

Five things you need to know today Edinburgh!



Property Sub-Committee – Edinburgh University opens up to industry – National Trust going cruising – Blossom Trees – Royal Blind need your help

The council's property sub-committee meets this morning under the Convener Councillor Alasdair Rankin to discuss progress being made following the difficulties with Statutory Repairs which led to the closure of the Property Conservation service. This was a service afforded to owners who could not agree on common repairs to their buildings. This meant that in the case of several owners in a stair who could not agree a statutory notice would be imposed to ensure that a property could not then be sold without the repairs being paid for. In many cases the council undertook the actual building work and billed the owners. Unfortunately the system worked well for many years but was misused leading to its closure.

There are now just under 3,000 statutory notices which remain in the review process. These notices affect around 30,000 properties, and are the cases where no works have been carried out to the properties. A way of dealing with these has to be found, but the situation is fraught with difficulties, and is a huge financial burden on the council. It is costing about £100,000 a year in staffing costs alone to investigate the history of what actually happened. These notices lead to difficulties in the sale of properties where an outstanding notice is found, and conveyancing solicitors will be among those consulted in developing a new computer-based system to evaluate and categorise all of these notices.

Up till now invoices of £2.3m have been issued for cases where work has been carried out by the council, but only £415,400 has been recovered from property owners thus far. In the cases examined by external firm Deloittes to date it is estimated that £2.5m will not ever be recovered out of the total due and payable of £10.3m. Some of the projects where sums will not be recoverable will be in excess of £50,000 in each case.

In total it is expected that the council may have to write off a total of £5.5m out of a total amount billed to property owners of £22m of work carried out. Deloittes are now working on the review of 61 projects where the total sum due to the council is £10m. They started off with some easier cases where they were able to identify that the work had been done quite easily, and where the money was perhaps known to be available, but the latter cases are those where details are much more complicated.

It is costing £950,000 to employ Deloittes to carry out this investigative work, which is the amount estimated at the outset.

A new Shared Repair Service has been set up by the council to do much the same as the old council service, but with more scrutiny and governance.

The University of Edinburgh is throwing open its doors to industry later this month, as part of a programme designed to develop stronger collaborative ties between business and the academic community.

'Access All Areas' is a one day event taking place on Wednesday 28th May at the University of Edinburgh. Open to all companies looking to explore opportunities to access research facilities and academic expertise, the event will showcase some of the best Science and Engineering facilities and

expertise in Europe.

To date, the University of Edinburgh has collaborated with some 2,500 companies, many of which have taken advantage of the broad range of expertise, equipment and capabilities available to further develop their product offerings.

The University is renowned for providing extensive support for companies across a wide range of market sectors. Typical projects have involved the analysis of new products/materials, waste water treatment, problem solving, improving product performance, and the testing of products or ingredients under extreme conditions.

The event is part of the University's continuing goal of leveraging its outstanding knowledge base and expertise to benefit industry, as Ian Sharp, Commercial Relations Manager at Edinburgh Research and Innovation, explains;

"There is a real focus on ensuring impact from our research, facilities and expertise through wider collaboration with Industry. The Event's talks and tours will be deliberately organised into smaller groups, to allow companies greater interaction with our technicians and academics. This will open up opportunities for attendees to gain a fuller understanding of how accessing our facilities and knowledge base could provide tangible benefits to their business."

"For example Edinburgh Genomics, one of the largest genomics facilities in the UK, will provide an overview of the support it offers the life science industry. Recent investment in new gene sequencing platforms and new staff has created a world class array of facilities, technology and expertise which many companies are beginning to benefit from."

Other facilities on show include the FloWave Ocean Energy Research Facility which provides outstanding scale modelling capabilities for the marine renewable energy and oil and gas industries. This is a world-unique facility for testing and

de-risking marine platforms, technologies and projects. The £9.5 million facility was funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) and the University of Edinburgh.

The large wave and tidal tank is able to mimic the normal and extreme conditions of coastlines around Europe for testing wave or tidal current devices at scales up to 1:20. It will be suitable for testing submersible devices, remotely operated vehicles, offshore wind installation and service vessels and other marine tools.

Registration for the Access All Areas event on Wednesday 28th May is now open until 16th May, and places can be reserved at www.accessallareas.eri.ed.ac.uk

The National Trust for Scotland will set sail from Leith at 8.00pm on Friday 9 May onboard *Pearl II*. This year one-week cruise will travel the sea paths of the Norse, calling first at Kirkwall, Orkney.

Passengers will have a chance to explore Viking heritage in Lerwick, Fair Isle, Torshavn and Caithness. The trip wouldn't be complete without the renowned, remote and so much loved UNESCO World Heritage site, St Kilda, owned by the National Trust for Scotland.

After a brief turnaround back in Leith on 16 May, *Pearl II* will then head for Helgoland on the Trust's *White Nights and Baltic Gold* cruise. During the two-week cruise, passengers will have a chance to enjoy white nights at an overnight stay in St Petersburg.

The itineraries are not the only reason why the Trust's cruises are so appealing.

Cruise Director Elaine Bruges said:

“Our lecture and entertainment programmes continue to lie at heart of our holidays and our cruise team features a host of familiar faces and new talent to keep our passengers entertained. As always we are travelling with a team of experts in wildlife, geology and history to help point out the finer details of the landscape we are sailing through.

“Also, the ship offers the ultimate in service and comfort, and with a maximum of 450 guests, we have managed to create a friendly, club-like atmosphere that our like-minded travellers enjoy so much.”

For more information about the National Trust for Scotland’s cruises call 0844 493 2457 or email cruises@nts.org.uk

We are still looking for your best blossom photos to our photo feature on EdinburghReportage. The blossom is starting to blow off the trees and carpet the pavements and streets, but it is still pretty nonetheless.

Add your best photos [here.](#)

The Royal Blind have put out a call for help. “We are seeking volunteers to assist at stalls to raise funds and awareness at the Leith and the Meadows Summer 2014 festivals.

If you are passionate and enthusiastic about our services and comfortable in engaging with the public Royal Blind wants to hear from you.”

Contact gary.seath@royalblind.org about volunteering.