

Five things you need to know today Edinburgh



MSPs expenses

Volunteer Centre Edinburgh

Flamingo chicks at the zoo

Gala Concert for Epilepsy Scotland

Football Works

The list of expenses incurred by MSPs across Scotland has now been published. The cost of keeping MSPs at Holyrood has now increased to **£12,523,959** which represents a rise of 2.14% on the previous year's figures.

A Scottish Parliament spokesperson said: "The 2.14% rise in Members expenses last year broadly reflects the effect of inflation on office costs and on staff salaries."

From our brief look at the expenses incurred by Edinburgh and Lothians MSPs it appears that Gordon Macdonald is the only one who uses a bus as most others use a car or take a taxi. Other claims are for office rent, taxis, car expenses and other sums directly related to running a constituency office.

You can search any MSP alone or together with another by looking at the Scottish Parliament website [here](#).

Ever thought about doing some voluntary work? [Volunteer Centre Edinburgh](#) has produced a new film to celebrate their 30 years of work. You can watch it [here](#).





Five Chilean flamingo chicks have been spotted testing the water and standing on one foot at Edinburgh Zoo after the final chick slid down off its nest last week. Keepers welcomed the arrival of the chicks with open, muddy arms – especially after getting stuck in the mud earlier in the year helping to build nests and encourage the flock to breed – with a few even hatching from their eggs in front of delighted Zoo visitors.

The little grey balls of fluff are now aged between three and seven weeks old – the first hatched on 19 August 2014 and the final on 15 September 2014 – and add to Edinburgh Zoo's flock of 33 adults.

Nick Dowling, Senior Bird Keeper at Edinburgh Zoo, said:

“We weren't short of drama in the flamingo flock this year! When the first egg arrived the parenting couple got really excited and accidentally knocked it off the nest – their natural instinct was then to abandon the egg. We don't usually intervene with our flamingo flock but as this was our first egg since 2010, we carefully picked it up and placed it back on the nest. Luckily, one of our same sex male couples went straight onto the nest, fostered the egg and raised it as their own.

“The fifth egg was born to a young, first time couple, but was

then was 'stolen' by our other male-male couple! Chilean flamingos are very paternal so often the more dominant couples will squabble with the inexperienced parents and 'steal' the egg.

"Both these chicks are now walking around the enclosure in their father's footsteps and will continue to feed from them for the next few months as interestingly, both male and female flamingos produce a nutritious, milk-like substance called crop milk."

Chilean flamingo eggs are incubated on the nest for around 30 days before hatching. At three days old the chicks are visible and start to stand on both legs before leaving the nest at around two weeks old. It's around this time that their beaks, which are straight when they are born to help them break out the shell and make it easy to feed from their parents, start to bend as they begin to learn how to eat independently. The chicks will stay fluffily until around two months old when feathers will grow in and they will be able to fly. It's also around this time when the chicks will be sexed.

As their name suggests, they are native to South America where their wild population sits around 300,000, the species is labelled as Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List as it is increasingly under threat from habitat loss, egg-harvesting, hunting and disturbance from increases in tourism. Edinburgh Zoo has been the home to Chilean flamingos for over 40 years and the well-established flock now has 38 including the new chicks and the oldest residents in the Zoo – three 53 year old males.

The births are a great testament to Bird Team's husbandry skills and dedication to create a natural environment for the birds to breed in and top off a bumper breeding year which included the birth of nine rare Darwin's rhea chicks.

Photos courtesy of RZSS

A school choir from East Lothian are celebrating, having been invited to take part in a Christmas Gala concert in Edinburgh with professional orchestra this December.

Loretto's Senior School Choir have been chosen to take part in a gala concert organized by the charity Epilepsy Scotland. This prestigious event at Greyfriar's Kirk on the evening of the 6th December will be hosted by BBC radio presenter Jamie MacDougal. The 35-strong choir of boys and girls from the ages of 12 to 18 will be the only school involved and appear alongside the Orchestra and Chorus of the Canongait led by conductor Robert Dick.

'We are thrilled to have been asked', said Edward Coleman, Loretto's Director of Music. 'The choir have an established reputation nationally and will be fresh from performing Haydn's Creation next month at school.'

'The boys and girls of Loretto Senior Choir are no strangers to performing, providing the music to weekly chapel services in front of the whole school. However it is many years since we have been able to experience the thrill of singing with a professional orchestra, a project we are hugely excited about.'

The evening will also feature a specially commissioned carol for the event by Edward Coleman. Tickets are available from <http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/epilepsy-scotland-presents-christmas-gala-concert-tickets-12663782715>

