

Five things you need to know today



- **HM the Queen's 90th birthday**
- **SNP Manifesto**
- **Enter our competitions!**
- **MagicFest announces 7th magical year programme**
- **Art on show**

Today at 12 noon there will be a 21 gun salute at Edinburgh Castle to mark HM The Queen's 90th Birthday.

The First Minister has sent Her Majesty The Queen congratulations on behalf of the people of Scotland on the occasion of Her Majesty's 90th birthday.

The First Minister also confirmed that, in line with Scottish Government flag protocols, the Royal Banner – the Lion Rampant – will be flown from the main Scottish Government building today to mark the occasion.

The First Minister said: "Many congratulations on behalf of the people of Scotland to Her Majesty The Queen on the occasion of her 90th birthday.

"Just last year, we were fortunate enough to be able to celebrate with Her Majesty as she became the United Kingdom's longest serving monarch on the day she also opened the new Borders Railway.

"Over the course of that incredible day, it was clear the huge affection Her Majesty had for Scotland and the incredible bond she has forged with the people who live here over her many years of dedicated public service.

“Many thousands across the country will be toasting Her Majesty today as she marks this wonderful milestone and I am delighted that there will be more opportunities for people across Scotland to help her celebrate when she makes her annual visit during Royal Week.”



We were at the SNP manifesto launch yesterday which was full of US style election drama.

The First Minister opened proceedings by saying: “It is the most ambitious programme for government that the SNP has ever published and I am proud to put it before the Scottish people today.

“And make no mistake – unlike the manifestos of other parties, this is a programme for government.

“The decision voters will make in just 14 days is this – who should form the next government of Scotland and who should be the next First Minister.

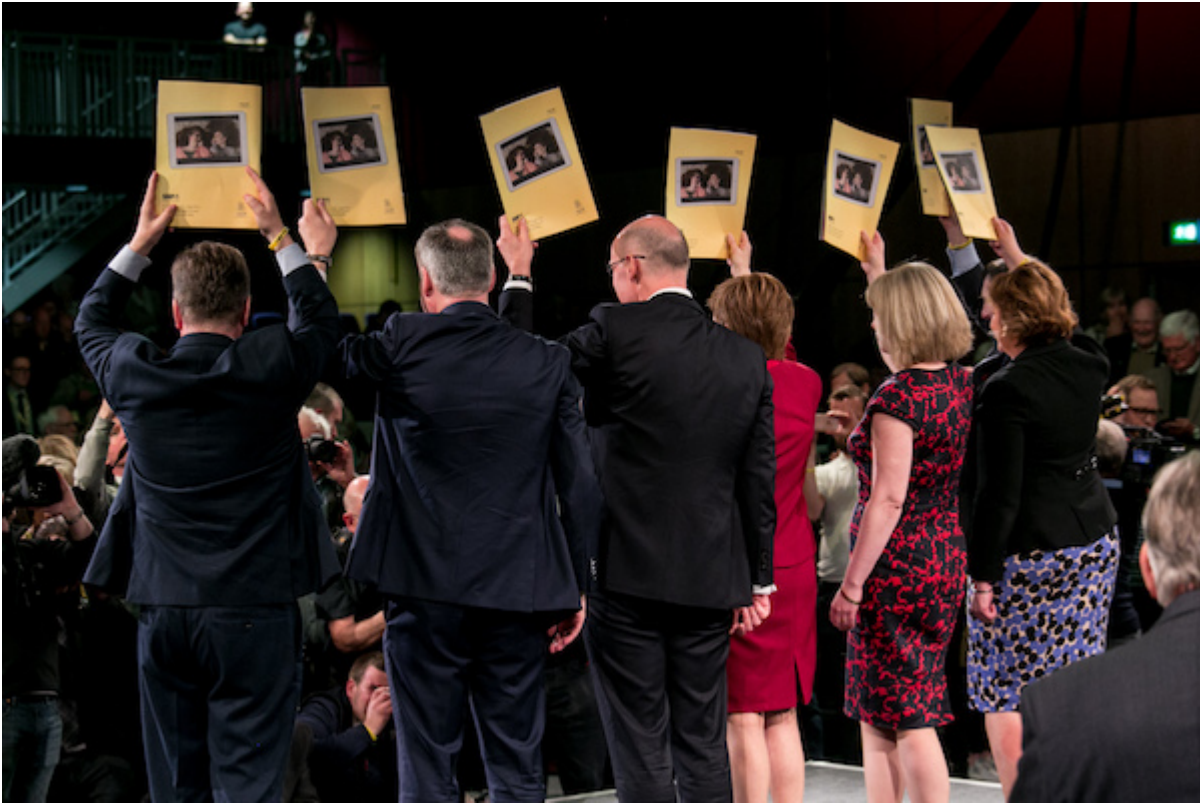
“That is what this election is about. It is not a battle for second place or a game of chance with the electoral system – it is about choosing a government and a First Minister that you can trust to lead the country forward for the next five years and into the next decade.

“For me, this bold, ambitious and reforming manifesto represents my job application.”

You can read the important points we picked out of the manifesto [here](#).

Thomas Haywood shared some of his photos from the launch with us:





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We have several competitions for you some of which are ending

this weekend. So enter now to win two tickets to the [Knitting and Stitching Show](#) at the Royal Highland Centre on 28 April to 1 May 2016, or designer specs from [Specsavers](#) here or one of five pairs of tickets to see [Quo Vado?](#) at the Vue Cinema this weekend, or four tickets for Edinburgh Rugby v Cardiff on 7 May courtesy of [Specsavers](#).



MagicFest Announces 7th Magical Year Programme and Launches a New MagicFair at Summerhall.

Lose yourself in magic 1st – 8th July.

Seekers of wonder and amazement are invited to 'lose themselves in magic' this summer as the Edinburgh International Magic Festival celebrates its 7th magical year as the UK's biggest festival of innovative and cutting-edge magic, 1st – 8th July.



Kevin McMahon, director of the Edinburgh International Magic Festival, pictured in the maze at Traquair House.

Photography from: Colin Hattersley Photography – colinhattersley@btinternet.com – www.colinhattersley.com – 07974 957 388

Edinburgh will sparkle with an enchanting programme of world-class magic events, unforgettable performances, and jaw-dropping stunts from some of the greatest illusionists, mindreaders and accomplished magicians from around the world.

Tickets:

Online – www.magicfest.co.uk

By Phone – 0131 226 0006

In person – Fringe Box Office, 180 High Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1QS

There are NO additional booking fees for MagicFest tickets 2016

MagicFair VIP tickets include goody bag worth £30, option to

pre-book up to 6 events in advance, signed festival programme, t-shirt, self-working magic trick, Krispy Kreme doughnut, and exclusive VIP event with R. Paul Wilson.

Dunblane artist Iona Leishman is exhibiting her historical mixed media work in two Scottish galleries.

Edinburgh's Sutton Gallery in the city's famous gallery mile, Dundas Street, exhibits her paintings on an ongoing basis. And from May 28 Dancing Light Gallery at West Linton near Edinburgh will also be showing her work.

Iona was Historic Scotland's first artist in residence in Stirling Castle from 2011 to 2012 – the first visual artist there for almost 400 years. She said: "The deeply atmospheric castle hugely influenced my painting as I connected energetically with a powerful sense of place.





“My painting is about feeling my way through the suggestive powers of colour, texture and sensation to find the images. It is truly an expression of the heart place and inner energies. I work through layers of paint to find my subjects and it can feel like finding treasure when I find what I’m looking for.”

She added: “I feel colour and energy very deeply and communicating this feeling through painted form is my purpose in life. I am a wife, mother and an artist who has found her language in paint. It is a heart expression around which my life is based.”

Iona’s career began as an en plein air landscape painter, a practice she still enjoys and which complements her historically imagined work.

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