

Five things you need to know today

First Minister to step down

In news which really nobody expected, the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon announced yesterday that she will step down as leader of the SNP and as First Minister when her successor is chosen by the party.

She said that since her first moments in the job she has believed that “part of serving well would be to know – almost instinctively – when the time is right to make way for someone else”.

Bute House 15 February 2023

“And when that time comes, to have the courage to do so – even if, to many across the country, and in my party, it might feel too soon.

In my head and my heart I know that time is now

Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland 15 February 2023

Party leader and First Minister for eight years, hers was a coronation when her predecessor, Alex Salmond stepped down. She had stood aside in 2004 when he became leader on the understanding that she would eventually take over from him. But the next First Minister is not as certain. Who will it be?

No doubt in a few days we will know who is standing – and how the succession will be handled by the party who have to announce the timetable.

Kate Forbes, Angus Robertson, Humza Yousaf are all names familiar to those in the political bubble, but perhaps not so

well known to the public. But no matter who it is the procedure will be conducted according to the SNP's own rules and the process, yet to be announced..

Here she is leaving Bute House after the speech when she made her announcement – which almost ended with her in tears.



Nicola Sturgeon leaves Bute House after resigning.PHOTO Alan Simpson Photography



Nicola Sturgeon leaves Bute House after resigning. PHOTO Alan Simpson Photography

Here the BBC's Andrew Black looks back at Nicola Sturgeon's

career



Salmond and Sturgeon return to Holyrood in May 2011 when the party had won – for the first time – a majority in Holyrood with 69 seats PHOTO ©The Edinburgh Reporter



Following the historic election victory of May 2011, Nicola Sturgeon met Alex Salmond who arrived at Prestonfield by helicopter PHOTO © The Edinburgh Reporter

Leith Chooses

Leith has chosen the projects which will be fully funded for 2022-23 following the results of the voting in the participatory budgeting programme called Leith Chooses. This allows local people to cast their vote for the projects which they want to work in the community.

A total of £54,102 was allocated on twelve projects.

[Read more here](#)

Council extends energy funding to tenants

The City of Edinburgh Council is extending funding to its Energy Advice Service for council tenants, so that it can help even more households to cut down on costs and carbon emissions.

Funded by the council and delivered by leading environmental charity Changeworks, the service aims to give tenants expert energy advice to help them save money on their bills. An additional £158,000 funding will increase the capacity of the service so that it can help to support even more tenants through the current energy crisis and beyond.

Cllr Jane Meagher, Edinburgh's Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Convener, said: "At a time when energy costs are soaring, the help provided by the Energy Advice Service is vital.

"Over 4,400 of our tenants have saved £1.5m between them since the project began so I'm really pleased to extend this support even further. The move will provide tenants with the opportunity to speak to someone about their bills, reduce carbon emissions and hopefully save money.

"Since the start of the cost-of-living crisis we have been

encouraging tenants to get in touch with us if they are struggling financially. It's so important to make sure people are getting all the benefits and advice they are entitled to and we have a wealth of support and information online."

Lord Provost's Budget under attack

The council will set its budget next week on a day when there will be a lot of posturing by political parties about what the revenue budget should be spent on to achieve a "balanced budget" which it is legally obliged to do.

In its approximately £1 billion spending budget the council has to save around £80 million – which by any other name means cuts. Quite where the cuts will fall is debatable at present.

The SNP group say they have the answer. They will cut the funds available to the Lord Provost's office and spend the savings on taxi travel for disabled people.

They point out that the Lord Provost has two BMW cars and a large staff and a budget of around £525,000 which includes expenditure on cars and civic hospitality. The political group concede that the civic work is important (the Lord Provost is also the Lord Lieutenant and the King's representative in Edinburgh) but they point out that this is the worst cost of living crisis in a generation.

Cllr Amy McNeese-Mechan, said: "Residents expect their representatives on the Council to set out their priorities clearly in our budget, and we in the SNP are putting frontline services above hospitality for civic leaders and visiting dignitaries during this challenging time. We feel confident this proposal will still allow the Lord Provost to continue extending a warm welcome in his civic role.

"With our citizens feeling the pinch in their heating bills and their basic shopping costs, and with threats to crucial

services, it's only right that we expect the Lord Provost's office to cut its cloth accordingly."

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Last dance

Tollcross's Cavendish calls last orders
Page 7

A tragic loss

Brave firefighter lost in Jenners blaze
Page 9

Love is in the air

Valentine's Day tugs at the heart strings
Pages 12-13

Labour of love

Secrets behind charming city home
Page 20

The third force

Jambos set sights on top three finish
Page 22

the Edinburgh Reporter

February 2023

EDINBURGH'S FREE LOCAL NEWSPAPER... CAPITAL READ FROM START TO FINISH



By **STEPHEN RAFFERTY**

FIVE PORTOBELLO rowers are finding their land legs after an epic 39 day 3,000 mile journey across the Atlantic which raised more than

£30,000 for young persons' charities. The crew of Atlantic Body & Soul completed the world's toughest rowing test, the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge, overcoming 20ft waves and an overnight power

outage when they had to hand steer the boat in pitch darkness. Sean Watters, Matt Callia, Ed van der Ven, Alec Martin and Cal MacAninch - all members of Eastern Amateur Coastal Rowing

Club - sailed into English Harbour in Antigua to a hero's welcome and the sound of the bagpipes - a fitting end to a six week journey from La Gomera in the Canary Islands. Overcoming physical and mental

exhaustion, the quintet and hundreds of supporters have raised much needed funds for two charities which support young people, Body & Soul and The Junction. *Full story page eight*

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