

Five things you need to know today



Evidence session on Assisted Suicide Bill today

Friends of the Earth welcome transfer of onshore licensing controls

Recruiting for the Canal College

Job at Edinburgh Festival Fringe

Take the bus during rail engineering works!

Today at Holyrood the Assisted Suicide Bill reaches Stage 1 when evidence will be presented by the Faculty of Advocates; Law Society of Scotland, Police Scotland; Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service as well as medical professions including the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons (Glasgow), Royal College of Psychiatrists and Royal Pharmaceutical Society.

Originally presented to The Scottish Parliament by the late Margo Macdonald MSP the legislation aims to enable “people with terminal or life-shortening illnesses or progressive conditions which are terminal or life-shortening and who wish to end their own lives to obtain assistance in doing so. It does this by removing criminal and civil liability from those who provide such assistance provided that the procedure set out in the Bill is followed. This procedure for accessing a lawful assisted suicide is designed to ensure that the individual seeking it meets the Bill’s eligibility criteria, has made his or her own informed decision to end his or her life and has had the opportunity to reflect before moving forward at key stages.”

Patrick Harvie MSP welcomes the start of the next phase of the bill and said:

“I’m aware of the strong views on both sides of the debate. There will be complex issues to explore as MSPs examine the detail of the bill, and indeed this has already led to some constructive suggestions for improvements, as well as some clear examples of misunderstanding about the legal issues. People in Scotland are currently being given no clarity over what action might be prosecuted if someone finds their suffering intolerable and seeks help to end their own life.

“Underlying all the issues of detail however is the question of principle. Does a life belong to the person living it? Do we each have the right to make fundamental choices, including how to face a terminal or life-shortening condition which causes unendurable suffering? Or does the state have the moral right to take that control away from people?

“I believe this bill represents the continuation of a long term trend toward respect for the right of people to make choices about their own lives, in an informed and supported way, and to decide what kind of assistance they need. We know that most of the public backs this basic principle, and I have little doubt that in time the law in this area will be changed.

“It remains to be seen whether MSPs are ready to act by passing this particular bill. I certainly hope that they will give it the fair scrutiny that it deserves.”

MPs in Westminster will vote on plans for the speedy transfer of fracking powers to the Scottish Government later today. An amendment lodged by Tom Greatrex MP to the UK Infrastructure Bill would see control over onshore oil and gas licensing devolved to the Scottish Government, as recommended by the Smith Commission.

Friends of the Earth Scotland Head of Campaigns Mary Church said:

“The Scottish Government already has powers at its disposal to block unconventional gas and fracking north of the border under planning and environmental laws. The transfer of onshore oil and gas licensing powers simply leave the SNP with absolutely no excuse not to act to stop this dangerous and unnecessary industry.

“While the Scottish Government has been cautious in its approach to unconventional gas, the goal posts have shifted in recent months with INEOS’s plans to frack large parts of the central belt, and Cluff’s ambition to set coal seams under the Forth alright. Ministers must act now to stop the unconventional gas industry before it becomes entrenched.

“Fracking has been a huge part of the post-Referendum debate in Scotland. In this critical pre-election period a switched-on Scottish electorate will be scrutinising the parties claims on this politically toxic issue.

“Climate science and justice means we simply can’t afford to waste any more time going after dirty new fossil fuels. To live up to our world leading Climate Act, the Scottish Government must leave unconventional gas in the ground and focus instead on making the most of our abundant renewables potential.”

The Canal College is now recruiting for new students. This is the last Canal College and it will start on 10 February. If you are aged between 16 to 25 years old and not in education, employment or training and you want to learn new skills while working outdoors then this is for you!

Read more [here](#).

There is a year round job on offer with Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Details below. Apply [here](#).

<http://www.theedinburghreporter.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Job-Description-Venues-and-Companies-Officer.pdf>

National Express says that demand for coach travel from Edinburgh is surging following news that engineering works will disrupt trains on the West Coast Main Line next month.

Engineering works by Network Rail over two weekends in February are impacting Virgin, Transpennine and Northern Rail trains affecting journeys on the West Coast Main Line including Edinburgh.

Meanwhile National Express has seen demand for coach travel from Edinburgh to London increase by nearly 200 per cent on the weekends when the engineering works are occurring.

The engineering works, which are to take place in February on Saturday 14 and Sunday 15, as well as Saturday 21 and Sunday 22, mean rail passengers will face longer journey times, multiple changes and replacement buses.

National Express coach passengers however will continue to enjoy a direct service between Edinburgh and London.

For fares from Edinburgh or to find more information visit www.nationalexpress.com or call the National Express call centre 24/7 on 08717 81 81 81.



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