

Five things you need to know today Edinburgh!



Portobello Park – Woodland Walk in Colinton Dell – Edinburgh Zoo Nights – Kelpies and Horses – University spin offs

Representatives of Portobello Park Action Group (PPAG) will give evidence to the Scottish Parliament for the second time today as they keep pressing the argument that The City of Edinburgh Council should build its long overdue Portobello High School on what they describe as ‘an alternative and suitable site’.

Importantly, the PPAG spokespeople are adamant that if the Bill is passed, they believe it could set a precedent for all Scottish councils to build on inalienable common good land even if some local residents oppose it.

The campaigner say that arguments about the siting of the much needed new Portobello High School are longstanding, resulting in a Court of Session ruling in favour of the Park’s defendants, and point out that the City of Edinburgh Council is promoting a Bill in the Scottish Parliament which could overrule that.

Moreover, PPAG says it is becoming increasingly concerned that evidence presented by the City of Edinburgh Council is not reliable. They claim that a PPAG Freedom of Information request has shown that a vital legal opinion about the risk of a legal challenge – should the plan to develop Portobello Park go ahead – was kept from Edinburgh’s councillors, which PPAG say means that they were unable to make a decision on the future of the school’s location on a sound factual basis.

Former Edinburgh councillor, Stephen Hawkins who represents

PPAG says:


"If the Portobello Park Bill goes through, not only will it enable the City of Edinburgh Council to override its citizens' right to common good land in Portobello, it could set a principle for other councils across Scotland to ride roughshod over their residents' common good land too.

PPAG fully supports the urgent need for a new Portobello High School on one of the several available sites but believes that the Council has misrepresented the facts, thereby pushing it through council processes and dishonestly boosting public opinion in favour of building the school on Portobello Park.

"There are reasonable alternative sites, but the Council seems disinterested in them. We have also been promised that if the new building is put up in Portobello Park, the existing school site will be turned into green space. It is hard to have faith that this will actually happen, given the Council's honesty on this matter to date.

"All MSPs and Scottish councillors must realise that this is not just an Edinburgh-based issue. If the Portobello Park Bill goes through, people across the whole of Scotland could find their precious common good land being developed and be powerless to stop it."

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 Edinburgh Zoo Nights offer you the opportunity to see and hear what the zoo is like after dark! The next one is on 23 May and you can book your tickets [here](#)....if you dare! You should note that the pandas are not on show during the Zoo Nights series. Next dates are 6, 20 & 27 June.

We went to see the Kelpies at the weekend. This is but a short jaunt from Edinburgh although we hope they improve the signage soon! If you go past the Kelpies on the motorway then you have gone too far as we found out. They are beautiful, and the Helix Park is a good resource for locals walking dogs or just having a walk along the canal. The car park closes at 8.30pm but there is overflow car parking at Falkirk Football Stadium for those photographers who want to catch the Kelpies when they are illuminated after dark.

We hope you like the photos [we have published here](#). If you have any photos of horses (yes we know that Kelpies are not horses!) then feel free to add them to our photo storyboard on EdinburghReportage. Does anyone keep horses within the city limits? Send us a photo then!

Fifty nine (59) potential businesses from three of the Capital's universities – the University of Edinburgh, Heriot Watt University and Napier University – are each aiming to land the £60,000 first prize of cash and pledged support package on offer in this year's Converge Challenge, the annual entrepreneurship start-up programme funded by eight Scottish Universities and the Scottish Funding Council.

In total, a record number of 111 entries, almost double from the last year, have been received from across Scotland's university community this year and the quest to reach the Converge Challenge final which takes place later in the year, promises to be the most intense yet.

Entries from the Capital include a raft of business propositions to develop a variety of ideas. These include the development of an alternative eye dropper device that consistently delivers an accurate dosage of medicine to the eye from Napier University, a start-up which provides dairy products to students in Ghana from Heriot Watt and a

pioneering online and retail space where consumers co-create their own eyewear submitted from The University of Edinburgh.

Submissions for this year's Converge Challenge have increased by 83% on last year's total, which delights Converge Challenge Director, Olga Kozlova.

"This is the fifth year for the Converge Challenge programme and I am delighted to see more and more projects coming forward as the competition acts as a beacon for entrepreneurship among our scientists and students. This year Converge Challenge is bigger than ever with dedicated training provided to over 50 budding entrepreneurs and record total funding pot of £68K in cash and £56K worth of business support.

As our economy continues on its road to recovery, it is crucial that we can keep the pipeline of innovative ideas coming forward from our university-based flowing and do our best to help the individuals develop them into successful profitable businesses."

For the participants there is now an anxious wait to see if they made it into the Elevator Pitch stage which will take place on the 3rd June at the Royal Society of Edinburgh, when they have to deliver a 60 second pitch to a panel of judges, a hundred-strong audience and a ticking clock. And this would be just a small part of the tasks they have to complete before the winners are announced on the 30th of September at the awards dinner held at Heriot Watt University.

Since its first launch in 2010 Converge Challenge has grown every year attracting more and more of university-based entrepreneurs and enabling them to develop their entrepreneurial skills and explore commercial potential of their inventions. The programme delivers nearly 30% incorporation rate and 4 out of 5 of these businesses has gone on to secure follow-on funding. The organisers are looking

forward to see what this record year is going to bring.