

Five things you need to know today



Scottish Government announce moratorium on fracking

Edinburgh Leisure has a new Chair

Wintry walk for the weekend

Wartime concert – next week!

Edinburgh Mountain Film Festival

Energy Minister Fergus Ewing announced plans in The Scottish Parliament yesterday afternoon to halt any planning permission being granted for the process known as fracking while further investigations are made into what has become a controversial way of extracting oil and gas from shale rock. Known as 'unconventional' the process has attracted environmental concerns in the US where it is prevalent and in the UK where it is trying to gain a foothold. The Minister

Scottish Green MSPs welcome the new position on fracking and other forms of unconventional gas extraction announced the Energy Minister, but warn that it still falls short of a full ban.

Scottish Green MSPs Patrick Harvie and Alison Johnstone have campaigned against unconventional gas extraction since the 2011 election. As well as proposing a ban, which all other parties voted against, they have urged ministers to provide funding for local authorities to develop robust policies to handle any fracking applications.

A Scottish Green petition calling on the UK Government to halt the imminent awarding of licenses to frack for gas across

Scotland has achieved over 5,700 signatures since its launch last week.

Alison Johnstone MSP said:

“A year ago the First Minister said shale gas was an undoubted opportunity; today the Energy Minister announced a pause but asks us not to rule it out. It is clear that the sustained pressure we’ve been putting on the Scottish Government has paid off, but we do not intend to rest here.

“The SNP and Labour voted against a ban last year when I led the Scottish Parliament’s first debate on fracking. While a delay to allow for further research is a welcome step, it remains a worry that neither SNP ministers nor Labour are talking about ruling it out.

“Leaving the door ajar to a new wave of fossil fuels is incompatible with our climate change ambitions and risks diverting attention and investment from the undoubted opportunity we have to pursue clean technology and energy efficiency.”

The statement from SNP Energy Minister Fergus Ewing also failed to meet a key element of Scottish Labour’s triple lock system by leaving Scottish communities with fewer protections than Labour forced on the Tories according to Scottish Labour.

Scottish Labour said they would introduce a triple-lock system to halt any onshore fracking taking place in Scotland until environmental and health safeguards are in place. This involves:

- A local referendum before final planning approval is given;
- Halting any fracking in Scotland until the lessons of fracking in the rest of the UK are learned;
- A comprehensive review of the baseline conditions

before any planning application is granted;

Scottish Labour has repeatedly called on the UK Government to suspend the current licensing round for Scotland until the power over licensing is devolved to the Scottish Parliament through the Smith Agreement.

Scottish Labour's Shadow Energy Minister Lewis Macdonald said:

"I am pleased that the Scottish Government has finally agreed to Scottish Labour's demand to use the planning process to halt fracking for the time being. But today's statement doesn't go nearly far enough.

"It's disappointing that after lots of noise from the SNP over the last few days they have let down communities across Scotland. The SNP Government had the chance today to confirm that no fracking will take place without the consent of the local communities affected, but failed to do this.

"We won't just have a public consultation. We will give Scots a local veto over fracking."

✘ Former Scotland rugby cap and Business Development specialist David Milne has been appointed to the position of Chair of Edinburgh Leisure, with immediate effect.

Milne, who hails from Edinburgh and has a keen interest in many sports, has been appointed following the departure of Edinburgh Leisure Chair Charles Winstanley, who came to the end of his tenure in December last year.

David has worked in a range of business sectors and has held board positions in five businesses. He currently works in a business development position with part of the RBS Group.

Of the appointment to Edinburgh Leisure's Board, David said: "I am excited about taking up my new post as Chair of the

Board at Edinburgh Leisure and bringing my business acumen and enthusiasm for sport to the table. I have used almost every facility in Edinburgh Leisure's portfolio over the years and am really looking forward to working with them to provide the best range of services to help the people of Edinburgh be active and healthy."

The Board of Edinburgh Leisure said: "We are delighted to announce the appointment of David Milne as Chair of the Board of Edinburgh Leisure. His wealth of experience in business development and passion for sport will be of huge advantage in helping to guide Edinburgh Leisure forward."

Councillor Richard Lewis, Culture and Sport Convener for the City of Edinburgh Council, added: "The year ahead looks set to hold a number of opportunities and challenges for Edinburgh Leisure, and the Board's expertise and support is vital in guiding the organisation forward. It requires strong leadership and I believe David's energy and his eye for business development will be valuable as he takes up the role of Chair. I welcome David to the position and look forward to working with him."

David is married with two grown-up children and is one of three brothers who have all played rugby for Scotland.

Looking for an outdoor escape this weekend?

Join local charity New Caledonian Woodlands for a Wintry walking workshop in some local woodlands and learn to identify trees all year round by their buds, shape, colour and position. Finish the day in the warmth of our green hub site for some revision, quizzes, and of course, cake. Beginners, improvers and experienced welcome!

This workshop will run on Saturday 31st January 2015 from 10am to 4pm approx and will cost £25 for the day. This price

includes all materials, expert tuition and a delicious lunch as well as hot drinks and snacks throughout the day.

For more information or to book a place please get in touch on info@newcaledonianwoodlands.org



A war time concert will be recreated next week by students at Edinburgh Napier University.

The idea for the Centenary Choral Concert was born after a couple handed in a programme for the original event to the War Poets Collection at the university's Craiglockhart campus.

The music of Elgar, Sullivan, Stanford and Coleridge-Taylor cheered up the residents of the city in the January following the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.

Now Edinburgh Napier Chamber Choir and soloists will follow in the footsteps of the members of Morningside Amateur Opera Company who staged the original charity concert in the winter of 1915.

The choir's Centenary Choral Concert will be held, in aid of Poppy Scotland, at St Andrew's and St George's West Church in George Street on Wednesday February 4 at 7.30pm. Admission is by programme, available at the door for £7 (£5 concessions).

"The First World War affected the home front intensely and everyone rallied round to support the troops, including those who returned wounded," said Alistair McCleery, the renowned expert on the literature of the First World War and Professor at Edinburgh Napier University. "This concert reflects our ongoing support for our veterans of every war since."

The evening, directed by Michael Harris, will also feature music played on a violin created last year from a sycamore

tree in the grounds of the one-time Craiglockhart War Hospital – now home to Edinburgh Napier's Business School – where poet Wilfred Owen was treated. It has already been played in a Royal Shakespeare Company production and at a recital at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

Admission £7 by programme available on the door. [More details here.](#)

[The Edinburgh Mountain Film Festival](#) takes place from 6-8 February 2-15 in Edinburgh. It looks set to be a fabulous affair with films and speakers galore. We will be running a competition for a couple of tickets so watch this space over the next few days.

Here is something to whet your appetite for adventure at the George Square Lecture Theatre:



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