

Five things you need to know today



Loony Dook – Piping under threat – Bus fare increase – New look at the Chocolate Tree – Your photos and videos

Local councillor Norman Work who represents Almond Ward which includes South Queensferry was up bright and breezy yesterday morning to go for a swim in the Forth. He was taking part in the Loony Dook where hundreds took to the freezing waters to raise money for charity.

Loony dook 2014. Well done to all. Here's ma pal [@CllrNormanWork](#) looking particularly cheery. All the best folks x pic.twitter.com/BJyxgKFdna

– Karen Newton (@karennewton69) [January 1, 2014](#)

Piping enthusiasts warn that the Scottish tradition is under threat in the capital city.

State schools in Edinburgh offer free tuition in all mainstream musical instruments – but not in the bagpipe, Scotland's national instrument, or in pipe band drumming. In the city these instruments are in danger of becoming the Cinderella of school music.

Organisers of the world's biggest schools piping competition, the Scottish Schools Pipe Band Championships, warn that despite over 60 schools signing up for the event next March, more than 2,600 schools in the country are still not taking

part.

David Johnston, Championships convenor, said pipers often have to fight to overcome opposition from school music heads to get pipes into the classroom.

He said: "Quite simply many classically trained school heads of music look down on the pipes and want nothing to do with them.

"This means that hundreds of young people desperate to learn pipes and drums in our schools are being denied that opportunity.

"In Edinburgh for instance, parents in several of the secondary schools have got together and formed after hours clubs bringing in teachers at their own expense and even in a couple of the schools forming pipe bands.

"It seems mad that in Scotland's capital city piping and drumming is not on the agenda in the city's state schools – yet all the private schools have flourishing bands that bring huge prestige and self esteem to those schools.

"If this worrying trend continues we won't have future pipers and drummers so hearing the roar of pipes and drums on New Year's Eve could become a thing of the past."

Robert Wallace, Principal at the College of Piping, Scotland centre of excellence for the teaching of the bagpipe, has also expressed concerns over the way the national instrument is being treated by Edinburgh city council.

He said: "I think it's a great shame that the pipes are being discriminated in Edinburgh's state schools. You can learn the piano for free but not our national instrument; it's just not right.

"Edinburgh council need a complete rethink on this. Why should children be prevented from learning what is, after all, their

musical heritage?

“It’s a fact that pupils who play a musical instrument do better in other subjects and those that play the pipes are no exception. Even if it means introducing a small charge for music tuition in Edinburgh then that would surely be better than excluding the national instrument.

“Piping is booming worldwide and it is disappointing to see Edinburgh so out of step with this popularity.

“At the College of Piping we know that children are the future of our art. It is time Edinburgh councillors woke up to that too.’

In response to a question posed by Councillor McInnes answered by Education Convener Paul Godzik at last October’s full council meeting, it was made clear by the council that the Instrumental Music Service (IMS) is highly popular in Edinburgh schools and almost all opportunities for free tuition are taken up.

The education convener said that there are seven schools with their own pipe bands, and that while free piping tuition to be added to the IMS would mean cuts elsewhere, the council aims to introduce a private funder and Creative Scotland to pay for piping tuition.

Some schools however have tried organising their own after school clubs to keep the cultural heritage alive.

In East Lothian a group of parents and piping enthusiasts started a teaching programme in Preston Lodge High School and its cluster primaries five years ago. Now they have a band that competes at the highest levels of schools piping and has gained many other opportunities.

Pipe Major at Preston Lodge, Lee Moore, said: “The band has opened up enormous opportunities to our young players. We have

been to the Nanning festival in China trips to Moscow and New York are being planned, they've appeared on X Factor, been to Flanders battlefields, played at Murrayfield, Holyrood Palace and Hampden with Paul McCartney.

"Hopefully more schools start to realise how exciting yet important it is to keep the tradition of playing alive so we can look forward to seeing in many more Hogmanays with the fantastic sound of pipers and drummers."

The Scottish Schools Pipe Band Championships is to be held at Broughton High School, Edinburgh, on Sunday 9 March 2014 and schools have until 24 January 2014 to submit an entry. For more details, please visit the [website](#).

One of our 2013 videos was of the Morningside Youth Pipe Band which you can watch here:-

Lothian Buses are increasing the fares on their Airlink service from Sunday 5 January 2014. Read more [here](#).

The Chocolate Tree in Bruntsfield has a new look for its customers. The owners have put their time to good use just yesterday!

Yesterday spent (with a clear head) installing a beautiful Yew bar & 2 seats back into [#bruntsfield](#) enjoy! (I <3 Yew) pic.twitter.com/ICr3EKQASk

– The Chocolate Tree (@T_ChocolateTree) [January 2, 2014](#)

We invite you to upload your photos and videos over here on our new site. Looking forward to seeing them!

A banner image for Edinburgh Reportage. It features a collage of three scenes: on the left, a close-up of a stone wall with a crest; in the center, a wide view of a cityscape with a river; on the right, a large, ornate building. The text "Tell us your stories with" is in white, and "EdinburghReportage" is in white on a purple background.

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