

Five things you need to know today



£19m spent on welfare fund – Robert Burns – Mammoths – Lord Provost’s Rapid Action Fund – Women on the Platform

Nearly 80,000 grants have been made to help the most vulnerable across Scotland. The grants worth nearly £19 million have been provided to those in need through the Scottish Welfare Fund, Welfare Minister Margaret Burgess revealed this week.

The most recent informal figures from local government on the £33 million fund showed local authorities have notably increased their spend since the Scottish Government revised its guidance in October and organised further promotional activity.

Yesterday, the Scottish Government made contact with more than 100 charities and other organisations which work with people who may need help from the Scottish Welfare Fund, to make sure that they are aware of the support on offer and asking them to help promote the fund.

Established in April the fund provides support to the disabled, elderly, lone parents and other vulnerable groups. It awards money to individuals dealing with emergency situations like a theft or other type of financial crisis, as well as helping people get essential household items to set up or stay in their own homes, rather than be in care. It can also help families facing exceptional pressures, to buy one-off items such as a cooker or washing machine.

By the end of December more than 79,000 grants had been made from the fund with grants totalling over £5.4 million spent in

Glasgow City, 1.2 million in the City of Edinburgh and £1.4 million in South Lanarkshire.

The Welfare Minister today announced the Fund still has capacity to give out more than £14 million in grants.

Mrs Burgess said: "The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that the poorest in society are protected during these tough economic times.

"I'm delighted to see an increase in the uptake of the Scottish Welfare Fund with nearly £19 million distributed across Scotland's 32 local authorities between April and December and thousands of people up and down the country receiving help and assistance.

"But it is vital that people know what support is available to them and how to apply. We have the capacity to give grants to many more people in need and will continue to work with local authorities and the third sector to promote the fund. Whether it's a family trying to get back on its feet after a financial crisis, or a household in urgent need of support we want to help them in this challenging economic climate.

"There is no doubt that people in Scotland are paying a heavy price for Westminster decisions but we will do all we can to help. However, only in an independent Scotland will we have the full powers we need to protect people from poverty and help them fulfil their potential in work and life."

The Culture Secretary Fiona Hyslop has recorded a Burns Night message: -

There is information about Burns on the Scottish Government website but if you want to appear to be word perfect then the

Robert Burns app is your best bet. You can download it [here](#).

Mammoths of the Ice Age is our recommendation at the Museum this weekend. It does incur a separate charge but we had a look round and think it's worth it! Lots of interaction for children and adults alike including a fascinating device which allows you to experience what it would be like to have a trunk... Watch our news video here:-

The Lord Provost has set up a fund called the Rapid Action Fund

The purpose of the fund, which sits with the framework of the [One City Trust](#), is to provide resources for swift action on social exclusion and locally identified needs.

This will be done through the award of small grants to charities or constituted groups within Edinburgh. The criteria are as follows:

- Grants should be allocated across the city, and should not be concentrated in one geographical area
- Grants should be made on a variety of themes, rather than concentrated on one topic
- Grants will only be made to a charity or constituted group with a bank account in their name
- Grants will normally be in the region of £1,000 to £2,000
- The total fund available over the year is £10,000 (with provision for further donations to the Fund).

If you're involved with, or know of, a group, project of charity that would benefit from this kind of support, please drop an email to lord.provost@edinburgh.gov.uk

Have you heard of Damned Rebel Bitches? Nor had we till we were sent their leaflet... There will be a presentation in the City Chambers on 27 January 2014 by St Thomas of Aquin's RC High School who are trying to highlight awareness about future plans for Edinburgh commemorative projects. They particularly support the wish to have more statues of women in the city.

You can read more in the leaflet here

<http://www.theedinburghreporter.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/DRB-Exhibition-Booklet.pdf>