

Five things you need to know today



- Writers Museum reopens
- Global Game Jam
- Deidre Brock MP
- Council Tax Reform
- Plan ahead for half term



The Writers Museum is situated on Lady Stair's Close halfway up The Mound. It is a quaint little building with a tiny doorway and narrow stairs inside. Now it has many new attractions after a two month closure for refurbishment, including dedicated spaces for all three literary greats, Scott, Stevenson and Burns, and a lovely gift shop.

Councillor Richard Lewis, Culture Convener, said: "The dedicated exhibition room to Walter Scott will give a fascinating insight into his life and works, while the re-opening of the Museum in time for Burns Night will provide visitors with the ideal way to mark the Bard's special day.

"The Writers' Museum celebrates some of Scotland's most revered writers and notable thinkers. Now it will be able to celebrate contemporary and budding writing talent too."

Gillian Findlay, Senior Curator for the Council's museums, added: "The display of Walter Scott's original writing desk has been made possible thanks to a generous lender who privately owns this wonderful artefact and the fabulous letters and notes it contains. We are very grateful to be able to display this material publicly for our reopening."

It will reopen to the public today.



Next weekend at Edinburgh Napier University's Merchiston Campus there will be lots of people who have had little sleep. There will be a 48-hour gaming marathon called Global Game Jam going on.

More than 50 people have already signed up for the event which is designed to attract those with game development skills.

The friendly competition will run from 5pm on Friday till 5pm on Sunday, at the same time as 632 others across the world, culminating in a final presentation on Sunday. Video games have to be completed during the weekend with computer code, art and other assets.

Organiser Sam Serrels said: "The Edinburgh Napier Global Game Jam is a crazy 48-hour weekend of games development.

"Programmers and artists of all backgrounds and capabilities are welcome to take part. It's an exciting opportunity to test your skills and learn from others in the industry.

"It is an intense event and some people do spend the entire 48 hour

Anyone who wants to take part should register on the jam website <http://globalgamejam.org/2016/jam-sites/edinburgh-napier-university> There is no entrance fee for the event, which is restricted to age 18+.



Deidre Brock is SNP MP for Edinburgh North and Leith.

Ms Brock posed this question to the Minister for Culture Media and Sport in [parliament](#) on 21 January: "How does the [Secretary of State](#) explain the worrying discrepancy between the amount

raised via licence fees and the amount spent in Scotland? There is a mismatch between the £335 million in income for the BBC from Scotland and the £190 million spent there. Does he not agree that a fairer share of that income would boost our broadcasting sector and provide funding for the restructuring of [BBC Scotland](#)?"

The Minister, John Whittingdale MP replied: "Of course, viewers in Scotland, just as elsewhere in the United Kingdom, benefit from the national programming of the BBC. She will be aware that the director general recently gave evidence to the Scottish Education and Culture Committee, in which he pointed out that in 2014 £108 million was spent on local content and that that rose to more than £200 million when central support and distribution costs were included."



This week we heard a lot of rhetoric about council tax reform. First of all Naomi Eisenstadt the independent adviser appointed by the Scottish Government to advise on how to tackle poverty, criticised the current system in her report. Secondly during the budget debates at the City Chambers a great deal of time was devoted to the fact that the local government funding system in Scotland is broken and requires reform.

In this Holyrood election year, we have yet to hear from the candidates or the parties about their plans for such reform, except that local MSP and Minister for Local Government and Community Empowerment, Marco Biagi made an announcement about it on 21 January. Jean Urquhart an Independent MSP representing the Highlands and Islands asked The Minister for an update on the proposals issued by the local tax reform commission last month. The Minister said:

"The First Minister established the commission on local tax reform, jointly with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, to examine options for the future of local

taxation. Before the end of the current parliamentary session, the Scottish Government will introduce plans for the reform of local tax, which will reflect the principles of the commission's report."

Ms Urquhart pressed the point by asking: "Can the minister at least declare today that this will be the last year of the unfair and regressive council tax?" and the Minister responded:

"The Scottish Government is very proud of the effect that the council tax freeze has had in mitigating the unfairness of the council tax. It is noticeable that a commission that included representatives from the Scottish National Party, Labour, the Lib Dems and the Greens—not a group that easily finds agreement—declared that the council tax is an unfair tax and that it hits those on low incomes the most. I would therefore express some caution to anybody who calls for a rapid end to the council tax freeze or the use of council tax when it has been observed by all those people to be an unfair way of raising revenue."

Keep the family active and entertained during the half term holidays with a range of adrenaline pumping and entertaining activities at Edinburgh Leisure's February Activator camps. Book for a day or a week and there's even the opportunity for an early drop off and late pick up at no extra cost.

From sports, games, arts and crafts and much more, Edinburgh Leisure's fantastic multi-activity holiday camps are perfect for getting the kids active and giving you some peace of mind this holiday.

Aimed at P1-P7 aged children, the camps are running at four of Edinburgh Leisure's venues including [Drumbrae Leisure Centre](#), [Gracemount Leisure Centre](#), [Craiglockhart Leisure and Tennis Centre](#) and [the Royal Commonwealth Pool](#). Each camp is different and is led by experienced leaders and coaches who will ensure the children are safe and happy throughout.

There's also an [Aquatics Activity Camp](#) for older children aged

9-14 years who are confident swimming 25m in deep water being held at the Royal Commonwealth Pool.

Prices start from £35 per day/£140 per week. To book, contact the venue direct, either by email, telephone or in person. And there's an early bird discount of 20% for those booking by the end of January 2016.

Edinburgh Leisure will also be running Activator Camps during the Easter and summer holidays. For further information www.edinburghleisure.co.uk

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