

Five things you need to know this New Year's Day



1999 Scottish Cabinet Records released today

Free tickets for Edinburgh's Christmas

PlayTalkRead has a bumper year

Community Food Projects to get help in 2015

Loony Dook at South Queensferry

Files opened for the first time at the National Records of Scotland reveal details about the first meetings of the then newly-established Scottish Cabinet in 1999.

[The Edinburgh Reporter NEWS – Cabinet records from 1999 made public](#) from [Phyllis Stephen](#) on [Vimeo](#).

Cabinet Papers and minutes now available for public viewing show discussion around issues of the day ranging from Land Reform to Freedom of Information.

[Read more here.](#)

Today you might get a free ticket on one of the rides at Edinburgh's Christmas if you take along a box of shortbread or non-perishable food item which will be given to the Trussell Trust who run food banks in Edinburgh.

PlayTalkRead, the Scottish Government's early years campaign, has reached a record number of families in 2014, it was

revealed this week.

Visits to the [website](#) over the year were 122,965 – an increase of 50 per cent on 2013 and a 219 per cent increase on 2012. More than 43,000 people visited Benji and Bessie, the PlayTalkRead buses in 2014 – an 11 per cent increase on last year.

PlayTalkRead encourages parents and carers to play, talk and read with their young children every day to give them the essential skills, motivation and abilities that will make it easier for them to keep learning throughout their lives.

This year also saw the pilot of a sensory playbus for children with disabilities or emotional and behavioural difficulties as part of the campaign – the first of its kind in the country.

Commenting on the campaign, Acting Minister for Children Fiona McLeod said:

“As a former librarian, I’m delighted to see so many families have got involved in the PlayTalkRead campaign by either visiting the buses or the website. I hope they’ve been inspired by some of the ideas.

“Playing, talking and reading are fun ways to spend time with children from the very earliest age and helps build bonds. The PlayTalkRead buses and website are a great source of ideas and inspiration on how to turn daily routines into exciting new games.

“As a government we are determined to identify what works and ensure that the best ideas are promoted and supported more widely. That’s why we are taking the principles of PlayTalkRead and Bookbug and extending them into early primary school to develop a new Read, Write, Count campaign to boost literacy and numeracy in the critical first years of school.”

A new law could help thousands of people grow their own food in community growing spaces, Community Empowerment Minister Marco Biagi has said.

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill, currently in Parliament, will make it easier for communities to take over land for their own purposes, which could include growing healthy food or building a community garden.

This ties in with the Scottish Government's wider commitment of giving people more control over the decisions that shape their communities.

As part of this, an extra £10 million will be available to support regeneration in Scotland's most disadvantaged areas through the new Empowering Communities Fund, which builds on the existing People and Communities Fund (PCF).

Speaking on a visit to Shettleston Community Growing Project in Glasgow earlier this week, Mr Biagi said:

"The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill will make it easier for residents in both urban and rural areas to access land for community purposes.

"Community growing projects are worthwhile as they can bring together people from all backgrounds, age groups and abilities to work towards one common goal.

"I have seen first-hand the benefits of giving people the power to make decisions about their own area. It can increase their confidence, skills and knowledge and give them more experience when it comes to applying for jobs.

"The Growing Project is exactly the type of community based organisation that we want to see flourish throughout Scotland.

"Giving people the opportunity to grow their own food can help to address food poverty, encourage healthy eating and promote the use of local, seasonal produce."

[listen to 'Community Empowerment in 2015' on audioBoom](#)

It appears that the Festivals Champion Councillor Steve Cardownie may well have been behind the Lord Provost's decision to take part in the Loony Dook at South Queensferry today. Councillor Cardownie admitted this when we met him earlier in the week.

[The Edinburgh Reporter NEWS Loony Dook](#) from [Phyllis Stephen](#) on [Vimeo](#).

Edinburgh's Lord Provost the Rt Hon Donald Wilson is preparing to plunge into icy cold waters for charity when he takes on the challenge later today.

Part of the three day festival for [Edinburgh's Hogmanay](#), the event will involve over 1,000 'Dookers' being cheered on by 4,000 spectators start 2015 with a dip in the River Forth in the shadow of the world-famous Forth Bridges.

The Lord Provost has signed up to take part in order to raise money for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution [[RNLI](#)], which provides a 24-hour lifeboat search and rescue service across the UK.



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