from the Scottish Government or the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body.

Parliamentary questions can be asked by an MSP or Law Officer and can be asked orally or in writing. Oral questions are answered at Question Time and First Minister's Question Time. In exceptional circumstances emergency questions can be taken in the Chamber.

Here are the questions and motions lodged by Edinburgh and Lothians MSPs over the last week:-

S4M-07752# Colin Keir: 100 Years of Conservation, Research and Education at Edinburgh Zoo—That the Parliament commemorates the centenary of Edinburgh Zoo, which was opened by Thomas Gillespie, founder of The Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS) in July 1913 and which remains the only zoological park in the UK to have a Royal Charter; notes what it considers the varied programme of events planned to commemorate the centenary year, including exhibitions, lectures and interactive events for children and adults; considers that the legacy of Thomas Gillespie has been continued into the 21st century, with Edinburgh Zoo a world-recognised centre of conservation for threatened domestic and international species, undertaking projects such as the Scottish Beaver Trial, the Pantanal Conservation and Research Initiative, the Cairngorm Wildcat Project Nyungwe Ecology Project, African Wild Dog Conservation, Water Vole Conservation, the Budongo Conservation Field Station and the Henderson Island Restoration Project; commends the in-the-field research and what is considered the highly significant international conservation work that the RZSS undertakes, most notably, the China/UK Giant Panda Project, a world-first research project to reintroduce giant pandas into the wild; considers that Edinburgh Zoo has a particular focus on education and has, as such, garnered an international reputation for excellence in the study of animals and their environments both in captivity

and in the wild, with teams of experts working at the vanguard of scientific research to further investigate applied conservation genetics, population management, veterinary science, animal behaviour, ecology and nutrition, and understands that the design of the animal enclosures, which were originally based on the idea of the open zoo at Hamburg designed by Carl Hagenbeck, are constantly evolving in line with the continually expanding knowledge of physical and psychological animal welfare.

S4M-07749 Colin Keir: Edinburgh's Second Skate Park Project Receives Funding—That the Parliament congratulates the Drylaw Neighbourhood Centre, community organisations and other project group members, such as the Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust, on securing £100,000 funding for the proposed Drylaw skate park through the Legacy 2014 Active Places Fund, which supports the Scottish Government's legacy ambitions to encourage people to be active and take part in sport; considers that the proposed Drylaw skate park is a commendable community project that will bring true value to the communities of Drylaw, Telford, Pilton, Muirhouse, Silverknowes and others in the north/northwest of the city; believes that the positive impact of a project of this nature is self-evident when paralleled with a similar and now immensely popular project, namely Saughton Skate Park; considers that a skate park in Drylaw will encourage and widen community spirit by attracting young people from north/northwest Edinburgh without having to travel too far for skating and BMX biking facilities; commends local young people for working in conjunction with Urban Design Futures architects, skate park consultants and Skateboard Scotland, ensuring that the future park will boast a variety of features for people between the ages of 11 and 18 and of all levels, thus fostering a sense of community as well as encouraging peer support, and trusts that the fundraising process continues to be successful and that construction can proceed as soon as possible.

And then this one of which we are very proud:-

[“Motion S4M-07722: Gordon MacDonald, Edinburgh Pentlands, Scottish National Party, Date Lodged: 17/09/2013](#)

Edinburgh Reporter Achieves 100,000 Unique Users

That the Parliament congratulates the editor, journalists and staff of The Edinburgh Reporter on achieving 100,000 unique users during August, two and a half times the number using the site in January 2013; notes that The Edinburgh Reporter was launched in 2010 as a hyperlocal news website for Edinburgh aimed at people living in, working in or visiting Scotland’s capital city, and wishes everyone involved with the publication continued success in its future endeavours to report on Edinburgh and its people.

Supported by: Angus MacDonald, Nigel Don, Dennis Robertson, Kenneth Gibson, Stuart McMillan, Christian Allard, Jim Eadie, Adam Ingram, Mike MacKenzie, Roderick Campbell, Colin Beattie, George Adam, Rob Gibson, David Torrance, Richard Lyle, Bill Kidd, Kevin Stewart, Annabelle Ewing, Jean Urquhart, Malcolm Chisholm, Jamie Hepburn, Bob Doris, Maureen Watt”



[Motion S4M-07756: Malcolm Chisholm, Edinburgh Northern and Leith, Scottish Labour, Date Lodged: 19/09/2013](#)

Importance of Independent Advocacy

That the Parliament welcomes the publication of the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance’s report, Towards the Future: A brief history of advocacy in Scotland; notes that the report highlights the growth and development of independent advocacy in Scotland; believes that best practice in the delivery of independent advocacy is steadily improving; affirms the

importance of both NHS and local authorities following the guidance for commissioners; welcomes the increased availability of independent advocacy for the most vulnerable members of society, and considers that there is a need for wider availability of independent advocacy for all who need it in Edinburgh Northern and Leith and throughout Scotland so that they can lead fuller and more independent lives.

Motion S4M-07738: Kezia Dugdale, Lothian, Scottish Labour, Date Lodged: 18/09/2013

Congratulating Holy Rood High School and Castle Rock Edinvar That the Parliament commends Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association on what it considers its successful educational initiative to offer pupils at Holy Rood High School the opportunity to gain real-life business experience; notes that media and drama students at the school were invited to pitch ideas to create a new look and accessible annual review and become guest editors on the organisation's tenant newspaper, The Rock Report; understands that the pupils scripted, produced and acted in two short films highlighting the work of the association's home energy advice team and what it considers its successful approach to employability for young people; further understands that pupils presented the annual review and a young person's perspective of the services provided by the housing association as a series of short films at Castle Rock Edinvar's AGM on 17 September 2013; considers the project to be an excellent example of best practice in combining learning in context with challenging activities and enjoyment; congratulates the association on engaging with the school and working together to provide what it considers inspiring work experience to young people as they consider their futures beyond secondary education, and recognises what it sees as the considerable talent and enthusiasm of the young people involved.

Question S40-02421: Jim Eadie, Edinburgh Southern, Scottish National Party, Date Lodged: 18/09/2013

To ask the Scottish Government what recent representations it has received regarding the terms and conditions of gallery attendants and security staff employed by the National Galleries of Scotland.

This may be debated in the Chamber on 25 September 2013.

[Motion S4M-07739: Neil Findlay, Lothian, Scottish Labour, Date Lodged: 18/09/2013](#)

Congratulations to Dr David Reid

That the Parliament congratulates Dr David Reid on his election as chair of the BMA's Scottish Junior Doctors Committee; supports what it understands is his view that, in the light of any real-term cuts to funding, the quality and standards of medical training should be maintained in order to provide reassurance to patients that the quality and standards of medical care are protected, and wishes Dr Reid well in his new role.

If you're thinking of volunteering then this could be the very event for you. Loads of charities and organisations who might need your help will set out their stalls.



There is a vision which has apparently been hatched by an Edinburgh company to build a floating village in Leith. These will be very energy efficient and will use solar panels which will mean running costs are cheaper. The good news is that they will also be cheaper to buy than other homes of similar size, as there is no land to buy.

There are already houseboats on the Canal in Leith but apparently these will be very different. Tom King, Managing Director of SRT EcoBuild explained to The [Scotsman](#):- "Our vision is to create low-carbon, energy- efficient homes on either land or on water, and in the waterways of Leith we believe we have found one of the most attractive sites for our project."

SRT Ecobuild have no website that we can find and the city's planning department said they were not aware of any planning applications having been made for such developments.

If anyone knows more than we do then please let us know!
Meantime here is a YouTube video that we did find...

Crime author Ian Rankin has co-written a play called Dark Road with Mark Thomson who is also directing the production which begins next week at The Lyceum.

The play is described as:-“Alfred Chalmers is a serial killer who has spent 25 years behind bars for the horrific and gruesome murders of four young girls in Edinburgh. Isobel McArthur, Scotland’s first Chief Superintendent and one of the team responsible for putting him away. But Chalmers’ conviction has always haunted her.

Approaching retirement, and hungry for answers, Isobel decides to revisit the case – a decision which drags her, her fellow officers and even her own daughter back down into the maelstrom of fear, horror and uncertainty which threatened to engulf them a quarter of a century before.

This is top Scots crime writer Ian Rankin’s debut stage play, co-written and directed by the Lyceum’s Artistic Director, Mark Thomson. Tense, tough and gritty it brings the brilliance of Rankin’s story telling sharply into focus as a gripping psychological battle of wit and will is played out between Chalmers and McArthur.”

Watch the trailer here...

[Booking details here.](#)

Harmony Ridge
d e s i g n s

