

Five things you need to know today Edinburgh!



Traffic News

FIRST LEGO League

Dr Bike

The National carries on

New Transport Minister visits Control Centre

Today Spartans FC are playing Morton in the 4th round of the William Hill Scottish Cup. Admission is £12 for adults and under 12s are free.

Entrance is by the Pilton Avenue or Pilton Drive entrance and there are extensive arrangements for fans of both teams with or without hospitality on the Spartans website [here](#).

There will be a lot of traffic in the area so you would be best to avoid it.

Lego robots from across Scotland are limbering up to face an epic series of daunting and exhilarating challenges.

For weeks, teams of innovative school children, aged 9 – 16, have been busy dreaming up, building and programming mighty Lego robots. Soon their creations will be put through their paces by tackling a variety of exciting missions.

Beginning today at Our Dynamic Earth in **Edinburgh**, 28 teams of up to ten pupils will compete in regional heats, with the following events happening on 2 December at the Glasgow

Science Centre and 10 December at Aberdeen's Satrosphere Science Centre.

As well as completing a series of set tasks, the teams will be challenged to imagine useful inventions to redesign how we gather knowledge and skills in the 21st century.

They join over 250,000 young people from 80 countries worldwide in the annual FIRST LEGO League championship (FLL), which is being run across Scotland by the RSE Young Academy of Scotland (YAS) and Lambda Jam, a not-for-profit organisation working to improve children's problem solving skills and enjoyment. They are working in partnership with The Institution of Engineering and Technology, which already runs a yearly event in the UK, to bring the league permanently to Scotland.

YAS programme organiser, Dr Fiona McNeill, said the league has an important educational purpose, "Computing develops skills in analytical problem solving, logical thinking and understanding information systems, each of which are useful for many areas of life."

Dr Laura Meikle from Lambda Jam added, "When it comes to self-development, technology has huge potential to engage each child at their own level in rich and varied ways, and it can give the motivation and reward that comes from surmounting a fun challenge or creating something exciting."

In running this year's event, Dr Meikle and Dr McNeill have broadened participation by involving more than 20 schools which have never taken part. This has been enabled by creating a bank of Lego robot kits that can be lent to schools which do not have the resource available to purchase their own – approximately half of the teams taking part are in this situation.

In addition, a network of engineer mentors has been

established to support teams and maximise the potential of the competition to interest children in computer science and engineering.

Such skills are becoming ever more important in today's digital world, and especially so in Scotland, as the IT industry has become a vital part of the national economy and is expected to grow substantially over the coming years.

Unfortunately, recent statistics on computer science in schools and universities raise a number of serious concerns. According to figures obtained by Computing at School Scotland last month, the numbers of computing teachers in Scotland fell by nearly 14% over two years. The result is that one in eight Scottish secondary schools does not have a specialist computing teacher.

According to *iomart*, Scotland's acute IT skills shortage is down to a lack of graduates being available to enter the jobs market. Scotland's universities are producing only 1,800 qualified graduates a year – leaving a huge annual deficit of 7,800 vacancies still to be filled.

Dr Meikle said, "The FIRST LEGO League shows that there is ample appetite and capacity amongst young people for engaging with computer science. It also provides a way into the fun aspects of programming for the first time, and has seen success around the globe."

Dr McNeill added, "As Scotland is crying out for more computer scientists, we hope that programmes like this will help support and strengthen the development of important skills from an early age."

Today Dr Bike is out at Middle Meadow Walk between 10am and 1pm. He is there to offer free checks on your bike or some tips on safe cycling on our streets. More information [here](#).

Scotland's new pro-independence newspaper, The National, is to continue indefinitely, after what the publishers call 'a hugely-successful five-day trial'.

The National Editor Richard Walker said: "Now that we have passed this initial test period, we have exciting plans for developing The National into a mainstay of the Scottish media landscape."

The paper is targeted at the 1.6 million Scots who voted for Scottish independence in the recent Referendum.

The National is produced in Glasgow by the Herald & Times Group.

Managing Director Tim Blott said: "We are delighted with its early success and will continue to produce it as long as there is a market for it."

The newly appointed Transport Minister visited South Queensferry this week.

New Transport Minister Derek Mackay visits Traffic Control Centre to view Winter preparations <http://t.co/KjF7JxpR84pic.twitter.com/1kV5RZiJja>

– Transport Scotland (@transcotland) [November 27, 2014](#)

Traffic Scotland has its base at the control centre and Mr Mackay took the opportunity to tweet from @trafficscotland to remind the tens of thousands of people who follow the service to use #winterinfo this year when they are sharing information on road conditions. In the last year the number people who use Traffic Scotland's digital platforms has increased substantially. Almost sixty-five thousand now follow the

service on Twitter and the Traveline Scotland smartphone app, which also includes real time travel information, has been downloaded half a million times.

Minister for Transport, Derek Mackay said:

“One of the major challenges that we face in the Transport sector is the Winter weather and I wanted to see first-hand the preparations that have been made to help mitigate the impacts of storms on the trunk road network.

“The National Traffic Control Centre ensures that the Transport Scotland response to major incidents is well coordinated, with experts from across the transport network, the Met Office and Police Scotland working under one roof. This means that when there is disruption, as I am sure there will be across the Winter season, we can make the decisive interventions that will help get things back to normal.

“It is clear that everything is being done to make sure that the Winter Service is as effective as it can be. I have seen for myself how well the flow of information is managed at South Queensferry and this is vital when we are dealing with any weather related issues.

“Weather stations, located across the country, are now feeding the latest data on road temperatures and conditions back to the control centre. This is used by the road operating companies to plan any treatments.

“We are also making use of all available technologies to get this information to the traveling public through Traffic Scotland. This allows travellers to make informed decisions about their journeys and I would urge everyone to use the #winterinfo when they are tweeting about weather related disruption. People can also get access to the latest real time travel information through our Traveline Scotland app and Traffic Scotland internet radio.”

