

Five things you need to know today Edinburgh



Council meeting – more trams

Government Minister gives blood

Interested in China? Then head to Edinburgh Castle

Choirs at the Museum

Free office space in Fife



Today from 10am there will be a full council meeting at the City Chambers.

It looks likely that the council will agree to take the next step in the tram extension programme. This is not yet the final decision to actually build the line, but rather a decision to spend more money to investigate the business case.

Last month the council heard about the outline of a business case and the decision on this was then continued till today to allow more time for consideration.

The council has also begun the procurement process for external support of all kinds, project management, legal, technical and commercial as well as beginning some site investigation.

The council has also sought legal advice on their options to acquire the remaining 67 plots of land for the extension to the part of the line known as 1B. The council has power to acquire plots of land on a compulsory purchase basis in terms of the Tram Acts, but has not exercised any of these powers in

relation to the land between Roseburn Delta and Granton Square (1b) and Granton to Newhaven (1c). If the council does not take any action on this before 7 May then it might have to return to Holyrood to ask for these powers which could be a risky business given that the Scottish Government do not support the tram.

But the council does not believe it should buy up the land now as it might add to the compensation bill which it would face. It also admits that the council might look a bit silly buying up all the land when it may not need it for the tram extension if it does not get built.

The delay from last month has allowed the council time to investigate with Lothian Buses whether asking them for an extraordinary dividend of £20million would impact on their business including any modernisation plans.

The only real opposition appears to be the Conservative Group who yet again moved for no action on the proposals last month while the Edinburgh Tram Inquiry is ongoing. The group also said that the council is not in a good enough financial position to afford the tram extension at this time.

With regard to the amount being requested at present this is what the council reports: "The costs associated with the next phases of the project total £9.9m, comprising approximately £3.25m for Stage 1 and £6.65m for Stage 2.

"This can be contained within the overall capital funding requirement of £144.7m for the project. In the event that the Council decides not to proceed with the extension, the costs of stage 1 can be met from reserves set aside from previous Lothian Buses dividend payments."

You can watch the whole meeting online [here](#).



Public Health Minister Maureen Watt visited the Edinburgh blood donor centre yesterday to thank them for their life-saving efforts this Christmas.

The Scottish National Blood Transfusion service requires 550 blood donations every day to meet the needs of patients in Scotland. Blood donations can drop off by up to 20% during the busy Christmas period.

The Edinburgh donor centre is one of the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Centre's five regional centres across Scotland. The centre expects to welcome 1,800 blood donors in the coming four weeks of the festive period, as well as 250 platelet donors.

Ms Watt said: "The festive period is a very busy time of year for us all, but especially for the health service in Scotland. I would urge people across the country to take some time out from their Christmas shopping to help others. The importance of making a regular commitment to donating blood has been highlighted for me today by meeting some of the dedicated donors in Edinburgh and the surrounding areas who have shared some of their experience of how blood can really help people in need."

Dr Moira Carter, Associate Director of Donor Services at the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service, said: "Our donors are fantastic and we are delighted to welcome Ms Watt and NSS Chair Professor Elizabeth Ireland today to make their donation and lead by example.

"Just because it is Christmas, the need for blood doesn't stop. Patients still need blood during the festive season and one blood donation can help save the lives of three patients. This might be to treat cancer or trauma or in child birth, as well as for planned medical procedures.

"We have blood donor sessions taking place at our regional

centres across the country, as well as within the community over the festive period. If you have never given blood before, make the effort this Christmas and we will write to you and let you know your blood group so you can continue to support us when these particular blood group stocks are low.”

To register as a blood donor or to find out where your nearest donation session is visit www.scotblood.co.uk , call 0345 90 90 999.



Edinburgh Castle has told us about their latest exhibition: “Our exhibition exploring the links between Edinburgh and Nanjing is now on. An interactive journey shows how the cities developed over time, using a combination of archive material and innovative technology.”

The exhibition is included in the admission charge for the castle.

[Read more here.](#)



Christmas at the National Museum of Scotland includes some carol singing.

Christmas Choirs will sing on 20 Dec 2015 between 15:00-16:00

The event is free (drop-in)

Get into the festive spirit with Christmas concerts from local choirs at the National Museum of Scotland. This year we’ve invited three Edinburgh-based choirs – Accord, Edinburgh Renaissance Singers and Edinburgh Contemporary Choir – to bring some festive cheer to your museum visit.



Evans EasySpace, the office space, warehouse and storage

provider, is offering stranded commuters free usage of its Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy workspace while essential repairs are being made to the Forth Bridge.

The Forth Bridge is a vital road-link and with the bridge under repair, commuters might have to endure an additional 20+ mile journey each way as they are diverted via Kincardine. Tailbacks are already commonplace as workers begin adjusting to this round-trip.


Evans' Dunfermline centre at Pitreavie Business Park and its Kirkcaldy centre at the John Smith Business Park will both operate their largest available office as a drop-in workspace. Workers will be able to use the space for free on a first-come, first-served basis, taking advantage of the professional set-up including complimentary wifi.

Richard Morris, CEO at Evans Easyspace , comments: "It's been well publicised that transport is much more congested than normal as thousands re-route to get to work. Enabling workers to operate from a professional location closer to home can provide a solution for businesses, helping their staff avoid difficult and lengthy commutes and ensuring they stay positive and productive.

"Employers in and around the Edinburgh area may find that letting their staff work from a more convenient location while the bridge is repaired could lead them to reassess their attitude towards the fixed workplace in the future. Just some of the reported benefits of flexible working include happier and more motivated staff, which in turn leads to productivity gains for employers."

Tel 0800 039 3900 for more information.



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