

Five things you need to know today



Syrian refugees learning English

St Andrew Square

Pay it Forward Yoga Festival

St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral Choir

Edinburgh Airport reports on new flightpath trials

The Scottish Government has confirmed that adult Syrian refugees who have been resettled in Scotland are being taught English.

In the last three months of 2015 around 400 Syrians were welcomed to Scotland, and The Minister for Europe and International Development, Humza Yousaf said that work is underway to ensure that all adults are receiving the tuition they need to be able to integrate successfully.

Half of Scotland's local authorities have accepted families into areas of Scotland.

Speaking ahead of the latest refugee taskforce meeting in Edinburgh, the Minister for Europe and International Development, said:

“English language learning is crucial to ensure successful integration in our communities. It's also vital when accessing education and employment opportunities. Work to support refugees and asylum seekers to achieve the English language skills they need forms a key part of the *New Scots* refugee integration strategy.

“Scotland is a caring and compassionate country. We welcome people seeking refuge from war and persecution, and we recognise the importance of supporting them to rebuild their lives and integrate into our diverse communities.”



The latest light installation in St Andrew Square has attracted comment both for and against the stick men light display called KEYFRAMES. This is no slur on the art alone. It is a discourse on the accessibility of the garden to the people who live in the city. You would be best advised to start with the most recent article on [The Broughton Spurtle](#) and work backwards....

The project to reopen the garden at the east end of George Street was begun in 2005 when Edinburgh City Centre Management started a dialogue with the owners to permit public access.

It took three years before the gates were opened during the day to the public following a remodelling which cost The City of Edinburgh Council and Scottish Enterprise £2.6 million.

It is now a matter of debate among many citizens whether the grassy garden is being abused by holding too many public events there. The garden is still recovering from the effects of Edinburgh's Christmas which fills the square with music, shows, an ice rink and Christmas shopping for about 5 weeks.

Last year it took until April for the grass to [‘look beautiful’ again](#) and this followed a report by Essential Edinburgh who run the Business Improvement District (BID) in the City centre to explain what would happen with the lawn areas and plants. The square is leased by Underbelly for the Christmas events and in terms of the lease there is provision for the garden to be reinstated.

The garden at the other end of a thankfully now *‘fully restored to how it used to be’* George Street is privately

owned and is only ever let to The Edinburgh International Book Festival annually, and a handful of other organisations on an occasional basis. We love going in there for the book festival as it is a treat. It would be good if we had the same feeling on walking through St Andrew Square but sadly before the KEYFRAMES figures 'invaded' the square it was looking rather sad and neglected.

We are in favour of the square being open to the public, and we quite like many of the events which are held there, but perhaps it is time for those in charge of its maintenance to work out how to reinstate it more quickly and more effectively?



At the end of next week there will be a yoga festival in the capital to support two charities Comas Scotland and Edinburgh Community Yoga Outreach.

The Pay it Forward Yoga Festival will take place between 19 -21 February and promises to be a full weekend of yoga to celebrate World Day of Social Justice.

There will be yoga classes, workshops, talks and events.

Everyone is welcome and there will be some prizes to win from healthy hampers to free yoga sessions. All funds raised will be shared by the two charities.

ECYO Outreach Co-ordinator and joint organiser, Lorraine Close said: "This is a fantastic opportunity to fuse our two communities and encourage the wider Edinburgh communities to come along and try yoga out in its many styles and forms. ECYO believe that yoga should be accessible to everyone and by taking part in this festival you can help us achieve that."

Tickets and more information can be found on the website, www.payitforwardyogafestival.com



Last weekend a choir from Edinburgh's St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral sang with their English counterparts as part of the annual Joint Service of Choral Evensong held alternately in Edinburgh and Durham.

The 22 strong choir joined forces with the Durham Cathedral Choir to sing music composed to mark HM The Queen's accession to the throne in 1953.

The Master of the Music at [St Mary's Cathedral](#), Duncan Ferguson, travelled with the choir and participated in conducting the service.

Duncan said: "The chorister programme is offered by many cathedrals in the UK but only by St Mary's Cathedral in Scotland. It develops high levels of musicianship and performance at an early age together with an excellent academic education. Many of our choristers have gone on to greater things including Alexander Armstrong who was a chorister when he was eleven years old.

"Our choristers take part in international tours, perform in some of the world's greatest concert venues and are frequently involved in television and radio broadcasts and acclaimed recordings. We value our link with Durham and other Cathedral Choirs. This week we start recording our latest CD with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, which features music by Stravinsky."



Edinburgh Airport announced yesterday afternoon that their trial of a new flight path (called TUTUR) over West Lothian 'achieved all of its objectives'. They have now shared the results with local communities who are affected by the change,

but they are especially pleased that the airport will now be able to offer a flight a minute which will ensure that they have sufficient capacity to expand further.

Between June and October last year they recorded just under 22,000 departures from Edinburgh Airport and 73% of these took off from Runway 24 heading west.

Almost 567 residents complained during the trial, presumably on numerous occasions as the total number of complaints was almost 8,000. The airport owners say that they have analysed the complaints and have found that these did not all relate to the new route. Some were about aircraft flying departing from the runway built in the 1970s.

A spokesman for Edinburgh Airport, said: "The report published today shows the viability of one minute separation times between departing aircraft from Edinburgh Airport during our peak periods – this presents a great opportunity for us to meet the demands of Scotland's growing international reputation and will enable us to create more jobs and help grow the economy.

"While the trial was a success – there is still work to do both technically and with our neighbouring communities.

"We will continue to work very closely with NATS to address the anomalies which will enable us to meet the demand that comes with running Scotland's busiest airport.

"The majority of complaints received during the trial period came from a relatively small number of people who live in pockets of communities in West Lothian. While the majority of these complaints did not relate to flights on the TUTUR flight path – we take our neighbours' concerns seriously.

"Our decision on TUTUR will be not be taken hastily. The trial has allowed us to collect data to inform that decision and should we decide to progress for a permanent change we shall


have two 3 month periods of full consultation, an environmental impact assessment and further rigorous tests.

“All options will be considered and views listened to before we come to our decision later in the year.

“The fact that the majority of complaints during the trial were not about flights on the TUTUR flight path and were in fact about existing flight paths gives us food for thought about the benefit of a potential full consultation – with people in Edinburgh, The Lothians and Fife – on modernising all of our airspace to enable growth with minimal disruption.

“We care greatly about our local standing as we are local ourselves; the vast majority of the people who benefit from the 8000 jobs that Edinburgh Airport supports live within 20 miles of the airport.

“To this end we have implemented a new noise complaints policy, created an arrivals and departures guide to further explain procedures in place at Edinburgh Airport, met with Community Councils in areas affected to understand local concerns and we will be proactively updating our five year Noise Action Plan and reviewing the way we monitor and mitigate noise from our operations.”

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