

# Indoor hockey – Inverleith in transition



Patrick Christie training outdoors.

Picture by Nigel Duncan Media

Coach Stuart Neave says his squad is in transition as Inverleith open their campaign in Division One of Scotland's indoor men's hockey league on Saturday in Perth.

He will rely on a several under-23 players as a number of senior squad members from last season are on the sidelines.

Derek Salmond is not playing at present, Adam Mackenzie has a long-term injury, goalkeeper Allan Dick is living in London, Ally Blair has returned to Harris, Stephen Dick has a short-term injury and Fabian Wolski is back in Germany

However, Patrick Christie, Aedan McCrossan, Stuart Hatton, Sean Stewart and Kyle Taylor are all under-23 and played Euro club tournament last year.

They return to the fold along with 18-year-old Ewen Mackie and goalkeeper Greg McKenzie.

Neave said: "The indoor season will be a rebuilding year for us as several of our older players have stepped down from playing hockey at the top level.

"Having said that we still have some young and exciting players in our side and therefore expect to be competitive."

Inverleith were runners-up last season to Grove Menzieshill and Neave's men meet them in the final game of the opening day (push-off 17.30).

Neave added: "We have a challenging opening day playing

Kelburne, Grange and Grove Menzieshill, however, the nature of the competition places a greater emphasis on the second of the season.”

Grange square-up to Grove in the opening game of the event at 9.15am and they also face Hillhead while Edinburgh University face Dundee Wanderers and Kelburne.

Fixtures: 09.15: Grange v Grove Menzieshill; 10.10: Kelburne v Inverleith; 11.05: Hillhead v Clydesdale; 12.00: Dundee Wanderers v Edinburgh University; 12.55: Kelburne v Grove Menzieshill; 13.50: Grange v Inverleith; 14.45: Clydesdale v Dundee Wanderers; 15.40: Edinburgh University v Kelburne; 16.35: Hillhead v Grange; 17.30: Inverleith v Grove Menzieshill (all at Bells Sports Centre, Perth).

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## Speedway – Monarchs go gold to lure more fans



Ricky Wells, one of Edinburgh's top riders. Picture by Jack Cupido

Edinburgh Monarchs bosses have confirmed a revamp to their season ticket system with the launch of a Gold Membership scheme offering benefits to regular supporters.

John Campbell, Monarchs' co-promoter, said: “We have one of the highest uptakes in British speedway for season tickets.

“Compared with football, where clubs can have upwards of 75 per cent of their regular crowd as season ticket holders, our

percentage is significantly lower than that.

“The price itself should be a big enough incentive, but we’ve decided to add on even more benefits in launching the Gold Membership Scheme.”

As well as admission to our 14 scheduled fixtures, 11 Championship, three League Cup and the Knockout Cup tie against Glasgow Tigers, Gold Members will also receive reduced admission prices to all the other meetings staged at Armadale next season.

Also included will be an invitation to the Season Launch Show and reduced prices for VIP Hospitality with special offers on the club’s souvenirs and discounts on end-of-season dinner dance tickets.

Campbell added: “It is a fantastic range of incentives that we are including in the Gold Membership package and meeting-for-meeting at a lower price than 2017.

“I’m sure there will be great interest from supporters, particularly as prices are even lower up to Christmas.”

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## **Friends of Starbank have a packed agenda**

The Friends of Starbank Park may not have won the Fields in Trust award that they were shortlisted for last week, but they are going to celebrate anyway – after all they have these lovely new loos to show off.



On my visit to the park this week, this was the very first stop, and they have every right to be proud of them. With nice loos, the job of keeping the gardens beautiful is made easier during the winter months. And the group also use the Bothy in the grounds for a variety of gatherings, so loos are essential. Also moving them has freed up a space for a tool shed which they are rightly proud of too.



Janet McArthur told us about what is happening during the coming months : “We’ve got lots of plans for next year. we always enter for the Keep Scotland Beautiful Awards and the Horticultural Weekly awards.

“We hold our Cheese and Wine at the end of the summer after the Festival is over, we are planning a celebration party in January and then Good Friday will be along after that.

“In May the park is full of cherry blossom and we mark that with a Japanese tea party. Then we have the Starbank Gala and a Halloween party.”



The community group meets twice weekly for gardening sessions along with Jen the Park Ranger from the council who had arrived this morning with a couple of hundred bulbs to plant.

Janet continued : “Jen’s amazing. She’s helped us plant quite a few of the borders. I think it is quite rewarding for her to work with us as we are quite a ‘together’ group.”

The group has been working since 2013 to restore the garden to how it used to be. There is now a children’s nature trail and two little libraries situated in the garden.



Little library in Starbank Park



There is a house in the park which is lived in, and there is also a bothy, a huge space which is being painted at the moment. The roof has been fixed and the bothy will be used for the wreath-making classes this weekend.

In the 1960s the building used to be a domino club and a social club for older people.

There are over 100 members of the Friends group at Starbank Park. To join the fee is £5 per year but anyone is welcome to go along and do a bit of gardening which helps with mental and physical health.

There is gardening on a Wednesday and Saturday from 10am till 11.30. People of any age, ability or background anyone are welcome. Follow them on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) to see the beautiful flowers in the park.

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## **A good night had by all at the Eric Liddell Going for Gold dinner**

The Going for Gold dinner for Eric Liddell Centre was held on Tuesday evening at the Sheraton Grand and by all accounts was a huge success.

Eric's daughter travelled 5,000 miles to receive the athlete's re-issued Scotland International Rugby cap during the evening.



L-R- Alexander McCall Smith, Patricia Liddell Russell, John MacMillan and Chris Paterson.

The fundraiser was held not only to raise funds for the centre which specialises in care for the elderly and dementia services with the aim of supporting people to remain in their own homes for as long as possible, but also to raise its profile. It is housed in one of the most significant buildings in Edinburgh, but too many people don't actually know about the work that goes on there.

Eric Liddell's daughter, Patricia Liddell Russell, travelled from Canada to accept the re-issuing of her father's Scotland International Rugby cap which was lost over the decades.

John MacMillan, CEO of The Eric Liddell Centre, said: "What an evening! I can't thank everyone enough for their outstanding generosity and support in what was a fantastic event.

"The demand for our services has gone up by 24 per cent in the past year alone so we are delighted for the boost which will enable us to continue the great work we do throughout Edinburgh's communities.

"I'd like to extend a thank you to all involved, especially Patricia for coming all the way from Canada to accept Eric's reissued cap, and look forward to welcoming everyone along to our next dinner for what I hope will be an even bigger success."

More than 160 guests enjoyed the evening which included speeches from Scottish Rugby's points-record holder Chris Paterson MBE and award-winning author Alexander McCall Smith, while comedian and columnist Susan Morrison compered the evening and live auction. Music was provided by pupils from St Mary's Music School.

Patricia Liddell Russell said: "The Going for Gold dinner was just fantastic. It was great to see so much support for the centre which does such tremendous work in my father's name.

"Being able to accept the cap on my father's behalf was also an extremely special honour and something I will treasure forever.

"I know he would be so proud of the work the centre continues to do and hopefully it will go from strength to strength, helping the people of this beautiful city."

Ian Rankin, a past president of Scottish Rugby and chairman of The Murrayfield Injured Players Foundation, presented Patricia with Eric's cap, to a standing ovation from guests. The foundation focuses on providing support and assistance to injured Scottish rugby players.

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# Christmas at the Botanics



One of the eye-catching illuminated shows at Christmas at the Botanics. Picture by Nigel Duncan Media

The Christmas season throws up a number of attractions of varying quality. Christmas at The Botanics is one worthy of your attention.

Basically, it is a series of light shows around the gardens only a few minutes from the centre of Edinburgh's world-famous Princes Street.

However, that description does not do justice to the experience. OK, it is weather dependent. Twelve months ago we walked round the park in driving rain.

This time it was a still, crisp winter night and we derived maximum impact from the light and sounds.

The one-mile walk through the illuminated trail, which winds its way through the world-famous gardens, is not arduous and we noted a number of wheelchair guests enjoying the spectacle. There are stalls selling sweet attractions and even mulled wine.

And there is even a wee Santa show. The night we visited it was a bubbly actress from the West of Scotland who was on duty and she did a great job of whipping up the audience.

One guest was not amused and was heard to say to one of her party: "Pity she was from the west." What a sad comment.



Thousands visit the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh by day, but this botanical outdoor trail of light celebrating Christmas is ideal for all the family.

Take your camera to relive the memory of your children running through the light show at home.

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## **Edinburgh Social networker launches Social Media Consultancy 'Streets Ahead'**

Well-known Edinburgh social networker, Dane Thomson, has officially launched his own social media consultancy, Streets Ahead, but with a very social difference.

This new consultancy based in Edinburgh is kicking off its launch with a 'Help Me, Help You' initiative. The purpose of this initiative is to transform and reinvest every social media work day commissioned in the month of December by paying clients into one hour of time helping a local charity with their social media free of charge.

Edinburgh, Lothians and Fife based charities personally or affiliates are being invited to register their interest for this generous initiative by simply emailing 'Help Me, Help You' to [dane@streetsaheadsocial.com](mailto:dane@streetsaheadsocial.com) with the chosen charity to be decided by Friday 15th December.

Streets Ahead Social has a social and charitable origin story of its own. In the summer of 2017, Founder, Dane Thomson, took a novel approach to a 100 Streets challenge created by Scottish Rugby legend Scott Hastings and his wife, Jenny, to

help raise awareness of mental health issues in professionals and promote good physical and mental health.



While walking the 100 streets across Edinburgh, the Lothians and Fife he engaged in 100 conversations about mental health with professionals from all walks of career life and gathered 100 signatures on his T-shirt. The campaign was a success and raised over £1,000 in just 7 days and was recently awarded with a 'Individual Category' award win.

Founder, Dane has over four years hands-on social media experience, providing social media solutions for award-winning bid specialists, AM Bid Services, National Charity, Support in Mind Scotland as well as mighty small businesses RJA Coaching & Development, Creating Balance plus many more.

Founder Dane said : "The purpose of social media is being social and small businesses have an outstanding opportunity to be creative and to lead the way. I want to bring Streets Ahead Social on board to help them on that journey. I want to recapture the magic from my charity challenge week and merge together three personal and professional loves, being social, helping others and social media for the benefits of clients."

Streets Ahead Social will focus on bringing clients social media to life with down to earth advice, hands on strategy formation, fun content creation, tailored training overcoming the 'what now' after as well as targeted marketing and PR copy writing.

Further information can be found at [www.streetsaheadsocial.com](http://www.streetsaheadsocial.com)

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# Scotland's universities offer scholarships to students from India

Students from India studying in Scotland have access to more than £6million in international scholarships with over £1million ringfenced to specifically attract outstanding Indian students, Universities Scotland has revealed.

As a delegation of Scotland's higher education leaders accompany Scotland's Deputy First Minister John Swinney on an official visit to India, Universities

Scotland can announce that there are scholarship opportunities available to

students from India for all of Scotland's 19 higher education institutions.

Below is a selection of the wide range of opportunities available:

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The Scottish Funding Council has announced a new £200,000 scholarship fund to mark the mission in India which will give 20 students from India scholarships of up to £10,000 for 2018/19 which will be jointly funded by the Scottish Funding Council and Scottish universities. The offer is limited to the three of the themes of the mission: big data, medical technologies and food/water.

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Strathclyde Business School (part of the University of Strathclyde) has launched a new scholarship of up to £7,000 to give 2018/19 Indian applicants the opportunity to undertake a Strathclyde MBA (one year, full time study) in Glasgow commencing September 2018.

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The University of Stirling has introduced a new postgraduate taught scholarship for 2018/19 Indian applicants to receive a £2,000 tuition fee waiver.

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For 2018/19, Edinburgh Napier University is again offering its South Asia Scholarships of between £1,000 and £3,000. More than £100,000 was awarded to Indian students last year

through the merit-based scheme, in addition to four Education is GREAT India Scholarships, each worth £7,000.

There are approximately 150 scholarships available to Indian students across Heriot-Watt University campuses in Scotland, Dubai and Malaysia. Last year (2016/17) the university awarded £375,000 in scholarships to students from India.

To celebrate its 120 years since its original foundation in Paisley in 1897, 25 years as a university and 10 years as the University of the West of Scotland (UWS), the UWS is offering 120 '120 Anniversary Scholarships' to non-EU international students who have achieved academic excellence. This includes outstanding students from India.

The University of Edinburgh has over £80,000 of scholarships to offer Indian students. The largest is from the Inlaks Shivdasani Foundation which supports exceptionally talented young Indian students.

From 2 – 5 December 2017, the delegation of higher education leads joined the Scottish Government, Scottish Development International and the British Council as they meet with key Indian government officials, education policymakers and business leaders.

To deepen existing relationships and build new partnerships with the higher education sector and key industries in India, a joint-programme of events was hosted by 11 of Scotland's universities and the Scottish Government in Mumbai and Delhi. They all share the message that 'Scotland's universities welcome India' and demonstrate Scotland's reputation for excellence in research, innovation and learning. There are currently over 1,300 Indian students studying in Scotland and the delegation will celebrate the excellent quality of Indian students at under-graduate and post-graduate levels in Scottish universities.



Deputy First Minister John Swinney said: "I am delighted to announce these 20 scholarships and to extend a warm welcome to students from India to come to Scotland to benefit from a high quality educational experience, our world-class research and Scotland's distinctive culture."

"I fully expect our friends from India will made good use of the opportunities to develop the skills they need to support their long term employment prospects."

Professor Richard A. Williams, Principal at Heriot-Watt University and Convener of Universities Scotland's International Committee at Universities Scotland said: "Scotland's universities are renowned internationally for excellence in education,

world-leading research and their truly supportive environments. I am delighted

to affirm that Scottish universities will continue their long-standing partnership with India by offering a wide range of scholarships to India's most outstanding students. We extend the very warmest of welcomes to Indian students and researchers."

John Kemp, Interim Chief Executive of the Scottish Funding Council, said:

"The Scottish Funding Council is delighted to support the new scholarship fund

for Indian students as part of the wider and substantial offering from

Scotland's university sector. This underlines that Scotland's colleges and

universities remain open to the world for learning, research and innovation".

The India higher education mission is part a global campaign called 'Scotland's universities welcome the world' which celebrates the diversity and inclusivity of Scottish universities. It is backed by all 19 higher education institutions across Scotland, which are already home to over 180 different nationalities among their students and staff.

For more information about the mission in India, visit [studyinscotland.org](http://studyinscotland.org) or check out #ScotlandwelcomesIndia on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

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**Recognition for groups  
working to stop domestic**

# violence

Earlier this week at the City Chambers the Lord Provost held a reception to recognise the work being done in the capital to end domestic abuse. This was held during the [UN 16 Days of Action](#) and marked 40 years of achievements in the Women's Aid movement in Scotland.



Edinburgh Chapter events are organised by the informal partnership created by staff members at Edinburgh Napier University's 'Changing Perceptions', Bright Choices, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service and the University of St. Andrews primarily, as well as partners in statutory services, third sector organisations, community groups and individuals who have been participating in the campaign.

There is an event in Edinburgh tomorrow which will also discuss the ongoing problems in these areas. [More details here.](#)



And there is a free JuJitsu Self Defence course on Saturday. [More details here.](#)









Councillor Susan Rae was instrumental in arranging for the reception hosted and she told us : “The links to Edinburgh Council go right back to the beginning.

“I worked 40 years ago helping to set up Women’s Aid and I was involved in Zero Tolerance. To see young women working in these two areas is inspiring, although still a bit depressing that they are needed more than ever. We have other things to deal with such as FGM, forced marriages and trafficking so it is no longer just domestic violence.

“It is however useful to have the work recognised by the council in this way.”



Speakers included Dr Marsha Scott Chief Executive of Scottish Women's Aid, Safa Yousaf of Amina and Kate Forbes MSP for Skye Lochaber and Badenoch.

The attendees watched the trailer for Hopscotch a film by Roxana Vilc based on the poem by Nadine Aisha Jassat and produced by Amina – MWRC and with the support of Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre., which you can watch [here](#).

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## Man detained in connection with Fleshmarket Close rape



An investigation is underway after a 44-year-old woman was raped in Edinburgh city centre.

Fleshmarket Close was cordoned off following the attack which took place around 3am on Wednesday morning.

Police say that a man has been detained in connection with the attack and officers have appealed for anyone with information to come forward.

A Police Scotland spokesman said: "Police in Edinburgh are investigating following a report of serious sexual assault on a 44-year-old woman.

"The incident happened sometime around 3am on Wednesday, December 6, in the High Street area.

"A man is currently detained in connection with this inquiry, however, anyone who believes they may have information relevant to the ongoing investigation is asked to contact

police immediately.”

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# Growing concern for missing schoolboy



Concerns are growing for the safety of 15-year-old schoolboy Ryan Kerr who has been missing for two days.

He was last seen shortly before 10pm on Monday, leaving an address in Ravenscroft Gardens, and he has not returned home or attended school since.

Ryan is white, of medium build, 5ft 10ins tall, with green eyes and short light-brown hair which is shaved at the sides, longer on top and combed to the right.

When last seen he was wearing a light grey Nike tracksuit, a hooded top and grey Huarache trainers.

He also had two black rucksacks which contained extra clothing, including a school uniform.

Enquiries continue to trace the teenager who has links to the Inch, Fernieside, Portobello, Drylaw and Bingham areas of the city.

Officers urged anyone who may have seen him since this time, or who has information on where he may be, to contact them.

Police Scotland also asked the boy to get in contact with either them or his family to let them know that he is safe and well, if he sees the appeal.

Anyone with information is urged to contact Howdenhall Police

# Darren McGregor helps to deliver Christmas cheer to those in need



Hibs defender and GameChanger Ambassador Darren McGregor was at Tesco on Monday afternoon to help launch a Christmas Day event to help deliver Christmas cheer to those in need this festive season.

Both Hibs and Hearts with key partner NHS Lothian will be laying on specially organised events to feed up to 400 people at Tynecastle and Easter Road Stadiums on 25 December.

Tesco stores across Edinburgh have stepped forward to supply food for the lunches as part of the Edinburgh Cheer initiative.

Darren joined Tesco store manager Fraser Cromar and Hearts midfielder Malaury Martin to promote the Edinburgh Cheer Christmas Dinner.

Fraser said: “Our Christmas campaign – Everyone’s Welcome at Tesco – celebrates the many ways we come together at Christmas, so when we heard about the Edinburgh Cheer initiative to make Edinburgh the city of kindness this Christmas we were only too pleased to be able to help out at this important time of year.

“Many people in the communities we serve will be facing the

prospect of being alone this festive season, so we are very proud to play our part in helping them enjoy a Christmas meal together.

“Hibernian hosted an event last year and it is fantastic to see that Hearts were so inspired by the success of it that they’re on board this time around and together we’re ready to kick off the Christmas meal on 25 December.”

As well as delivering food for the lunch, the Edinburgh stores will also supply goodie bags.

Tesco’s teams of Community Champions will also be helping to organise the events ensure it reaches those most in need.

Leeann Dempster, Hibernian FC Chief Executive said: “We’re very happy to open up our club home at Christmas to welcome people along to enjoy Christmas Day with us again following on from the success of last year.

“We hope that up to 200 people of all ages, who might otherwise have less to look forward to at Christmas than the rest of us, can come together and have a wonderful lunch and a great time. Special thanks are due to Tesco, who are again providing us with a huge helping hand by providing the food, and thanks also to Central Taxis for their efforts in bringing people here.”

Malaury Martin of Hearts said: “It’s great to be launching this initiative which will help the most vulnerable from our community at Christmas time.

“It is clear that football can be used for social good and it is great to be supporting that aim today. As a squad of players we are always proud to get involved in charity initiatives and this is no different.”

Tim Davison, Chief Executive of NHS Lothian, said: “We are delighted to be part of a campaign that is harnessing the

power and influence of football to promote health and wellbeing. It is a great opportunity and we are confident that it will make a real and meaningful difference to those who really need help and support, especially at this time of year.”

The event is being organised with help from the GameChanger Partnership and Hearts’ Big Hearts Community Trust and FareShare as part of a wider Edinburgh Cheer campaign.

NHS Lothian and both clubs are hosting and supporting a number of events throughout December in an effort to harness the power of football to help create a kinder city.

Tesco are involved at a number of events including choir singing and a Christmas movie night.

Contact [edinburghcheer@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:edinburghcheer@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk) if you know groups or individuals who would like to come and enjoy a Christmas dinner at Tynecastle Park or Easter Road football stadiums.

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## Two men plead guilty to involvement in Ferry Road collision



Two men who were involved in a serious road traffic collision on Ferry Road on Saturday 19th August which left a 10-year-old boy seriously injured have today pled guilty.

Connor Whalen, aged 20, pled guilty to injuring the 10-year-

old while riding a motorcycle whilst Marc Miller, aged 22, pled guilty to driving in a dangerous manner and to having an involvement in the incident.

Whalen and Miller left the scene in the wake of the collision, leaving others to tend to the 10-year-old.

The boy sustained serious injuries and was taken to the Royal Hospital for Sick Children for treatment. He has since returned home where he continues to recover from his injuries.

Officers from Edinburgh's Criminal Investigations Department conducted extensive inquiries into the circumstances of this incident and later arrested Miller and Whalen.

Whalen and Miller pled guilty at Edinburgh Sheriff Court on Tuesday, December 5. They will both be sentenced at a later date.

Detective Inspector Graham Grant of Corstorphine CID said: "Connor Whalen and Marc Miller's actions resulted in a 10-year-old boy sustaining serious injuries which will take a significant period of time to overcome.

"This was a major investigation which has thankfully resulted in Whalen and Miller both submitting early pleas and sparing a child the trauma of a trial.

"I also want to pay tribute to the 10-year-old's bravery throughout this process and wish him well as he continues his recovery.

"I hope this plea will bring a degree of closure to him and his family and allow them to move forward with their lives."

Chief Inspector Stevie Sutherland, Local Area Commander for North West Edinburgh, said: "This incident had a profound impact on those within the North Edinburgh community who have been incredibly supportive not only to police, but to the young boy and his family.

"The criminality undertaken by Whalen and Miller and their associates is completely unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

"Tackling the theft of motorcycles, and associated criminality, is a priority for us and we continue to address the matter through Operation Soteria and the Stronger North partnership.

"However if we are to fully tackle this issue we need the support of the local community. Anyone who is aware of motorcycle criminality in their area is asked to contact Police Scotland on 101, or anonymously through Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111."

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## **Review: Cinderella \*\*\*\*\***



When the editor of The Edinburgh Reporter told me I was going to review Cinderella, the much-loved pantomime at Edinburgh's Kings Theatre, I responded in traditional panto fashion. 'Oh, no I'm not!' I replied. 'I have never been to a pantomime in my life and I'm not going to start now'. Her reply was brief and to the point. 'Oh, yes you are' she said, 'or else your career with Edinburgh's best news and media website will be behind you!' (that's enough panto gags – Ed)

However, I was mighty glad I did go to the fairy godmother of all pantomimes on Wednesday evening. The Holy Trinity of Panto – Allan Stewart, Andy Gray and local hero Grant Stott – have returned to the King's for the 13th time as a trio. And they provided a hugely entertaining evening to a packed and appreciative audience.

Veteran Allan Stewart has appeared so many times at the old theatre over the years I wouldn't be surprised if the King's aren't charging him rent. He plays Auntie May, Cinderella's Fairy Godmother and despite being a star of stage for half a century, Stewart clearly still loves the pantomime season and his infectious enthusiasm certainly has its effect on his co-stars. Stewart has worked with Andy Gray on numerous occasions and their great friendship is there for all to see, particularly when one of them makes a wee error which is immediately pounced on by the other with great hilarity.

Gray plays the part of Buttons, the lovable servant who has Cinderella's best interests at heart. Keeping it in the Gray family is his daughter Clare who plays one of the ugly sisters – Ruth. Maureen Carr – one of the stars of BBC Scotland's hit comedy Still Game – plays the other ugly sister – Nicola. Perhaps a wee nod there to the political landscape in Scotland? Who knows?!

Grant Stott plays the part of Baroness Hibernia Hardup, the wicked stepmother and he plays the part with great panache. Stott is, of course, a well-known fan of Hibernian FC and his reference to hating the Jambos brought a laugh even from Hearts fans present (including the former Lord Provost Eric Milligan)

The part of Cinderella is played by Gillian Parkhouse, star of Singin' in the Rain in London's West End while Prince Charming is played by James Darch, another London West End performer (Wicked) and who has also appeared in the BBC Television drama New Tricks.

The young dance troupe were highly impressive and the special effects just before the interval were breath-taking.

But the stars of the show are undoubtedly the 'terrible trio' of Stewart, Gray and Stott. The classic folk tale was given the 'Embra' treatment from the off and the audience lapped it



up. Stott's assertion that Cinderella's father 'gies me the boak' is a line you won't hear in any other performance of Cinderella anywhere else in the world! At the ball, Baroness Hardup says she feels 'about as welcome as a Jambo at Easter Road!' I'm pretty sure the Brothers Grimm didn't include that in their original transcript!

It was great entertainment, nearly two hours of good old-fashioned laugh-out-loud pleasure. You don't need to be a child to enjoy this panto. It's great fun for adults too. And the great news is that the show runs for the next six and a half weeks!

If you want to treat a loved one this Christmas – or as a New Year gift – get them a ticket to see this show. They'll thank you for it.

Edinburgh Reporter rating: \*\*\*\*\* (oh yes it is!)

Cinderella is at the King's Theatre, Leven Street, Edinburgh until 21st January 2018. Tickets [here](#).

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## Green theme to Christmas networking



Carberry Tower Mansion. Picture by Nigel Duncan Media

Midlothian and East Lothian Chamber of Commerce and the Bright Green Business Network invite businesses to Christmas networking with a twist.

An environmental expert will be there to provide some useful

hints on how to increase their bottom line by being green.

There will also be an opportunity to showcase products and services at complimentary stand spaces.

The date for the popular event is Thursday, December 14 (11.30am to 2pm) at Carberry Tower Mansion House near Musselburgh EH21 8PY.

Carberry is one of the great Scottish mansion houses and sits in 35 acres of parkland only seven miles from Edinburgh.

Further information is available from Dita Macfarlane at Midlothian and East Lothian Chamber of Commerce (MELCC) on 0131 603 5040 or [dita@thebusinesspartnership.org.uk](mailto:dita@thebusinesspartnership.org.uk)

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## Hearts Fixture at Celtic Park Brought Forward



Hearts have announced that their Ladbrokes Premiership match away to Celtic at the end of January has been brought forward by 24 hours.

The game was due to be played on 31st January but with Partick Thistle hosting Rangers on the same evening, the SPFL have arranged the Celtic-Hearts game to be played on Tuesday 30th January 2018.

Hearts will announce ticket arrangements in due course.

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# Social enterprise set to expand



A social enterprise set up to help artists and designers sell their work without paying commission is set to expand its Edinburgh store and open a second outlet in Glasgow.

The Scottish Design Exchange (SDX) is a unique concept store and not-for-profit creative community, bringing artists and designers together to share retail space that benefits both the producers and customers.

Around 150 independent fashion designers, artists, textile and jewellery designers, publishers and photographers now display their creations in the SDX store in Ocean Terminal in Edinburgh.

As well as retail space, SDX provides support and training to help them develop a profitable product and promote themselves to other retailers.

The Edinburgh store is now at full capacity and director Lynzi Leroy said: "The commission-free model allows the artists and designers to sell unique and handmade items at High Street prices.

"The idea has also proved popular with customers who can buy locally made items knowing that the manufacturers will benefit directly from their support."

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# Optician says: 'Don't ignore warning signs'



Ava Dovesi, her mum Joanne and optician Daniel Herbert

A nine-year-old from Edinburgh has received life-saving treatment after a quick-thinking optician spotted warning signs during an eye test.

Joanne Dovesi said her daughter Ava had experienced months of blurry vision, headaches, fatigue, motor skills issues and, more recently, a limp.

She asked her optician's advice during Ava's routine appointment at Specsavers in Morningside resulting in the youngster being referred to hospital.

Optometrist Daniel Herbert had spotted severe swelling of Ava's optic discs (known as bilateral papilloedema) caused by pressure inside the skull.

He says: "I recommended that Ava visit the hospital immediately as vision loss can result if the underlying condition causing swelling of the optic nerves is not treated.

"She was referred to the Royal Hospital for Sick Children where a diagnosis meant doctors could give her the treatment and medication she urgently required."

Joanne said: "The surgeon told us that fluid had been building up for a long time. Ava's head was so swollen it was almost the size of an adult male."

Six months on from the operation, Ava's optic nerves have returned to normal.

Grateful mum Joanne thanked all concerned and said: "I have seen a huge change in Ava since the operation.

"She is no longer tired after school, her balance is perfect and she is a bright, cheery child full of life.

Optometrist Daniel said Ava's story was a reminder of just how important it is to seek expert advice.

He added: "Ava's diagnosis is a reminder that it is essential to seek a professional opinion if you experience anything unusual – don't ignore warning signs."

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## Women's hockey – Edinburgh players in Gold Coast countdown



Gordon Shepherd, coach to Scotland's women.

Picture Nigel Duncan Media

Three Edinburgh University players and one from Watsonians have been named in Scotland's 27-strong squad as the clock ticks towards selection for the Commonwealth Games in the Gold Coast next year.

Coach Gordon Shepherd hosts a warm-weather camp in Gran Canaria on from January 13 to February 3 and Laura Swanson, Rebecca Merchant and Amy Brodie from Edinburgh University and goalkeeper Lucy Camlin of Watsonians will be there.

Former Edinburgh University players Nicola Cochrane, Mairi Drummond and Sarah Robertson are also selected along with former Cala Edinburgh and Inverleith player Amy Costello.

Dundee-born but Glasgow-based Shepherd said he will use this camp to name the squad for the Commonwealth Games on February 14.

The Scots will play Wales five times during the camp and in the Games Scotland have been drawn in Pool B against Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and Ghana in Australia.

Shepherd said there is real competition for places in the squad and he added: "The camp in Gran Canaria will allow the players to express themselves.

"As well as training we have five games versus Wales and I feel this is an excellent balance of training and games to maximise each player's opportunity to be selected."

And he added: "Every player that is going on this selection camp has the same opportunity to be selected to represent Scotland at the Commonwealth Games."

SQUAD: Lucy Camlin (Watsonians), Nicola Cochrane (Beeston), Amy Gibson (Reading), Kareena Cuthbert, Becky Ward, (Western Wildcats), Alison Howie, Heather Howie, Camilla Brown, Fiona Burnet, Jennifer Eadie, Fiona Bruce, Lucy Lanigan (Clydesdale Western), Karen Belch, Katie Robertson, Sarah Jamieson, Nicola Skrastin (Grove Menzieshill), Laura Swanson, Rebecca Merchant, Amy Brodie (Edinburgh University), Charlotte Watson (Dundee Wanderers), Robyn Collins (Surbiton), Sarah Robertson (Hampstead and Westminster), Amy Costello, Rebecca Condie (University of Birmingham), Kate Holmes (Clifton Robinsons), Nicola Alexander-Lloyd (Wimbledon), Mairi Drummond (Wimbledon)

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# **‘Come and Try Paraclimbing’ at Edinburgh International Climbing Arena**

*Introductory session to be held at Ratho for anyone with a disability*




A come and try session for para-climbers is being held at the Edinburgh International Climbing Arena on Thursday, 7 December 2017 from 7-9pm.

Organised by Climb Scotland and the EICA, this will be the first get together for the Scottish Paraclimbing Club, who will be running the ‘Come and Try Paraclimbing’ session.

During the session, qualified staff will be on hand with access to specialist equipment to enable anyone with a disability to have a go and hopefully to get involved in this sport long-term.

The ambition for the club is to have weekly climb meets, club trips to various indoor venues, coaching sessions, outdoor climbing trips and training opportunities for members and volunteers.

 Victoria McWhannell, Events Manager at Ratho said: “After the really successful Paraclimbing Cup that was held in September, alongside the IFSC World Cup, we have seen an appetite for sessions that might encourage people with disabilities to get into this sport.

“At the September event, out of the 204 competitors there were

42 men and 17 women that participated within the Paraclimbing Cup, which far exceeded our expectations. These competitors, despite their different disabilities which included visual impairments, amputations and health conditions, had different stories to tell and a common love of climbing. They were truly inspirational to everyone watching."

Places are subject to availability and booking is advisable. Call 0131 333 6305 or email: [bookings.eica@edinburghleisure.co.uk](mailto:bookings.eica@edinburghleisure.co.uk) to book.

*Top – Local Paraclimber Keith Lynch competing in September*

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## **Cramond Primary Pupils Deliver early Christmas to Local Care Home**

*Pupils deliver Christmas gifts to Cramond Residence*



Pupils at Cramond Primary School delivered Christmas presents to people living with dementia and their carers as part of a local gift appeal for the elderly.

Gifts were delivered to the Cramond Dementia and Carers Lunch Club by Primary Seven pupils at the club's Christmas lunch. The Christmas Gift Appeal was organised by local care home, Cramond Residence, which is set to open next year.

Throughout December gifts will also be delivered to elderly members of the community living in isolation, as well as members of the Almond Mains Initiative, a lunch club for



elderly people living in Cramond, Barnton, Almond, Cammo, Davidson's Mains, and Silverknowes.

Dorothy Brown, client relationship manager at Cramond Residence, commented: "We have been completely overwhelmed by the generosity of the community which has donated a huge amount to our gift appeal for the elderly.

"The Cramond Dementia and Carers Lunch Club and Almond Mains Initiative are both doing great work in providing a place where elderly people can socialise and feel part of our community. It is a pleasure to be able to spread some Christmas cheer to their members with the help from pupils at Cramond Primary."

Helen Donaldson, head teacher at Cramond Primary School, added: "All Cramond pupils from P1-P7 have created a special Christmas card with a carefully worded message, entitled 'to a friend in Cramond, from a friend in Cramond.'

"We are ever keen to develop intergenerational links in the local community and have reached out to Cramond Residence, Almond Mains Initiative and the Cramond Dementia and Carers Lunch Club. Our pupils have loved the opportunity to spend time with our elderly neighbours and learn from them at the clubs.

"We want everyone to know, whatever their age, that they have a friend at Cramond Primary."

Managed exclusively by Walker Healthcare, Cramond Residence will offer some of the best in personalised nursing and residential care for older people, in luxurious and comfortable surroundings.

Due to be finished in spring 2018, the residence will include 74 en-suite bedrooms and a wide range of lounge, dining, and activities rooms, and beautifully landscaped gardens.

# Hearts Pair Warned About Future Conduct



The SFA have seen fit to warn Hearts Head Coach Craig Levein and Assistant Coach Austin MacPhee about their future conduct following Saturday's Ladbrokes Premiership game against Hamilton.

However, the Gorgie duo will not face disciplinary action.

Referee Bobby Madden infuriated the Tynecastle crowd not only with his display – he booked eight players and sent off Hearts Jamie Brandon – but with his decision to send Craig Levein to the stand. Levein said after the game he didn't know why he had been sent from the touchline.

Even more bizarre was Madden's decision to send Austin MacPhee packing. The Assistant Coach was pushed over by Hamilton's Darian Mackinnon but was deemed guilty of something by the referee. Quite why the SFA have decided to warn MacPhee about his future conduct beggars belief.

The SFA Compliance Officer's report into the game would surely have made interesting reading. Whether it recommended Bobby Madden should be taken to task over his performance isn't clear...

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# Construction underway on £35 million Council regeneration project in North Sighthill



Construction is underway on a £35 million Council-led regeneration project at North Sighthill.

The City of Edinburgh Council's partner, Keepmoat Regeneration, will deliver a mixed tenure affordable housing development on land previously occupied by outdated poor quality high rise housing.

The development, funded through the Council's housebuilding programme supported by £2.88m Scottish Government funding, will comprise 316 much-needed new energy-efficient homes, including 96 affordable homes for social rent, 88 affordable homes for mid-market rent and 132 flats and family homes for market sale.

The contract brings many additional benefits. As part of the four year programme, Keepmoat Regeneration has committed to offering substantial employment and training opportunities for local people via an ambitious Community Engagement Plan, centred on Employability & Training, Education & Outreach, Enterprise & Business, Funding & Development and Community Cohesion. A £25k investment fund has also been established dedicated to help local community groups.

Kevin Stewart MSP (Minister for Local Government & Housing) and Councillor Gavin Barrie (Convenor Housing and Economy committee) joined representatives from the local community, City of Edinburgh Council and Keepmoat Regeneration to celebrate the start of the build where Keepmoat presented the £25,000 community group contribution.

Eamonn McGarvey, Regional Managing Director for Keepmoat Regeneration, said: "Our launch ceremony was a hugely important milestone, as it not only marks the start of imperative housing delivery, but the start of our commitment to improve North Sighthill's social and economic

prosperity.

“Our Community Investment Fund is just the start of this pledge, as we will be working with our partners at the council throughout the duration of this major programme, to ensure we are investing in the area as whole and offering opportunities for local people.”

Housing and Economy Convener for the City of Edinburgh Council, Councillor Gavin Barrie said: “This is another major step forward in the regeneration of North Sighthill, which will bring much-needed affordable housing to the area. This development is a key part in the Council’s coalition pledge to deliver 20,000 affordable and low-cost homes over the next ten years.

“Each of the new homes have been designed to ensure residents’ heating costs will be kept low and the development includes a variety of gardens and open space for residents.

“We are very pleased to be working with Keepmoat on this project which is now part of a larger programme already delivering new affordable homes in Leith, Newhaven, Craigmillar, Pennywell, Gracemount and Chesser in one of the most ambitious Council-led housebuilding programmes in the UK.”

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## **A trio of British Empire Medals for Edinburgh volunteers**

June McIntosh, a child cancer nurse and fundraiser. Alexander Douglas Ruthven, Trustee of Therapet and Fiona Russell, volunteer for Capability Scotland all received their British Empire Medals from the Lord Lieutenant Frank Ross this evening.

A reception was held in the Lady Provost’s room with friends

and family invited to join the three recipients.



June McIntosh, a registered nurse with the Western General Hospital for 30 years and a fundraiser for Fighting Against Cancer Edinburgh (FACE) for 25 years, will receive the honour for services to young people with cancer and to charity.

Described as part nurse, part play therapist, part counsellor and part friend by her peers, June is recognised for improving the lives of countless children undergoing cancer treatment and their families in Edinburgh, and for making a real and measurable difference to patient care as deputy charge nurse for the Edinburgh Cancer Centre.



Alexander Douglas Ruthven, a volunteer dog walker and Trustee of Therapet, will be recognised for voluntary service to the community in Edinburgh and the Lothians.

Douglas and his beloved Border Collies have been regular visitors to long stay patients and residents in hospitals, care and nursing homes since 1998. He is recognised for negotiating a key initiative with NHS Lothian to provide pet therapy support to children confined to hospital, people suffering from stress and anxiety and the lonely.



Fiona Russell, a volunteer at her local Capability Scotland shop, will also be honoured with the British Empire Medal for services to charity. Volunteering three days a week, every week, Fiona has rarely missed a shift in 22 years. She is commended for supporting and training staff across Capability Scotland's shops, for her commitment and passion. The financial benefit of her service to the charity has been described as incalculable.



The British Empire Medal is awarded for meritorious civil or military service worthy of recognition by the Crown.

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## Edinburgh MP leads WASPI consultation

Christine Jardine, MP for Edinburgh West, is at the centre of efforts to reverse the injustice to women born in the 1950s caused by pension reforms.



Ms Jardine and a cross party group of MPs launched a consultation, which will help formulate proposals for transitional arrangements for women disproportionately affected by pension reforms.

An estimated six thousand women in Edinburgh West have been affected by the changes which left women with inadequate time to prepare for their retirement, leading to financial difficulty and hardship.

Christine Jardine said: “These women have suffered a gross injustice as a result of government mismanagement and poor communication.

“It’s time this government recognised that tens of thousands of women, whose only mistake is to have been born in the 1950s, have had their retirement plans ruined and in many cases are facing hardship, because the state pension age was changed without adequate warning.

“This consultation will show us exactly what is involved and what is needed to ensure these women get the deal they

deserve.”

You can take part in the consultation [by clicking here.](#)

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## Davidson and Sturgeon speak out over Brexit talks

MSP for Edinburgh Central and Leader of the Scottish Conservatives, Ruth Davidson MSP has spoken out against the proposed deal on Brexit which hinged on a special deal for Northern Ireland. Talks between the UK government and the EU Commission ended with no agreement in evidence yesterday afternoon.



It appears that the DUP which supports the government at Westminster would not allow the government to agree to something which would leave Northern Ireland in a situation which is separate and different from the rest of the UK.

In a statement earlier Ms Davidson said : “The question on the Brexit ballot paper asked voters whether the UK should stay or leave the European Union – it did not ask if the country should be divided by different deals for different home nations.

“While I recognise the complexity of the current negotiations, no government of the Conservative and Unionist Party should countenance any deal that compromises the political, economic or constitutional integrity of the United Kingdom.

“All sides agree there should be no return to the borders of the past between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

“Similarly, jeopardising the UK’s own internal market is in no-one’s interest.

“If regulatory alignment in a number of specific areas is the requirement for a frictionless border, then the Prime Minister should conclude this must be on a UK-wide basis.”

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon issued a statement yesterday afternoon in which she also rejected any idea of a deal which allowed Northern Ireland to be treated differently from Scotland.

She said : “Despite the fact that no deal on the Irish border issue has been reached today, and while full details of any such deal are still to become clear, I welcome the fact that there now appears to be the outline of an agreement which would ensure that there is no return to a hard border on the island of Ireland.

“The potential for a hard border has been one of the most concerning aspects of Brexit, and the UK Government’s position to date on protecting the terms of the Good Friday Agreement has left much to be desired.

“While I welcome the proposed commitment for Ireland and Northern Ireland – and while the particular circumstances in Scotland are distinct and separate from those in Ireland – today’s developments show very clearly that if one part of UK can retain regulatory alignment with the EU and effectively stay in the single market, there is no good practical reason why others cannot do the same.

“Indeed, any special status for Northern Ireland would make a similar solution for Scotland even more vital. For Scotland to find itself outside the single market, while Northern Ireland effectively stays in would place us at a double disadvantage when it comes to jobs and investment.

“While the simplest answer to the Brexit problem is for the



whole UK to stay in the single market, the Scottish Government has already put forward very detailed compromise proposals for how Scotland's place in the single market could be maintained if the rest of the UK insists on leaving – proposals which were previously rejected by the UK Government as unworkable. Indeed, if Northern Ireland is effectively kept in the single market it makes it all the more vital for Scotland's national and economic interests that we are too.

"Today's developments also demonstrate in the clearest possible way, through the role played by the Irish Government at the top table in Europe, the importance of being independent when it comes to defending your vital national interests.

"Scotland voted overwhelmingly to remain in the EU, and the Scottish Government will continue to make the case, as strongly as ever, for that democratic choice by the people of Scotland to be respected and for our place in Europe to be protected."

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## **Arnold Clark partner up with VisitScotland to welcome visitors**

VisitScotland has appointed VIPS (VisitScotland Information Partners) who will assist them in spreading tourist information across the country. One of those is Europe's largest independently owned, family-run car company, Arnold Clark which will be handing visitors the keys to unlock the ultimate Scottish holiday experience.

Eight of its Car and Van Rental sites in Scotland, including Glasgow, Edinburgh, Prestwick and Inverness Airports, as well as central locations in Aberdeen and Dundee, have received iKnow accreditation from the national tourism organisation.



Launched in May 2016, the VIP programme ties in with VisitScotland's global Spirit of Scotland campaign. The innovative project harnesses the local knowledge, warmth and enthusiasm of partners across the country to help visitors receive the warmest of welcomes and allow them to make the most of their trip to Scotland.

Established in 1954, Arnold Clark has expanded from a single car showroom in Glasgow to a UK-wide organisation employing and training over 11,000 members of staff.

The business has always been people-oriented and takes pride in having customer-focused staff across the country who are always willing to impart their local knowledge on to visitors. It therefore made perfect sense to join VisitScotland in this exciting approach to information provision.

This is another example of the strong partnership VisitScotland and Arnold Clark have developed over the years. The firm has been stand partners at VisitScotland Expo for the past 25 years and has developed strong working relationships with the national tourism organisation's travel trade and the Scottish events community.

They also provide the iconic Coo Vans which, like the VIP programme, are another new and innovative way that VisitScotland is passing on distinctive information about things to see and do throughout the country.

Jeff Clark, General Manager of Arnold Clark Car & Van Rental,

said: "We're delighted to join the VisitScotland Information Partner programme. Arnold Clark Car & Van Rental pride themselves on their knowledge and are always happy to inform our customers about the best local sights and attractions. With this official recognition we'll continue to provide a wonderful service to visitors from around the world to ensure they experience the best that Scotland has to offer."

Manuela Calchini, Head of Information at VisitScotland, said: "Arnold Clark are a fantastic addition to our network of VIPs. They are a wonderful business we have worked with for a long time so I am delighted to see them get involved in the programme. Visitors using the firm can expect a high standard of customer service and sound local knowledge.

"The VIP programme celebrates and supports tourism businesses as they act as local ambassadors and help provide information, assistance and advice on all there is to see and do here. This follows a growing trend among consumers to use online resources to plan their trips and we now have partners throughout the country providing high quality information and advice to visitors with whom they interact."

The programme forms part of VisitScotland's focus on information which also includes a global online community to allow Scots and those who love Scotland to bring alive the streets, characters and landscapes of our country.

The scheme is open to a wide variety of businesses, as well as community groups, local authority-operated library services and social enterprises. VisitScotland provides the partner sites with official signage and collateral, promotional material and information resources to make sure visitors receive an excellent standard of information about the area and the rest of Scotland.

For more information, visit [www.visitscotland.org](http://www.visitscotland.org).

*Photo © Ian Watson*

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# Airlink welcomes 1 million passengers in 2017

Lothian's Airlink 100 today welcomed its one-millionth Edinburgh Airport passenger for 2017.

The city's bus company carries around 3,000 customers a day from the airport into the city. With a team of sixty dedicated drivers and a fleet of fifteen specially designed vehicles, the route covers 20,000 miles per week.



**Nigel Serafini, Commercial Director of Lothian, said:** "Over the last few years, we have invested significantly in Airlink 100, including a fleet of new low emission vehicles for the route and the latest contactless payment technology. We are delighted to hit this milestone in our operation for 2017 and look forward to continuing to provide a first class service for residents and visitors to our city."

**Gordon Robertson, Director of Communications at Edinburgh Airport, said:** "We've worked closely with Lothian to provide reliable and efficient bus services that make it as easy as possible to get to or from Scotland's busiest airport. Recent investment also means passengers are benefitting from things like live updates on their flights and contactless payment and these fantastic usage figures demonstrate the continued success of this route."

Airlink 100 provides Edinburgh Airport with a 24/7 operation

and has 175,000 seats available per week; the equivalent to 333 jumbo jets. Vehicles are fitted to a high specification and all have contactless payment technology, free WIFI, next stop audio/visual announcements including British Sign language, and live on-board flight departure information and security waiting times.

To mark the occasion, staff from Lothian will be on hand across the day to surprise customers with airport shopping vouchers and Airlink return tickets.

More information on Airlink 100 and the other airport services on offer from Lothian can be found on the [website](#).

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## Chrissie wins the Green Pencil Awards 2017

The City of Edinburgh Council's Green Pencil Awards 2017 were announced last week.



The competition is in its 10<sup>th</sup> year and this year the theme was 'Edinburgh's Natural Heritage'.

Chrissie Clark a pupil at Edinburgh Academy won with her poem The Three Bridges

*One, two three bridges,*

*Standing side by side.*

*Each towering over the next,*

*You can see the world evolving,*

*Right in front of you!*

*The beauty of the original,*

*Bright red reflecting onto the Forth,*

*You simply cannot beat.*

*But the shining-new Queensferry Crossing has an edge.*

*It shows off the modern day intelligence,*

*Everything pitch perfect.*

*I'm going to apologise in advance to any middle children,*

*But that's what the road bridge must feel.*

*Never the old original bridge with the cool paint,*

*Or the young, new, tall one that always gets the prize,*

*But the one that did the work for a very long time.*

*Now forgotten.*

*Chrissie Clark*

*1M, The Edinburgh Academy*

Councillor Alison Dickie, Vice-Convener Education Children & Families, said: “I was delighted to have the opportunity to participate in the Green Pencil writing competition for the first time this year, and have been struck by the skill and creativity shown by entrants.

“It’s clear that the theme of Edinburgh’s Natural Heritage has inspired a variety of inventive prose and poetry from schools across Edinburgh, and Chrissie’s study of the three Forth bridges really caught our imagination. She is a worthy winner.”

*Photo Kirsty McLachlan*

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## John Byrne ‘s Christmas card for the First Minister unveiled

Artist John Byrne has created a Christmas Card for the First Minister in 2017 which is cheeky as well as festive, and dates back to his own boyhood in Paisley.



‘Say It With A Kiss!’ is an original artwork in Byrne’s celebrated trademark style. It features a couple about to share a kiss under the mistletoe.

The artwork will be auctioned next year with the proceeds going to four charities – Food Train, SCIAF, Scottish Women’s Aid and Teapot Trust.

SCIAF and children's art therapy charity the Teapot Trust were chosen by John Byrne, while Food Train, which provides a range of services, to older people including grocery shopping and befriending and Scottish Women's Aid were selected by the First Minister.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said: "I'm absolutely thrilled to have such a beautiful painting by John Byrne for my Christmas card this year. He is one of our most celebrated artists and this work has a wonderful festive feel while maintaining John's inimitable style.

"The four charities that will benefit from the sale of the painting do fantastic work on local, national and international levels and I'm very pleased that the card can support such a wide range of good causes."

John Byrne, while best known as a playwright for his trilogy *The Slab Boys*, is a renowned artist, with several of his works exhibited in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

He said: "I was both surprised and delighted to be commissioned by the First Minister to produce the artwork for this year's Official Christmas Card and got to work straight away – I had a notion to paint a young couple from my boyhood days in Paisley, having a great time jiving to the music of Jimmy McCracken's 'Big Band' at the Town Hall c1957 dressed in the style of the day, with a nod to the Festive Season."

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## **The Old Town Christmas lights**



# to be switched on this Thursday

Santa and his elves will switch on the Greater Grassmarket's Christmas lights on Thursday,

The Greater Grassmarket Business Improvement District (BID) kicks off the Old Town's festive celebrations with the official switching on of the Christmas lights in the Grassmarket Square on Thursday 7 December at 6.30pm.



The free family-friendly event will feature special guest appearances from Santa and his elves who will have the honour of turning on the light display and will be handing out Christmas hats to children. The event begins at 6.15pm with the lights switch on taking place at 6.30pm.

Local businesses will be staying open during the festivities to allow for some late-night shopping and there will be a number of other Christmas offerings such as mulled wine, carol singing, and even some free mince pies.

The Greater Grassmarket is also hosting a free Christmas Festival on Saturday 9 and Saturday 16 December 2017 (12pm till 4pm) which will feature a Christmas market alongside live music, street performances and visits from Santa, his elves and Rudolph. On Saturday 16 December visitors can also get a festive photo taken in a giant selfie snow globe.

Norrie Stewart, Grassmarket BID Project Manager, said: "We can't wait to start celebrating this festive season and we couldn't be happier that Santa and his elves have agreed to come down and turn on the Christmas lights with us!"

"The Old Town is the perfect place to bring the family to at Christmas. With our quirky independent shops whose unique products make the perfect Christmas presents, great bars and restaurants and the wonderful view of the castle, the atmosphere here is truly magical this time of year."