

**In brief**

**Charges after gorge drama**

A MAN and a woman have been charged after nine children from a Dundee outdoor activity group were stranded in a gorge at Struan, Calvine, near Pitlochry. Tayside Police search and rescue team and the Tayside Civilian Mountain Rescue team were called to the scene, along with a RAF Lossiemouth helicopter at around 4pm on Monday. They were stood down when the group were helped to safety 30 minutes later. Police said no one had been seriously injured, but confirmed a 21-year-old man and a 27-year-old woman had been charged. A report will be sent to the procurator fiscal at Perth.

**Cabbage doll revival**

EIGHTIES toy phenomenon the Cabbage Patch Kids are staging a comeback. Toy firm Play Along is preparing a huge pre-Christmas marketing push. When the first Cabbage Patch Kids went on sale in the US in 1983 they sold more than 3million in the first year and more than 20million in the next. They came in a box with adoption papers featuring the doll's "name" and "birth date". The relaunched dolls are now in shops priced £19.99 each.

**Teenager raped**

A TEENAGE girl was raped as she returned home from visiting friends in the early hours of Monday. Police have appealed for witnesses after the attack in the Broomhouse area of Edinburgh. The 15-year-old was waiting for a bus at around 3am on Stenhouse Drive, when a man led her to a grassed area and raped her. Lothian and Borders Police said the attacker was aged 40 to 50, 5ft 9in, with short grey hair.

**Tripp up over ad**

LUGGAGE maker Tripp has been criticised over an advert seen as encouraging guests to steal from hotel. The newspaper advert for an expandable case read: "Now you can steal the bathrobe as well as the toiletries." The Advertising Standards Authority upheld 11 complaints and told Tripp not to use the same wording again.

**Rock star case**

TROUBLED rock star Pete Doherty, 25, yesterday failed to attend Bow Road Magistrates Court in London claiming he was too ill to answer allegations of possessing a flick knife. The exiled member of the Libertines has spoken openly about his addiction to crack and cocaine. Bail was extended and magistrates ordered him to appear on August 17. Band members forced him out of the group until he kicks his habit.

**Hughes off posters**



SKY Sports has confirmed that it is removing all posters for the Premiership that featured West Bromwich Albion striker Lee Hughes, above, after his conviction for causing death by dangerous driving. It had placed the ads in Birmingham and the Black Country last week.

**Search for cadet**

MOUNTAIN rescue teams were scouring the French Alps yesterday for an Army officer cadet who has been missing for more than two days, the Ministry of Defence said. The 25-year-old from Shropshire went missing on a training expedition based at Chamonix ski resort. The cadet, based at the Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst, Surrey, failed to return on Saturday night.

**Yacht explosion**

A FATHER and his nine-year-old son were airlifted by helicopter after suffering burns in a yacht explosion yesterday. Police, firefighters, paramedics and lifeboat crews attended the blast at a marina in Falmouth, Cornwall on board the 18ft motor cruiser High Interest at about 2pm.

**'Wendy' wasters**

MORE than half of young adults waste energy trying to copy such celebrities as David Beckham and J-Lo, said research out today. The problem with "Wendys" - Would-be Environmentalists Not Doing it Yet - is they waste water by spending too long in the shower and use too much electricity by using a hairdryer on for about half an hour. The Powergen study showed that while 66% of 18 to 24-year-olds claim the environment is more important than how they look, only a third give any thought to how much energy they use.

**Watchdog defends decision not to release critical water report**

by Paul Gallagher

A WATER industry watchdog has defended its decision not to publish a critical report on Scotland's utility. The Water Customer Consultation Panels, an independent group set up last year to create dialogue between Scottish Water and its consumers, commissioned a study on the openness of the authority in its operations.

The report is understood to have been critical of Scottish Water and to have made a number of recommendations, including that the authority should improve its website and make more information available. It was completed last year and is still unpublished, leading to allegations that it had been suppressed. Scottish Water claimed the report was outdated and in parts inaccurate. It insisted most

of the concerns had been dealt with, some by last year. The panels accepted the survey no longer reflected matters as they stood and stated, for this reason, it had been withheld. Scottish Water has faced constant criticism for imposing high rates while awarding its management generous bonuses. But the company has defended itself by pointing to its extensive upgrading programme and its moves to harmonise water bills.

Ian Smith, convener of the panels, said: "When complete, some of (the report's) conclusions represented situations which had already moved on, as the priorities of Scottish Water in this instance largely mirrored our own. "Some of the conclusions therefore were already out of date by the time the report was completed and that was the reason the decision was taken not to promote the results."

A spokesman for Scottish Water said: "The recommendations were not valid at the time that the work was done and certainly don't accurately reflect the picture at Scottish Water now. "There are a number of errors in the report so we're not surprised that a decision was made not to publish it." "Scottish Water is under more scrutiny than perhaps any other organisation in the country. We

are open and accountable, to suggest otherwise is incorrect." Conservative enterprise spokesman Murdo Fraser has written to Scotland's Information Commissioner, Kevin Dunion, asking him to investigate the matter. Mr Fraser said: "This report was paid for by the taxpayer, commissioned by a body representing the interests of the consumer and should be in the public domain.

"So why the cover up? Who got a copy? Why was it not published?" SNP water spokesman Richard Lochhead said: "It beggars belief the powers-that-be have conspired to ensure that a report into the lack of openness in Scottish Water was kept secret. "There is something deeply wrong with the culture that exists within Government circles that allows situations like this to arise."

**New windfarm strikes a blow for renewables**



The 12-turbine site near Ardrossan, North Ayrshire, has the potential to supply electricity to around 20,000 homes

A NEW windfarm constructed by developer Airtricity was opened near Ardrossan in North Ayrshire yesterday. The 12-turbine, 24MW development, officially opened

by Deputy Enterprise Minister Lewis Macdonald, has the potential to supply green electricity to around 20,000 homes a year. It is also expected to mit-

igate more than 65,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year - equivalent to removing 20,000 cars from the road. Steve Cowie, of Airtricity Scotland, said: "The official

opening of our first development in Scotland represents a major achievement for Airtricity and we are delighted to have secured so much local and political support for the project."

**Plans lodged for huge turbine site**

by Mark Drever

PLANS for a huge windfarm in southern Perthshire have been formally lodged with Perth and Kinross Council. British Energy Renewables made the move on Monday, claiming it has taken public opinion on board. The Knowhead site is the first of 11 proposed windfarms in the region and has taken more than a year of planning. Design chiefs revised their original plans following detailed public consultation. Changes include fewer turbines and shorter towers. A detailed environmental assessment has been completed and the company claimed the development will have little impact on the community and the landscape. An environmental statement has been lodged with the council with three planning applications for the main site, an off-

site substation and road modifications. Copies of the applications have also been sent to 20 local residents. If approved, the wind turbines could create as many as 40 construction jobs and two permanent posts. The full planning applications can be seen at council headquarters in Perth. An exhibition giving details of a similar multimillion-pound venture at Ochil Hills, near Auchterarder, closed yesterday amid a storm of controversy. Renewables company Green Power set up the hi-tech displays to give residents the chance to find out more about their proposed Little Law windfarm. The 14-turbine development has been earmarked for a site at Coulshill Farm. Work could get under way on the project in 12 to 18 months, and would take around a year to complete.

But campaigners yesterday described Green Power's attempts to involve locals in the project as "too little, too late" - a claim the Alloa-based firm has strenuously denied. Gillian Forbes, of the Ochils Environmental Protection Group, said: "A lot of people are gobsmacked that Green Power would put in a planning application for a major transformation of the landscape without having consulted residents. "There are now six windfarms being planned for the Ochils in Perth and Kinross and another in the hills' Clackmannanshire side. "It is a complete free-for-all and it seems totally haphazard the way these companies go about their consultations." Ms Forbes added: "The developers are under no statutory obligation to tell people what is happening, which is ridiculous." However, Green Power direc-

tor John Morgan insisted that the company would take local people's views into account. "It is my understanding that the consultation period has been adjusted to allow people to express their views and our exhibitions coincide with the start of that period," he said. "We are aware that to be truly consultative residents must be allowed to have their say and they now have four weeks to do so." Little Law would create four full-time maintenance and administrative jobs and local suppliers would be involved in the construction phase. A council spokesman said yesterday that one letter of objection to the Little Law proposals had been received. He added that no date has yet been confirmed for when the application will be considered, although it is likely to be around the end of next month.

**£5m marine test centre to harness power of sea**

by Keith Findlay

SCOTLAND yesterday took a step closer to becoming a world leader in marine energy, with the opening of a £5million test centre in Orkney. The new European Marine Energy Centre near Stromness has been created with the ultimate aim of harnessing the power of the sea. It was opened by Deputy First Minister and Orkney MSP Jim Wallace, who said its future success was "pivotal" to the growth of the marine energy sector in Scotland. He added that it also had a significant role to play in helping the Scottish Executive to meet its green energy targets - the aim is to have 40% of Scotland's energy needs met from renewable sources by 2020.



Jim Wallace... opened the new facility

Orkney Enterprise chairman Brian Kynoch said EMEC was "bound to create jobs" and put Orkney on the world map. Yesterday's opening ceremony was taking place only a few days ahead of EMEC's first marine energy device - the Pelamis wave-energy converter - being manoeuvred into place for testing. Mr Wallace said EMEC signalled the "dawn of a new era for energy production in Scotland", with the potential for up to 7,000 new jobs being created in directly and indirectly related industries. He said Scotland was already "well blessed" with the skills and experience needed to turn the fledgling marine-energy sector into a world leader.

He added: "By providing world-class facilities on Orkney we will be in a prime position to capitalise on the enormous opportunities provided by this rapidly developing and expanding sector." But Mr Wallace stressed there were challenges to be overcome if the dream was to be realised. "The key task facing us is to deliver the infrastructure and levels of support the industry will need," he added. He also said the investment in EMEC - most of the construction costs were met by the executive and Highlands and Islands Enterprise - showed the Government's commitment to renewables was not just about wind turbines. The EMEC partners - the Scottish Executive, HIE, Scottish Enterprise, Orkney Islands Council, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Carbon Trust - aim to eventually expand the wave-power testing facilities on Orkney to also cover tidal energy. HIE chief executive Sandy Cumming said EMEC's creation had put Scotland at the fore-

front of the marine energy industry. Orkney, which was chosen above other sites, was the natural location for testing commercial-scale devices, he added. Councillor Jim Foubister, chairman of Orkney Islands Council's economic development committee, said: "Stromness is a natural base and we see opportunities here for new and existing companies." Pelamis, developed by Edinburgh firm Ocean Power Delivery, is due to be connected any day now. The final installation depends on weather and sea conditions. The four-tonne, 120metre-long structure has taken more than six years of planning and development to get to this stage. OPD managing director Richard Yemm said: "I hope it will act as a springboard for successes for the industry here in Scotland." The EMEC partners are optimistic it will not be too long before other companies send their devices for testing. EMEC managing director Andrew Mill said: "We are already talking to a number of other companies who are at different stages of development." EMEC is based around two main sites on Orkney. There is a small underground building at Billia Croo, as well as offices and a data centre at the Old Academy at Stromness. Its opening comes just over a week after the DTI announced details of a new £50million Marine Renewables Development Fund.

**SNP officials accused of sending ballots early**

THE SNP leadership election was embroiled in a dirty-tricks row last night after party officials were accused of trying to send out voting papers three days ahead of schedule. However, party bosses insisted it had always been in the rules of the contest that the papers would be sent out by Friday, not on Friday. Critics said the officials planned to send the ballots out yesterday - and this was three days ahead of schedule. The alleged move was seen as an attempt to allow Alex Salmond and his running mate, Nicola Sturgeon, to capitalise on their early lead in the contest. However, SNP clerk Ian McCann referred to a statement issued within hours of outgoing leader John Swinney's announce-



Mike Russell... "deeply concerned"

ing in June of his intention to step down. This stated that ballot papers would be mailed to all members by - not on - August 13. They are to be returned by August 31 and Mr Swinney's successor will be announced on September 3.

Mr Salmond's leadership rivals, former chief executive Mike Russell and deputy leader Roseanna Cunningham, are both due to launch their campaign manifestos today. They threatened to take court action if officials tried to deliver the voting forms early, although party president Winnie Ewing is understood to have intervened to make peace. Mr Russell said: "My campaign was built around the timetable set out in the party's rulebook. "A change at this late stage simply isn't on. I am deeply concerned about any departure from the rules and I have made those views crystal clear at headquarters." Ms Cunningham said: "There appear to have been two very

different, clearly understood positions. It is extremely unfortunate that this has arisen and it is something I expect nobody would have wished to see. "I have some concerns and I have communicated them privately to headquarters." Mr McCann said yesterday that all ballot papers would be sent out simultaneously. "They haven't been sent out yet," he said. "That will be some time in the next two days. "The exception is for overseas ballots, which have already gone." The ballot row followed claims that Mr Salmond had tried to "nibble" deputy leadership candidate Fergus Ewing by offering him influential party jobs to stand down from the race.

**Surprise backing boost for Salmond's campaign**

FORMER SNP leader Alex Salmond's campaign to return as party chief received a huge but surprising boost last night when an old adversary backed his bid. Central Scotland MSP Alex Neil, who is regarded as the standard-bearer of the party's so-called fundamentalist wing, revealed he would be throwing his weight behind the Banff and Buchan MP in the poll. But he will not be backing Mr Salmond's choice as deputy, Nicola Sturgeon, opting instead for South of Scotland MSP Christine Grahame. Mr Neil's backing is hugely significant. However, his rejection of Ms Sturgeon could be damaging to her prospects. Mr Neil was expected to join the race himself but decided not to race Mr Salmond declared he could not work with him.

Last night, Mr Neil said from his home in Ayr: "There are three reasons why I have decided to support Alex Salmond in this election. "The first is that I obviously support the social-democratic values he is putting forward in his manifesto. The second is that he is the best-placed candidate to unite the party. The third is that he is best placed to maximise the SNP vote." Mr Salmond's manifesto, announced last week, has appealed to the fundamentalists and is thought to have been a critical factor in Mr Neil's decision. One party insider said last night: "We currently have 25 MSPs at Holyrood and I'd say seven or eight are supporting Roseanna. The rest are backing Salmond. At the moment, I don't think there is a single MSP backing Mike Russell."

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