

# Five things you need to know today

## Education, Education, Education

This appears to be the winter of discontent as yet another group of people affected by council decisions will gather at the City Chambers today ahead of the Education Committee meeting. They are protesting against proposed cuts to the education budget, but also calling the council report on restructuring services into question.

We will be at the City Chambers to interview the protesters gathering there this morning.

One group – Fathers and Allies for ASN reform has support from many notable charitable bodies involved in education. It has written a letter to the committee. This written statement refers to the Inclusion Review and explains to the Education Convener, Cllr Joan Griffiths, and the Education Director, Amanda Hatton their concerns. The group is worried about the additional stress the changes in the inclusion review and any financial cuts which would result. The group specifically asks for engagement with the parents and carers to provide more clarity. [Read more here.](#)

The body calls out the cut of £4 million proposed by council officers on inclusion spending. This, they say, will impact on all children in all schools as all teachers would be placed under even more pressure. But curiously the sum – hotly debated before now – has been omitted in the report. Instead the report claims there will be no cuts made at all. In a department where there is a projected £6 million overspend this is unusual.

The report says that the council will instead be “optimising resources and establishing skilled locally based teams to best meet needs”.

The Fathers and Allies group claims that the proposed changes in the Inclusion Review are unclear. But they also point out that the consequences of the review could be “devastating” for children and families in Edinburgh.

They refer to the [Edinburgh Integration Joint Board](#) (EIJB) where other groups of protesters managed a stay of execution on the proposed cuts by the EIJB on 60+ third sector bodies.

The group claims there is a growing need for places for children with Additional Support Needs (ASN) “year on year” citing that around 46% of all children in Edinburgh have some level of additional support need. This is said to be 43% in primary schools and 50% in secondary schools and is above the national average of around 34%.

The group of parents [has set up a petition here](#) asking that the council and the government stop the threat of inclusion cuts. So far more than 7,200 people have signed it, calling for any proposed drastic cuts to services for vulnerable children are reversed.

*“We desperately need your help. Please raise your voice and make Edinburgh Council look again at their priorities and stop trying to balance their books on the backs of the most vulnerable. A cut in services may save the council money in the short term but in the long term it will have a disastrous impact on ALL children’s wellbeing, attainment, and teacher retention, as well as adding to future pressure on other services.”*

# Book Week Scotland

This is Book Week Scotland and the First Minister went to visit children at Wardie Primary School yesterday to give pupils in primaries two and three gift bags from the Read Write Count with the First Minister programme before joining them so he could hear about their new books, storytelling cards and numeracy games.

The First Minister said: “As my Government works to eradicate child poverty, I wanted to make clear my personal commitment to encouraging reading, literacy and numeracy among children and young people.

“The most recent figures show literacy levels in primary schools have reached a record high – and that the attainment gap in literacy between primary pupils from the most and least deprived areas is at a record low.

“But we are determined to drive further improvements and that is why programmes like Read Write Count with the First Minister are so valuable. With thanks to our partners in the Scottish Book Trust, it helps children and young people by making learning a fun family activity.

“Book Week Scotland is the perfect time to acknowledge the hugely positive benefits of reading for pleasure on wellbeing and attainment. I am convinced that developing an early love of reading can help us throughout our lives.

“The theme this year is hope and I believe it is well chosen, because reading inspires children and young people to imagine how things might be not only different, but better. I want every child in Scotland, no matter their circumstances, to be filled with hope for a better future.”

CEO of Scottish Book Trust Marc Lambert said: “Gifting Read Write Count bags to every P2 and P3 pupil in schools across

Scotland is one of Scottish Book Trust's yearly highlights. For many children, the books they receive through the Bookbug and Read Write Count gifting programmes are the only books they have at home.

"We know access to books makes a big impact on children's lives, with research showing it can boost attainment across the curriculum, as well as improving wellbeing, empathy and future opportunities. We thank the First Minister for joining us at Wardie Primary as the pupils and families were gifted their bags."



First Minister at Wardie Primary School PHOTO The Scottish Government

## Roseburn to Union Canal

Thanks to Cllr Ross McKenzie for reminding us that this new active travel link is almost (but not quite) complete and ready to open to the public.

The council explained the key construction stages and latest updates:

### **Project update 15 November**

We are making good progress on installing perforated steel panels over Dalry Bridge and work is expected to be complete by 15 November.

### **Pedestrian crossing**

Work is underway on the pedestrian crossing over the West Approach Road near the Telfer path. Alternate lane closures will be in place.

11 – 22 November, westbound lane closure

21 – 28 November, eastbound lane closure

The eastbound bus stop at Fountainbridge will be closed from 18 November for around 5 days and signs will be in place for bus users.

It would be good to be able use this before Christmas. If anyone is up that way would you take photos and let us know how it is progressing?

The council's reasoning behind this project is that the route was unsuitable for less confident cyclists and presented major barriers to movement between the Roseburn Path and the Union Canal.

Cyclists and pedestrians had to use fairly busy and narrow streets like Russell Road, faced difficulties when turning right on busy Dalry Road or crossing the West Approach Road by way of the Telfer Subway.

"The new route will help more people to walk, wheel or cycle. It will provide greener, easier and safer walking, wheeling and cycling connections in the area (wheeling refers to people using a mobility scooter, wheelchair, or other wheeled mobility aid, as well as people walking with pushchairs and

prams.) link to other routes across the city help to replace short car journeys and therefore reduce traffic, air pollution, noise, and the visual impact of traffic in urban areas, together with reducing greenhouse gas emissions”.

A new path was hung on the side of the existing bridge over Dalry Road – a bit of an engineering feat.

The new path will bring Sauchiebank Gardens into use – it used to be inaccessible. There will be a new woodland community garden created as well as new woodland and other landscaping. A new bridge has been placed over the Mid Calder railway line leading to the section behind Duff Street and the other over Dalry Road leading to Dalry Community Park which will also be upgraded in the multi-million pound project.

And two new bridges were [craned into place along the route.](#)

## Venture Scotland

This charity based on Easter Road is offering a programme beginning on 27 January which might just be right for a young person you know. Venture Scotland said: “We have a programme starting in the New year!

“Challenge yourself in the new year by joining our personal development programme focusing on gaining skills and learning more about yourself and others in the great outdoors.

“If you are aged 16-30, living in Edinburgh and experiencing challenges in life, Venture Scotland is offering you a FREE opportunity to make some positive changes to your mental, emotional and physical wellbeing.”

If you are interested and would like to know more, please see the charity’s website for more details and for a referral form: <https://venturescotland.org.uk/>



You can also contact Louisa who is the Outreach and Support Worker via email at [louisa.selwood@venturescotland.org.uk](mailto:louisa.selwood@venturescotland.org.uk)



## Winter Coat Appeal

If you have a coat which you no longer wear please consider washing or cleaning it and taking it to the Pilton Community Health Project so that it can find a new home



**Pilton  
Community  
Health  
Project**  
equality wellbeing belonging



## **Winter Coat Appeal!**

As the colder months approach, we are looking for donations for preloved coats.

**Where: Pilton Community Health Project  
73 Boswall Parkway EH5 2PW**



**When: During our Opening Hours  
Monday - Thursday 9am - 4pm  
Friday 9am - 2pm**



**WE BELIEVE IN EQUALITY, WELLBEING AND BELONGING  
FOR ALL IN OUR COMMUNITIES**

Pilton Community Health Project 73 Boswall Parkway Edinburgh EH5 2PW We are a charitable company limited by guarantee registered in Edinburgh 339435 Charity number SC018460