

Five things you need to know today

Spring Statement



Rachel Reeves MP, The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Leeds West and Pudsey, Labour)



The UK Chancellor Rachel Reeves announced her Spring Statement in the House of Commons. There was no mention of tax increases and instead The Chancellor announced that the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) has cut the rate of growth in the UK by half to one per cent.

The amount to be saved by squeezing the welfare budget was cut from a projected £5 billion announced last week was reduced by around £1 billion. The Big Issue say that the Department of Work and Pensions have estimated that 250,000 people will be living in poverty after the benefit cuts come into effect. And the OBR say that 800,000 people will lose money from Personal Independence Payments owing to the change in eligibility rules.

Scottish Secretary Ian Murray said: *"We are living in an increasingly insecure world, and the extra £2.2 billion for defence – on top of the £2.9 billion announced at Autumn Budget – will make Britain stronger and safer. This is a huge boost for Scotland's world-leading defence sector, which delivers Scottish economic growth and more highly-skilled*

jobs. The increase will also mean better homes for our military personnel and families, including the thousands based in Scotland.

“Today’s announcements underpin the great strides being made by the UK Government in achieving stability in our public finances. There have been three interest rate cuts since the general election. Next week the increase in the minimum wage will mean a pay rise for hundreds of thousands of workers in Scotland and our employment rights legislation will deliver the biggest upgrade in workers’ rights in a generation.

“The Spring Statement also delivered an extra £28 million for the Scottish Government. That is on top of their £4.9 billion extra from the budget, creating a record £47.7 billion settlement for 25/26, announced at the Autumn Budget. This is the biggest budget settlement in the history of devolution and an end to austerity. The Scottish Government must now use that wisely – to improve Scotland’s failing public services.”

The Edinburgh Reporter spoke to Mr Murray at Dover House, his London office.

<https://twitter.com/edinreporter/status/1905043417119301980?s=61>

Praise for regional media

HM the King said that he recognises the role media plays in promoting community cohesion as he welcomed 400 members of regional media to Buckingham Palace.

[Read more here](#)



Community councils

After last month when residents were invited to lodge their nominations to become a community councillor, eight community councils may yet fall by the wayside.

These are Craigmillar, Davidson's Mains and Silverknowes, Firrhill, Hutchison / Chesser, Muirhouse / Salvesen, Old Town, Portobello, and West Pilton/West Granton.

The council has sent out a second call for nominations for these community councils. Nominations will open on 27 March and will close at 4pm on 17 April.

More information on the [council website here.](#)

The Dr Elsie Inglis Scottish Women's Hospitals Trust

The Trust will confer a medal and prize “ encouraging more equal access to Medicine for Scots school leavers and undergraduates”.

The medal ceremony will take place place on 12 April at Augustine United Church George IV Bridge.

A spokesperson said: “To preserve the ethos and memory of the Edinburgh woman surgeon Elsie Inglis (1864-1917) and her Scottish Women's Hospitals of The Great War, The Trust's annual commissioned bronze Dr Elsie Inglis-Scottish Women's Hospitals' 3 inch diameter Medal encouraging Scots school-leavers and undergraduates to read Medicine, is now in its ninth year. Following The Trust's 12th March 2023 Medal Ceremony & Dinner at The Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Glasgow, where Elsie Inglis qualified in Medicine in 1892, our 2024's Ceremony returned to The Augustine United Church George IVth Bridge Edinburgh on the 12th April 2024”.



North Bridge will re-open to two way traffic

Northbound traffic can use North Bridge again from Friday 28 March at 10am.

The northbound closure in mid-February has allowed for essential resurfacing works to be carried out on both the southbound approach to the bridge (both lanes outside Waverley Gate toward Princes Street) and the southbound departure of the bridge (both lanes from the entrance to the Hilton Edinburgh Carlton on North Bridge to the junction at High Street).

Work had been due to finish next week but the project team has completed the resurfacing ahead of schedule. The wider work on the Category A Listed Structure in the heart of the city centre, has included structural steelwork repairs, installing cathodic protection and structural health monitoring systems to the reinforced concrete deck and fitting permanent platforms to improve access provisions for future inspection and minor maintenance. These are just a few of the [host of other improvements](#).

Transport and Environment Convener, Cllr Stephen Jenkinson said: "I'm pleased that we've been able to complete these works slightly ahead of schedule. I appreciate that this temporary closure will have been frustrating for our residents and businesses, and I want to thank them once again for their patience. "We're now in the final phase of the project and, while I acknowledge that it's taken longer than we first anticipated, we're preserving this majestic and hugely complex structure for future generations, and we owe it to them to make sure the job is completed to a high standard."

Today's lovely photo is from Craig Duncan Photography and shows Edinburgh Castle lit to highlight awareness of epilepsy for Purple Day.