

Five things you need to know today on Halloween



Samhuinn Fire Festival tonight

Royal Mile

Council website for useful advice

149 new jobs at Fort Kinnaird

Otters having fun on Halloween

The Samhuinn Fire Festival, held in Edinburgh every Halloween night to mark the end of summer and beginning of winter, will move beyond its usual Royal Mile route and finish up at the Mound Precinct.

With more than 6,000 spectators last year, the Beltane Fire Society event has become so popular it has had to move its finale to the new city centre location on Princes Street, allowing many more spectators to enjoy the scenes.

The celebration will begin at 9pm this evening at the High Street, with a procession of drums, fire and characters from celtic lore making their way from the High Street at the Royal Mile, down Cockburn Street, and on to the stage at the Mound Precinct for the final battle between the forces of Summer and Winter.

Sara Thomas, event co-ordinator said:

“It’s great to be taking Samhuinn to the very heart of the city this year. The extra space at the stage on the Mound Precinct means we can make the event more spectacular than ever, and far more people will be able to see every moment.

It's an incredible event, fantastic to watch – even more so given all the performers are volunteers, we don't get any formal funding, and the audience can turn up on the night with no need to buy tickets – just make a donation to our lovely Bucketees.”

Becky Salter, playing the key role of the Cailleach in the event, said:

“Samhuinn is a wonderful event to be part of, full of fire, drums and excitement. There's nothing like it anywhere in the world. We want the people of Edinburgh to share it with us, to join us in marking the end of Summer and the rise of Winter – and this extended route will mean far more people can witness it all.”

Attendance at Samhuinn Fire Festival is by donation on the night, with no ticket required.

The event is organised by the Beltane Fire Society, a charity run by volunteers, dedicated to marking the fire festivals of the ancient celtic calendar and keeping traditional Scottish skills of street theatre, music and pageantry alive.

Samhuinn Fire Festival is a modern re-imagining of an ancient celtic festival marking the end of summer and rise of winter. The modern event has been held in Edinburgh since 1995. Its spring and summer counterpart, Beltane, takes place on Calton Hill on the last day of April each year, and has been running since 1988.

If you're looking for other things to do this Halloween then This is Edinburgh has some great ideas [here](#).



Statue of Robert Fergusson outside the Canongate Kirk

On Sunday there will be an afternoon of events celebrating the lower half of The Royal Mile which Edinburgh World Heritage call The Glorious Half Mile.

Last year the City of Edinburgh Council announced ambitious plans to spruce up the lower half of the street to make it look a lot like the area around the City Chambers where the pavements and the street are almost seamless. [This shared space idea](#) may be introduced in the part of the street leading down to The Palace of Holyroodhouse, although it appears that no firm decision has been taken as to when this will happen.

The free events on Sunday start at 1pm and are part of the Scottish International Storytelling Festival and are designed to make you look again at places like The Museum of Edinburgh, Canongate Kirk, the People's Story Museum, Acheson House and The Scottish Parliament.

It appears from the Storytelling Festival website that there is no need for tickets. Just turn up at one of the venues.

Our photo shows Mrs Diana Allen the [President of the Scottish Arts Club who hold a ceremony each year to commemorate poet Robert Fergusson. Read more here.](#)

We actually think that the City of Edinburgh Council website is pretty good and quite easy to find your way around. We think it contains a lot of useful information and here is another useful, if surprising, piece.

[Click here](#) to find your top ten energy saving tips. (Yes number one is, you guessed it, 'Turn the lights out'. As you will be lighting your house with pumpkins this evening this should be quite easy.

Fort Kinnaird has welcomed Scotland's first HomeSense store.

HomeSense, which offers shoppers a unique range of affordable homewares, is a sister company to TK Maxx. The brands now occupy a 43,000sq feet size unit, which formerly housed Comet.

With Scotland's first, Ed's Easy Diner also opening this week 149 local jobs have been created. Fort Kinnaird's on-site Recruitment and Skills Centre and charity, Springboard that helps long-term unemployed and young and disadvantaged people have supported filling these spaces.

Liam Smith, Centre Manager at Fort Kinnaird, said:

"We are delighted to have secured the very first HomeSense in Scotland. It is a very exciting brand and something we are confident our customers will love. It is also a real coup to welcome the ever-popular TK Maxx to the park.

"It is also great to note the number of job opportunities we have managed to work with our partners at the Recruitment and Skills Centre to develop for local people in search of employment."

Restaurants Frankie & Benny's, Five Guys and Chiquitos, fashion retailer SimplyBe and office provider Regus are all set to open their doors by the end of the year at the shopping park.

Liam added:

"This is a very exciting period for Fort Kinnaird and one which is pivotal in the development of our offering for our customers. It is fantastic to be able to offer so many exclusive brands, not only in Edinburgh but in Scotland, as well as attracting some popular leading names. The development of our restaurant offering in particular marks an exciting move for the shopping experience at Fort Kinnaird."



Razor sharp teeth and claws were used to carve into a gruesome Halloween treat as 15 Oriental short-clawed otters put on a spooktacular display of natural foraging at Edinburgh Zoo. As a spooky surprise to celebrate the holiday, keepers stuffed pumpkins with a creepy and crawling concoction of meat and insects for a special Halloween-themed enrichment as part of their daily feed.

The otters, who are listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List, were seen putting the extremely agile front paws which they are known for to good use as they reached into the mouths and eyes of the pumpkins to tear out the meat.

Jo Elliot, Animal Collection Manager at Edinburgh Zoo said:

“Halloween is one of our favourite opportunities to come up with fun, new enrichment ideas for our animals to enjoy. By packing their usual feed into pumpkins, the Halloween enrichment provides both mental and physical stimulation for our otters. As they are really inquisitive, all 15 of our otters came out of their dens to take a closer look – even the pups, who were born in June joined in with the fun. Although, they did just quickly grab some meat and ran back to the safety of their heated dens to enjoy their gory breakfast in peace!

“Our Oriental short-clawed otters may be the smallest species of otter in the world but that doesn’t mean they are your typical cute and cuddly mammal. Along with their sharp teeth, they have sharp claws on their dexterous paws and slightly webbed fingers which makes them great hunters; in the wild they prey on mice and other small mammals, and can also pry into clams and crabs.”

The Oriental short-clawed otter can be found in the wild from India through Southeast Asia and up to the Philippines, Taiwan and southern China. Their numbers are declining due to many threats including habitat loss and destruction due to farming, as well as water contamination from insecticides entering streams from farm runoff. Overfishing of otters’ prey and contamination of prey due to pollution are two more significant threats to this species.

Members of the public will be given the opportunity to celebrate Halloween by making enrichment items for many of the Zoo’s inhabitants, including the squirrel and capuchin monkeys

and the sun bears, at the Zoo's Enrichment Day on Saturday 1 November 2014.