

# Five things you need to know today

## Student flats at Gillespie Crescent – new application

The developer S Harrison has [lodged a new application](#) to demolish the building used by Sight Scotland and replace it with purpose built student accommodation (PBSA) containing 131 student rooms. The existing building is not listed, and so has limited protection against being torn down to make way for some new development.

This is a long-running saga. A previous application was refused by the council and then [dismissed by the government reporter](#). Locals do not see much change in the application recently lodged.

The Gillespie Crescent & Community Residents' Association have been involved from the start, although they have now formally constituted themselves.

A spokesperson said: *"The local community were clearly unhappy at the developers' public consultation. We, the Gillespie Crescent & Community Residents' Association (GCCRA), have yet to hear a positive opinion about this latest iteration of what is, in effect, the same building proposal that was refused permission last year by the DPEA Government Reporter, albeit with some minor tweaks. I therefore believe local people unanimously consider this proposed demolition and development as entirely inappropriate. I have seen similar sentiment from MPs, the wider public on social media, and from various civic bodies.*

*"The clear point of contention is the demolition of a*

perfectly good building and the proposed replacement building's excessive size and massing. In my opinion, building this would be like aliens landing a huge geometric spaceship in an otherwise calm and quiet cul-de-sac, like something from a B-movie.

"The GCCRA also believe that the current plans have not meaningfully or materially addressed the original grounds for the Reporter's refusal last year, namely that the 'plain' and 'block form' would not sit comfortably opposite the Crescent, itself described by the Reporter as a 'key feature ... of the Conservation Area' (Decision Notice, 2024, p4). Additionally, other grounds for last year's refusal do not seem to have been meaningfully addressed by the developers, examples being: scale, design, insufficient space for mature trees, poor amenity and placemaking, and that the building is contrary to Conservation Area policy, and to the Conservation Area's preservation and enhancement.

"Looking at the associated documentation, some phrases are very worrying. The developers attempt to justify ruining this beautiful street by claiming to use the proposed building to create a 'tighter geometric street plan,' (Design Statement, p.40), suggesting that it would match the surrounding townscape and Conservation Area. Quite the opposite! It is the very character of single-sided crescents such as this one that make Edinburgh and its Conservation Areas so special in the first place. The developers' own words show that they aren't merely trying to replace a perfectly good building; they are, in fact, aiming to change the whole character and fabric of Gillespie Crescent and its community, whilst saying they're doing the opposite. They claim that their 'tight geometric street plan' fits the Conservation Area, presumably based on two-sided straight streets elsewhere within it. However, this is one of only a few beautiful single-sided and curved crescents in the city, and should not be subjected to 'tight geometry' for financial gain.

*“We are counting on people who love living here, and on all those who wish to preserve the beauty of Edinburgh, to submit their comments on the City Council Planning Portal before the deadline, Friday 30th May.”*



## **St Mark's Portobello**

A six month long, £900,000 project to restore and renew one of Portobello's most historic buildings is almost complete.

On Sunday 18 May, the congregation of St Mark's Portobello was joined by the Rt Rev Dr John Armes, Bishop of Edinburgh, for a celebration to mark the start of a phased return to the use of the building after the renovation and renewal.

During those past months, the congregation attended worship at St John the Evangelist, Roman Catholic Church and Portobello and Joppa Parish Church.

The major work on the 200-year-old church included extensive conservation of the roof, ceiling and historic stained glass windows. Inside, there has been a transformation with the reordering of the front of the church, adding a second toilet and enhanced kitchen facilities, new flooring, lighting and decoration.

The project has been 10 years in the vision and planning, and has been made possible through the design team at Taft Architects and Lee Boyd Architects, HM Raitt, and the many funding partners including Historic Environment Scotland, The Heritage Lottery Fund, National Churches Trust, the Scottish Episcopal Church, Benefact Trust, Wolfson Trust, Baird Trust, Beatrice Laing Trust, Congregational and General Fund, Garfield Weston, FCC Communities Trust as well as smaller community groups and individuals.

The phased return allows the congregation to worship in the building on Sundays while the contractors finish the work in the next few weeks and will culminate in a community celebration on Saturday 21 June.

Rev Dr Sophia Marriage, Rector of St Marks said: "This was a joyous celebration to rededicate the building as a sacred space at the heart of Portobello and to rededicate the congregation as we serve the people of Portobello. We are so grateful for all those who have encouraged, prayed and worked so hard to make this possible and we look forward to welcoming many into the space in the coming months and years."



## Edinburgh Canal Festival

A month today it will be time for the Edinburgh Canal Festival from noon until 6pm.

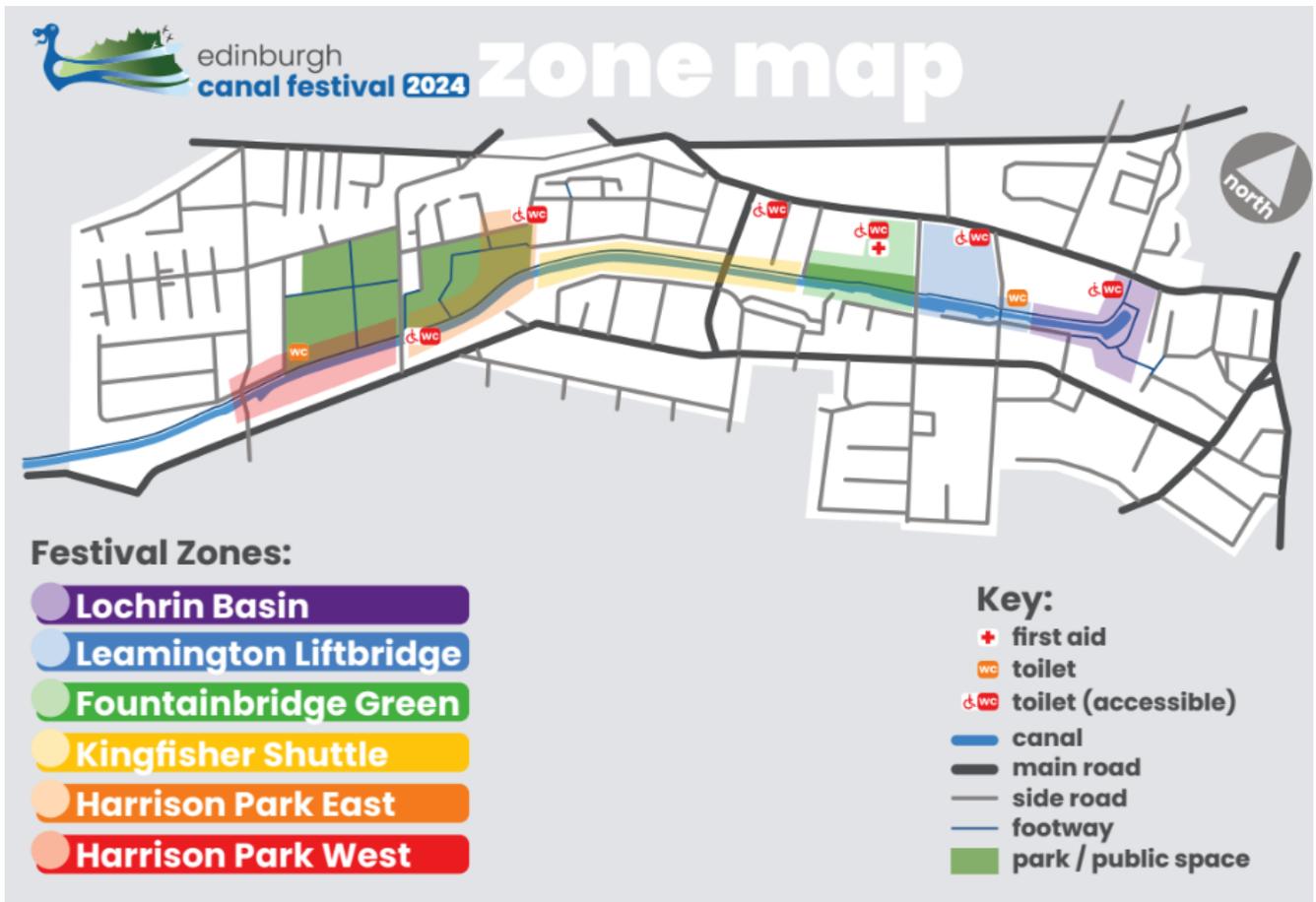
Everyone is invited along to enjoy the part of the canal between Harrison Park and Lochrin Basin. There will be three main activity zones as there is some construction in the area.

There are so many stalls already booked, there will be canoe polo, fun for all the family and live music from bands and performers. Read the programme on the Edinburgh Canal [Festival website here](#).

And if you are interested in taking part in the festival as a community stall holder, activity provider, musicians, performer or event volunteer, then [read the information here](#). As the festival only holds a not-for-profit licence it cannot

accommodate private businesses.

The Raft Race is held later in the year on 23 August – so you still have time to get a bigger boat.



## North Edinburgh Tool Library

North Edinburgh Tool Library – with garden tools – has been set up in Drylaw Neighbourhood Centre. The idea is to help people to work in their gardens without having to buy expensive gardening tools. They have a selection of hand tools from trowels to secateurs. Anyone who wants to borrow tools has to become a member of Drylaw Neighbourhood Centre and fill out a short form. The tools may be borrowed for up to two weeks and there is no cost.

The full list of what is available is on the [Drylaw Neighbourhood Centre website](#).

# **ECA Fashion Show**

This event is not until 6 June but tickets are selling fast we understand – and the photos are gorgeous...



Model Laura poses outside the University of Edinburgh's Futures Institute wearing a duchess satin

pink gown inspired by life-size dolls, created by final year Fashion student Milly Mi for the Edinburgh College of Art Fashion Show.

Pic Neil Hanna

[Head on over to our article here to find out more.](#)