

Five things you need to know today



- **Edinburgh council meeting today**
- **Edinburgh International Fireworks poster**
- **Edinburgh International Festival 2016 opening event**
- **At the Out of the Blue Drill Hall till tomorrow – Lost Spaces**
- **Scottish PEN event at Holyrood for Raif Badawi**

The council will meet this morning at 10am. On the agenda today there are nine questions from councillors, and the council is also set to approve progressing plans for the replacement of the Ross bandstand in Princes Street Gardens.

Mr Norman Springford, founder of Apex Hotels, has indicated that he will donate up to £5 million towards the project.

It is recommended that the council move this project forward, which will incorporate a visitor centre with the new bandstand.

You can watch proceedings from the City Chambers [here](#).



Ailsa Morrison, aged 12 from Edinburgh, Carlotta Ecks, aged 8 from Dunbar, and six pupils aged 5 to 8 from the Language and Communications Class at St Cuthbert's RC Primary School, also from Edinburgh, will see their poster designs across Edinburgh in the months leading up to the Virgin Money Fireworks Concert.

The entries from Ailsa and Carlotta, plus the joint design by Jack, Jamie, Basia, Fletcher, Milosz and Cameron from St Cuthbert's, were praised by judges for capturing the spirit

and character of the Fireworks Concert, which forms the spectacular finale to the Edinburgh International Festival, and the city's summer festival season.



Competition Winners Carlotta Ecks and Ailsa Morrison with Brian Giles of Virgin Money and Arlene Stuart of Forth 1 Photo ©Neil Hanna

The competition, supported by Virgin Money and Fireworks Concert broadcasters Forth One, is now in its fifth year, and attracted hundreds of entries from children across Edinburgh, the Lothians and Fife.

The winners were announced in a special unveiling at the Virgin Money Lounge, Edinburgh. Forth One DJs Boogie and Arlene from the Breakfast Show judged the entries on their bold, bright colours and shapes.

As well as seeing their designs throughout the city, the winners will enjoy an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of the Fireworks set-up site at Edinburgh Castle and win a family ticket to the spectacular concert in Princes Street Gardens on Monday 29 August at 9.30pm.



On Sunday 7 August thousands of people will gather to watch [Standard Life Opening Event: Deep Time](#) in the city centre.

Edinburgh's iconic Castle Rock becomes a window to the past as the city's dramatic 350 million year history is captured through a kaleidoscope of animation by [59 Productions](#) and the apocalyptic forces of [Mogwai](#)'s music.

The event will conclude the first weekend of the International Festival and is free to the public. Tickets are required, however, and will be available from July 11.



At the Out of the Blue Drill Hall they have an exhibition which finishes tomorrow so hurry to catch a glimpse of the work by third and fourth year Architectural Design University of Edinburgh students.

The work has a design reflection of the lost spaces around Easter Road and Leith Walk all in a bit of decay. This is part of the [Archi-Fringe Festival](#) which opens tomorrow with a launch party in Glasgow.

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It has now been four years since Saudi Arabian blogger Raif Badawi was imprisoned for questioning the state, and there are still six years left on his sentence. Scottish PEN, the Scottish branch of PEN International, are marking the anniversary of Raif's sentence by hosting an event this evening in the Scottish Parliament.

Raif is a human rights campaigner from Saudi Arabia who has often spoken out about free speech and secularism. He was charged in 2012 for insulting Islam on his blog, and in 2013 was sentenced to seven years in prison and 600 lashes. This was later increased to 10 years and 1000 lashes. He has so far received 50, and carried out multiple hunger strikes. His family have been forced to seek refuge in Canada, where his wife has been tirelessly campaigning for his release.

The event will contain a series of readings of Raif's work by valued Scottish writers. We will also hear extracts from other imprisoned writers sponsored by Scottish PEN, including Ashraf

Fayadh, the Palestinian poet also based in Saudi Arabia. Liz Niven, Regi Clare, Ron Butlin, Drew Campbell (Scottish PEN president), and and Michael Russell MSP (sponsor of the event) are due to read, with introductions from Jean Rafferty (head of Scottish PEN's Writers At Risk committee).

This event will highlight Raif's struggle whilst also amplifying his voice that Saudi Arabian officials have sought to suppress. PEN International, Amnesty International, and many other human rights organisations are campaigning to secure Badawi's release, and will continue to do so until he is free.

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