



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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Corporate Body Will Vigorously Contest Holyrood Legal Action

The Corporate Body today issued the following statement:

“We have been made aware that legal proceedings have been initiated by Sir Robert McAlpine Ltd and another Sir Robert McAlpine company, who are seeking to challenge the process by which the Construction Manager contract for the Holyrood Project was awarded. This award process was discussed in depth during the Fraser Inquiry.

“Sir Robert McAlpine Ltd are claiming for the sum of £4.31m, a substantial sum that would have to be found from the public purse if this action is pursued and is successful. If the SPCB and Sir Robert McAlpine Ltd come to court over this matter, the case will be vigorously contested as the best defence of the public purse.

“The procurement process was managed by the Scottish Office, with the formal EU notice posted in August 1998. The Scottish Office subsequently awarded the contract to Bovis Lend Lease (Scotland) Ltd in January 1999. This decision preceded the establishment of both the Parliament and the SPCB in May 1999, and the transfer of all Holyrood contracts to the SPCB in June 1999.”

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Holyrood Reaches 100,000 Visitors

Visitor figures went through the 100,000 barrier at the new Scottish Parliament building at Holyrood today. The landmark figure puts the Parliament on schedule to reach its projected number of 780,000 visitors in the first year alone.

Since opening to the public on 7 September, just over nine weeks ago, members of the public have flocked to Holyrood to watch debates, give evidence at Committees and simply see Scotland's new Parliament building for themselves.

Speaking in the Parliament's Main Hall this afternoon visitor number 100,000 was 71 year old, retired weaver, Mr John Corrigan. He had travelled from Galston in Ayrshire with his friend and neighbour, retired lorry driver Bart Paton, also 71.



Mr John Corrigan, right, with Mr Bart Paton

Mr Corrigan who was presented with a bottle of Scottish Parliament champagne courtesy of the Parliament's shop said:

"We're through from Ayrshire for the day. We wanted to see the Parliament because we had only seen it on the television and wanted to see it in reality."

Asked how it felt to be the 100,000th visitor, Mr Corrigan said:

"Great. It's brilliant to be here," adding quickly, "and we'll drink that when we get home!"

Head of Visitor and Outreach Services, Rosemary Everett said:

"The response from the people of Scotland and from tourists visiting Scotland has been overwhelmingly positive.

"So far, we have welcomed an average of around 1500 visitors per day. The building itself is proving to be a very popular attraction with many people taking advantage of the guided tours on non-sitting days.

“However, on business days the public gallery is frequently packed with everyone from school children to groups of senior citizens eager to see how the Parliament works.”

According to market research commissioned by the Parliament, the projected visitor numbers for the first three years are as follows:

780,000 visitors expected in 2004 – 05

767,000 visitors expected in 2005 – 06

759,000 visitors expected in 2006 – 07

The busiest day yet in Parliament was on Wednesday 27 October with 3735 visitors.

Background

The Scottish Parliament building is open free of charge to the public all year round.

Places on specialised guided tours are also available for booking for up until Christmas and into 2005.

More information on visiting Holyrood is available on the Scottish Parliament website at the following address: <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/vli/visitingHolyrood/index.htm>

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Education Centre Opens Today At Holyrood

Members of pupil councils from Royal Mile Primary and Holyrood High were today the first to visit the newly opened Education Centre at the Scottish Parliament. They were welcomed to Holyrood by the Deputy Presiding Officer, Murray Tosh, who introduced the event.

Local MSPs also came along to meet the group as part of the official launch of Parliament's programme of school visits. Following an informal discussion about the Parliament with Members, the young people were given a tour of the building and were shown some of the facilities on offer for school groups.

The education visits programme is now fully booked until the end of June 2005. Nearly 9000 young people will take part in almost 300 groups. Bookings for the 2005 – 06 session will start to be taken in the summer term 2005.

Deputy Presiding Officer Murray Tosh said:

“Bringing young people into Holyrood and showing them how Parliament works is one of the most rewarding parts of our work. And from 1999 onwards, the level of interest in the Parliament's education service has been immense.

“Even though Holyrood can accommodate twice as many school visits as our temporary home on the Mound, all our places are booked up until June 2005. That is a hugely encouraging response from Scotland's schools.”

Ten-year-old Sacha Hamilton, a P6 pupil at Royal Mile Primary, enjoyed her first visit to parliament with her classmates.

She said: "I think it's important that we are able to come and see it and find out about it, because if we don't, when we're a bit older, we're going to wonder 'why was it built?'"

And Ross Walker, 17, an S6 pupil from Holyrood High, agreed it was important for young people to understand how important issues, such as decision-making, affect everyone.

He said: "Not everyone is interested in politics, but it's great to come here and learn how things are done. I've found out today that a lot of what happens is very similar to the pupil council work we do in school. And of course, it's a stunning building with lots to look at."

Background

Those visiting today were:

- Fifteen S2 - S6 pupils from the Holy Rood High pupil council executive committee.
- Ten P3 - P7 from Royal Mile Primary pupil council.

The Education service at Holyrood will be able to accommodate twelve school visits per week compared with only six per week at the Mound. Four visits will take place per day on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursday.

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Scottish Parliament Builds On Success with First Tour Visitors

The first family to gain exclusive access to the new Scottish Parliament have described the building as “inspirational”.

The Milton family, from Oldmeldrum in Aberdeenshire were among 25 lucky people to take part in the first official guided tour of the building on Monday 11 th October.

Ian Milton, wife Alison, and sons Ramsay (13) and 10-year-old twins Findlay and Fraser, visited the Parliament during a short break in Edinburgh and the whole family pronounced themselves “very impressed”.

Ian, who works as a chartered surveyor, commented:

“I know people who had visited the Parliament in the run-up to the opening ceremony and I’ve seen it on TV but I must admit it really is impressive when you actually see it for yourself.

“It’s a bold and inspirational building - the debating chamber is beautiful and the garden lobby area is also really eye-catching.”

Alison’s view was also very positive:

“The whole building demands a reaction”, she said. “It definitely exceeded my expectations – Scotland deserves an impressive building for its Parliament and that’s definitely what has been achieved.”

The younger members of the Milton family also enjoyed their tour and sung the Parliament’s praises.

Eldest son Ramsay commented: “It was good to hear the guide explaining the background to the Parliament – it would be interesting to know what the architect had in mind when he was designing it.”

Twins Findlay and Fraser were also impressed and described the Parliament’s debating chamber as “cool and awesome.”

The launch of the tour service follows Saturday’s successful official opening of the building in the presence of Her Majesty The Queen. Demand for the rest of the year is expected to remain high, with Parliament staff already receiving bookings up to Christmas Eve.

The tours last for 45 minutes and provide a detailed commentary on the building itself, from its design to the artwork on the walls, and the history of the Scottish Parliament from devolution to elections. Visitors can also expect to gain an insight into the day-to-day workings of the Parliament.

Starting from the main public area of the Parliament building, visitors are taken to the floor of the Chamber to see where the MSPs meet to debate and decide on the issues that matter to the people of Scotland .

In the Chamber, visitors can view a number of striking elements which include an oak beam ceiling reminiscent of early boat-building principles.

The tours include visits to one of the six Committee Rooms – where MSPs take evidence from witnesses, scrutinise legislation and conduct inquiries - and go further into the building to allow views of the MSPs' office accommodation and historic Queensberry House. Visitors can also explore some of the most eye-catching areas of the building, including the Garden Lobby, glazed walkway and black and white corridor, where MSPs are interviewed by the media.

Up to four tours every hour will run at the Parliament, each accommodating a maximum of 25 people. Until the end of the Parliament's current October recess and during future recess periods, the tours will run seven days a week.

At all other times when the Parliament is sitting, the tours will run on Mondays and Fridays and at weekends.

The tours cost £3.50 for adults, £1.75 for concessions and there is no charge for children under the age of five or support workers/carers accompanying a disabled person. There are a range of family ticket prices and a 10 per cent reduction for large groups of 25 or more.

The charges have been set at a level to cover the cost of operating the professional tours.

The service is run by a pool of 100 guides from the Scottish Tourist Guides Association and Mercat Tours. Initially, tours will be given in English and the intention is to offer tours in other languages by next year.

In addition to the guided tours, all visitors to the Parliament can freely access the public areas, view an exhibition about the Parliament or make use of the shop, public café, crèche and Visitor Information Desk.

On business days, members of the public can book free tickets to see Parliament in action in committees or meetings of the full Parliament. This is a very popular option and booking in advance is recommended. On non-business days, the Chamber and Committee Room public galleries are open for visitors to see these remarkable spaces and staff are available to answer questions.

A massive 32,982 visitors passed through the Scottish Parliament's doors in the four weeks since the new building opened its doors to the public on September 7. The figure is almost 3,000 more than those who visited the Parliament at its former George IV Bridge location in the year between May 2003 and April 2004. The public crèche has been used by almost 60 visitors to the building so far.

The Parliament shop has made brisk sales since opening in recent weeks, with the best selling items including a range of postcards depicting the building and The Scottish Parliament Whisky, with both the blend and malt proving popular.

To book a tour, please call telephone (voice): 0131 348 5200

Textphone users are also welcome to contact any of the Scottish Parliament's telephone numbers using the Text Relay service.

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Historic Opening of Holyrood Attracts Global Interest

International interest in the Opening of Holyrood ensured that Parliament's website yesterday attracted visitors from locations all across the world, with people logging on from Guadalajara to Glenrothes, Barcelona to Beijing, Dundee to Dar es Salaam, and Hanoi to Honolulu.

With interest from Aberdeen to Zagreb, the greatest number of hits came from the UK and the United States, with other visitors accessing the site from more than 80 other countries, ranging from Nepal, Qatar and Saint Lucia, to Brazil, China and India.

On the day of the Opening itself and the week running up to it, Parliament's website served more than 375,000 pages, with information about the Opening and latest pictures of the Holyrood building being most popular after the front page itself.

Presiding Officer George Reid said:

“The Opening of Holyrood gave us a chance to show off the range of Scotland’s best talent on the international stage, and the level of interest in Parliament’s work from around the world is a pleasing reflection of our internationalist outlook.

“The day itself lived up to my high expectations for it, and key to that for me was being able to bring people from across the country into the heart of their new Parliament building.”

Peter Lederer, Chairman of Visit Scotland, said:

“The eyes of the world were on us at the weekend and I have no doubt that the successful opening of Holyrood will bring even more visitors to the Capital.”

International public interest was matched by the range of countries which sent representatives to Holyrood on the day. Those who gathered for the day’s events included speakers of Parliaments from Ghana to the Slovak Republic, and consular representatives from over forty countries, ranging from Mongolia to Mexico.

The opening celebrations also attracted international media coverage in countries ranging from Bahrain and China to Australia and Canada.

Background

Records for Parliament's website showed that the greatest interest in the Opening yesterday came from the UK and the United States. The remaining visitors came from more than 80 countries, as follows (largest number first):

Canada, Spain, Netherlands, Germany, Australia, Republic of Korea, Sweden, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Austria, Japan, China, Poland, Denmark, New Zealand, Greece, Ireland, Norway, Singapore, Israel, United Arab Emirates, Luxembourg,

Argentina, Hungary, Iran, Finland, Peru, Portugal, India, Mexico, Russian Federation, the Czech Republic, Thailand, Turkey, Nigeria, Philippines, Brazil, Slovenia, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Ukraine, Malaysia, Iceland, Hong Kong, Cyprus, Croatia, Uruguay, Trinidad and Tobago, Slovakia, Pakistan, Benin, Liechtenstein, Bahrain, Indonesia, Dominican Republic, Serbia and Montenegro, Malta, Colombia, Morocco, Romania, Vietnam, Zimbabwe, British Virgin Islands, Tanzania, Andorra, Saint Lucia, Lithuania, Macau, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Egypt, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Belarus, Puerto Rico, Qatar, Panama, Chile, Nepal and Bulgaria

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Guided Tours Of Holyrood Get Under Way

Visitors will be able to gain exclusive access to the new Scottish Parliament building from Monday 11 October when the official programme of guided tours gets under way.

The Parliament has already been inundated with bookings for the guided tours, which will give the public access to private areas for the first time – such as the floor of the Debating Chamber.

The launch of the service follows Saturday's successful official Opening of the building, performed by Her Majesty the Queen.

Thousands of spectators turned out to witness the historic day and enjoy the packed programme of entertainment and events laid on along the Royal Mile and around the Parliament building.

The first round of the professionally-run guided tours programme, setting off from the building's Main Hall tomorrow morning, is fully booked and demand for the rest of the year is expected to remain high, with Parliament staff already receiving bookings up to Christmas Eve.

The tours last for 45 minutes and provide a detailed commentary on the building itself, from its design to the artwork on the walls, and the history of the Scottish Parliament from devolution to elections. Visitors can also expect to gain a deeper insight into the day-to-day workings of the Parliament.

Starting from the main public area of the Parliament building, visitors are taken to the floor of the Chamber to see where the MSPs meet to debate and decide on the issues that matter to the people of Scotland.

In the Chamber, visitors can view a number of striking elements which include a ceiling reminiscent of the hammer-beam roof of Old Parliament Hall, and also echoing early boat-building principles.

The tours include visits to one of the six Committee Rooms – where MSPs take evidence from witnesses, scrutinise legislation and conduct inquiries – and go further into the building to allow views of the Members' office block and historic Queensberry House. Visitors can also explore some of the most eye-catching areas of the building, including the Garden Lobby, the glazed walkway and the black and white corridor, where MSPs are often interviewed by the media.

Up to four tours every hour will run at the Parliament, each accommodating a maximum of 25 people. Until the end of the Parliament's current October recess and during future recess periods, the tours will run seven days a week.

At all other times when the Parliament is sitting, the tours will run on Mondays and Fridays and at weekends.

The tours will cost £3.50 for adults, £1.75 for concessions and there will be no charge for children under the age of five or support workers/carers accompanying a disabled person. There will be a range of family ticket prices and a 10 per cent reduction for large groups of 25 or more.

The charges have been set at a level to cover the cost of operating the professional tours.

The service will be run by a pool of 100 guides from the Scottish Tourist Guides Association and Mercat Tours. Initially, tours will be given in English and the intention is to offer tours in other languages by next year.

In addition to the guided tours, all visitors to the Parliament can freely access the public areas, view an exhibition about the Parliament or make use of the shop, public café, crèche and Visitor Information Desk. On business days, the public can book free tickets to see Parliament in action in Committees or meetings of the full Parliament.

This is a very popular option and booking in advance is recommended. On non-business days, the Chamber Gallery and Committee Rooms are open for visitors to see these remarkable spaces, and staff are available to answer questions.

A massive 32,982 visitors have passed through the Scottish Parliament's doors in the four weeks since the new building opened its doors to the public on 7 September. The figure is almost 3,000 more than those who visited the Parliament at its former George IV Bridge location in the year between May 2003 and April 2004. The public crèche has been used by almost 60 visitors to the building so far.

The Parliament shop has made brisk sales since opening in recent weeks, with the best selling items including a range of postcards depicting the building and The Scottish Parliament Whisky, with both the blend and malt proving popular.

Philip Riddle, Chief Executive of VisitScotland said:

“The new Parliament building is an exciting addition to a range of fantastic visitor attractions in Scotland.

“We expect there will be a huge interest in the Holyrood building from home and abroad.”

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Her Majesty the Queen First to Sign Commemorative Book at Parliament Opening



The commemorative book

Her Majesty the Queen will be the first guest at the Opening of Holyrood to sign one of two specially-designed commemorative books, gifted by the National Archives of Scotland. Saturday's visitors will then be able to add their signatures to the books, forming a historic record of the day.

The books were hand bound by conservators Donald Campbell (from East Calder) and James Thorburn (from Edinburgh), while the inscriptions were commissioned from an Aberdeenshire calligrapher Catherine Whiteman.

The inspiration for the cover of the book to be signed by The Queen is the inscription from the Mace presented by Her Majesty The Queen at the opening of the first session of the Scottish Parliament in 1999. "*Wisdom, Justice, Compassion and Integrity*" are impressed upon the book flowing across from front to back in English and Gaelic.

The calligraphy is Celtic with a clean uncial form (a rounded form of letters) which has been used to provide a bold legible hand. Catherine Whiteman also created the endpapers in the front and back of the book. These are handmade Suminagashi, marbled in silver grey, complementing the covers. Suminagashi is a traditional Eastern technique based upon producing smoke-like patterns on paper using a combination of sumi ink and water.

The materials and methods are all traditional but the design, colours and approach are modern.

George Reid, Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, said: "We are grateful to the National Archives of Scotland for producing these quite stunning books to help mark the occasion and it's a tremendous honour that Her Majesty The Queen will sign one."

George MacKenzie, Keeper of the National Archives of Scotland, said: "We are delighted and proud to have made the visitors' books for the Parliament. Our conservators have married the best of Scottish crafts and materials to produce books which will last for

centuries. They will carry the names of the distinguished visitors and, in time, will become one of the records to be preserved in the National Archives of Scotland”.

The National Archives of Scotland, located in Edinburgh, holds records spanning from the 12th to the 21st Century, touching on virtually every aspect of Scottish life. The archives require over 70 kilometres of shelving to store all the records in its care.

The earliest full Parliamentary records date back as far as 1466. As well as the public and legal records of Scotland, the National Archives of Scotland holds local and private archives and adds to them by special purchases and by accepting gifts from public and private sources.

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Streets Come Alive With Entertainment for Holyrood Opening

Thousands of spectators are expected to line the Royal Mile and congregate around the Parliament and its neighbour Our Dynamic Earth, for Saturday's Opening of the new Scottish Parliament building by Her Majesty The Queen. (See full media briefing note attached).

The streets around Holyrood in Edinburgh will come alive with entertainment from a range of colourful top performers – including fire eaters, stilt walkers, pipers and drummers.

The packed cultural programme of events unveiled by the Scottish Parliament has something to appeal to all ages, mixing traditional Scottish entertainment with performances which draw inspiration from across the globe.

The entertainment will get under way at 9.15am on the Royal Mile with the Scottish Youth Theatre's re-enactment of pre-1707 Scotland outside St Giles Cathedral at Parliament Square, and will continue throughout the day, culminating with a pyrotechnics performance in Holyrood's landscaped gardens just after 5pm. (See full entertainment programme attached).

Bands entertaining the crowds prior to the start of the Riding event down the Royal Mile – an event which will bring together 1,000 people from communities across the country – will include C Ian An Drumma, an energetic and rhythmic band from Glasgow who have recently toured America, and Clan Wallace, best known for their mixture of Scottish contemporary and tribal music.

Also on the Royal Mile, there will be poetry recitals by members of the World Burns Federation and street performances by the Edinburgh-based arts company Te Pooka.

Once the Riding event has made its way down to the Parliament, the focus of the entertainment will shift to the Holyrood end of the Royal Mile, where a host of performances will continue from midday to 5pm.

The Chamber Ceremony itself will feature performances by Young Musician of the Year Nicola Benedetti and singer-songwriter Eddi Reader.

Commenting on the cultural programme of events, Scottish Parliament Presiding Officer George Reid MSP said: "We were inundated with offers from a wide range of Scottish entertainers wanting to perform on opening day and this has allowed us to put together a truly diverse programme of events.

"There will be something to suit all tastes, from musicians to fire-eaters, and the acts range from professional entertainers to representatives from amateur community groups

"We are hoping that this multi-cultural programme will encourage people from all walks of life to travel to Edinburgh to enjoy the unique atmosphere of this day."

During Saturday afternoon, a diverse range of entertainers will perform for the crowds in three outdoor venues – the amphitheatre outside Our Dynamic Earth and in the Parliament's landscaped gardens and amphitheatre.

The entertainment will come to a close at 5pm when Te Pooka will give a pyrotechnics performance, including a Saltire fire sculpture, on the water feature outside the public entrance to Holyrood.

The afternoon programme of entertainment for the public comprises of the following:

Landscaped Stage within Gardens of the New Scottish Parliament

The popular Lathallan School Pipe Band, which regularly takes part in parades at Balmoral Castle, Scone Palace, Blair Castle and Highland Games, will be among those providing entertainment at Holyrood's landscaped gardens.

Lathallan School, based in Johnshaven in the North-East of Scotland, has had a reputation for piping and drumming spanning more than 50 years.

The crowds will also be able to enjoy performances from the Edinburgh Military Tattoo Dancers, singer and Celtic harpist Katie Targett Adams and Blazin Fiddles, a group of seven musicians whose aim is to celebrate Highland and Island fiddle music.

Amphitheatre within Gardens of the New Scottish Parliament

The Scottish Youth Theatre, which will be performing on the Royal Mile earlier in the day, will begin the entertainment at the amphitheatre.

There will also be poetry and recitals from the World Burns Federation (North of Scotland) and storytelling from Netherbow Storytellers – an Edinburgh-based group which aims to keep the art of storytelling alive.

The Martians – of which Fame Academy winner David Sneddon was a member prior to entering the TV competition – will also be performing. The group, consisting of acoustic guitarists and singers, has toured all over Europe.

Outside Our Dynamic Earth

Entertainment outside Holyrood's neighbour will include a range of Scottish bands including the four tenors group, Caledon. The group's recent performances include the First Minister's Reception at the MTV Awards and at the United Nations in the presence of Kofi Annan.

Clan Wallace, a band which is involved in a range of projects designed to mark the 700 th anniversary of the death of William Wallace in 2005, will provide a mixture of Scottish contemporary and tribal music.

Members of the Edinburgh-based arts company, Te Pooka, will also give a spectacular array of performances ranging from fire breathing, stilt walking, street theatre and live drumming.

Talented performers across the length and breadth of Scotland will be involved in entertainment for Saturday's opening. Below are brief backgrounds on a selection of the groups:

Caledon

Caledon is a music group consisting of four tenors – Alan Beck, Jamie McDougall, Ivan Sharpe and their Musical Director, Michael Barnett. As childhood friends, the five men set up Caledon with the main aim of celebrating Scots song, rescuing it from neglect and making it accessible to a new generation of Scots both at home and abroad. Caledon has not only toured internationally but has performed at the Edinburgh Festival, BBC Children in Need, the 2003 Scotland European cup qualifier against Germany at Hampden Park, T-in-the Park, the First Minister's Reception at the MTV Awards and at the United Nations in the presence of Kofi Annan.

Clan An Drumma

The title of this group means “Children of the Drum”. They describe themselves as an exciting, energetic and rhythmic band from Glasgow. Clann An Drumma's thunderous approach to percussion is what makes them distinct from “just another pipe and drums band” and gives a brilliant flair to the traditional pieces, also flavoured with enchanting vocals. They play worldwide and have just recently toured America before going on to Spain and Norway.

Clan Wallace

The Clan Wallace band – whose music is a mixture of Scottish contemporary and tribal - is involved in international media/cultural projects to bring many thousands of people to Scotland in 2005 to celebrate the 700 th anniversary of the death of William Wallace and also the 10 th anniversary of the release of the film, “Braveheart”. The band has toured internationally and plays to audiences of up to 20,000 in Europe and has a large international appeal. The band has also won the ‘Best of the Fringe’ award and was the Finale performance at the end of the Fringe Celebrations 2003. Several CDs, a concert video, DVD video albums and DVD video singles have been released.

Commun Na Clarsaich

The Clarsaich Society exists to promote Scotland 's oldest instrument and to provide help and advice to players. It has 11 local branches throughout the UK, a special interest group for wire strung harp enthusiasts and a HQ/central unit which operates a harp hire service and music sales. It also organises the Edinburgh International Harp Festival each spring.

Danceihayami

Danceihayami, founded in 2003, is Scotland 's first cross-cultural professional dance company with its aesthetic roots in Bharatanatyam (South Indian dance). Artistic Director, Priya Shrikumar, leads this multi-national company of dancers creating culturally diverse works with musicians from Asian, Scottish and Western Classical roots. Next year, they are hoping to tour Scotland, Europe and New Zealand.

Gizzen Briggs

Gizzen Briggs is a traditional music group and boasts some of the most talented young, traditional musicians in the Highlands today. The group consists of pupils and teachers from Tain Royal Academy and musicians from Kinlochbervie High School and Fortrose Academy. The group has three international tours under its belt, three recordings and has played all over Scotland, including at a Reception in the Scottish Parliament in June 2000 to mark the end of the Parliament's first term.

Katie Targett-Adams

As an acclaimed singer and Celtic harpist with three CDs to her credit, Katie Targett Adams became the Music and Culture Icon for Scotland in 2003 at the age of 23. Her contemporary interpretation of Scottish music and tradition has led her to represent Scotland at Tartan Day in New York, appear live on TV and radio and before audiences of 35,000 overseas. Katie has been invited back to China on 10 October 2004 to perform for the First Minister of Scotland, sing in the Forbidden City in Beijing and star in the Shanghai Baoshan International Festival.

Lathallan School Pipe Band

Lathallan School is a private, independent, fee-paying boarding school for girls and boys. It is located in Johnshaven, serving the communities of Aberdeenshire, Kincardineshire and Angus in the North East of Scotland. Lathallan School has had a reputation for piping and drumming spanning more than 50 years. It is in high demand and regularly takes part in parades at Balmoral Castle, Scone Palace, Blair Castle, local fetes and highland games.

National Youth Choir Of Scotland

The National Youth Choir of Scotland (NYCoS) was formed in 1996 to provide an opportunity for young singers in Scotland to participate in choral singing at a national level. Around 100 singers aged 18 – 24 are recruited annually for the choir. Recent performances by NYCoS have included the MTV Europe Awards, BBC Proms in the Park, the Edinburgh International Festival and the Grant Park Festival, Chicago.

Rose Street Quartet

The Rose Street Quartet is a string group which has been performing together for the last six years. Beyond the core quartet, the group has access to a pool of around 20 highly experienced local chamber musicians, ensuring an ever-high standard of performance. The group typically plays for private and corporate functions, meals and lunches, where live music is used to contribute to the atmosphere of the event. The quartet's classical performances range from Bach instrumentals and Mozart divertimenti, Strauss waltzes and Operatic arias. Its contemporary repertoire focuses mainly on lighter styles, including arrangements of jazz standards, ragtime and tango.

Saor Patrol

Saor Patrol's vibrant pipe tunes and drum rhythms please and even excite many a crowd. The group has a very unique sound and style, combining old roots and new blood. The band consists of Charlie Allan on the pipes, Wayne Manning on the snare, Kev Johnson on the drums, Stevie Kilpatrick on the bass and Robbie MacFarlane on percussion.

Scottish Fiddle Orchestra

The Scottish Fiddle Orchestra is one of Scotland's foremost traditional music organisations. The Orchestra was formed in 1980, deriving its origins from Fiddlers' Rallies which were – and are – held throughout the country. The SFO – with a membership of around 150 – brings keen and interested musicians together to provide a series of concerts in main cities and works together to create the finest possible standard of orchestral fiddle playing without detracting from the strong traditional strains of music. It has settled into a sequence of five main concerts each year – in the Royal Concert Hall, Glasgow ; Usher Hall, Edinburgh ; Music Hall, Aberdeen ; Barbican, York and the Barbican Centre, London.

Scottish Youth Theatre

The Scottish Youth Theatre is an organisation which focuses its activities on youth, providing a professional background to assist, develop and promote young people, giving them life skills required to make it in the world. The demand for the company's services remains at an unbelievably high level, taking it from one end of Scotland to the other and beyond.

Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust

Scottish Traditions of Dance Trust (STDT) is the only national organisation which exists to promote, research, conserve and foster all of Scotland's dance traditions. Everyone dances at some point in their lives and STDT is the national advocate for the enjoyment of all forms of Scottish traditional dance. They have a variety of groups but the Edinburgh Tattoo Highland Ceilidh Dancers rate amongst the best in the world and will perform at the Tattoo again this year. Other groups include Traditional Step Dancers – percussive dance, originating in Scotland – Highland Dancers, Early Dancers, Shetland, Hebridean, Old Time, Orkney, Country and Military Dancers.

Te Pooka

Te POOKa is an Edinburgh-based Arts Company specialising in world class fire performance, physical theatre, music, drumming and percussion as well as workshops and educational outreach programmes across Scotland, the UK and abroad. One of the group's specialities is spectacular fire-shows featuring fire spinning, fire eating and fire breathing set against exploding pyrotechnic backdrops and original musical scores.

The Martians

The Martians consists of three to four acoustic guitarists/singers, with the group's trademark being that one of the singers has a 'unique' singing voice. He is described as singing as though he has just been sucking helium. The group, which has toured all over Europe, performs well known songs with audience participation and much hilarity. David Sneddon, the Fame Academy winner, was in this band just prior to entering the TV competition.

Unusual Suspects

Unusual Suspects is the brainchild of David Milligan (piano) and Corrina Hewat (harp) and is a Scottish Fiddle Orchestra – Big Band Style – consisting of musicians playing a wide

selection of traditional and modern pieces, ranging from delightful vocals to full-blown swing. The group has toured the length and breadth of the country to standing ovations.

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Scotland's Poet Laureate Composes Poem For Holyrood Opening

Scotland's Poet Laureate Edwin Morgan has penned a special poem to mark the opening of the new Scottish Parliament building.

The 84-year-old poet, who is suffering from cancer, will be unable to attend the ceremony personally but poet and playwright Liz Lochhead has agreed to perform the first public reading of the poem before The Queen and invited guests at the event on Saturday, October 9.

Earlier this year, Mr Morgan was asked by the Parliament's Presiding Officer George Reid to compose a poem to mark the official Opening.

Speaking ahead of the event, Mr Morgan said: "I'm sad I won't be at the opening but I'm looking forward to hearing and watching the events on what will be a very special day."

He added: "I haven't seen the building for myself but I have looked at photographs and I like the look of it. I know there has been much criticism of the new Parliament but I think that will gradually fade when people realise what a remarkable building they have.

"It is a very modern building in terms of its architecture and my poem reflects that and my hopes are that it will be a building where good debates will take place."

Mr Morgan revealed it took several months to think about his poem for the Opening but just a week to put his thoughts to paper and write the 50-line poem, which will take four minutes to read. The content of the poem is currently being kept under wraps.

He added: "It was a great privilege to be made the national poet of Scotland and I'm delighted to be doing the job."

Ms Lochhead, 56, said she felt honoured to be standing in for the Poet Laureate to read the 'wonderful poem'.

She said: "It's a huge responsibility which I will try to carry out as well as I can and with as light a heart as possible. It's wonderful to be taking part on a great day in history.



Edwin Morgan and Liz Lochhead

Final preparations are being made for the event in the Scottish Parliament Debating Chamber, which will bring together around 300 people from all walks of life across the country, along with Scotland's 129 MSPs, to witness the official Opening by Her Majesty The Queen.

The programme for the official opening has been devised to reflect the cultural diversity in Scotland and includes performances from some of Scotland's most talented musicians.

Eddi Reader, one of Scotland's most successful female singer-songwriters, will be involved in the proceedings.

Along with leading folk musicians Phil Cunningham (whistle), Colin Reid (guitar), John McCusker (whistle) and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Reader will perform the song 'Wild Mountainside' and – along with a group of Gaelic singers, the National Youth Choir of Scotland and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra – she will also sing 'Auld Lang Syne'.

She said: "I'm extremely honoured to have been asked to perform at this historic event.

"I think that Scotland is beautiful and I'm very proud of everything it has given me. I'm particularly pleased to be singing this gorgeous song 'Wild Mountainside' which is about how beautiful Scotland really is.

"Singing this song, here in the new Parliament building, is my prayer for all who work for us in this place, now and in the future, to be magnificent in the job of caring for Scotland."

Also providing entertainment for the guests will be BBC Young Musician of the Year 2004, violinist Nicola Benedetti from West Kilbride, who will perform an arrangement from

'Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso' by Saint Saens, accompanied by the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

Nicola said: "I am truly honoured to be asked to perform at the opening of our Nation's parliament. October 9 will be a historic day for the Scottish people, and to be part of this celebration will be both exciting and rewarding.

"This year has been amazing for me as a musician and as an individual, and this unforgettable event will be one of the most memorable experiences in which I have had the opportunity to be involved."

Gaelic plays a key element of next week's ceremony, with Presiding Officer George Reid set to formally welcome the Queen to the Parliament in English and Gaelic.

A group of Psalm singers, Seinneadairean-shalm Leòdhais, from the Isle of Lewis in the Western Isles will sing Psalm 121: 1-5 in front of guests in the Chamber at Holyrood.

The ceremony will open with a fanfare performed by the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, which will mark the entrance of the Scottish Parliament's mace bearer, followed by archers, pursuivants and heralds.

Inside the Chamber, The Queen will be joined by the Duke of Edinburgh; Lord Lyon King of Arms; the Duke of Hamilton bearing the Crown of Scotland; the Captain General; and the Parliament's Deputy Presiding Officers.

The day will begin with a short ceremonial event at Parliament Hall, the seat of the first Scottish Parliament, which the Queen will attend prior to the opening ceremony.

This will be followed by a "Riding" (procession) down the Royal Mile to Holyrood, which will involve schoolchildren, community groups and representatives of civic society from across Scotland, as well as MSPs.

Bands and groups from across Scotland will entertain the thousands of spectators expected to turn out on the day. Between 1pm and 5pm, the public can enjoy a range of entertainment, including Scottish dance, music, poetry, drama and recitals, within the gardens of Holyrood and Our Dynamic Earth Amphitheatre, neighbours of the Parliament.

Each MSP has been asked to nominate one person from their constituency who they believe has made a contribution to the lives of other Scottish people, to participate in the Riding event.

[Opening Poem by Edwin Morgan](#)

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Holyrood Opening Marked by a Day of Celebrations

A special programme of events bringing together people from all walks of life has been organised to mark the official Opening of the Scottish Parliament.

Entertainment will start at 9.15am along the Royal Mile, with the Riding beginning at 11am . At the conclusion of this historic procession, the Opening Ceremony of the new Scottish Parliament building in the Chamber at Holyrood will follow.

Thousands of spectators who are expected to witness the day on Saturday, October 9, will be entertained by a programme aimed at reflecting the diversity of Scottish culture.

Among the highlights of the day, will be the official Opening Ceremony of the Holyrood building in the presence of Her Majesty The Queen and the spectacular Riding event down the Royal Mile, which will bring together 1,000 people from communities across the country.

Crowds will be entertained by a variety of performances from a wide range of Scottish musicians and actors, and the Opening Ceremony will include performances from BBC Young Musician of the Year 2004, violinist Nicola Benedetti from West Kilbride and singer-songwriter Eddi Reader.

A specially commissioned poem penned by Scotland 's Poet Laureate Edwin Morgan will also be read during the ceremony by fellow poet Liz Lochhead.

Below is a summary of events which will mark the Official Opening:-

Parliament Hall

Her Majesty The Queen, accompanied by His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh, will arrive at Parliament Hall, where they will be met by Lesley Hinds, Lord Provost and Lord Lieutenant of the City of Edinburgh ; First Minister Jack McConnell; and Scottish Parliament Presiding Officer George Reid.

The dignitaries will attend a 20-minute ceremonial event which is being held to reflect the historic change in the Scottish political landscape over the past 300 years.

The ceremony will be opened with the fanfare introduction "Royale" composed by Major W. Jackson.

During the event, Jack McConnell, Nicola Sturgeon, David McLetchie, Robin Harper and Jim Wallace will be invited to make short speeches. Also attending will be the Lord Lyon King of Arms and the Duke of Hamilton, bearing the Crown of Scotland.

Following the ceremony, the Presiding Officer and the First Minister will escort Her Majesty The Queen and His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh to meet members of the Scottish Youth Theatre.

The Riding

The Riding down the Royal Mile to Holyrood is a key element of the Opening Ceremony programme and will feature schoolchildren, community groups and representatives of civic society from every constituency in Scotland who were nominated by their MSPs. The 1,000-strong event, which will span the length of the Royal Mile and last around 30 minutes, will be attended by Sir Sean Connery, along with bands from across Scotland .

The start of the Riding which marks the centuries-old Scots tradition of Parliament and people working in public partnership will be marked by a Royal Air Force flypast at 11.01am .

The Riding leaves from Parliament Square West and proceeds down the Royal Mile before arriving at the Holyrood building for the official ceremony. The Crown of Scotland will follow on at the end of the Riding.

Holyrood

The First Minister joins the other political leaders in the line-up inside Holyrood to await the arrival of the Royal guests. The Duke of Hamilton bearing the Crown of Scotland will also arrive at Holyrood.

Tour

Her Majesty The Queen and His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh will take a tour of the Parliament building which will include the office of Shiona Baird, the Scottish Green Party MSP for North East Scotland. This will allow the Royal guests to see the new accommodation facilities available to the Members.

Chamber

The Royal Scottish National Orchestra will perform a fanfare to mark the beginning of the official Opening Ceremony in the presence of Her Majesty The Queen in the Chamber.

The Opening programme will include performances from BBC Young Musician of the Year 2004, violinist Nicola Benedetti from West Kilbride , singer-songwriter Eddi Reader, and will include Liz Lochhead reading a poem penned by Scotland 's poet laureate Edwin Morgan.

Following the ceremony, Her Majesty The Queen, accompanied by the His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh, will meet guests and staff. Before departing, Her Majesty The Queen will also unveil the 'Honours of Scotland' sculpture gifted by the Incorporation of Goldsmiths of the City of Edinburgh. The sculpture of Scottish regalia has been crafted by Graham Stewart from Dunblane.

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Parliament's Corporate Body Responds to the Report of the Holyrood Inquiry

The Presiding Officer and the First Minister last year jointly commissioned Lord Fraser of Carmyllie to lead the Inquiry into the Holyrood Building Project. Lord Fraser laid his Report before Parliament today at 10am.

What follows is a formal response to the Report by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (SPCB):

The Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body wishes to thank Lord Fraser for his report on the Holyrood Building Project. The SPCB acknowledges the efforts made by Lord Fraser and his team and the achievement involved in analysing the vast amount of evidence submitted to his Inquiry and producing this detailed report.

Time will be required to study and consider what lessons are to be learned. What is clear from a first reading, is that Lord Fraser has recognised not only the complexity of the building, but also the complications and difficulties this created in its construction.

The SPCB acknowledges the comments made by Lord Fraser on aspects of the management of the project since it assumed responsibility in June 1999. It will be considering very carefully the implications for future governance.

The Corporate Body will also, of course, take careful note of the outcome of the debate in Parliament on Lord Fraser's report. They also share Lord Fraser's hope "that the excellence of the parliamentary activity within the building will reflect the quality of the structure", and accept that the painful lessons of its procurement must be learned.

Background

The SPCB is responsible for ensuring that the Parliament is provided with the property, staff and services it requires. In 1999 legal responsibility for the Holyrood Project was transferred from the Scottish Office to the SPCB.

The SPCB is currently chaired by the Parliament's Presiding Officer, George Reid MSP, and its membership currently consists of Duncan McNeil MSP, Andrew Welsh MSP, Robert Brown MSP and John Scott MSP. In 1999 it was chaired by the then Presiding Officer, Sir David Steel, and the membership was Des McNulty MSP, Andrew Welsh MSP, Robert Brown MSP and John Young MSP.

[Presiding Officers letter to Finance Committee](#)

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Sir Sean Connery Confirmed for Opening of Holyrood

On the day the Parliament has announced a programme of public entertainment to mark Holyrood's formal opening on October 9, Sir Sean Connery has accepted his invitation to the day.

After confirming by telephone to the Presiding Officer, Sir Sean said:

"I always said that I would want to be here for the opening of this marvellous building. It's taken some manoeuvring of my plans, but how could I miss this? The building marks a new start for Scottish politics and that deserves a celebration. We need to recapture the optimism felt by many Scots in 1999 and encourage the political parties as well as the media to work together for Scotland."

Sir Sean will be part of the 1,000-strong Riding down the Royal Mile, along with bands from across Scotland, which forms just one strand of the programme of entertainment for the day. Details of the Chamber event, which includes Nicola Benedetti and Eddi Reader, will be announced in the next two weeks.

Presiding Officer, George Reid, said:

"This is a day first and foremost for the Scottish people and many have already responded with enthusiasm, overwhelming us with offers of live performances.

"As a result, the programme we have been able to put together is an entertaining mixture of experienced professional entertainers, younger people, community organisations and talented individuals.

"All of them will celebrate the diversity of Scottish culture and bring to the day an element of excitement and history which everyone can enjoy."

Scottish dance, music, poetry, drama and recitals will be performed in Parliament Square, on the Royal Mile, and in the Parliament's landscaped garden area to entertain the thousands of members of the public who are expected to visit the Royal Mile on the day.

Our Dynamic Earth, neighbours of the Parliament, will also be open to the public as a venue for some of the entertainment.

Some of the highlights of the programme include:

- Guests being greeted at Parliament Square by a Scottish Youth Theatre re-enactment of part of Scotland's past before 1707
- Bands entertaining the crowds along the Royal Mile prior to the start of the Riding, including:
 - the Gutter Slippers who played in New York's Central Park as part of this year's Tartan Day celebrations.

- Clan An Drumma, the energetic and rhythmic band from Glasgow who have recently toured America, before going on to Spain and Norway.
- Clan Wallace, the Finale performance at the end of the Fringe Celebrations 2003 and are known for their mixture of Scottish contemporary and tribal music.
- Caledon will perform in the landscaped gardens. A music group of 4 tenors whose recent performances include the First Minister's Reception at the MTV Awards and at the United Nations in the presence of Kofi Annan.
- Military and brass bands from each region of Scotland leading the Riding.

Background

Further details on the programme for the Chamber and the guest list will be released in the next two weeks.

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Committees Prepare to Start Work at Holyrood

Committee business gets under way for the first time in the new Parliament building on Thursday. The Finance Committee and the Environment and Rural Development Committee will sit in the morning, while the Health, Justice 1 and Justice 2 Committees will meet in the afternoon.

Members will meet in their new purpose-built surroundings to consider matters including the Water Services (Scotland) Bill and The Fire (Scotland) Bill.

The new Holyrood building includes six committee rooms, compared to four in Parliament's temporary accommodation, and all are equipped with broadcast facilities which will enable viewers to follow all committee business. All meetings will also be available live by webcast across Scotland and internationally.

The committee rooms can accommodate between 29 and 69 members of the media and public, far exceeding facilities in Parliament's interim accommodation. A crèche is also available at Holyrood for visitors watching business and for witnesses giving evidence to Parliament's committees.

Deputy Presiding Officer Trish Godman said:

"I'm delighted that our hard working committee members have at last got modern and appropriate facilities to carry out their important work. Our committees are the scrutinising heart of the Parliament and the key to devolution. We are all looking forward to getting down to business for the first time in our new surroundings."

Convener of the Justice 2 Committee Annabel Goldie said:

"There is no question that these purpose built modern facilities are not only highly attractive, they are extremely stylish and provide a very acceptable working environment.

"While our previous committee room facilities were perfectly workable and we were glad to have them, they were never designed for the activities of Parliament. What strikes me about these committee rooms is how light and spacious they are."

Robert Brown, the Convener of the Education Committee added:

"The difference between our new committee rooms and our previous surroundings is like night and day. These facilities are very impressive and I think make a good working environment for members."

Background

All Parliament business is available by live webcast at www.holyrood.tv

Thursday's committee business will include evidence taking by the Finance Committee on the Water Services (Scotland) Bill. Witnesses include Alan Sutherland, Scotland's Water Industry Commissioner, and Dr John Hargreaves, Scottish Water's Chief Executive.

The Justice 2 Committee will also take evidence on the Fire (Scotland) Bill, which aims to deliver a modernised fire and rescue service which responds to the particular demands of the 21st Century and contributes to building a 'Safer Scotland'.

There are 16 subject committees which are: Audit, Communities, Education, Enterprise and Culture, Environment and Rural Development, Equal Opportunities, European and External Relations, Finance, Health, Justice 1, Justice 2, Local Government and Transport, Procedures, Public Petitions, Standards, Subordinate Legislation. There are also currently three private bill committees: Edinburgh Tram (Line One) Bill, Edinburgh Tram (Line Two) Bill and Waverley Rail (Scotland) Bill.

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Holyrood's First Day of Business

The Scottish Parliament today welcomed over 900 visitors to the historic first sitting of MSPs in the new Holyrood complex.

The main debating Chamber's viewing gallery was full to capacity for the opening debate. Two hundred guests had booked their seats in advance and the remaining 25 seats were allocated to the first members of the public through the doors.

While the focus was on the MSPs getting the debate underway in the main Chamber, the first day of business was also keenly anticipated by hundreds of Parliament staff, all with important jobs to ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the parliament.

With hundreds of guests making their first visit to Holyrood, it meant a busy opening morning for the Parliament's visitor services team. David Brownlie-Marshall was one of the five visitor services officers to greet the members of the public as they entered the main public area.

After the morning session visitors had taken their seats, he said: "It seems to have been going very smoothly.

"I wasn't nervous at all about this being the first day of business. We've all been looking forward to today and we've done our training run, so we were ready."

Visitors began streaming through the Parliament's main entrance just after 9am. One of the first to arrive was Mike Dougan, visitor services assistant manager at Our Dynamic Earth, which neighbours the Parliamentary complex.

Mr Dougan was invited over to take in the sights and sounds of the first day of Parliament, and, after watching the building develop from the outside, was impressed with what he found inside.

He said: "The parliament is really superb. I've been watching the complex going up over the last three years and it is as impressive inside as it is outside. I really like the main entrance, because the interior design is stunning and it's so vast and welcoming."

Visitors from all over the country arrived clutching their tickets for the opening morning, including Jane Diack from Banchory, who was keen to enjoy the Parliament's first day in session.

She said: "I've been very excited about coming to see the new building, and as soon as I came in, I thought it was absolutely wonderful.

"I wanted to be here for the first day and looking around, I was struck by the quality of the architecture. It's definitely something that's going to last."

Visitors were also drawn to the Scottish Parliament's gift shop, where retail officer Annie Burgess oversaw a brisk opening morning of business.

She said: "Everything's been fine today. People that have been coming in have been very impressed with the shop and the products we are selling. So far, it's teddy bears and chocolates that have been the most popular."

Security has been a key concern in the Parliament project, but security team manager Robert Duncan insisted there was no opening-day nerves.

He said: "Everything has been fine. We have been having live tests in the run-up to today and any problems that were identified have been addressed."

"This is a new building, but the way we have been looking at it is that this is the same job that we were doing when we were at the interim accommodation on the Mound, and everyone in my team has got the confidence and the skills we need to fulfil our duties."

The first day of business was also a big occasion for members of the Parliamentary Prayer Scotland group, who, in their red blazers, have been a regular sight in the main chamber's viewing gallery since the return of devolution five years ago.

Director Anne McIntyre led a group of 30 members, drawn from across Scotland, who took their seats in the main chamber.

She said: "We were keen to come here for the opening, and we're delighted as the main chamber is absolutely stunning. It was momentous to be here for the first day in Parliament."

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Corporate Body Provides Finance Committee with June Report on Holyrood

Presiding Officer George Reid today wrote to Parliament's Finance Committee with the final update on cost and programme for Holyrood before the summer recess. He also set out the latest construction progress on site, further details of Parliament's migration plans, and how the SPCB intends to manage and report on the conclusion of contracts post-completion.

Presiding Officer George Reid said:

"The move to Parliament's new building is now imminent. Six weeks from today staff will move in, and five weeks after that Parliament's business will start at Holyrood.

"Everyone in the Parliament will no doubt share my happiness that this long and difficult process is coming to an end. I welcome the very positive reviews the building its elf has received, and I look forward to getting down to business in our new home shortly."

Key points

- The overall estimated final cost is unchanged at a maximum of £430.5m.
- There is no change in the overall programme. Occupation of the building will take place this summer.
- Since May's report, £6.8m has been moved from the risk reserve to construction commitment, reflecting the predicted materialisation of costs.
- Security and facilities management staff are already on site at Holyrood. The rest of Parliament's staff will start to move to the new building on August 2.
- Work to prepare public facilities for an estimated 700,000 visitors a year will run from August 2 up to the first day of business on September 8.
- The Holyrood Progress Group will continue to meet during the final stages of completion and migration, and expects to hold its final meeting at the end of September.
- The SPCB will continue to report to the Finance Committee on the contractual issues and final account settlements until the project reaches "commercial completion", expected to be around one year after construction completion this summer.

Cost

The overall final cost of the Holyrood project is currently estimated at £424.6m - £430.5m.

£6.8m net has been moved from risk to committed expenditure. £1.9m of this risk materialisation is associated with the landscaping contracts, and the remaining £4.9m covers expected materialisations to building contracts.

Progress on site since the last report includes:

- Much of the carpet in the Chamber has now been fitted;
- 45 MSP desks are installed in the Chamber;
- The stone floor in the Garden Lobby is now well advanced;
- Hard landscaping has started around the north lightwell and the formal entrance;
- The pavement has been completed along the length of the Canongate Wall;
- Landscaping of the Internal Gardens is underway;
- Fit-out in Towers 1 and 2 is largely complete;
- The lower concrete pergola is fully glazed and the upper level of timber screening is well advanced;
- The last Caithness cladding panels are being installed on the media tower;
- The majority of the Bovis site accommodation has been dismantled to allow the landscaping to progress south towards the Craggs.

Professional advice

- The professional expertise and experience of David Manson, Andrew Wright and John Gibbons will continue to be available to the SPCB and to the HPT in an advisory capacity after the building is complete.

Testing the building

- A great deal of testing of the building services will be complete by the time staff move into the building.
- Staff and contractors will require training on voting systems, sound and broadcasting systems in the Debating Chamber and the Committee Rooms, and this will include simulations of Parliamentary business in these areas.

Snagging and commissioning

- Most snagging activity will be undertaken in August before business begins. During the August recess weeks it is expected that a considerable number of people will be working on snagging and defects during normal working hours, and the hoardings will remain in place during this period.

- Some outstanding snagging work is likely to continue through until the end of the year and possibly into 2005. Where possible this work will be conducted out of business hours and in recess.
- Hard landscaping work around all the entrances to the building will be complete by early September. Final landscaping work will continue into the autumn, including tree planting planned for November - the right time of year for this activity.
- The current programme includes the post-fixing of some timber louvered screens at lower levels at the rear of the Chamber and on Tower 4. This will probably be carried out either in the October or December recess and should have no impact on building users.

Contract mobilisation

- Major contracts, including that for maintenance, have already commenced on site with others now making preparations.
- Major activities include set-up of new catering, printing, webcast and crèche contracts as well as public information displays, the shop, mail services and numerous other contracted services that support the work of Parliament.

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Corporate Body Updates Finance Committee on Progress at Holyrood

Presiding Officer George Reid today provided Parliament's Finance Committee with the most up-to-date information on cost and programme for Holyrood, and progress with the plans for the summer migration to the Scottish Parliament building.

Key points

- There is no change to the overall cost reported in April.
- There is no basis whatsoever to the story circulating at the weekend which referred to £19m additional costs to the Project.
- Completed plans for migration to Holyrood are in place, allowing business to begin at the new building in September.
- Since April's Holyrood report, £13.84m has been moved from the risk reserve to construction commitment. This change simply reflects the predicted materialisation of costs.

Cost

The overall estimated final cost of the Holyrood project is unchanged at £424.7m - £430.5m. Targeted acceleration is currently taking place, and these measures are being funded from existing reserves.

£13.84m previously reported under risk is now committed as expenditure. This change largely covers extensions of time for glazing and fitout contracts. In addition, £0.5m of risk reserve has been moved into programme contingency. Neither change affects the overall cost of the project.

Progress on site since the last report includes:

- The stone floor in the Garden Lobby is now well advanced;
- The servery and kitchen equipment for the public cafeteria is in place;
- Committee tables are now in place in all three of Tower 1's Committee Rooms, along with broadcast lighting;
- The crash deck has been removed from the north lightwell;
- Railings around Queensberry House have been installed;
- The scaffold has been dropped from the upper pergola, allowing hard landscaping to progress around the public entrance;
- Trees have been planted in the Reid's Close garden and at the largest of the ponds adjacent to Horse Wynd;
- Granite setts are being installed in Reid's Close;
- The scaffold at the west elevation of the Chamber has been dropped to reveal the veneered glass.

Presiding Officer George Reid said:

"June will be Parliament's last month of business in our temporary accommodation, and the preparation for this summer's move to Holyrood is well advanced. Bovis continue to work closely with Parliament staff to ensure that the construction and migration programmes fit together properly at every level.

"The advice from Bovis is that the programme for completion is robust. Equally, everything is in place to ensure that an efficient move over the summer is followed by a smooth start to business in September and the formal opening of Holyrood on October 9."



Scaffolding has been removed from around the pergola outside the public entrance to Holyrood, allowing work on the landscaping to progress in this area. Within the chamber, internal scaffolding around the west elevation has also been removed to reveal the completed glazing below the curved rooflights.



Work continues on the roof of the garden lobby. This central circulation space is situated between MSP offices, Queensberry House and the towers which will provide accommodation for Parliament's Committees and for Scottish Executive Ministers.

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Crèche Contract Under Way at Holyrood

The contract for the Parliament's Holyrood crèche has been mobilised as part of the migration plan for Holyrood.

The successful contractor, Kidcare – a Glasgow-based charitable trust – will shortly advertise for staff. This will allow enough time for the necessary vetting to be carried out in time for business starting at Parliament.

The contract was awarded through open competition under formal tendering procedures. This is a rigorous, fair and equitable process that ensures that value for money is obtained.

Kidcare has demonstrated that it can meet the requirements regarding staff retention, service quality and consistency. Under the requirements of the contract all its staff will hold a suitable qualification or be working towards a qualification.

As an independent contractor, Kidcare's service is not affected by current local authority nursery disputes. However, the Scottish Parliament Corporate Body will review the salary levels of crèche staff as part of next year's budget review. In doing so, SPCB members will take into account any settlements that may be reached with regard to local authority nursery staff, as well as any further action on a proposed national review.

Background

The crèche at Holyrood will be the only public facility of its kind in Europe and is considered by the SPCB to be an important part of creating an open and accessible Parliament.

Its main purpose will be to provide supervision for children of people visiting the Parliament on business, but it will also be available on an emergency basis to children of MSPs and parliamentary staff. It will be available for children aged 0-5 years, can take up to 10 children at any one time and be open for business from 8am to 6pm on weekdays.

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Sarah Davidson to Leave Holyrood Project Team at End of June 2004

Sarah Davidson, Project Director of the Holyrood Building Project will leave her post at the end of June 2004, it was announced today.

Ms Davidson leaves the Parliament after five years service. Her departure marks a shift in the project from construction completion to migration and post-contract management as the Holyrood building enters its final stages.

Clerk / Chief Executive of the Scottish Parliament, Paul Grice said:

“The current role of Project Director will be largely complete by the end of June and the remaining project-related tasks will see the focus of work shift first towards migration and, thereafter, post-contract management.

“By that time, the Parliament’s Implementation Unit will be leading on all migration plans. At that point, Paul Curran, currently Senior Project Manager, will take over Sarah Davidson’s leadership of the Holyrood Project Team. His role will be to see the Parliament through the migration period and the post-contract stage of settling claims and final accounts.

“Sarah Davidson has given great service to the Parliament since its establishment in 1999, first as Clerk to the Finance and Audit Committees, then as Secretary to the Holyrood Progress Group and latterly, of course, as Project Director.

“The summer forms a natural break point and it is therefore a practical time for her to move on. I would wish to express my own personal appreciation for the commitment and dedication she has given to the most demanding of roles.”

Background Notes

Sarah Davidson, 32, joined the Parliament on secondment from the Scottish Executive in 1999. Ms Davidson will return to the Scottish Executive in January 2005, following a short career break on completion of her secondment to the Parliament.

Ms Davidson took up the position of Holyrood Project Director in June 2001.

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Scottish Parliament Announces Holyrood Opening

Presiding Officer George Reid today announced the date and nature of the opening of the Scottish Parliament's new building.

In order to allow as many people as possible to participate on the day, the formal opening of the Holyrood building will be held on a Saturday.

Members of the public representing all regions of Scotland and all walks of life will take part in the day, which will see around 1,200 people from home and abroad coming together.

Speaking from the Chair of the Chamber, the Presiding Officer said:

“The official opening of the building by Her Majesty The Queen will be on Saturday 9 October.

“Detailed arrangements for the opening will be announced nearer the event. However, after discussion with party leaders, I can today give the broad outline.

“It will be a day for the whole community of Scotland – a day of quiet Scottish dignity. It will have three elements: a morning meeting in Old Parliament Hall, a Riding down the Royal Mile and the formal opening of the new Holyrood Parliament building by The Queen.

“The riding marks the centuries-old Scots tradition of Parliament and People working in public partnership. Each Member will be asked to nominate a person from their constituency who has done most for the public good. They will walk too. As will schoolchildren and civic representatives from throughout Scotland. There will also be a large contingent of Speakers and Presidents from parliaments in the United Kingdom, Europe and the Commonwealth.

“The cost to Parliament for the whole day will be £210,000.

“Lastly, let me say this. In my evidence to the Fraser Inquiry I apologised for the shadow which Holyrood, with all its attendant costs and delays, has cast over Scotland.

“I want to thank today those who have stayed resolutely focused and who have kept up the intense pressure to occupy the building in September.

“Before we can get on, we have to get in.

“The opening on 9 October marks a new beginning – an opportunity for all of us to concentrate on why we are here: not to build a building, but to build a better Scotland.”

Background

The day will consist of three main phases:

1. A Ceremonial event in Parliament Hall, the seat of the first Scottish Parliament.
2. A “riding” down the Royal Mile to Holyrood which will include schoolchildren, community groups and representatives of civic society from every constituency in Scotland as well as MSPs.
3. The formal Opening Ceremony of the Holyrood Parliament building by Her Majesty The Queen.

The Presiding Officer will host a reception in Our Dynamic Earth for all who have participated in the day, in the attendance of Her Majesty The Queen and his Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh.

The Presiding Officer today wrote to each Member regarding the Opening Ceremony, setting out their involvement in the run up to and on the day. Each Member has been asked to nominate one person from their constituency/region who they believe has made a contribution to the lives of other Scottish people either locally or nationally, to participate in the procession.

The event will be managed by existing Parliament staff resources. The Parliament's maximum allocated budget including staff costs is £210k.

Up to date images of the building and the Presiding Officer are available on request from the Scottish Parliament's Media Relations Office.

For full text of Announcement see news release 025an/2004, 22 April 2004

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Text of Presiding Officer's Opening Ceremony Announcement to Parliament

“At long last, I can today inform Parliament of the arrangements for our migration to Holyrood, our occupation of the building and its formal opening.

Members can start packing at the end of June. They should be out of their offices by 20 August, Members have entry to the offices during the week commencing the 30 August.

We shall meet in the new Chamber in the second week of September. The official opening of the new building will be by Her Majesty the Queen will be on Saturday 9 October.

Detailed arrangements for the opening will be announced nearer the event. However, after discussion with party leaders, I can today give the broad outline.

It will be a day for the whole community of Scotland – a day of quiet Scottish dignity. It will have three elements: a morning meeting in Old Parliament Hall, a Riding down the Royal Mile and the formal opening in the Chamber.

The riding marks the centuries-old Scots tradition of Parliament and People working in public partnership. Only 10% of those taking part in the events of the day will be MSPs. Each Member will be asked to nominate a person from their constituency who has done most for the public good. They will walk too. As will schoolchildren and civic representatives from throughout Scotland. There will also be a large contingent of Speakers and Presidents from parliaments, from the United Kingdom, Europe and the Commonwealth.

The cost to Parliament for the whole day will be £210,000.

Lastly, let me say this. In my evidence to the Fraser Inquiry I apologised for the shadow which Holyrood, with all its attendant costs and delays, has cast over Scotland.

I want today to thank those who have stayed resolutely focused and who have kept up the intense pressure to occupy the building in September.

Before we can get on, we have to get in.

The opening on 9 October marks a new beginning – an opportunity for all of us to concentrate on why we are here: not to build a building, but to build a better Scotland.”

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Last Tower Crane Set to Leave Holyrood

The seventh and last massive tower crane at Holyrood will this weekend disappear from the Edinburgh skyline. Twenty-two metres high to the cab, a gib 40 metres in length and a lifting capacity of up to 18 tonnes; the tower crane has shifted thousands of tonnes of steel, concrete and glass around the Canongate area of site since construction began in 1999. The removal of the Tower Crane 4 from site is another significant milestone as Holyrood enters its final construction stages.



Tower Crane 4 at Holyrood in its final week



A dismantled Tower Crane 4 leaves Holyrood

Words of John P Mackintosh Engraved at Holyrood's Dewar Room



Letter cutting of a quote by John P Mackintosh, the late Berwick and East Lothian MP

The threshold of the Donald Dewar Room at Holyrood is to carry a quote made famous by one of the late First Minister's former parliamentary colleagues and strongest proponents of devolution.

A first glimpse of the room is offered today following the completion of the letter cutting of a quote by John P Mackintosh, the late Berwick and East Lothian MP.

The quote, which is cut in Caithness stone reads:

“People in Scotland want a degree of government for themselves. It is not beyond the wit of man to devise the institutions to meet these demands.”

Located in the threshold of the room, the letters have been cut by Gillian Forbes, based in Perthshire. Ms Forbes completed the project while members of the Mackintosh family and members of the Mackintosh Memorial Committee, who funded the work, looked on.

Chairman of the Berwick and East Lothian Mackintosh Memorial Committee, and Convener of the Holyrood Progress Group, John Home Robertson MSP, said:

"John Mackintosh and Donald Dewar were kindred spirits, dedicated to devolution from when they were both elected to the House of Commons in 1966. In fact, I was in the Commons' public gallery when John spoke these words in 1976.

"John pioneered the case for democratic devolution in Scotland both as an MP and as Professor of Politics at Edinburgh University. With the passing of the Scotland Act in 1998, Donald Dewar ensured that the task John Mackintosh had worked so hard for during his political career became a reality.

"I am delighted that John's role in achieving home rule for Scotland has been set in stone in the new Parliament complex. John was the most powerful advocate of devolution at that time, and I know that he would be proud of the new Holyrood Parliament."

John P Mackintosh's daughter Deirdre Mackintosh said:

"My father was a tremendous communicator in speeches and lectures, and as a family we are delighted that some of his words have been commemorated here in such a permanent way.

"The Scottish Parliament is looking very impressive and my father would have been honoured to have his words inscribed in such a prominent place, within the actual building."

Ms Forbes, the letter cutter, said:

"I've done a lot of work which is hidden away in people's homes, but this is interesting because now as people cross the threshold, they will hopefully pause and think about the meaning of the words."

Deputy Presiding Officer Trish Godman said:

"This room brings together the past and the future of Scotland, and marks the contributions of two great politicians.

"I feel the inscription is a very apt for the new building. Donald would be delighted to have a room here named after him and while you could never fit his life into a room, what we will fit in here will be a lasting tribute."

Background

Photographs of the stone and the room are available to the media and can be obtained through the Parliament's Media Office. Access to the room is also available between 10-11am. Media interested in accessing the room should contact the Parliament's Media Office to organise this.

The inscription is a quote from John P Mackintosh's speech to the House of Commons during the Scotland and Wales Bill 1976. The idea for the stone was initiated by the Mackintosh Memorial Committee, who provided funding for the project.

The Donald Dewar Room is now complete, aside from furnishing and the installation of the collection. Within the collection are four books written by John P Mackintosh, including 'A Parliament for Scotland' from 1976 and the programme from the 1999 Mackintosh Memorial lecture.

The Donald Dewar Room comprises two rooms – 38.5sq m and 10.5 sq m, on Level 1 in Queensberry House.

The Donald Dewar collection was gifted to the Parliament by his children. It will be moved to the room when the Parliament migrates over summer. It contains 1800 items – all being catalogued by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre. A majority of the collection is books, including family owned items, gifts to Mr Dewar, titles reviewed by him along with his notes and corresponding newspaper reviews, and some rare and important antiquarian material. The rest of the collection is made up of memorabilia from his political life, including newspaper clippings, event programmes, election material and photographs.

The letter cutter Gillian Forbes is based in Path of Condie, Perthshire. The work began February 23 and was completed on March 11.

Mackintosh Memorial Committee

Following John Mackintosh's death in 1978, a public subscription in Berwick and East Lothian raised money which was initially used to put up a memorial stone in East Linton, East Lothian. The money was then gifted to the University of Edinburgh to fund a lecture, to be run in alternate years in East Lothian and of the University of Edinburgh.

The first Memorial Lecture was given in 1980 and Lord Robertson of Port Ellen, the former MP and General Secretary of NATO, gave the twenty-first lecture on 12 March 2004.

The Secretary of the Joint University Committee is Gordon Martin. Tel no: 0131 650 2093.

The Secretary of the Berwick and East Lothian Committee is Noel Foy. Tel no: 01620 824386.

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Corporate Body Issues February's Holyrood Report to Finance Committee

Presiding Officer George Reid today provided Parliament's Finance Committee with the latest information on the Holyrood Project.

Key Issues

- On 5 February Bovis presented revised programme 7B for the completion of the Holyrood campus by July of this year. The cost consultants DLE have estimated the extra costs at £20-£25m which, once VAT is included, represents an overall range of £24-£29m of additional expenditure. Due to fee capping, there are no fees payable on these additional costs.
- Included in these estimates are £2-£4m of non-allocated contingency funds to allow accelerated working, if required. The bulk of the extra costs are for delayed work under the original contracts, largely on glazing and stone cladding which, in turn, has caused delays elsewhere.
- Provided Bovis complete programme 7B on schedule, as the company is confident it can, this ought to be the last Holyrood cost increase.
- The programme remains on target for completion in July and for business to begin in Holyrood in September. Detailed plans for migration and occupation of the complex are now in place.

Programme

Long-standing difficulties arising from blast-proofing have led to delays in glazing, windows and cladding, with consequent delays in other areas of work. This revised programme will therefore include completion of commissioning and snagging work in some areas during July and August.

This is a tight programme, but Parliament's migration plans are being worked around the later areas to ensure that they do not delay entry and that migration can be completed over the July-September period.

If trade packages are not completed by the summer, there will be a further escalation in costs, and if the ten week recess period is not used for migration, entry could be delayed into 2005.

Cost

The gross contract costs of these changes and programme delays are estimated by our cost consultants as an additional £24m - £29m (including contingency). This takes the estimated final cost of Holyrood to £425m - £431m. The previously secured fee cap ensures no additional fee is payable on these additional costs.

In addition, £12.6m of the previously identified risk reserves have been allocated to committed construction costs.

Progress on site since the last report includes:

- Excellent progress in the lightwell/public stair area with extensive areas of glazing installed;
- Successful testing of the telephone system, following installation of 8500 phone and data sockets along with 58km of optic fibres and 570km of copper cabling;
- Final power systems are now up and running across the whole Holyrood site;
- Installation of lighting in the Chamber is well advanced and should be complete for the end of February;
- North elevation of the Canongate Wall is complete;
- The first area of site accommodation has been removed, and excavation works for Pond 3 are underway;
- The oak and glass screens in the public foyer have begun to go in, defining the layout of the shop, public cafeteria and classroom areas;
- The upper pergola over the public entrance has been delivered to site and will be erected early next month;
- IT and other fit-out works are progressing in Queensberry House.

Presiding Officer George Reid said:

"I deeply regret this further increase in costs to the public purse.

"Over the past month there has been major work completed on site, without which the cost rise would have been significantly higher.

"The vast bulk of the extra costs are prolongation costs due under the original contracts for delayed work, largely on glazing and stone cladding — which, in turn, have caused delays elsewhere. Additionally, we have now allocated £2-£4m contingency funds for acceleration measures.

"Bovis are confident that the programme will be completed by July. Provided that happens, this should be the last rise in Holyrood costs.

"We are now totally focused on completion on target, followed by migration over the summer and occupation of the new Parliament in September."

Background

The following associated documents are available on the Parliament's website:

[Letter to Des McNulty, Finance Committee Convener.](#)

[Annex A – Financial summary](#)

[Annex B – Progress report and latest site images](#)

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29 January 2004

City Of Edinburgh Councillors Visit Holyrood Site

City of Edinburgh Council leader Donald Anderson said:

“Whilst I still stand behind my view that Calton Hill should have been the preferred site for the Scottish Parliament, I was impressed with the building I saw today. I always thought that it would be a real challenge to put a modern building in a Medieval setting, but I am really impressed with the quality of the work. The design of the building is very exciting - the way space is used and the lighting are both impressive.

“In many ways the public spaces are the most exciting thing about it, because the Parliament is about the people and the way they mix. The way that Holyrood has been built undoubtedly gives lots of opportunities for that to happen. That is clearly the success of the building.

“Having been someone who was very sceptical about the Parliament coming to Holyrood, I do feel that the building will work well for both the Parliament and the whole of Scotland.”

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Latest Holyrood Report to Finance Committee Published Today

Presiding Officer George Reid today provided Parliament's Finance Committee with the latest information on the Holyrood project. Reports from Parliament's consultants continue to show the programme on target, and the costs unchanged from last month.

This is the third consecutive report to the Finance Committee that has shown no increase in cost.

Progress on site this month includes:

- A key milestone has been reached with the Chamber crash deck removed over the Christmas period, 21 days ahead of schedule. This was achieved by authorising overtime at a cost of £28,000.
- The high level crash deck in the problematic lightwell area has seen excellent progress in accordance with the key milestones set out in November's letter.
- The MSP offices are complete and fully functioning, and snagging is well underway. Telephone systems are installed and are fully working. Office space has been allocated and furniture choices are being made by Members.
- In Queensberry House all building works are complete and snagging is well underway. The next phase is for IT and other fit-out works to progress.
- Following the removal of scaffolding, the public stair is now in place and glazing is underway. This complex design, which has proved challenging to construct, is moving forward in line with programme.
- Horse Wynd is complete and re-opened to traffic on 4 January.
- The floor of the Chamber is nearing completion and building services are well advanced. The next stage will see the installation of internal wall linings.
- Glazing is installed to the back wall of the public entrance hall.
- A solution to the 'extruded garden' at first floor level on the Canongate has been achieved which will ensure that its completion will not threaten achievement of the strategic programme.
- Ninety per cent of the windows in Towers 1 and 2 have been handed over for internal finishings.

Cost

The overall cost of the project is unchanged. Since the November report, £2.8m has been moved from the risk and programme reserve into construction commitment. The overall cost now sits at £396.5m plus a programme contingency of £4.6m.

Future programme

There is no change to the strategic programme reported in November. Completion continues to target July 2004, which would allow business to commence at Holyrood in September.

Bovis will shortly present to the Holyrood Progress Group its revised strategy for the final push for completion by July. This strategy will address slippage to the Towers to ensure that the July 2003 programme is protected.

The cost consultants, DLE, will review the remaining contingency figure in time for February's report, taking account of prolongation on the Towers and the need for acceleration measures to maintain the overall completion date.

Presiding Officer George Reid said:

“This month has seen excellent progress with us hitting all key milestones.

“We are now engaged in the final push towards completion by July. We are determined to enforce a ‘completion culture’ on everyone involved. Everything must be programme-driven.”

Additional information on all the latest developments on site, plus this month's construction pictures, is available in Annex B to the Presiding Officer's letter.

Background

The following associated documents are available on the Parliament's website:

[Letter to Des McNulty, Finance Committee Convener](#)

[Annex A – Financial summary](#)

[Annex B – Progress report and latest site images](#)

All the latest images from Holyrood contained in Annex B can be used by bona fide media organisations.

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Holyrood Chamber Ceiling Revealed

Presiding Officer George Reid today presented to the media the first glimpse of the new Holyrood Chamber ceiling with its 'crash deck' scaffolding now removed, and said that it was a "major milestone" on the critical path to finishing construction work.

Mr Reid said he was determined to enforce a "completion culture" on architects, builders and parliamentary staff in 2004.

"The end date of July is achievable if we meet the deadlines laid down in my November report to the Finance Committee. We must focus all our efforts on finishing each stage on time, not on explaining why it is behind time.

"Miralles' vision for the Parliament has been largely delivered by EMBT/RMJM, Bovis and other contractors. In the final months of the project everyone must now be programme-driven."

Mr Reid said that the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body and the Holyrood Progress Group would clamp down on delayed decision-making and cut back on non-essentials which did not affect the integrity and quality of the building. He gave examples:

- The Chamber: scaffolding taken down by 23 December, 21 days ahead of deadline — "Achieved by authorising of modest overtime pre-Christmas, met from the existing budget line. Fitting out the Chamber now proceeding on schedule".
- Horse Wynd: reopened on 4 January — "To have sets installed in 2005, once engineers had agreed tolerances and specifications".
- Chamber Rooflight: "Proposals to remanufacture rooflight refused, in favour of re-alignment only, since this would have led to knock-on delays. It is watertight and does not affect the aesthetics. Removal would have set the critical path back by seven weeks."

The Presiding Officer said that the next two milestones were completion of the central lightwell by March and a decision on the 'extruded garden' by mid-January.

"After many difficulties, we are now making good progress on the lightwell. The stairway is installed and glazing is going ahead on schedule.

"As for the 'extruded garden' on the roof of the Canongate building, I need to be absolutely assured that it will not have knock-on effects on completing the whole complex. If not, I shall have no hesitation in recommending to the SPCB that it is removed from the project."

Technical background detail on Holyrood Chamber

- The Chamber's laminated oak beams are structurally reinforced with a steel core as a consequence of the massive loads being carried by the 'Glulam' roof structure. The structure not only supports the weight of the Debating Chamber roof but also

connects to the structural steel frame enabling the entire Debating Chamber structure to act as one.

- Each of the structurally reinforced laminated oak beams is supported by stainless steel connection nodes between each of the timber beams. There are 112 individually designed nodes each with variable geometry which enables the oak beams to follow the curvature of the roof profile. The nodes were fabricated to exacting tolerances by Aberdeen-based specialist engineering firm 'MSD'.
- The stainless steel tie rods between the beams generate the tension within the roof structure and assist in pulling all the structural elements together.
- The laminated oak beams span 30m at the widest point of the Chamber and 60m in length. This results in the floor of the Chamber being free from columns and sight lines are un-impinged.

The Debating Chamber crash deck has now been removed enabling progress to be made with the installation of the Sycamore veneered glazing to the west elevation, the broadcast lighting, oak lining to the interior of the Chamber, carpet and timber floor finishes and the furniture

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