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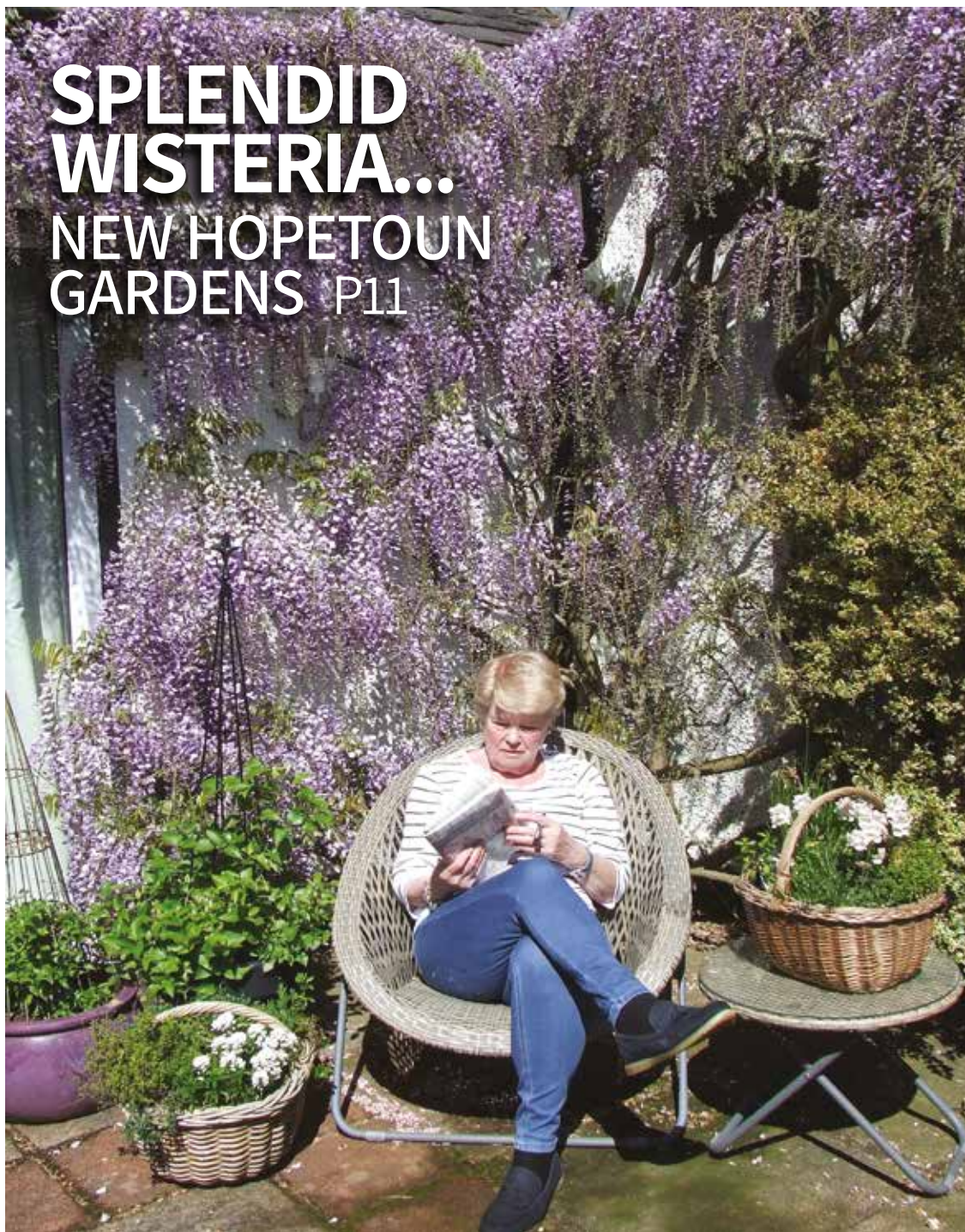


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BITCH

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JULY 2026

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DAVID TAIT
EDITOR



What's inside this Issue

There are plenty of interesting articles to enjoy in this issue, so as the warmer weather arrives, why not take some time to relax? Whether it's with a well-earned coffee in the garden or a quiet moment in your favourite chair, we hope you'll enjoy browsing the magazine and discovering more about what's happening in and around Linlithgow.

As regular readers know, the Magazine is committed to keeping the community informed about the Linlithgow Local Place Plan and its influence on West Lothian Council's Local Development Plan (LDP2). These plans will have a significant impact on our town for many years to come. One of the key challenges is providing more homes suitable for young people entering the housing market, whether as first-time buyers or renters. Without opportunities for younger generations to remain in the town, Linlithgow risks developing an increasingly ageing population, with long-term consequences for the vitality and sustainability of the community.

The Planning Forum is now focused on West Lothian Council's revised Evidence Report, which will be resubmitted to the Scottish Government Reporters. Their review of the original submission concluded that further evidence was required, including stronger consideration of the measures needed to address Linlithgow's changing demographics. John Kelly's article, beginning on page 6, explains why these developments matter and what they could mean for the future of our town.

Technology is transforming every aspect of business, and **One Linlithgow Business Improvement District** examines how artificial intelligence is reshaping internet search. For small businesses, understanding how AI-generated search results are produced – and recognising both their strengths and

limitations – is becoming increasingly important. As technology continues to evolve, businesses will need to adapt if they are to remain competitive.

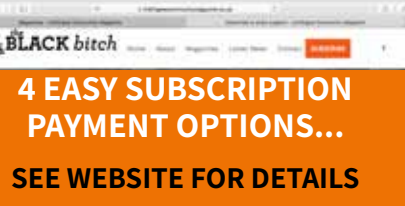
Linlithgow Academy's end-of-term feature highlights the Developing Young Workforce programme, which helps prepare students for employment in an ever-changing world. By spending time with local employers across a wide range of industries, pupils gain valuable experience and insight into the workplace while making the transition from education to future careers.

This issue also celebrates two of Linlithgow's creative success stories. Artist **Leo du Feu** was already demonstrating remarkable talent when he appeared on the front page of The Black Bitch in 2011. Musician **Emily Evans** attended the very first Party at the Palace on the Peel in 2014, an experience that inspired her own musical ambitions. Eleven years later, she returned to perform on that very stage.

Another local success story is **Calum Paterson**, who has built an outstanding career in both finance and football. Now Chairman of Heart of Midlothian FC, a long-time supporter of Linlithgow Rose FC, and Chairman and Senior Partner of Scottish Equity Partners, he has also played a significant role in the success of travel technology company Skyscanner.

Our Folk Fae Lithgae series features **David Olwa**, who was born in Uganda and has called Linlithgow home since 1981. Despite more than four decades of contributing to the community, he is still occasionally asked whether he is visiting the town. Murdie Kennedy tells the fascinating story of David's career, achievements and lasting contribution to West Lothian and Uganda.

Looking to the future, pupils from **Springfield and Low Port Primary Schools** have created their own Mini-Marches procession to encourage younger generations to engage with Linlithgow's ancient Riding of the Marches tradition. Complete with



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bagpipes, banners, floats, the Town Crier and the Provost, the event captured the spirit of the historic celebration and may well become a new tradition in its own right.

Railway historian John McGregor explores another fascinating chapter of local history in **Tracks Around Linlithgow – A Different Railway History**, bringing to life the remarkable engineering ambition and innovation that accompanied the expansion of the railway network during the Victorian era. This article explains the role of the Causewayend Incline.

Finally, our regular coverage of **heritage, banking, gardening, new community facilities, sport and local fundraising** rounds off another packed issue. We hope you enjoy reading it as much as we have enjoyed bringing it together.

Help Keep Linlithgow's Community Voice Alive

Every issue of the Linlithgow Community Magazine is made possible by the support of local people. By subscribing or making a donation, you help sustain an independent publication dedicated to celebrating, informing and connecting our community.

Your support provides local clubs, charities, voluntary organisations and community groups with a platform to share their news and reach residents across the town. It also helps us report on the issues that matter, celebrate local achievements and preserve the stories that make Linlithgow unique.

Keeping the magazine free to read depends on the generosity of readers who value an independent community voice. Every contribution, however small, helps secure its future.

If you enjoy the magazine and would like to support its work, please visit linlithgowcommunitymagazine.co.uk, select Subscribe, and choose the option that suits you.

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CONTACT DAVID TAIT, EDITOR
on.a.lead@gmail.com

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NOTHING ARTIFICIAL ABOUT INTELLIGENCE

The saying that ‘practice makes perfect’ reflects on the idea that to become a ‘global expert’ at a skill or understanding a topic, the

human brain needs 10,000 hours of attention to achieve that goal or professional levels of skills. Mere ‘experts’ like scientists or doctors or big business leaders need only 3-5,000 hours of specific education and on-the-job experience.



Experts and talented people from across the world have put in their 10,000+ hours to gain the knowledge in their chosen careers and become the best people to provide opinion and comment on matters they know about.

Then what may have been perceived as minor tweaks to searching the Internet, a term pop’s up from the 1950’s – **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** – that was originally associated with ‘thinking machines.’ You may have noticed over the last year that “**AI Mode**” now appears top left in Google just below the search bar. Google uses the “Gemini AI” agent platform [gemini.google.com] to display results, described as “Your personal AI assistant can help you write, plan, learn, create and get more done”

How often in the last year have you typed a question in an Internet search bar? The answer appears in concise bullet points that you can understand. There’s barely a mention of the accuracy or authenticity of the answers that come up, although there are links to more information for the user to click through on. However, increasingly humans don’t bother.

You get the information and carry on with your day, happy with new knowledge you’ve read while not leaving the largest Internet search engine on the planet.

The BBC reported that “**A recent study suggested that people only clicked a link once in every 100 searches when there was an AI summary at the top of the page.**”

However, theGoodLawProject.org launched a campaign in April 2025 – “**AI giants are stealing our creative work**”, claiming that “**As the hype builds around AI, big tech steals more and more of our creative work. It’s time to fight back.**”

Watch this space in all news formats as this debate will only intensify over the next couple of years.

**GOOD LAW
Project**

HISTORY FIRST: AI BOT TRAFFIC OUTNUMBERS HUMAN INTERNET TRAFFIC

As reported in national press in June this year, the tech giant Cloudflare announced that AI bots have overtaken humans in accessing websites and driving their traffic for the first time in history. What does this mean and how did this happen?

Before picturing a dystopian robot uprising, the reality is more nuanced. It is worth explaining that the increasing numbers of “AI Agents” such as Chat GBT and Google’s Gemini are accessing the vast range of information on the Internet on a user’s behalf to find the precise information they need and feeding it back to them.

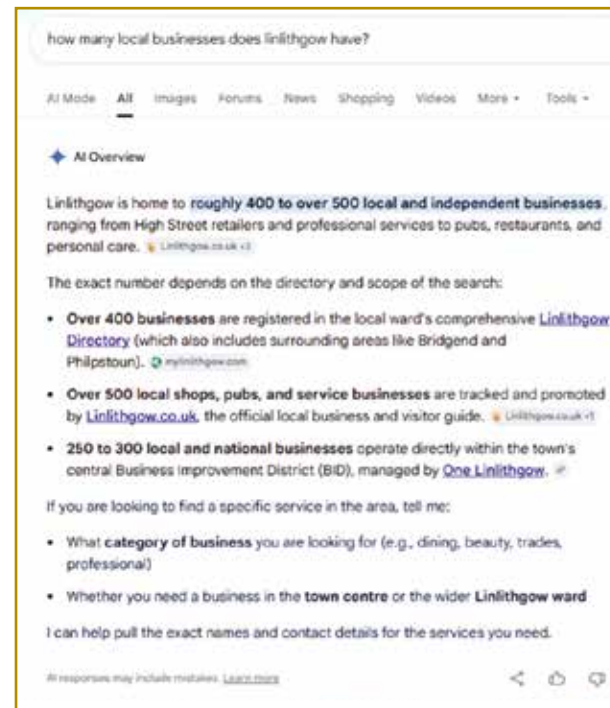
The research also suggests to businesses that your website analytics are lying to you because Bot-heavy traffic is accessing your pages and advertisers pay for impressions that a human never even sees.

“AI Overviews” now reference AI-generated content rather than human-created sources, creating a hall of mirrors where machines summarise articles written by other machines.

A simple example is below by posing a question and receiving an AI Overview answer, without having to click or navigate away from the search results page.

Q: HOW MANY LOCAL BUSINESSES DOES LINLITHGOW HAVE?

AI Overview:



The localised results are most likely identifiable. It is also noticeable that the AI Agent – Gemini - in this case also offers to drill down into the results by category or narrow the search for town centre or the wider area. This is just one example of how humans are consuming information, which leads directly onto how businesses can accept this is the new normal and adapt to it.

The fact is AI and AI Agents are here to stay. The key is how human intelligence and ingenuity can use it for the benefit of us all.

FROM SEO TO AIEO

For more than a couple of decades, **Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)** was the key objective of millions of businesses who published their websites on the Internet. “**We want to be at the top of the first page in Google**” was the brief that web designers and marketers used to receive from clients.

AI Engine Optimisation (AiEO) is the new here and now for any business large and small that generates customers, sales and bookings from its website.

“**Boom, boom, boom everybody say AiEO**” sounds cool or very annoying depending on your character and may remind a mid-90’s generation of The Outthere Brothers hit rap and dance song that repeats the famous chant “**I said boom, boom, boom, now everybody say wayo!**”

If you are a small business reading this article in July 2026, it’s highly advisable to get the tune going around your head whenever you are producing digital content for your business and think **AiEO**.

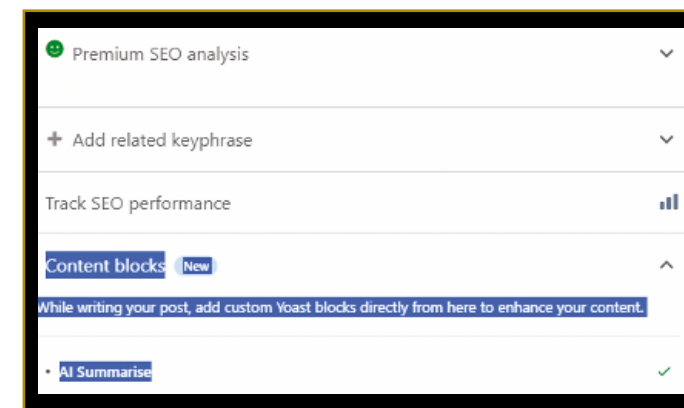
But how can a small owner managed business appear in the “AI Overview” section at the top of a Google search question?

WORDPRESS >> PLUGINS >> YOAST >> AI SUMMARISE

A very large proportion of the world’s websites are powered by WordPress that started off in the early days as a platform for bloggers to write and share their ideas. It’s developed considerably since then with a myriad of “**Plugins**” or addons providing many extra useful tools.

One key tool (plugin) is called **Yoast** that allows each individual web page published to have its own customised “SEO” features for a range of specific terms. The Plugin has now introduced an advanced feature to automatically generate an “AI Summary” from the article written.

It has been designed for Google’s AI “Gemini” Agent to pick up the summary and display in the search results.



It will be interesting to see how this develops once many competing businesses start to use the same techniques.

HUMAN AUTHENTIC CREATION V SLOP ART

There is a new term out there called “slop art”. The AI Summary result comes up with an explanation from Wikipedia: “**Slop art** refers to the visual equivalent of internet “slop” – low-effort, mass-produced, or low-quality digital content generated by artificial intelligence.

To clarify, we did click through to check the text definition. The image below was created in an AI Agent on an iPhone within about 20 seconds of asking it to “**Create a colour image of Linlithgow High Street as it might look in 2075**”. There were another three versions that it produced, that were too over the top. It looks like in this one the gap site has been filled.

The question is how is this going to affect the visual presentation of information to each other in the coming years. Will it affect the graphic artists who generate their own content using their own imagination and tools, whether they be digital software or more traditional painting methods.



AN AI AGENT PREDICTION OF LINLITHGOW HIGH STREET IN 2075.

NEW HIGH STREET BANNERS



In time for this year’s **Marches Day**, a new set of banners were installed along the High Street, including new brackets, passing through the Cross. **Battle 500** graphics have been highlighted in the new designs along with the main events in the town throughout the year.

A special banner for Battle 500 included heraldic shields from the local primary schools

NEW TO LINLITHGOW HIGH STREET

A warm welcome to **Sage Hair Alchemy**, **Refyne Hair Studio** and **Selene Hair Studio** in Linlithgow High Street. We can’t imagine an AI Agent taking over their business, but one might have some significant involvement in any online appointment system they are using.



One Linlithgow Email: office@onelinlithgow.com
Tel: 07708 194592

LINLITHGOW AND THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN: WHY THE NEXT CONSULTATION MATTERS

Later this year, or perhaps early next, West Lothian residents will be asked for their views on the draft West Lothian Local Development Plan. For Linlithgow, this will be much more than a routine planning consultation. It will help shape where homes may be built, how infrastructure is planned, how services are protected, and whether the town can remain a balanced, sustainable community for the next generation.

The timetable for the new West Lothian Local Development Plan has already slipped with the final adoption of the plan anticipated to be in May 2028. Before that can happen, however, the Council must

satisfy the Scottish Government that it has gathered enough evidence to justify the policies and proposals included in the draft plan. Under the new

planning system, local authorities must prepare an Evidence Report before they move on to the draft plan itself. This report is reviewed by independent Reporters acting for Scottish Ministers. Their role is to decide whether the Council has collected sufficient information and properly involved communities. In West Lothian's case, the first version did not pass that test. The Reporters asked for further work including issues that matter directly to Linlithgow.

Policy aims for West Lothian should not exclude Linlithgow's local community needs

The revised Evidence Report acknowledges Linlithgow's importance as one of West Lothian's traditional town centres. It also repeats wider national and local policy aims: less dependence on private cars, more walking and cycling, better use of public transport, and an

"infrastructure-first" approach to development. These are welcome principles. The difficulty is that Linlithgow's problems are not only matters of policy wording. They are practical and local, and they need to be understood at community level.

Transport is the clearest example. The Scottish Government's National Planning Framework says Local Development Plans should be informed by an appropriate and effective transport appraisal. In Linlithgow, this is not optional. The town already experiences difficult access, congestion and pressure on key routes. A recent planning appeal also highlighted the issue, noting that potential housing sites to the east and south-east of Linlithgow could not be properly considered without a

full assessment of traffic requirements and possibly new access arrangements around the eastern side of the town. At

the very least, the West Lothian Local Development Plan should include a full transport appraisal for Linlithgow.

Population change and housing choice

Population and housing are just as important. West Lothian is projected to grow, with the revised Evidence Report referring to a population increase of 5.8% during the current planning period from 2018 to 2028, reaching around 192,800 people. The housing supply target is estimated at 980 homes per year across West Lothian, including an indicative affordable housing target of 310 homes per year. The report also says that a better mix of market housing should provide

attractive options for older people to downsize into single level, energy-efficient, low-maintenance homes.

That is all useful at county level, but it does not answer the question Linlithgow must ask: what is happening here? The census figures are striking. Linlithgow's population was recorded as 13,460 in 2001 and 13,465 in 2011, showing almost no change. By the 2022 census, however, it had fallen to 12,517. That is a decline of around 7% in 11 years. This is not a small statistical movement; it is a significant change in the make-up of the town.

Comparing the age profile in the 2011 and 2022 censuses makes the concern sharper. The number of children aged between 5 and 18 has remained broadly similar, but the number of young adults has fallen dramatically. In 2022 there were only about half as many 20-year-olds in Linlithgow as there had been in 2011. This cannot simply be explained by a birth-rate fluctuation. It suggests that young adults are leaving, or cannot return, at precisely the stage when people often begin work, form households and put down roots. There are usually three broad reasons why younger adults leave a place: work, housing, or the attractiveness and convenience of living there. Linlithgow remains an attractive and well-connected town, so housing affordability and availability appear to be the most pressing issues. The scale of change in social housing is particularly important. In 2003, Linlithgow had 856 council houses and flats. The current figure is around 420. Much of the reduction reflects historic right-to-buy sales. Today, there are more private rented homes in Linlithgow than council and housing association homes combined.

POPULATION CHANGE IN COMPARABLE LOCAL TOWNS, 2001-2022

Town	2001 Census Population	2022 Census Population
Linlithgow	13,460	12,517
Bo'ness	13,961	14,885
Queensferry	9,370	10,216
Broxburn & Uphall	12,892	15,418
Bathgate	15,068	22,222
Whitburn	10,391	11,775
Armada	9,063	

Why school rolls matter

Education adds another layer to the picture. The revised Evidence Report notes that West Lothian has seen significant housing and population growth during the period of the current 2018 Local Development Plan, with pupil numbers rising in places where housebuilding is under way. In Linlithgow, the forecast is very different. Based on current assumptions of minimal new housebuilding, school rolls are projected to fall across the town's schools.

For example, Linlithgow Primary is forecast to fall from 346 pupils in 2024-25 to 210 by 2034-35. Linlithgow Bridge Primary is forecast to fall from 170 to 124, Lowport from 197 to 136, Springfield from 304 to 188, and

A plan for Linlithgow, not just West Lothian

The revised Evidence Report does not ignore Linlithgow. It recognises many of the relevant issues, but it places them within a broad West Lothian framework. That is understandable for a strategic planning document, but it is not enough. Infrastructure pressures, service access and development impacts are experienced differently in different communities. Linlithgow needs the Local Development Plan to describe its own circumstances clearly: its transport constraints, housing shortage, declining young adult population, school roll forecasts, healthcare pressures and heritage setting.

including schools, healthcare and roads. In Linlithgow, falling school rolls suggest that additional school capacity may not be a barrier to profitable development. The larger unresolved issue is transport. Without a proper appraisal and credible infrastructure plan such as that described in the Community Council's Local Place Plan, housing proposals will remain difficult and controversial. The Local Place Plan describes a plan for the homes Linlithgow needs while protecting the qualities that make the town special. It should not be ignored.

Why residents should take part

The coming consultation is therefore important. Residents should not see it as a distant technical exercise. It is an opportunity to insist

that Linlithgow is considered with evidence that reflects local realities and therefore includes policies that respond to them. The questions are simple but vital: where can homes be built, especially affordable homes; what transport improvements are needed first; how can schools and services be sustained; and how can

growth be managed without damaging the town's heritage and character?

Linlithgow has a strong sense of place and a strong community voice. When the draft Local Development Plan is published, that voice will need to be heard clearly. The aim should not be growth at any cost, nor resistance to all change. It should be a balanced plan that allows younger people and families to live here, supports local schools and services, addresses transport honestly, and safeguards the historic town we value. That is the challenge the next consultation must meet.

John Kelly
Linlithgow Planning Forum

SECONDARY ROLL - BASE SCENARIO - NO NEW CONSTRUCTION

School	Capacity	Entry	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33	2033-34	2034-35
Armada Academy	1,210	220	1,169	1,172	1,181	1,133	1,085	1,063	1,018	983	950	925	892
Bathgate Academy	1,210	220	1,212	1,208	1,225	1,215	1,210	1,187	1,137	1,086	1,018	962	915
Broxburn Academy	1,210	220	874	831	779	740	695	666	658	626	606	580	568
Deans High School	1,100	200	995	974	941	919	887	856	801	750	709	660	626
Inverleith High School	1,320	240	1,001	972	932	901	862	839	791	747	702	651	594
James Young High School	1,210	220	1,202	1,202	1,204	1,210	1,210	1,210	1,210	1,210	1,210	1,210	1,210
Linlithgow Academy	1,320	240	1,266	1,225	1,165	1,131	1,107	1,071	1,043	984	947	896	851
West Calder High School	1,100	200	1,201	1,245	1,288	1,302	1,378	1,419	1,453	1,505	1,551	1,554	1,611

St Joseph's from 93 to 61. At secondary level, Linlithgow Academy is forecast to fall from 1,266 pupils to 851 over the same period, against a capacity of 1,320. These figures should concern the whole community. Falling rolls may appear, at first glance, to ease pressure on schools. But over time they can also create pressure for rationalisation, shared facilities or closures. Recent changes at Linlithgow Bridge Primary Nursery show how quickly service provision can be reorganised when numbers and budgets point in that direction. A community that wants to retain strong local schools must also think seriously about the population needed to sustain them.

If Linlithgow is to remain a sustainable community, it needs planned growth rather than drift. A reasonable target would be growth of around 1.5% to 2% per year. With approximately 5,700 dwellings in the town, that would suggest about 100 homes per year, or around 1,000 homes over the 10-

year period of the plan. Since 1997, a total of only 614 homes have been constructed in Linlithgow, leaving a substantial

shortfall against what would have been needed to maintain population stability and provide more choice for local households.

New development, of course, must be planned carefully. Developers are normally required to contribute towards the cost of infrastructure made necessary by their projects,

We need more young people in the community

Developing Young Workforce

LINLITHGOW ACADEMY



At Linlithgow Academy, our **Developing the Young Workforce (DYW)** programme plays a vital role in helping young people connect their classroom learning with the world beyond school. By building confidence, developing key skills and providing meaningful real-world experiences, DYW opens doors to a wide range of future pathways – from college and university to apprenticeships and employment.

Why does it matter?

Because real-world experiences make a real difference. When learners engage with employers, explore different industries and gain insight into career pathways, they become more motivated, informed and better prepared for life after school. DYW helps young people understand the relevance of their learning while raising aspirations within our local Linlithgow community.

As we approach the end of another academic year and look ahead to the summer break, it is a fitting time to reflect on the progress we have made together. Through strong partnerships and a shared commitment to opportunity, our DYW programme has continued to grow from strength to strength. Over the past year, we have connected our young people with a wide range of employers, industries and organisations – bringing learning to life and broadening horizons.

Pathways with Purpose: Inspiring Futures

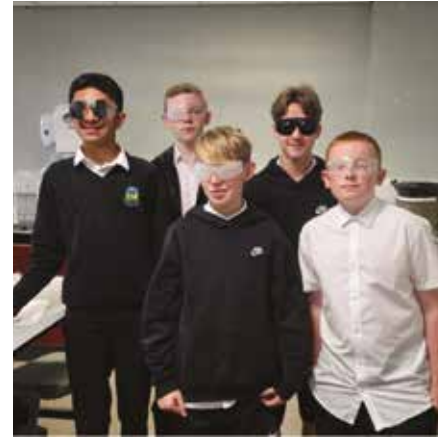
At the heart of this success is our **'Pathways with Purpose'** initiative. Delivered weekly throughout the year, these sessions have welcomed a diverse range of employers and

professionals into the school. By sharing their experiences and career journeys, they have helped pupils explore different industries and better understand the many opportunities available beyond school.

This year, pupils have engaged with partners including **Bramble Bio, KPMG, Centrica, NHS Lothian, the Royal Navy, Hearth Architects, Vets for Pets, NextPharma and Sight Scotland Veterans**. These interactions have provided valuable insight into a wide range of careers and sectors.

A key strength of the programme has been its focus on hands-on learning. For example, sessions with **Sight Scotland Veterans** gave pupils the chance to take part in practical challenges linked to sight loss, helping to build empathy, awareness and a deeper understanding of real-world issues.

"It really made me think about how people adapt – it was challenging but really interesting."



Our partnership with **Optos** also brought science to life, with pupils exploring careers in medical engineering and taking part in engaging classroom activities.

"I hadn't ever thought about medical engineering before, it opened my eyes to something new."

As this term's programme concludes, plans are already underway to expand and grow these opportunities into the next academic year.

Celebrating STEM: Linlithgow Loves Science

A highlight of the year was the **'Linlithgow Loves Science'** event, which brought together pupils, partners and the wider community to celebrate innovation and creativity in STEM. Thank you to **Origin Peptides**

and their Chief Scientist **Sara ten Have** for making this possible.

Pupils designed and presented their own investigations across a range of scientific fields, supported by interactive exhibits, robotics and virtual reality experiences.

"It was great being able to create something myself and share it, it didn't feel like normal schoolwork."

The event showcased not only pupils' creativity, but also the strength of partnership working in delivering meaningful, engaging experiences.



Developing Skills for Success?

Alongside inspiration, developing key skills has been a major focus of the year. Our mock interviews for S5 pupils provided valuable real-world experience, supported by a range of local employers.

Pupils were praised highly for their confidence and professionalism:

'The interview helped me understand what employers are really looking for.'

'It made me feel much more confident about applying for jobs.'

Employer feedback reflected this success, highlighting pupils' maturity, communication and leadership potential.

Our SCQF-accredited Future Skills programme continues to play a vital role in developing leadership, resilience and self-awareness ensuring pupils leave

school well prepared for their next steps.

A Year of Opportunity

Across the academic year, partnership working has enabled a wide range of opportunities:



> A large-scale Careers Evening with 56 employers;

> A Creative Industries Event at Sky Up Academy

> Industry-linked experiences across STEM, hospitality and construction

> Engagement with public services such as all emergency services and the Scottish Parliament.



These experiences have supported hundreds of learners, helping them see the relevance of their learning in real-world contexts.



Looking Ahead to Next Session

While this reflects a successful year, we are already looking forward. Next session will see continued expansion of partnerships, increased work-based learning opportunities and further collaboration with employers.

A key development will be the launch of a new DYW Linlithgow Academy website, offering a central hub for pupils, parents/carers and staff to access opportunities, labour market insights and employability support. You can already view it here:

Our Vision in Action

This work reflects Linlithgow Academy's vision of developing confident, capable and ambitious young people, ready to thrive in a rapidly changing world. Partnership working is central to this mission helping us provide meaningful, inspiring opportunities for every learner.

To find out more, visit: <https://linlithgowacademy.westlothian.org.uk>

A Shared Commitment

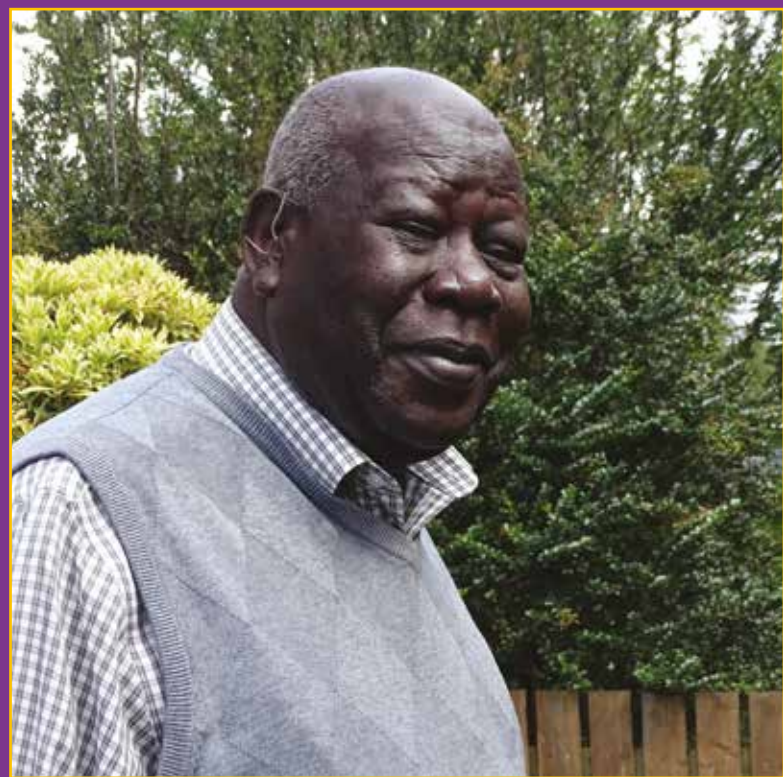
As we close the academic year, we would like to thank all of our partners for their continued support. Their contributions make a real difference to our young people's experiences and aspirations. If you are interested in working with us, we would love to hear from you. Please contact Rachel.bryson@westlothian.org.uk



Grant Abbot,
Head Teacher



Follow all the news and events at Linlithgow Academy: <https://linlithgowacademy.westlothian.org.uk/>

Folk Fae Lithgae **DAVID OLWA**

David Olwa has lived in the Springfield area of Linlithgow since August 1981, although his links with the area go back further than that. From 1975, he worked in the Town and Country Planning department of the new West Lothian District Council at the County Buildings in Linlithgow and lived in Bo'ness. A colleague was re-locating and David jumped at the chance to buy the house in Springfield. He recalls with great fondness the welcome he and his wife **Dorothy**, who was a midwife at Glasgow Royal Maternity

"When I moved here, the street was very friendly. There were many people together, at Christmas, and especially at the New Year. We used to go from house to house and there was always plenty to eat and drink and good music. If people fell asleep in your house, you supplied them with breakfast. It was very, very good".

From the outset, David was keen to get to know people and become integrated into the community. He did this through his work at the Council and involvement in organisations such as St Mildred's Church (now St Peter's) and the Round Table, where he got involved in numerous community projects and was introduced to the delights of the Riding of the Marches.

Hailing from the Lango region of Northern Uganda, David first came to the UK in 1969, with the aim of furthering his studies. He was a qualified medical assistant and trained as a State Registered Nurse in Newcastle upon Tyne. He later moved into psychiatric nursing at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital, before switching to a course of study which led to qualifications in health service and public sector management. After a spell with West Lothian District

Council, he joined NHS Lothian, where he worked in healthcare planning and capital development and was involved in projects such as St John's Hospital and the Linlithgow Health Centre.

David became active in the trade union UNISON and helped to establish the Lothian Health Black Members Group.

Experiences in his native Uganda have inspired David's humanitarian work over many years. His concern at the poor conditions in a major hospital in Northern Uganda, where patients suffered inadequate treatment, led David to successfully engage hospitals within NHS Lothian and businesses to donate surplus but functional medical equipment. The result was a 40-foot container being sent to Lira Hospital

David later learned that many patients in the hospital were in need of spectacles. Through Robert Callendar opticians, he requested that people donate unwanted pairs and harvested 5,000, thereby enhancing the quality of life for many people in Northern Uganda.

The need for a chapel at Lira was helped by David raising £7,000 through Scottish churches, which covered half the cost.

David has a great reputation for being an innovator and, on retirement, he established a charity – 'Association of Serving the Humanity International' (ASHI), which is based in West Lothian.

The work undertaken by David and ASHI since 2010 has facilitated a major clean and safe drinking water project, where three deep wells have been drilled to provide water for a community of 10,000 people in Bala, Northern Uganda.

Of his voluntary and humanitarian work, David told me:

"I am never afraid and I never shy away. If there is any organisation bringing people together, whatever needs to be done, I am there".

"There is deep sadness in David's voice when he says that, despite his great involvement over many years in Scotland, and his huge love for the place he calls home, people still ask him where he comes from and if he is a visitor. All I would say is that 'St Michael is kind to strangers'. After over fifty years in Linlithgow, David is certainly not a stranger and this adopted son of St Michael is without a shadow of a doubt one of the finest of the 'Folk fae Lithgae'."

Murdoch Kennedy



Hospital, received when they moved into their new home shortly after their wedding in St Michael's Church in 1981:

YOUR MUCH LOVED COMPANIONS FOR MANY YEARS...

Which plants have you got in your garden that have been your much loved companions for many years? We have quite a few, some of which have moved with us, or been replaced by younger ones as they have aged, but all full of memories of past times and folks.



Lesley loves this picture of a very young Dougal and it reminds him of the rose Maigold that was grown by his parents on the metal fence railings he is swinging on. A hybrid that was introduced from Germany in the year we were both born, a long lived variety!



It can be used as a loose shrub or trained as a climbing rose with wonderful glossy and healthy leaves. In our garden we train it as a climber around a tall post and it flowers generously in June and then offers flowers on and off all summer, finishing with a cloak of golden Clematis Tiara in the late summer. The perfume is delicious and memorable although sadly the blooms only last a day or two if picked for the vase.



June and then offers flowers on and off all summer, finishing with a cloak of golden Clematis Tiara in the late summer. The perfume is delicious and memorable although sadly the blooms only last a day or two if picked for the vase.



Dougal's family home had a sprawling Wisteria on its south facing wall, and the sight and fragrance in May takes him straight back to his youth. Lesley claimed that our Wisteria had a thousand flowers on it this year, life was too

short to count them! In Scotland it always enjoys a sheltered south or west facing stone or brick wall. The reflected warmth from the wall encourages lots of flowers.

The first two plants that Lesley bought (from a great local garden centre!) and planted in her new garden were Clematis montana and Geranium Ibericum (or G. magnificum). The rich purple blue flowers make a great display in June but don't repeat again later in the summer unlike some of the Geraniums, but we always have it in the garden where it likes most soils in sun or partial shade.

Lesley always tells folk that every garden should have at least six clematis, we have more than a dozen. The vigorous Clematis montana wilsonii scrambles up a tree and is gently fragrant. At the other end of the scale her patio clematis are happy in a pot,



the blue one is called Olympia and is pruned like cutting off a ponytail to 15cm in February. Clematis are really so easy and add a surprise splash of colour at different times of the year.



We have been designing gardens for more than 30 years and one plant we nearly always include is Amelanchier. Grown either as a large shrub or small tree it is great in blossom and shows wonderful autumn colour. We have always wanted to convert our customers to having a love for it. Going forwards we are probably doing the same for the hardy Perennial Alstroemeria Indian Summer as it will surely appear in every garden we design. With lovely dusky leaves it starts flowering in June and doesn't stop until late autumn. Easy to grow in average garden soil in a sunny position, it flowers at about 45cm high.



NEW HOPETOUN GARDENS

Dougal Philip and Lesley Watson
New Hopetoun Gardens

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LINLITHGOW'S FIRST PROVOST

Bruce Jamieson

Linlithgow's major celebration is over for another year and Provost Derek Green can be well proud of another successful Riding of the Marches. Derek is the 17th Provost of the Deacons' Court - the organisation that for the last 51 years has handled all the arrangements for the Riding of the Marches. In 1974, the Lord Lyon allowed the Court to use the term "provost" for its chairperson, thus continuing a name which had been used in the Burgh since the creation of the first Civic Head in 1541.



Provost Derek Green and Past Provost Bruce Jamieson greet Princess Ann on a recent royal visit.

Before that date, Linlithgow had been granted a form of self-government by a royal charter signed and sealed by King Robert II in the late 14th century. Linlithgow could then largely govern itself, with the powers to hold burgh courts and regular markets and the right to keep all the income from custom duties and from tolls on roads and bridges.



The Great Seal of King Robert II.

Influential inhabitants, mostly merchants or craftsmen, were created burgesses, holding their land directly from the Crown and granted the rights to take part in trade or to join a craft guild. Royal Burghs were also permitted to protect their township from attack by erecting a defensive

wall with access permitted only through designated entry points called ports.



Linlithgow's town wall - still visible in the late 17th century.

However, Scottish kings still kept considerable control over the royal burgh and succeeding royal officials, such as Sheriff Sir John Borthwick, continued to exercise significant power in the town. It was not until the year 1540 that Linlithgow was granted full control of its own undertakings with the royal appointment of a Town Council made up of a group of rich merchants, wealthy traders and powerful landowners - all appointed to manage the burgh's affairs.

The King's permission to select a Provost and Council was a reward for the burgh's loyalty to him during the tribulations of his minority, culminating in the Battle of Linlithgow Bridge in 1526. The creation of the Council was also designed to celebrate the completion of St Michael's Church which had taken one hundred and fifteen years to fully construct. As well as time-consuming, the building had also been a costly business with donations coming from local taxes on, for example, ale and leather, and from fines for allowing a chimney to catch fire or for overpricing at the market. The Stewart kings also donated - recorded as "paying drinksilver to the masons involved wi' the kirk werk".

The Church was finished off with a beautiful, stone crown, topped by a weathervane in the form of a hen surrounded by chickens. The carved motto beneath it was a favourite motto of King James III: "Non Dormit Qui Custodit" meaning: "She sleeps not who keeps guard".



A drawing made of St Michael's Crown.

The newly created Council consisted of three bailies, a treasurer and eight deacons who were

elected by the craft guilds: the baxters (bakers), coopers (barrel makers), cordiners (shoemakers), fleshers (butchers), smiths, tailors, weavers and wrights.

The leader of this council was to be called 'Provost' from the medieval Latin word 'praepositus' meaning 'someone placed in charge' and King James V allowed the Linlithgow burgesses to elect their first such "Civic Head" in October 1540. The gentleman chosen was Henry Forrest of Magdalene, a wealthy landowner, who had himself donated towards the building of St Michael's Church and had been instrumental in getting the king to create the Town Council.

His election reflected his powerful position in the community and his wealth which came from farming his estates to the east of the town and from his trading concerns as a merchant-burgess. He lived in the burgh itself, at 129 - 135 High Street, and he owned other property at the west corner of The Cross, as recorded in a 1551 Instrument of Sasine.

Forrest was also able to take advantage of the troubles facing the Roman Catholic Church and was able to add to his "property portfolio" by acquiring two acres of land from John Scott, Prior of the Carmelite monastery (now in the grounds of Nether Parkley.)



An archaeological excavation in 1984 uncovered the remains of Linlithgow's Carmelite Friary.

Through the powerful connections of his wife, Katherine Livingston, Henry was able to obtain the rights to the Burgh Mills which had previously been held by the Manuel Nunnery, on the River Avon near Linlithgow Bridge.

As a committed Catholic, King James was not pleased at this acquisition of church property, and he began to question the burgh's choice of its provost whom he suspected of having Protestant sympathies. He duly sent his Sheriff Principal, Henry Stewart,



Royal Messenger, Henry Stewart, Lord Methven

Lord Methven (who had married the king's mother, Margaret Tudor) to Linlithgow to inform the burgesses that their choice was declared null and void. Instead, the monarch insisted that Robert Wotherspoon be appointed "as one who is thankful and appliabil touching sic things as may happen to occur"

Before demitting office, however, Provost Forrest was able to put his name to the first recorded evidence of the Riding of the Marches, dated October 19th, 1541. It stated that the date of the next 'Riding and Inspection of the Boundaries and Common Lands' would be on Pasche Tuesday (the day after Easter Monday), in the year 1542. This date was associated with long-established religious processions and would also tie in with the traditions around the coming of Spring and the asking for a blessing on the coming farming year.

The date (usually in April) also attempted to ensure that the weather might be favourable for open-air ceremonies. This Easter date for the event continued for the next two and a quarter centuries, although gradually its religious significance diminished - largely as a result of the Reformation and the demise of the ceremonies associated with the Roman Catholic Church. The Riding of the Marches was not changed to a June date until the late 18th century.



The "golden Finale" of the 2025 Marches held 483 years after the first recorded event.

Henry Forrest was re-elected to the position of Provost in 1544 and shortly afterwards, at a meeting of Parliament held in the Great Hall of Linlithgow Palace, he was obliged to make arrangements for a defensive army to deter an English invasion designed to capture the infant Queen Mary and marry her to Prince Edward, the son of King Henry VIII - an incident called "The Rough Wooing." A sum of £16,000 was allocated to finance the venture and Provost Forrest was ordered to include an armed force from Linlithgow.

An English army duly arrived in

Scotland and attacked Edinburgh which was almost burned to the ground. The Linlithgow contingent was not called upon to help defend the capital - being ordered instead to protect their own burgh. However, they were later present at the Battle of Ancrum Moor where 800 English warriors were killed with the Scots winning the day.



Fishing from the shore and in boats. (John Slezer, 1678)

In another judgement, several local men appeared before him accused by the Crown of illegally fishing on the loch. Forrest declared that "they hae done nae wrang because the loch hes been fishit in by the inhabitants in a' time past."

After Henry Forrest, another 75 Provosts were elected until the year 1975 when the Linlithgow Town Council was abolished and the Deacons' Court took over the running of the Marches - as they still do.

The Battle of Ancrum Moor was fought north of Jedburgh.

Forrest continued in the post until 1547 - laying down several council dictates such as: "in all time coming, the old council should choose the new"; "the new council with the deacons of crafts should choose the provost, bailies, and officers"; "no councillor should ever divulge what passes in council".

After giving up the provostship, Forrest still wielded considerable power and continued to sit on the Council, now headed by his son in law, Provost James Danielston. He also remained as a magistrate on the Sheriff Court, holding judgement on many local matters. Surviving papers record him conferring property rights to several burgesses - sometimes by the simple matter of placing the new property owner's right hand on the hasp of the door of the purchased tenement.

KING JAMES V and the BATTLE of LINLITHGOW BRIDGE

BATTLE

In September 1526, an attempt was made to rescue the 14-year-old King James V from the clutches of the Earl of Angus. An army in support of the King's mother, Margaret, led by the Earl of Lennox, met the opposing forces along the River Avon at Linlithgow Bridge. The result was a victory for Angus - and a death toll of 3,000 Scottish soldiers.

From 7.00pm on September 4th & 5th, these historic events will be dramatically portrayed in St Michael's, Kirkgate in a multimedia presentation featuring over 160 large-scale, specially-created images, live narration, recorded voices and sound effects, and live music from the Linlithgow String Orchestra.

The event is masterminded by local historian Bruce Jamieson, who has written and presented several highly-acclaimed productions in St Michael's - a building which played an integral part in the build-up to the battle, and its aftermath.



TICKETS: Adults £15 - Under 15s £12 - available from Far From The Madding Crowd and at battle500.org.uk/whats-on

All proceeds go to the Battle500 Project and St Michael's at Linlithgow and Avon Valley Church





REDSFEST - AN OUTSTANDING SUCCESS AGAIN!

Linlithgow Rugby Club held its third annual RedsFest Beer Festival and rugby sevens tournament on Saturday 17th May and it was once again an outstanding success. Hundreds of people attended over the course of the afternoon and evening, with a great range of beers, live music and excellent rugby on tap for much of the day.

The introduction of a Women's 7s tournament this year was a huge step forward and brought an extra dimension to a great day. Congratulations to all 14 teams (8 men's and 6 women's) who entertained with some thrilling rugby over the course of the afternoon. Big shout-out too to the seven tournament referees from the Edinburgh Rugby Referees Society (all unpaid volunteers) who presided over a total of 25 matches spanning the course of the afternoon!

Edinburgh University Reds came out top of the women's tournament to be the first ever winners of the Palace Cup with one of their players, **Rowan McPherson**, being selected as Player of the Tournament. Grangemouth gave them a good game in the final, but the Reds' overall teamwork, pace and skill proved too much for them in the end.

The home team Linlithgow Reds came out on top in the 8 team men's tournament beating Edinburgh Accies 29-5 in the final. The Reds were outstanding in all 5 matches they played over the course of the afternoon and deservedly retained the RedsFest Mains Park Trophy. **Alex Hall** claimed the

Tournament MVP award, but it could easily have gone to any of the Reds' players on the day - all were superb!

In the week leading up to RedsFest, groups of players and other volunteers had converted the Indoor Training Centre into the **Marquee Indoors** ready for the town's annual Civic Festival in early June. The Rugby Club has invested significant time and money over the last four years to enable this temporary transformation and a huge thanks are due to the Club's volunteers who make this possible each year

The Beer festival wouldn't be the same without our organising team, sponsors, volunteers and most of all, all the visitors! A big thank you to all for making it such a wonderful day. The whole purpose of RedsFest is to raise funds for the club. These funds go to help support the various developments in the club, from projects around our facilities to supporting developments on the grounds and as ever to enable us to offer rugby to the local community, especially through links with local schools.

As **President Jean McKeown** said *"what a fantastic day at the club with both the rugby 7s tournaments and the RedsFest beer Festival. It was amazing to see so many people there, enjoying the different ales and cider on offer and seeing people catching up with old friends on the day. Thank you and hope to see you all next year!"*



Fly Half
www.linlithgowrugbyclub.co.uk

SPRINGTIME ACTIVITY ON THE LOCH

Earlier in the year, the arrival of a pair of nesting mute swans, right beside the footpath at the west end of the loch generated significant community involvement, because of the swans' boldness and the proximity to passers-by. Through April and May, rarely a day went by, when interested locals, quietly huddled on the footpath alongside the nest (behind the safety netting helpfully put up by Historic Environment Scotland Rangers), debating the latest progress.

The lovely thing about this particular nest was that it was right in the middle of town, and so many townsfolk became really interested, inspiring inquisitiveness and learning about something that they knew little about before. This is the spirit in which this account is written - not as a bird expert, but as a novice enthusiast.

FOUR SWAN EGGS

The first egg was laid on April 5th. In all honesty, it appeared as if the pair were "caught out" by the arrival of the first egg, as they had barely begun building the nest. The adults quickly constructed a robust and formidable nest right at the side of the loch footpath, and 4 eggs in total were laid by April 13th. Incubation normally



starts once all eggs are laid and lasts between 35-42 days.

On May 21st, the first cygnet hatched, absolutely to plan. It

was amazing to see something so small, starting to feed independently on the soft vegetation around the nest, and then learn to swim close to the nest, with the adults always close by. The adult swans continued to incubate the remaining 3 eggs, and the town waited with bated breath! So many people walked round the loch every day, just to check how the swans were doing!

Unfortunately on May 30th, 47 days after the last egg was laid, the adults abandoned the remaining 3 eggs, seeming to know that it was now "too long" and their efforts needed to transition to raising their single cygnet. We may never know what happened. Were they a new pair, breeding for the first time, and perhaps misjudged the start of incubation? Whatever happened, we can be happy that Linlithgow has one new cygnet on the loch, alongside 5 Canada goose goslings (which we think may be a first for many years). We wish them all well for their journeys to adulthood.

A RETURN IN 2027?

Swans are famously monogamous and often reuse the same nest location each year. It is with great optimism that our swan pair successfully continue to raise their single cygnet this year, and return in 2027, with all the more experience, to raise another brood successfully here in Linlithgow.

Ronald Hunter (Written on behalf of a novice bird watcher around Linlithgow loch).





HEARTS BOSS SAYS FIRST FOOTBALL LOVE WAS THE ROSE

On October 31st last year, prominent Scottish investment chief and life-long Hearts supporter, **Calum Paterson**, was appointed chairman of Heart of Midlothian Football Club, succeeding Ann Budge OBE.

On his appointment, he said:

"It is a great honour for me to be asked to take on the role of chairman at Heart of Midlothian, and to succeed Ann Budge who, through her exceptional dedication, commitment and leadership, has made an incredible contribution to the club's illustrious history."

"These are clearly exciting times for the club. I share the ambition of

the board, the Foundation, our key stakeholders, and all our supporters for Hearts to fulfil their huge potential and to be the very best they can be."

An experienced business leader for nearly four decades, Calum is chairman and senior partner at Scottish Equity Partners (SEP), the private capital fund management firm he co-founded more than 25 years ago, which invests in high growth companies across the UK and Europe. He has served on many boards, including Edinburgh-headquartered travel technology company Skyscanner, and previously chaired UK Private Capital.

Calum may now be the head man at Hearts, but he grew up in Linlithgow and his first footballing love was Linlithgow Rose. I met up with Calum recently when he paid a visit to his home town and he told me:

"Although I've not lived in the town since leaving for university in 1981, I'm still Linlithgow through and

through, have family and friends in the town, and of course I'm still a fan of the Gallant Rosie Posie!"

Calum was born in 1963 at Simpson's maternity hospital in Edinburgh and grew up on Braehead Road, together with mum **Betty (nee Smith)**, who worked in the Co-op and served on the Community Council, dad **Eddie**, who worked in the BP at Grangemouth and ran the Konkar ice cream van for many years, brother **Kenneth** and sister **Rhona**. The family home was just along the road from Linlithgow Academy, where Calum was the deputy Head Boy in the 1980-81 school session, and the Rose ground at Prestonfield.

Calum's grandad, **Jock Smith**, a builder to trade and Gallipoli veteran, was one of the men who revived the Rose after the Second World War and built the new facilities on ground adjacent to the Gowanstank glue works. At the Rose AGM in May 1949, a few months before the club played its first competitive game for ten years, Jock was one of the people who opted to call the new ground 'Prestonfield', defeating the alternative 'Buchanan Park' by two votes.

Calum recalled:

"I remember going along to watch my grandad cut the grass and he was heavily involved in the Rose, along with his sons, Freddie and John. They seemed to do everything for the club, including washing the strips. As a wee boy, I used to sneak into the ground through gaps in the fence at the back, but I later became a paying customer. I always loved the big away trips in the Scottish Junior Cup. When I started following Hearts, I just used the same maroon and white scarf"

One of Calum's proudest possessions is his grandad's medal from the famous 1964-65 Scottish Junior Cup victory, which all the Rose committee received.

Calum attended the last Rose game of the season, when they clinched the Lowland League at Bonnyrigg. During his recent visit to Linlithgow, Calum met the Rose President, **Jon Mahoney**, and he looks forward to strengthening the historic links between the two clubs.

Murdoch Kennedy



THE ROSE ARE READY TO ROAR AGAIN!

Linlithgow Rose are gearing up for the new football season and their number one aim is to retain the Lowland League title they won in such dramatic style last term. The Rose were undefeated in their last twelve outings and clinched the league in the last game of the season against Bonnyrigg, who had been one of the favourites to take the title.



Manager Gordon Herd told me:

"The ambition is to win the league again and to gain promotion to League Two through the play-offs. We were disappointed about what happened with the play-offs last season, but we understood the club's position and we backed the committee on it. Coming into the new season, there are a few wrongs to be righted"

"Our amazing run in the closing weeks took some people by surprise, but not us as a coaching staff, because we always had belief in the players that they were the best team in the league, certainly the best footballing team, and that was the message we kept relaying to them. We knew we would be challenging if we won our games in hand"

With the Lowland League having an east and a west section this year, Gordon is only too aware of what lies ahead:

"It's a different challenge, because we've lost teams from the west, but we've added some familiar foes from the old junior days, such as Musselburgh, Lochee, Hill of Beath and Dunipace and we'll be playing at different parks and travelling to different places, such as Brechin. It's exciting. We have managed to keep our squad together and we've brought in three that we think will

Lowland League winners 2026



PHOTOS BY ANDREW WEST



add to the quality - Jordan Tosh, Sallu Touray and Liam McQuaid. We feel we are in a good place with the squad and the injured guys coming back, like Ciaran Greene, are like new signings. Having had the experience of success last season, we certainly feel we will be in a strong position to be the first winners of the new Lowland League"

Before the Lowland League East fixtures get underway, the Rose have the small matter of four glamour games in the Premier Sports Cup to contend with,

where they will face East Fife from League One, Greenock Morton and Inverness Caledonian Thistle from the Championship and St Johnstone from the Premiership. The opening fixture will take place at Morton's Cappielow ground on Saturday July 11th and then St Johnstone will visit Prestonfield on the evening of Tuesday July 14th.

Gordon hopes the whole community will rally round the Rose in this exciting new venture, which is the ideal preparation for the club's ambition to be playing in the Scottish leagues. He told me:

"There was a great Rose support at the last game of the season at Bonnyrigg and they really helped to pull us through after we went a goal down. It would be great to see those kinds of numbers every week at Prestonfield. Maybe people who don't normally come along, but got the bug from the Bonnyrigg game? Linlithgow is a great town and the Rose has always been a huge part of that. We are very ambitious for the club to progress and hope the community will get right behind all our efforts"

Check out the Rose website and social media pages for full details of all the forthcoming fixtures and information as to how you can rally round the Rose.

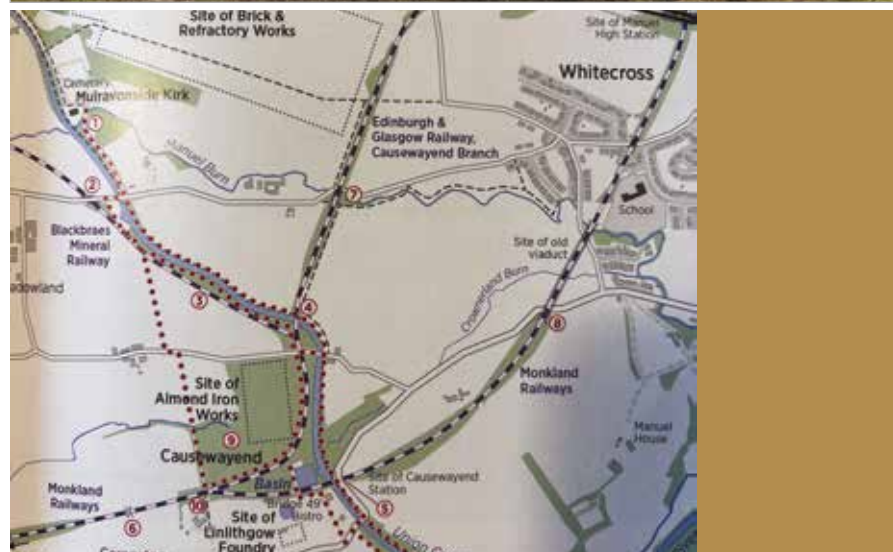
Murdoch Kennedy



The Slamannan Railway and Causewayend Incline John McGregor



Causewayend Incline, Slamannan Railway



The Slamannan Railway, authorised in 1835, was completed to Causewayend on the Union Canal in 1840. Together with the Monkland & Kirkintilloch Railway and the Ballochney Railway, it was gathered into the combined Monkland Railways in the plural in 1848 and converted from 'Scotch gauge' (4'6") to Stevenson standard gauge (4'8½"). The Slamannan Company's powers for a Bo'ness Extension passed to the united Monkland enterprise.

The Monkland system is not easily disentangled from the other railways which multiplied around it in the 1840s and '50s. In its relatively brief heyday it was almost self-contained, tapping the mineral wealth of the Central Belt but traversing a good deal of empty upland

which offered little local passenger traffic. It linked with the Forth & Clyde Canal at Kirkintilloch and with the Union Canal at Causewayend and threw out a branch to Bathgate.

An integrated train-and-canal passenger service to Edinburgh via Causewayend was short lived – overtaken by the completion of the Edinburgh & Glasgow Railway, Scotland's first truly intercity line, in 1842. However, alteration of gauge made possible a rail link between Coatbridge and Linlithgow by the Monkland route, connecting with the trains between Edinburgh and Glasgow. This continued for some years, and excursion traffic from North Lanarkshire seems to have reached Linlithgow in the same manner.

The imploding 'Railway Mania' bubble of the late 1840s gave pause to plans for Monkland-Edinburgh & Glasgow amalgamation – plans which in any case had already run into difficulties; but both companies would eventually be absorbed into the North British Railway

in 1865 – one of the mid-Victorian 'Great Amalgamations' which largely defined the Scottish network until the 1914-18 War. Much of the original Monkland rolling stock and plant was basic, even primitive, and improvement to minimum Board of Trade criteria came slowly. While the Bathgate line, opened from Newbridge (Ratho) on the Edinburgh & Glasgow in 1849 and extended westward in stages, became under North British ownership a busy secondary route between the cities, the Monkland, for passenger business at least, remained relatively a backwater.

Nevertheless, the North British timetable for 1896 shows through services in both directions between Bo'ness and Hyndland in Glasgow's western suburbs, over Monkland tracks and through Glasgow Queen Street Low Level, with a journey time of some 2¾ hours. Intermediate stations, like Avonbridge or Slamannan, benefitted immensely from such provision, but it was a traffic which, between the Wars, passed irrevocably to the motor bus. Passenger trains ceased from 1930. Mineral traffic experienced a long slow decline, from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century, as coal and ore reserves were little by little worked out. All rail activity ended in 1964.

Causewayend Incline (800 yards in length with a gradient of 1 in 22 or 45.5%) made a dramatic feature of the 12½ mile Slamannan Railway. It was inevitably rope-worked, and early maps indicate the stationary winding engine which stood at Incline Top. Runaways were not unknown, and on one occasion a train of ironstone ended in Causewayend basin. Locomotives were introduced from 1864; and this, curiously, relates to the major main-line collision at Bo'ness Junction-Manuel which the North British Company suffered in 1874. Disaster followed when a newly promoted young signalman was persuaded to allow an illicit shunting movement – because the engine was urgently needed for Incline duty. (17 lives were lost.)

It speaks to the pride and confidence of mid-19th century railway promoters (but also to their naivete?) that the Slamannan Company – a modest venture only briefly independent, which made sense only as the appendage of lines already in being – thought fit to erect an elaborate stone plaque inscribed with the directors' names beside the Causewayend Incline. Though broken, the plaque survives, in the keeping of the National Railway Museum in York.



SUMMER CLASSICAL CONCERTS IN LINLITHGOW



CONSERVATOIRE STUDENTS

Music after Lunch – *Dates for your diary*

All are welcome to join the audience at St. Michael's Parish Church after lunch on four afternoons in July and August, when students from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland have been invited to perform in the town.

The events are a result of open invitations to students issued by Linlithgow Arts Guild. A total of 16 applications were received. The selected events are:

Sunday 12th July
Cello and Piano
Charlotte Hay and Ruari Woodsend

Wednesday 22nd July
4-hands Piano
Georgiana Grecu and Michael Gemmell

Sunday 2nd August
Classical Guitar
Shubbe Kabanda

Wednesday 12th August
Wind Quintet
The "Autumn Quintet"

The concerts are all at 2pm, with a duration of 1 hour. There is no charge for entry, but donations to Linlithgow Arts Guild will be invited at the door. The Arts Guild funds the concerts, including fees for the students and hire of the venue and publicity. The students have selected their own programmes and these are available online.

These events precede the start of the Arts

Guild's main series of concerts in the winter months, running from September 2026 to April 2027. Details of all of the concerts are now available online at <https://www.linlithgowartsguild.org.uk>



David Lunt
Linlithgow Arts Guild (SCIO)
davidalunt@aol.com
T.07821 017099

Summer eye care: Simple steps to prevent dry eyes



Dry eyes can be uncomfortable at any time of year, but, symptoms can become more noticeable during the summer months.

Specsavers

To help support customers, Specsavers Linlithgow has recently launched its advanced in-store ZEST (Zocular Eyelid System Technology) procedure to help treat dry eyes.

ZEST is a quick, painless 10-to-20-minute procedure using a natural gel and a specialised swab to deep-clean the eyelids and lashes. By clearing away the biofilm, debris, and mites that block vital oil glands, it delivers immediate, soothing relief, allowing customers to regain comfort and focus on their daily lives.

Diana Kelly, ophthalmic director at Specsavers Linlithgow, has answered some of the most commonly asked questions about dry eyes.

What are dry eyes?

Diana says: 'Dry eye is a condition where the eyes do not produce enough tears, or where the tears produced aren't working effectively enough to keep the eyes comfortable and healthy.'

'This can lead to irritation, soreness, redness and a gritty or burning sensation. Some people may also experience watery eyes, which happens when the eyes react to dryness by producing excess tears.'

Why can dry eyes feel worse in summer?

'Warmer weather, pollen, air conditioning and fans can all contribute to the eyes feeling drier or more irritated. People may also spend more time outdoors, travel more often, or use screens for longer periods while working, studying or relaxing.'

'For anyone already prone to dry eye, these summer factors can make symptoms more noticeable.'

What are the signs of dry eyes?

'Around 1 in 3 people experience dry eye symptoms, which can vary, but common signs include sore, irritated or itchy eyes, redness, watery eyes and blurred vision.'

'Some people notice their symptoms are worse after long periods of screen use, in air-conditioned environments, in heated rooms, when reading for a long time, or after spending time outdoors in warm or windy weather.'

What causes dry eyes?

'Dry eye can be linked to ageing, a blockage in the glands of the eyelid, or environmental factors such as heating or air conditioning.'

'That's why it is important to have the condition assessed properly. Dry eye isn't always caused by the same thing, so understanding the root of the problem helps us recommend the most appropriate treatment plan.'

What can people do to help protect their eyes in summer?

Diana says: 'Take regular breaks from screens, stay well hydrated and wear sunglasses outdoors to help protect your eyes from wind, sun and pollen.'

'If symptoms persist, it is important to seek professional advice.'

What is the new ZEST procedure?

'ZEST is a deep-cleaning specialist dry eye treatment that is now available at our Specsavers store.'

'It's designed to help improve the symptoms of dry eyes and provide relief for customers who are experiencing ongoing discomfort.'

'The first step is to book an appointment or speak to a member of the team, so we can assess your symptoms and advise whether the service is for you.'

To book an eye test at Specsavers Linlithgow, call 01506 534 484 or visit www.specsavers.co.uk/stores/linlithgow.

Leo du Feu - Artist Homecoming Exhibition, Burgh Halls

Much has changed in the life of artist Leo du Feu since he featured on the front page of Black Bitch magazine (edition No.4) back in September 2011. Moving forward 15 years, Leo's not to be missed 'Homecoming' exhibition of paintings is now running in the Burgh Halls from 22nd May through to 13th September 2026.

Leo's first ever exhibitions were at the Line Gallery in Linlithgow High Street and his work can now be found displayed in homes all over the world.

BURNTISLAND STUDIO

I recently met with Leo in his wonderful studio (previously a waiting room) located on the platform of the railway station in Burntisland where he spoke candidly about his passion for nature, landscape and wildlife, his full recovery from a crippling mental illness and a magical childhood spent in Linlithgow.

Born in Edinburgh in 1984, Leo moved to Linlithgow two years later with his parents Susan (also an artist) and Dave. Brother Roan was born in 1989. Leo has vivid memories of his early life at the family home at Greenpark Cottages on Edinburgh Road and especially the "wild space" garden which stretched up to the Union Canal.

LOW PORT PRIMARY / LINLITHGOW ACADEMY

Leo went to school at Low Port Primary where he was awarded the School Art Cup in P7. At Linlithgow Academy Leo particularly enjoyed S6 where he studied Advanced Higher Art and GCSE Photography and, importantly, became more self confident. Over the years at the Academy, Leo took inspiration from a number of teachers in the art department including Mr Boyle, Mrs Calder, Mr Pilarski and Mr Spence.

EDINBURGH COLLEGE OF ART

In 2002, age 18, Leo started at Edinburgh College of Art where he realised that painting was to be his vocation in life. In his final year, Leo was awarded a large commission to be set in the entrance hall of the newly built UK Astronomy Technology Centre at the Royal Observatory Edinburgh on

Blackford Hill. Leo has been a full time free-lance artist ever since.

AN ARTIST'S LIFE

Thanks to a scholarship from the Royal Over-Seas League, Leo travelled across Canada and subsequently published a book - Sketches from Canada.



Leo has worked as a Lead Artist with Scottish charity Art in Healthcare for many years, running outreach art workshops for adults including weekly sessions at the Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh.

Leo loves travelling by train and works as a Scotrail Community Rail Champion. He has featured in two Channel 4 programmes - Scotland's

Scenic Railways and Britain's Scenic Railways.

Each year Leo spends time living on the Isle of May which sits at the mouth of the River Forth. He travels there with a group of artist friends - "It's the highlight of my year, probably the most inspiring of all my places".



BURGH HALLS EXHIBITION Leo shares his thoughts -

"The opening evening in Linlithgow was wonderful. I was ecstatic to spend those hours surrounded by so many of you special people from so many parts of my life. Followers and collectors... school friends, one of my secondary school art teachers - thank you for the champagne you brought me Mrs Calder! Art college friends, Isle of May friends... new Burntisland friends... my boys and Jennifer and my parents and my brother. Thank you all so much."

"I'm really proud of this exhibition and I have important messages to share, about mental health,

breakdown, recovery, excitement and joy. It's my biggest ever solo show, by far. It is taking place 20 years after my Edinburgh College of Art Degree Show. This year is also the 15 year anniversary of the Burgh Halls Gallery - a space which West Lothian Council should be so proud of and which I don't think they make nearly enough noise about."

Leo, his wife Jennifer and two young sons currently live in the coastal village of Burntisland, Fife.

This 'Homecoming' exhibition is not just a physical return to Linlithgow for Leo, where he spent most of the first 30 years of his life but also a celebration of the return to being himself - Leo du Feu - Lion of the Fire.

Contact - www.leodufeu.co.uk / Facebook & Instagram - Leo du Feu
Leo will soon publish a 'Homecoming' book.

Leo holds open studio weekends through the year and by appointment - To be added to his mailing list contact Leo on leo@leodufeu.co.uk

BURGH HALLS (THE GALLERY) - AN IMPORTANT PLACE

After extensive refurbishment the Burgh Halls re-opened in 2011 and since that time, under the careful management of curator Camille Archer, the Gallery on the second floor has been host to a wonderful array of established, emerging and contemporary artists.

The Gallery is an important and incredible space - a place to be cherished and valued.

Website - linlithgowburghhalls.co.uk

Ronald Hunter

(The image from 2011 is courtesy of Matthew Beech and the new photography is by David Anderson).



St Joseph's Primary is thrilled to connect with our local community through The Black Bitch magazine! It has been a busy and rewarding term, and we are proud to share some of the fantastic events our pupils have taken part in recently.

Health Week

We welcomed top GB athlete Fraser Malcolm to St Joseph's to kick start our Health Week on Monday 18th of May. Fraser Malcolm, a team Scotland basketball player and a two-time Commonwealth semi-finalist put the children through their paces in a sponsored fitness circuit and were inspired in a whole-school assembly.

The aim of the event was to improve levels of physical activity, wellbeing, and academic results in schools by inspiring the children with a real-life sporting role model and encouraging them to follow their dreams.



What a fantastic Health Week we had! Our pupils stayed active with yoga, archery, soccer, tennis, judo, and dance. We also welcomed the dental nurse, who shared important tips on keeping our smiles healthy. Sports Day was a huge success, thanks to our fantastic Primary 7 leaders who organised potted events, traditional races, and a vibrant colour run! To wrap up our fantastic Sports day, pupils from each class showcased their incredible skills at our "St Joseph's Got Talent" show!

Pupil Voice

"I really enjoyed doing all the exercises, my favourite part of Health Week was when Fraser Malcolm came in and we did some exercises, one of them was 'The Spotty Dog!' Harris, primary 3"

Reading Schools update

St Joseph's Primary School proudly achieved Gold Reading Schools status in June 2024! This award celebrates our vibrant, inclusive reading culture, which inspires a love of books across our entire community. Our learners take the 'driver's seat' by promoting literacy, sharing recommendations, and helping younger peers discover the magic of stories. Supported by exciting community partnerships and strong home-school links, we are proud to act as official ambassadors for reading across the local area.

As part of our ongoing commitment to reading for pleasure, we continue to strengthen community ties through regular library visits and unique opportunities for pupils to engage with authors, including participating in the Linlithgow Book Festival. This year our pupils were fortunate to take part in an event with Ross Collins, Morag Hood, David MacPhail and Justin Davies



Pupil Voice

"I enjoyed going to see David MacPhail because he was really funny. He told us about jellyfish and it

was really fascinating!
Olivia, Primary 5

I really enjoyed seeing Morag Hood, we listened to 'I am Bat' and 'The Seahorse and we drew a picture of a seahorse.
Vivienne, Primary 2."

Transition

Primary 7 pupils have been participating in transition activities with their destination secondary schools, Sinclair Academy, Linlithgow Academy and Cedarbank. Our robust transition programme includes visits from high school staff and pupils who deliver taster lessons. Additionally, our P7 students take part in a series of high school visits, allowing them to experience life as an S1 student firsthand.

Pupil Voice

"I had a great time at Sinclair Academy. I liked the layout of the day and we had more freedom to stay in or go out at break and lunch. I really enjoyed the variety of activities we did in each class. Katie, Primary 7
I loved my trip to Linlithgow Academy, we got a tour of the school and the day went really quickly. I met some new friends. Grace, Primary 7

Primary 7 School Camp

Primary 7 have had a fantastic time at school camp where they visited Lockerbie Manor for a residential 3 day stay. Activities included a mix of water and land base activities, such as climbing, kayaking, canoeing, paddleboarding, archery, bushcraft, raft building, abseiling, gorge walking, high ropes, and others. All sessions were led by fully trained instructors and the children had the best time!

Pupil Voice

"I had an amazing time at camp! My absolute favourite parts were the zip-lining and the blind trail. On the trail, we wore blindfolds and had to find our way while our partners guided us. Victoria, Primary 7

Jillian Bryce

EMILY EVANS RETURNS TO PARTY AT THE PALACE

Local singer song writer, **Emily Evans**, returns to Party at the Palace on Saturday 8th August. Back for its 11th year, Emily is excited to perform and the festival promises another outstanding weekend of live music, with an impressive two-day line-up that has audiences in for a real treat.



King Tut's, Glasgow

Born and raised in Linlithgow, 24-year-old Emily discovered her passion for music at an early age through learning the violin and piano. She was a familiar face at Linlithgow Academy's productions and annual music showcases, where she regularly performed both her own songs and collaborative pieces. Taking to the Party at the Palace stage in 2025 marked a true hometown milestone and a full-circle moment for the rising artist.

Emily's music journey has taken her to some iconic venues across Scotland, earning her airplay on radio stations like BBC Radio nan Gàidheal and Amazing Radio, where Jim Gellatly – widely regarded as the voice of new music in Scotland – champions emerging talent and unsigned artists. She has supported Murdo Mitchell at King Tut's Wah Wah Hut, Katie Nicoll at SWG3 Poetry Club, returning to King Tut's for their annual Summer Nights Festival supporting Niamh Morris and earlier this year she supported Amy-Louise at SWG3 Poetry Club.

After graduating from the University of Strathclyde in 2024 with a degree in Marketing, Emily has successfully combined her professional expertise with her music career. Alongside promoting her own releases, she works full-time in marketing. Reflecting on the balance between her two passions, Emily said: *"It's been a busy year. I feel like I eat, sleep and breathe*

marketing as my daytime role as a marketing executive means that I am constantly planning, preparing and strategising and my music allows me to do the same. I love it though and wouldn't have it any other way."

Emily describes her sound as "heartbreak pop" – a blend of emotional ballads, relatable

storytelling and infectious melodies. Drawing inspiration from both real-life experiences and fictional narratives, her songs explore themes that resonate with a wide audience. *"I want my songs to resonate with those listening, even if it is just one person I know I've done my job to comfort someone and*

they aren't alone. When singing my songs live and hearing lyrics being sung back to me is just something that I'll never get over." While many of her tracks showcase her heartfelt songwriting, songs such as 'Left Me on Read' and 'Overdrive' reveal a more upbeat and energetic side to her music. Fans can also look forward to new releases, with more tracks scheduled to arrive throughout the summer.

What's special about this year's event is not only Emily's return but that Party at the Palace returns to its original home, where it all first started, - on The Peel right at the foot of the majestic Linlithgow Palace and next to the picturesque Linlithgow Loch. Steeped in history, James I began construction of the Palace in 1424. Over time it has undergone various rebuilds and extensions across the centuries, battling fires, abandonment and the wear and tear of housing some prominent royal figures. Although a ruin, today it still stands tall and proud having been the birth place of one of Scotland's most famous royals in 1542, Mary Queen of Scots. As one of Linlithgow's most recognisable and visited landmarks, the Palace provides a fitting backdrop for Party at the Palace's return to where it all began. Combining world-class live music with one of Scotland's most spectacular historic settings, this year's festival promises to be a memorable celebration for artists and audiences alike.

PATP 2025



Emily, Mum & Dad and sister Alicia 2014



The number four appears to pop up in many palace dates and holds special significance for Party at the Palace, as the festival first began in 2014. That inaugural event featured headline performances from Deacon Blue and Simple Minds. At the time, Emily was just 12 years old and attended her first-ever festival alongside her parents and sister. Emily said *"My Mum remembers the Bluebells came on stage and everyone in the drinks queue was singing 'Young at Heart' in the marquee. Obviously, I wasn't in that queue..."*

Emily's excited to play at Party at the Palace, a festival extremely close to her heart having been at the first one as a child. Since then, she has been a regular attendee and more recently a performer. Emily said, *"I am extremely grateful to the organisers for inviting me back. I can't wait to play in my home town again."*

You can find Emily's music on all streaming platforms such as Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon Music and iTunes. You can also follow her latest updates on Instagram @emily.evansmusic, TikTok @emilyevansmusic and Facebook @Emily Evans Music.



NO WEEPING AT THE WILLOW TREE

A popular local venue has had a complete refurbishment and customers are being encouraged to come in and use the new-look premises.

The Function Suite at the Willow Tree (formerly the Black Bitch Tavern) at 14 West Port was stripped back to the walls in the biggest renovation since the facility was first created in 1971.

That was a year after the long-serving licensee, Mrs. Catherine Liddell, sold the Black Bitch Tavern to Brightons-based building contractor, Bruce Wilson. He completely transformed what was believed to be the oldest pub in the town, building a new and much larger public bar and creating an upstairs lounge and a downstairs lounge in what had previously been two houses. The extensive work took over a year to complete and the upstairs lounge was officially opened on May 31st 1971 by Rangers and Scotland footballer, Colin Stein. The downstairs lounge would be completed later.



I called into the pub as they were busy preparing for the Marches celebrations and spoke to **Elizabeth Carlin**, who together with her partner, **Robert Lowe**, has the lease on the premises. Elizabeth was keen to explain the extent of the upstairs makeover and told me:

"The room was absolutely gutted. We went back to the bare brick and all that was kept was some of the wood paneling. We decided on fixed seating round the walls to make it easier for the customers and increase the capacity. We didn't scrimp at all on the fixtures and fittings and employed a professional designer to organise the

furnishings and decoration. The completely new bar was hand-made by a carpenter from Fife and we replaced the whole floor. We can comfortably seat fifty and even when it is busy, it never feels claustrophobic."

The Function Suite is the ideal venue for celebrations of all kinds, including birthdays, baby showers, christenings, renewals of vows and small funerals.

"We did a First Communion party recently and we've even done a full wedding", Elizabeth told me. "We can cater to the needs of the customers and offer a bespoke service for their event, including music, catering, and drinks. Our beautiful new bar is well stocked and we can order in specific spirits on request".

In recent times, the upstairs Function Suite has hosted the 'Wee Whisky Socials' organized by the Wee Whisky Shop on Linlithgow High Street and these have proved to be very popular. The next one will take place on Thursday July 23rd.

For further details about the Function Suite – and all the other facilities available at the Willow Tree (formerly the Black Bitch Tavern) – give Elizabeth and Robert a call on 01506 842147, or pop in to the pub any day from 11am.

Murdoch Kennedy



The Willow Tree Live Entertainment



Friday 8-late

31st July - Jamming with Acoustic Bruce

Saturday 9-late

July 11th - Will Treeby

18th July - Alannah Colston

25th July - Gerry's Karaoke

1st August - Lynne Size

8th August - Kenny Hanlon

15th August - Sammy Lee

Sunday 5-8pm

2nd August - Under Cover

Sky : TNT :Via Play

The Best Of Sporting Activities On Our Screens



Photography: Elizabeth Carlin

ALLOTMENT IN JULY

LINLITHGOW AND DISTRICT ALLOTMENT SOCIETY



June has been favourable for growing both produce and weeds! The rain we had followed by the hot sun around the solstice gave us some challenges but with careful management crops are healthy and the allotments are looking very productive. Vegetables, fruit and flowers are at their best.

What to do in your fruit and vegetable garden in July

Most of the time this month is taken up with harvesting crops and keeping on top of weeding. This is true of gardens as well as allotments. There are still some crops that can be sown or planted to spread out the season

> Continue to sow lettuce, salad leaves, spring onions, rocket, spinach, beetroot and radish. Sowing two or three times throughout the growing season means you have crops for eating over a longer period. Keep seedlings watered in dry weather until the plants are established.



> Leeks can be planted out during June or July when they are about 10 cm high and about the thickness of a pencil. Using a dibber, or better still an old spade or broom handle with a square or wedge shaped end, make planting holes 15 cm

deep, 15–20 cm apart in each direction. Drop a leek plant into each hole – some gardeners recommend trimming the roots so that they drop into the holes easily, but others say just to twist the plant gently as you drop it into the hole. I just drop the leek plant into the hole. Fill up the hole with water. Job done. Leeks are very easy to grow and don't need much looking after apart from weeding

> Some varieties of carrots can be sown in early July. Autumn King, Amsterdam Forcing 3, Eskimo F1 are all good varieties to sow now. They store well and could see you through the winter months. Water the soil before sowing and sow thinly. Keep soil moist until seedlings emerge, then water during dry spells. Baby carrots can be lifted after eight to twelve weeks. Larger carrots can be left in the ground during the cooler months (as long as pests and heavy frost are not expected) or lifted and stored indoors.

> A row of Kelvedon Wonder peas can also be sown early in July.

> Feed autumn cauliflowers weekly to get good-sized curds.

> Keep watering sweet corn and squash plants. An inverted bottle (with the bottom cut out pushed into the ground at the base of the squash and courgette plants) is a good way to get the water to the base of the plant and into the soil. Push a cane through into the soil to keep the bottle in place. Without this, it is not easy to water when plants are more mature as the leaves make it difficult to direct the water to the roots.



> Summer cabbages, Swiss chard, courgettes, broad beans, peas, spinach, should be ready for harvesting this month.



> Strawberries, gooseberries, blackcurrants, redcurrants and whitecurrants as well as early raspberries can be picked.



Stop watering shallots in week 2 and harvest them at the end July.

> Stop watering onions towards the end of the month.

> Early potatoes should be ready for harvesting. Try not to leave any small potatoes in the ground as they will come up again next year. There are always some left however thorough you are.



For those who have an established vegetable garden and want information about what to do each month we have a post on our website that gives growing information, month by month. This is on the left hand side of the home page. Our website address for LADAS is linlithgowallotments.wordpress.com

Val Corry
Chair LADAS



SHEDDING LIGHT ON THE LIGHT ROOM

Local photographer and community activist, Rebecca Holmes, has recently moved from her studio base in the High Street to lovely new premises at the east end of the town, next door to the Cricket Club.

Together with her husband David, Rebecca has taken over the Old Pavilion and has created what she is calling "The Light Room". I called in a few weeks ago to catch up with Rebecca and get all the news about this exciting development and was immediately struck by how bright and welcoming the place felt.

On its very attractive website, 'The Light Room' is described as "A calm, light-filled space to gather, create and connect.

Events, co-working and photography studio hire in the heart of Linlithgow. A beautiful, welcoming space for creativity and connection".

Rebecca told me:

"I've always looked at this space and thought it would be lovely. My lease finished up at the High Street place and I messaged the Old Pavilion owners to ask if I could use it occasionally. They offered me the chance to rent it and I said 'Yes, please!'.

According to Rebecca,

"It feels like a combination of a lot of the things I've done before, such as co-working, bringing people together, inter-generational learning, holistic therapies, all that kind of good stuff. I am keen for it to be a space where people gather and spend time, whether that be co-working and networking for people working from home, or holding small events. We have already had a first aid course here and it would be ideal for Yoga sessions, small rehearsals and open mic nights. One of our children would like to offer children's craft parties and it would really suit that kind of event".

At the heart of the space is Rebecca's photography studio, which is available for hire, and the whole area is organised in such a way that it can be adaptable to suit any purpose.

When I asked Rebecca who she thought 'The Light Room' was for, she replied:

"It is for people who care. People who are building something thoughtful. Who value connection. Who want to bring others together in a way that feels calm, welcoming and genuine.

It's for those who will treat the space with respect, and in doing so, help it grow into something even more special for the wider community.

More than anything, we want 'The Light Room' to be known as a place people genuinely love. The kind of space where someone says, 'Oh, I love it there'.

A place where ideas are shared, friendships are formed, and meaningful things begin. Where people come together, not because they have to, but because they want to.

There are small details here that make the space what it is.

Good coffee. A proper selection of herbal teas.

David's fudge, which has quietly become a favourite.

But more than anything, it's the care behind it all.

Anybody planning something, or just curious about the space, is always very welcome to get in touch"

Further information about 'The Light Room' can be found at the website thelightroomlinlithgow.co.uk



"It is for people who care. People who are building something thoughtful. Who value connection."



Murdoch Kennedy





Mini Marches



On Monday 22nd June the streets of Linlithgow were filled yet again with bagpipes and excitement as pupils from Springfield and Low Port Primary Schools took part in our very own Mini Marches. The event was exactly as it sounds - a mini version of our annual tradition.

The real Linlithgow Marches is a centuries-old event dating back to the 16th century, where the boundaries of the town were historically checked and celebrated. Today, it is known for its lively parades, bands and strong sense of community spirit. The mini version brought that same energy on a smaller scale, with pupils proudly marching along the High Street, stopping at the Cross and heading towards the Palace then around the Peel.

Primary 4's from both schools not only took part in the parade but created floats, flags and banners to bring the event to life. There were speeches, dance acts and lots more. Other pupils from Low Port also joined on to walk in the march. Past and present members of the Deacons Court joined us too.

The Mini Marches allows pupils to work and collaborate, builds confidence and helps us to connect with the town's local history. Families and residents turned out to watch the Mini Marches, with many commenting on how special it was to see the next generation taking part in a tradition that has been celebrated for hundred of years. Events like this ensure that important traditions continue to live on, hopefully carried forward by the young people who will shape the town's future.



YOUR SUMMER HEALTH QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Summer is the season for holidays, sunshine and spending more time outdoors — but it can also bring health challenges, that's why the pharmacy team at Linlithgow Pharmacy is here to help answer some of the most common summer health questions.

What's the best way to manage hay fever?

Hay fever symptoms can often worsen during the summer months. Your pharmacist can recommend the right treatment for your symptoms, including antihistamines, nasal sprays and eye drops.

Can my medication affect me in the sun?

Some medicines can make your skin more sensitive to sunlight and heat. If you're unsure, speak to your pharmacy team before travelling or spending long periods outdoors.

How do I know if I'm dehydrated?

Hot weather increases the risk of dehydration, especially in children and older adults. Signs can include headaches, dizziness, tiredness and dark urine. Staying hydrated and avoiding too much sun during peak hours can help.

Can the pharmacy help with summer illnesses?

Yes — your local pharmacy can provide advice and treatment recommendations for many common summer conditions without needing a GP appointment.

Travelling this summer — can you help with my vaccinations?

If you're planning a summer holiday abroad, it's important to check whether you need travel vaccinations before you go.

Different destinations can require protection against illnesses such as hepatitis, typhoid, tetanus and more.

At Linlithgow Pharmacy, our team can provide travel health advice and help you prepare for a safe and healthy trip.

We can help with:

- Travel vaccination advice
- Destination-specific recommendations
- Holiday health essentials
- Travel health guidance and support

It's recommended to arrange vaccinations well in advance of travelling, so speak to the team as early as possible before your trip.

What should be in a holiday health kit?

A few essentials can make a big difference while travelling. Consider packing:

We can help with:

- Pain relief
- Antihistamines
- Insect bite treatment
- Travel sickness remedies
- Diarrhoea relief
- Sunscreen and aftersun

Your pharmacy team can help you choose the right products for your trip.

Whether you need support with hay fever, travel health, weight management, blood pressure checks or general wellbeing, the Linlithgow Pharmacy team is here to help keep you healthy this summer.

Speak to the team in pharmacy today for advice and support.

YOUR TRUSTED LOCAL PHARMACY



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Vaccination services
Weight loss support
Stop smoking support

FREE
collection
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LINLITHGOW PHARMACY

269 High Street | 01506 379632 | www.linlithgowpharmacy.com

THE ROTARY CLUB OF LINLITHGOW GRANGE ANNUAL AM/AM CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT

MONDAY 31 AUGUST 2026 AT LINLITHGOW GOLF CLUB



MON
31
AUG

Past President Ken MacKenzie teeing off



No hole in one here

The Rotary Club of Linlithgow Grange are proud to announce we're holding our 21st annual AM/AM Charity Golf Tournament on Monday 31 August 2026. This is the first time teams will experience Linlithgow's new (two 9-hole loops) course layout – something everyone has been talking about.

Teams will compete for The Magdalene Cup and Medals and many other prizes. Over the past 20 years this event has raised well in excess of £85,000 for major Scottish, UK, and international charities.

This year two brilliant Scottish charities, Alzheimer Scotland and 1st Step Recovery will benefit from the generosity of the many golfers who will turn out to do a good turn, doing the thing they enjoy most – playing GOLF!

If you're a golfer and would like to take part in support of these charities then here's the deal.

The competition is open to all - 4 players per team. The format is a

"Texas Scramble" which is a fun and inclusive way for teams with mixed handicaps to complete the course. The maximum handicap for gents and ladies without a club handicap is 27 (full details will be in our event programme when you arrive).

The entry fee is £180 per team, which includes half-way burgers, beer and soft drinks, and at the end of your round you can replay those classic shots, lucky breaks and near misses over a complementary two-course meal. It's a fantastic day out and a great way to benefit two worthy causes.

We'll do our utmost to give you a tee-off time slot to suit your team. But hurry! It's on a first come, first served basis. Book today by contacting the organiser, Malcom Brebner whose details are below.

Perhaps you're not a golfer? Well, you can still help by sponsoring our event. We're replacing last year's tee and green sponsorships with two large banners at the 1st and 10th tees, the cost is the same as the previous tee and green arrangement (£100), but we feel this

will give you more prominence, and provide better opportunities for social media posts.

In addition, sponsors' contact details will be displayed on a loop on the clubhouse tv, and your name will also be featured in our programme. If this is something you can support it would be greatly appreciated. All the money raised in this way will go directly to the charities.

For more details please contact Malcolm Brebner on T. 07500 105055.



Alan Evans

Rotary Club of Linlithgow Grange



BOWER CARE HOME

OPENING
OPENING LATE
SUMMER
2026



Bower Care Home is a brand-new, all-inclusive luxury care home in the historic town of Linlithgow.

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Competition time The Adventures of Rosie

Are you aged 6-13 and enjoy writing stories or drawing pictures? Then we'd love you to take part in a special competition from Linlithgow Ladies Choir.

We are looking for stories and drawings to illustrate our songs, which should all feature Rosie, a fun-loving wee dog from Linlithgow.

Rosie loves adventure and travel, and she also loves the countryside and spending time with her friends. Can you imagine some of the things she might get up to?

We are looking for stories of up to 500 words, with or without a drawing, or simply a drawing by itself, on any of the concert's themes. The ten winning stories will be read as part of the concert on September 12 in St Michael's Parish Church, Linlithgow, and winning artwork displayed. Winners will also receive tickets to the concert for the winner and their family.

The themes are:

- Friendship • A starry night
- A singing bird
- Flowers • A magic carpet
- Mermaids • Flying a kite

- Cherry trees • Kenya
- Scotland's countryside
- Mary Queen of Scots

Drawings and stories can be posted in an envelope to: Alison Fraser, 17A Strawberry Bank, Linlithgow, EH49 6BJ, or digital copies emailed to alison_t_fraser@hotmail.com

Entries close:
Friday 14th August

Please include your name, age, and a parent of guardian's email or telephone number.

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YELLOWFACE REBECCA F. KUANG

"Writing is the closest thing we have to real magic. Writing is creating something out

of nothing, is opening doors to other lands. Writing gives you power to shape your own world when the real one hurts too much."

Rebecca Kuang, an American writer born in China and raised in the United States, has studied at prestigious universities in both the UK and US.

Yellowface, her fifth novel, follows June Hayward, a white

American aspiring writer who opportunistically steals an unpublished manuscript written by her casual friend, Athena Liu - a more successful Asian American novelist and darling of the publishing world. June is with Athena when she dies in a tragic, freak accident - an event that casts a long shadow over the novel's gripping moral drama.

Athena's unfinished manuscript, The Last Front, is a novel within a novel exploring the exploitation of Chinese labourers in World War I. Recognising its historical significance, June begins editing and completing it, initially as a tribute. But her writing and Athena's soon blur together, and when the book is published, June consciously claims it as her own.

"I've laboured for years to learn my craft. Perhaps the core idea of this novel wasn't mine, but I'm the one who rescued it, who freed the diamond from the rough".

Persuaded by her publishing team to use the pen name Juniper Song for "optics", June complies - adding another layer to Kuang's exploration of how easily narratives can be manipulated to serve convenience and ambition, and how readily public consciousness buys into such constructs.

Kuang deftly examines identity, diversity, and representation within a ruthless publishing industry where talent and integrity rarely guarantee success. She weaves these themes intricately through a sharp, fast-paced and thought-provoking style, exposing the fragility of many fledgling writers' self-worth:

"Every writer I know feels this way about someone else. Writing is such a solitary activity. You have no assurance that what you're creating has any value."

The result is an addictive yet uncomfortable moral read, challenging us to confront how ambition and deceit can overtake honesty - and how readily the reader is led to

sympathise with June's self-justifications. Kuang's incisive first-person narration implicates the reader, forcing us to question how reliable June's version of events ever was, especially as new perspectives and details emerge.

"But that's what I need right now: a child's blind faith that the world is so simple, and that if I didn't mean to do a bad thing, then none of this is my fault".

Yellowface also captures the ferocity of trial by social media and the dangerous ease with which reputations are destroyed. Kuang's dark humour and biting satire expose the cruelty and anonymity of the digital "keyboard warrior", serving as a cautionary reminder to check source information before casting judgment.

"Most of the accounts that participate so clearly do not care about the truth. They're here for the entertainment. These people love to have a target, and they'll tear apart anything you put in front of them".

Kuang herself describes Yellowface as "a horror story about loneliness in a fiercely competitive industry". It is that - and much more: an addictive literary thriller and a razor-sharp satire of privilege, guilt, and ambition. Kuang offers no easy answers, leaving readers questioning not only June's motives but their own complicity in the stories they choose to elevate, remember, and celebrate.

Lisa Nettleton Lisa Nettleton is a teacher and enjoys reading on her daily rail commute into Edinburgh.



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GREAT GUITAR, GREAT CAUSE

Some readers may have noticed the orange guitar that was on display in Low Port Music in Linlithgow last July and August. It was being raffled, through the kindness of Chris the proprietor, to raise funds for Strathcarron Hospice.

This year, in the weeks building up to Party at the Palace, you can see another very special guitar in Low Port Music, again raffled for the Hospice by our kind Chris. Like last year, there is a very special story to this guitar – a Jackson Performer PS1.

The donor is Kris Lennox a young Scottish composer and musician. If you Google his name, you will find some of his fine, beautiful compositions. You might also find, on YouTube, Kris demonstrating this actual guitar (Search for Kris Lennox Etude in Gm). His parents gave him the guitar when he was a teenager, so it is very special to him.

A couple of years ago Kris decided to strip the guitar down to restore it. Just a few days later he was knocked from

his bike by a car and seriously injured. He is recovering well, but when he heard about how the guitar might be used to raise funds for the Hospice he generously handed it over to be restored for that purpose.

The Jackson has been carefully restored and refinished, trying to keep as many of its original qualities and as much of its character as possible. Here's the technical bit.

The electronics (pickups, selector switch and output jack) have all been cleaned and serviced. The frets have been levelled, recrowned and polished, and the fretboard cleaned and oiled. The body has been refinished, keeping some of the original blond showing but now with a red blush sunburst effect to keep some of the design details clearly visible. It's quite beautiful!



Watch out for the red Jackson Performer PS1 appearing in the display in Low Port Music. The raffle last year raised a total of £450 for the Hospice, and Chris donated a generous second and third prize for the draw. This year, Linlithgow's very own Gary Clinton has also generously contributed a free lesson.

We're aiming for £500+. Strathcarron Hospice costs a serious £20,000 every day to run.

The Jackson is a very special, very fine instrument with a real story featuring some very kind people. Chris will welcome you into Low Port Music to have a closer look – and maybe buy a ticket or a strip? **Can you think of a better cause?**

Bill Geddes

KUK SOOL WON KOREAN MARTIAL ART



When Kuk Sool Won of Linlithgow opened its doors in November 2024 under the guidance of SBN (chief instructor) Nicola Robertson, the initial focus was simply on introducing the community to the comprehensive Korean martial art. Just 18 months later, the school achieved outstanding results in a tournament.

Competing at the 2026 World Kuk Sool Association (WKSA) Scottish Tournament, held across Bathgate and

Winchburgh on May 22–23 - Linlithgow defied the odds. Facing off against 25 other established schools from across the country, the local club captured an impressive 6th place overall finish with 104 total points.

What makes the school's success particularly remarkable is the sheer diversity of the team. Linlithgow rolled into the tournament with a squad of 19 dedicated competitors spanning the generations, from aged just 5 years old to 50.

Kuk Sool Won is known for its breadth - encompassing everything from fluid, traditional forms and self-defense techniques to light-contact point sparring and acrobatics. Preparing a team with such wide age differences requires excellent coaching, but the results over the weekend proved that the discipline knows no age limits.

From the tiny five-year-olds showing focus beyond their years to the adults demonstrating poise under pressure, the team put on a great performance in technique and martial arts etiquette. Out of the 19 Linlithgow students who stepped onto the mats, almost every single competitor



returned home with a medal around their neck.

A 6th-place finish at a national tournament is a massive victory for any club, but for one that has only been training since late 2024, it is a fantastic achievement. Most of the competitors who took to the floor over the weekend began their martial arts journey as complete novices under two years ago. The medals they brought home are a testament to many hours of sweat, repetitive practice, and a shared team culture built on mutual support.

Ultimately, Linlithgow's fantastic weekend proves that a martial arts club is about so much more than just a place to exercise. It's about

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community. Most of the people standing on that podium started as total novices less than two years ago. The massive haul of medals they brought home is the result of countless hours of shared enthusiasm, and a place where the five-year-olds and the fifty-year-olds cheer each other on like family.

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SUMMER SKIN SURVIVAL GUIDE

SUN PROTECTION AND SUMMER SKIN SECRETS: WHAT'S SAFE AND WHAT SHOULD WAIT?

Summer is a wonderful time to enjoy the outdoors, but it's also a season when your skin requires extra care. Many people are surprised to learn that some advanced skin treatments are best postponed until autumn and winter, particularly microneedling, laser, and IPL (Intense Pulsed Light) procedures.

The reason is simple: these treatments can make the skin more sensitive to ultraviolet (UVA and B) radiation. Increased sun exposure before or after treatment can raise the risk of complications, including irritation, burns, post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation (the development of unwanted dark patches), and hypopigmentation (loss of normal skin pigment, resulting in lighter patches).

For this reason, I often recommend pausing certain treatments during the summer months or during periods of high UVB exposure.

UVA and B radiation is one of the biggest contributors to pigmentation concerns. Whether it's sunspots, melasma, or uneven skin tone, excessive UV exposure can stimulate pigment-producing cells and worsen existing discolouration. This is why prevention is always preferable to correction.

SUMMER SAFE TREATMENTS

The good news is that several treatments remain suitable during the summer months when performed appropriately and combined with diligent sun protection.

> **Light Chemical Peels.** Mild chemical peels can help refresh the skin, improve texture, and brighten the complexion without the downtime associated with more aggressive resurfacing treatments.

> **Cryotherapy.** Depending on the area being treated, cryotherapy can remain a safe and effective option for removing certain benign skin lesions during the summer.

> **Phototherapy.** Phototherapy is safe throughout the year and can help manage conditions such as psoriasis, eczema, and dermatitis. It can also help reduce acne, support skin rejuvenation, improve overall skin health, and promote wound healing.

> **Hydration and Skin Barrier Repair Treatments.** These treatments are particularly beneficial during warmer weather, helping to restore moisture, reduce sensitivity, and strengthen the skin's natural protective barrier. Skin Happy's Refreshing Facials are a perfect example.

> **Skin Consultations.** Summer is also an ideal time for a professional skin assessment. A consultation can help identify concerns, optimise your skincare routine, and create a personalised treatment plan for the months ahead.

SUMMER SUN PROTECTION

Why Sunscreen Matters

SPF (Sun Protection Factor) isn't just for summer. UVA and B rays are present all year round and can penetrate cloud cover, contributing to skin damage even on overcast days.

Over time, accumulated sun exposure and sun damage can lead to premature ageing, leathery skin texture, deeper lines and wrinkles, pigmentation changes, age spots, and the development of certain skin lesions, including actinic keratoses.

One of the most common misconceptions about sunscreen is that a single morning application provides all-day protection. Unless a product specifically states otherwise, most SPF 30-50 sunscreens provide around two hours of protection before the protective energy is used up and reapplication is needed. Lower SPF products may provide significantly less protection time.

For best results, I recommend using a broad-spectrum SPF 30 or higher every day and reapplying every two hours, or sooner such as after swimming, excessive sweating, or towel drying.

FREE SUN SAFETY BOOKLET

For more information on sun safety for yourself, friends, or family members, pick up your **FREE Sun Safety booklet** from Skin Happy today.



PREPARING FOR AUTUMN TREATMENTS

Rather than viewing summer as a pause in your skincare journey, think of it as a preparation season.

By focusing on sun protection, hydration, and skin barrier repair, you can improve your skin's overall health and create the ideal foundation for more intensive treatments later in the year.



When autumn arrives and UV levels begin to decrease, your skin will be in a stronger, healthier position for treatments such as microneedling, laser, and IPL.

A responsible approach to skincare isn't about rushing into procedures, it's about choosing the right treatment at the right time, with safety always coming first.

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BANKING HUB OFFICIAL OPENING

Our banking hub at the Vennel (with external ATM) opened on Friday 5th June 2026 with the official opening launch taking place on Friday 19th June. The hub was previously located at the Burgh Halls.

Barry McLean, Regional Manager, from Cash Access UK said -

"This hub represents an important addition to the local community, providing continued access to essential banking services, including cash transactions and support from major banks, all within a single shared space. It has been developed to ensure residents and businesses can continue to access face-to-face banking services conveniently within the town centre."

The following banks will provide community bankers on the following days:-

Monday **Santander**

Tuesday **Barclays**

Wednesday
No Community banker available

Thursday **Royal Bank of Scotland**

Friday **Bank of Scotland**

Your hub's address is:

**30 The Vennel, Linlithgow,
EH49 7EX and will be open from
Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm**

We are delighted to see this valuable service launched for Linlithgow and the surrounding areas, helping to support financial inclusion and local



economic activity. If you have any questions or would like further information about the hub and the services it offers, please do not hesitate to get in touch. Thank you for your continued support."

OFFICIAL OPENING LAUNCH (19th June)

After the official opening launch the Linlithgow hub team commented:-

"What a day! Linlithgow Banking hub was officially opened today and we just wanted to say a big thank you to those who helped both today and to get us here!"

Thanks to all our community bankers who came along - it was lovely to see you. If you haven't been along to see our community bankers and you're a customer of one of the banks who visit (Santander, Barclays, RBS and BoS) do come along to see them, they are a lovely bunch! Thanks also to Trading Standards, Police Scotland West Lothian and Citizens Advice

who came along to talk to customers about keeping themselves and their money safe. If you missed them, we have lots of helpful leaflets.

Thanks also to Cash Access UK for coming along today and for all their support. And thanks to all our lovely customers, especially those who came along today to help us mark the occasion - thanks for putting up with the noise and chaos!"



www.cashaccess.co.uk / Facebook - Linlithgow Banking Hub

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“WEST LoTHIAN OUTPERFORMS MAJOR CITIES”

The latest figures from Registers of Scotland show that the country's housing market has performed more strongly than expected. In the year to April 2026, average house prices increased by 2.8% to £192,000, surpassing earlier estimates of 1.7%.

Transaction volumes also edged up by 1.5% over the same period, in contrast to a decline of 4.6% across the rest of the UK, highlighting Scotland's relative resilience.

Buyer Trends Shift Toward Houses

Growth varied across property types, with terraced houses recording the strongest performance. Prices rose by 4.7% over the year to April 2026, bringing the average to £178,000.

Flats and maisonettes saw more modest growth of 1.5%, with average prices reaching £136,000. This supports the growing trend of first-time buyers opting to purchase houses directly rather than starting with flats.

West Lothian Outperforms Major Cities

West Lothian emerged as one of the stronger-performing areas in mainland

Scotland, with house prices rising by 4.1% annually. This compares favourably to growth of 2.0% in Edinburgh and 1.6% in Glasgow.

Across Scotland as a whole, 26 of the 32 local authority areas recorded price increases. Inverclyde saw the largest rise, with prices up 12.2% to £116,000. Meanwhile, Aberdeen experienced the sharpest decline, with prices falling by 5.6% to £130,000.

Transactions Highlight Local Demand Differences

Sales data reflects shifting demand patterns across key regions. In West Lothian, transactions rose from 209 in February 2025 to 256 in February 2026. However, activity slowed in larger cities, with Edinburgh falling from 689 to 622 transactions, and Glasgow from 698 to 677.

Overall, Scotland saw little change in total transactions, with 6,186 recorded in February 2025 compared to 6,190 a year later. This marks stability following a peak of 6,563 in February 2022 and a dip to around 5,500 in both 2023 and 2024.

Wider UK Market Faces Headwinds
Looking across the UK, market

conditions remain more challenging. Rightmove reports that an unusually warm May brought forward summer market behaviour, while major events such as the World Cup could distract prospective buyers.

Buyer demand in May was down 10% compared to last year, although still broadly in line with activity seen earlier in 2026. Higher mortgage rates remain a key constraint, and increased housing supply is allowing buyers to take a more cautious approach.

Despite these pressures, sales activity is holding steady overall. The number of sales agreed is 6% lower than last year, but similar to 2024 levels and still 5% above 2023.

Outlook

The Scottish housing market continues to demonstrate stability, supported by steady demand and stronger performance in areas such as West Lothian. While economic uncertainty and higher borrowing costs persist, the market appears to be adapting, with clear shifts in buyer behaviour shaping current trends.



Hello
I'm Circe
Kenmure



Circe is a five year old, short haired German Pointer.

Her name, Circe (pronounced Sirsee), comes from an immortal sorceress and minor goddess of magic in Greek mythology, renowned for her vast knowledge of herbs, potions, and spells that could transform her enemies into wild animals. Her owner says that if Circe could actually do this, she'd be in her element!

Circe's owner describes her as a fun loving mischievous live wire, who likes nothing better than running at full pelt up at Beecraigs Country Park!

Her favourite toys are usually rabbits and squirrels - that she has never been able to catch (so far!) Her happy place is snuggled under a blanket and on the sofa next to her owner.

Circe makes her owner smile by spending hours staring at a bush in the garden she once saw a rabbit disappear into... about 2 months ago.

She has a cheeky habit of letting her owner know when it's dinner

time and bedtime, by whining a lot or by nuzzling her head into his chest.

Her favourite hobby is canicross, which she is very good at!

Canicross is a fast-growing sport in which owners and their dog partake in off-road trail running together (or biking, known as Bikejor). The owner wears a padded waist belt, the dog wears a specially designed pulling harness, and the two are connected by a bungee line (the aim of the bungee line is to absorb shock).

Circe has raced at the British Sled Dog Sports Federation races, Sled Dog Association of Scotland races, TrailDog races and Canicross Sports Scotland races up and down the UK.

Her highlight so far was representing Great Britain in Bardonecchia, Italy in the Canicross World Championships in 2024!



Q. What are you most looking forward to doing together this year?

Circe's owner, Douglas, says:

"After her recent injury we are hoping to get back on the canicross race circuit next season, doing what Circe does best, winning medals."

A huge well done to Circe and her owner on their fantastic Canicross achievements!

If you are interested in doing sports or activities with your dog, fitness and activity levels must be trained for, with your dog's fitness levels being gradually built-up over time. This is to best prepare your dog's body and joints to cope with these levels of exercise. Preparation is key to ensuring your dog's health is maintained appropriately.

We recommend your dog has a health check with a vet and to discuss with your vet what your plans are, before starting training. This is to ensure they are an appropriate age and in their best health to start.

This summer, if you are dreaming of climbing hills and taking in the views at the top with your dog, this needs to be well trained for. Long walks should be built up gradually over time. Working towards having a 'hill fit' dog requires consistency and time.

Be mindful that if your dog gets off lead they cover a lot more distance. Using a dog fitness tracker is a great tool to monitor distance covered - and their recovery after increased exercise. Having a quieter day after longer adventures is highly advised to prevent overworking joints.

Maintaining solid recall - even for dogs who don't get off lead much is also a vital tool - you never know when you may need it. Research routes before new walks to stay safe. Check the weather forecast and be aware of higher risk areas, for example: areas of free grazing sheep, paths next to roads or open bodies of water, steep cliff edges, wildlife etc. There are also increased risks of snakes in areas across Scotland and the UK. Snake bites are serious and can be fatal.

Always ensure you have the essentials for any adventures - collar or harness with an up to date ID tag, lead, plenty of drinking water, poo bags, towel, basic first aid kit, waterproof, a light (for areas of fog/mist) and ensure your pets microchip details are up to date. If you are away from home, ensure you know where the nearest vet and emergency vet is located.

Planning ahead is key to staying safe and getting the most out of new adventures.

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