

Five things you need to know today Edinburgh



Petition to release Mohammad Asghar

Edinburgh Castle

The Big Draw

Build a business in a weekend

Polite request

There is a [petition](#) to seek help from the UK Prime Minister David Cameron in the case of 70 year-old Mohammed Asghar from Edinburgh who is being held in prison in Pakistan. Mr Asghar is said to be mentally ill but he has been convicted of blasphemy and sentenced to death.

The family plan to go to Downing Street on Friday to deliver the petition which currently has almost 70,000 signatures.

Scotland's number one paid for tourist attraction, Edinburgh Castle has had a record breaking summer for visitors.

The castle, which is Scotland's number one paid for visitor attraction, welcomed 767,566 visitors through its famous gates between June and September, a 3% increase on the previous record, which was in 2013.

The castle is one of several Historic Scotland sites which enjoyed record breaking visitor numbers over the summer period. Other key performers included sites in Orkney, with Skara Brae and Bishop's and Earl's Palaces both recording rises of 11% respectively. Meanwhile heritage attractions such

as Stirling Castle – the former home of Mary, Queen of Scots and Urquhart Castle also recorded record breaking numbers, welcoming 256,035 and 220,025 visitors each.

In total, 2,141,082 people visited a Historic Scotland site between June and September 2014, a 4% increase on the previous record.

Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs Fiona Hyslop said;

“These are fantastic figures which showcase the continued appeal of Scotland’s historic attractions to visitors from both home and abroad.

“2014 was a memorable summer for Scotland – with an influx of visitors to events such as the Commonwealth Games and the Ryder Cup as well as a whole host of Homecoming related events taking place up and down the country.

“Our heritage sites played a key role within this and continue to be a constant and hugely important asset at the heart of our tourism and cultural make-up.”

Stephen Duncan, Director of Commercial and Tourism for Historic Scotland said;

“It has been a very strong summer season for visitors to our sites.

“Whilst the majority of the growth in visitor numbers has been experienced at our three biggest sites – Edinburgh Castle, Stirling Castle and Urquhart Castle, it is fantastic to see that growth emulated across many parts of the estate.

“In terms of trends, we have continued to build upon last year’s strong travel trade business; meanwhile we have also experienced an increase in visitors from the rest of the UK, particularly England, as well as French and German visitors.

"We are also seeing a strong return from products which allow visitors the opportunity to visit multiple sites such as our explorer passes, which have grown 16% year on year, whilst our extensive events programme continues to bring history to life."

The Big Draw takes place at Central Library on 31 October 2014 and will take its inspiration from the Moromasa Scroll which was gifted to the library in the 1940s by a relative of Henry Dyer, a Scottish engineer who played a prominent role in the industrialisation of Japan.

The library blog Tales of One City explains how it will work: "We'll be using recycled material from old magazines and gluing them onto an extended roll of paper. Old-school cutting and pasting!

"Age, talent and experience is no barrier when it comes to The Big Draw. Everyone can join in and take part in creating something big.

"Pop in any time between 11.00 am and 4.30 pm to make your contribution, and look out for pictures of the finished masterpiece right here not long after."

This weekend, 65 student entrepreneurs from undergrads to PhD students who attend the University of Edinburgh, will be building a business from scratch, having signed up to participate in the 3DS (3 Day Startup) challenge, one the country's most innovative student entrepreneurship events.

The students, from all different disciplines, will be spending the weekend brainstorming ideas, conducting market validation, creating business models, building prototypes, then finally and most importantly, pitching to investors and successful

entrepreneurs.

The event is being organised by LAUNCH.ed, Edinburgh Research and Innovation's enterprise initiative at the University, which has supported more than 250 students to form a business. Over the last two years alone, LAUNCH.ed has helped form 60 student-led companies and many of these students have gone on to raise funding from VCs, Scottish Enterprise and awards schemes, where they have raised over £1.75 million in start-up capital.

The weekend starts this Friday when the student entrepreneurs arrive with their ideas to start a new technology business. They can bring pre-built technology or simply have an idea for a start-up company. These technologies and start-ups are usually at early stages, where technical feasibility and business models are unproven.

In the first few hours, participants discuss and evaluate their business ideas in smaller groups, with business mentors on hand to provide insight and experience. This year's 3DS will have eight mentors, including technology developers, start-up entrepreneurs, angel investors, designers and solicitors. The students then vote on which ideas will become the focus of the weekend and decide which projects they want to work on.

Saturday and Sunday are action packed, revealing the microcosm of start-up life, engaging potential customers on the streets and over the phones to better understand the problem their venture addresses with the highs of completing prototypes and the lows of discovering better-positioned competitors.

The ideas that have survived this far are revealed in a series of pitches and prototype demos on Sunday night to a panel of venture capitalists, angel investors and accomplished entrepreneurs.

The feedback is constructive and extensive; panellists ask

tough questions, identify strengths and weaknesses, and give candid advice for the road ahead.

For Fern Sinclair, a 3DS participant in 2013, which was the first to be run in the UK, said the event gave her a change of perspective:

“I am a scientist so my biggest challenge was thinking from a business perspective. However, I learnt that no matter how unique an idea is, it is useless in the business world if nobody wants to buy it.”

Since her 3DS experience Fern has gone on to great success. After coming second in the 2014 Edinburgh BioQuarter Innovation Competition, Fern was a category winner at the 2014 Scottish Institute for Enterprise (SIE) Fresh Ideas Competition and was one of the winners of SIE’s 2014 Young Innovators Challenge.

To attend the Sunday Night 3DS Demo night and see six teams battle it out for the best pitch, register your place at <http://www.launch.ed.ac.uk/3ds>



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