

Whether it's yes or no – vote!

Friday 4 October, 2013

Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYP's) are urging young people to get politically engaged - with Scotland's crucial independence vote on the horizon.

Finlay Duff, 17, Scott Redmond, 16, both from Hawick and Nicola Pringle, 16, from Oxtun are determined to get young people interested in next year's important referendum when the voting age will be lowered.

With support from Fixers – the charity that supports young people aged 16-25 to tackle the issues that fire them up – the trio are embarking on a campaign to get young Scots interested in local politics.

The three MYSP's feel that too often, young people aren't talking about politics or, believe it is too complicated for them.

Scott said: "Our Fixers project is to get young people more politically literate and aware. "I think you have to start in school. I am in school now and we don't get taught directly about politics. It's not reaching enough people."

Finlay added: "I am really keen to break down politics as a serious adult subject. People look at it and think it's a big scary subject, I want people to realise it's not."

The team have already held discussions with representatives campaigning on either side of the independence issue.

Blair Jenkins, Chief Executive of 'Yes Scotland', feels it is of the utmost importance that young people take interest and are able to hold politicians to account.

He said: "There are all types of reasons why people have tuned out of politics or found it unattractive in recent years. I don't think young people are immune from that.

"But what I think is true is that young people are interested in issues. Anything that can be done to encourage participation in the democratic process, interest in public affairs and to make sure politicians are held accountable by all generations, is hugely important."

Blair McDougall, Campaign Director of 'Better Together' feels that young people need to use their voting rights to make changes today, while it is a key duty of politicians to defeat apathy.

He said: "People always talk about young people being the future. They sometimes forget they are the present as well.

"I think what's different this time, is that with 16 year olds being given the vote, it will affect not only the future of youth participation in Scotland, but across all of the UK."

Scottish Borders Council member, Councillor Stuart Marshall, feels the opportunity which next year's referendum presents, will hopefully lead to young people wanting to both engage in and lead local politics in their communities.

He said: "I certainly hope that after the referendum, that interest can be sustained. It is very important that youngsters come into local government and have a big say on local issues. I am hoping they all turn out in huge numbers to vote."

Fixers is charity which supports young people across the UK to take action and change things for the better, addressing any issue they feel strongly about.

How each Fixer tackles their chosen issue is up to them – as long as they benefit someone else.

The award-winning Fixers project has already supported almost 10,000 young people to have an authentic voice in their community.

Each Fixer is supported to create the resources they need - such as films, websites or print work - to make their chosen project a success.

Now, thanks to a grant from the Big Lottery Fund, Fixers aims to work with a further 19,000 young people over the next three years.

Media:



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Three photos attached. Captions:

1. Fixer Finlay
2. Fixer Nicola
3. Fixer Scott

For images, interviews or more information, please contact Jatin Patel in the Fixers Communications Team by email jatin@fixers.org.uk or phone 01962 810970.

There are lots more stories about young people doing great things on the Fixers website, Twitter and Facebook pages:

www.fixers.org.uk
www.twitter.com/FixersUK
www.facebook.com/FixersUK

Notes to editors:

- Fixers started in England in 2008. Now with a £7.2 million grant from the Big Lottery Fund, Fixers is extending into Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. To date, over 9,000 young people across the UK have become Fixers and created 1,040 projects.
- The Public Service Broadcasting Trust is a charity that brings together mainstream broadcasters, public and voluntary sector services, and viewers.
- The Big Lottery Fund (BIG), the largest distributor of National Lottery good cause funding, is responsible for giving out 40% of the money raised for good causes by the National Lottery.
- BIG is committed to bringing real improvements to communities and the lives of people most in need and has been rolling out grants to health, education, environment and charitable causes across the UK since June 2004. The Fund was formally established by Parliament on 1 December 2006.
- Since the National Lottery began in 1994, 28p from every pound spent by the public has gone to good causes. As a result, over £29 billion has now been raised and more than 383,000 grants awarded across arts, sport, heritage, charities, health, education and the environment.
- Margo Horsley, Chief Executive of Fixers says: "Fixers started in 2008 as just an idea... an idea given a voice by over 9,000 young people over the past five years. They have reached thousands of people with their work, on a national stage as well as in and around where they live. They choose the full array of social and health issues facing society today and set about making their mark. Fixers are always courageous and their ideas can be challenging and life-changing, not just for themselves."
- Peter Ainsworth, Big Lottery Fund UK Chair, says: "The Big Lottery Fund is extremely happy to be supporting Fixers to engage with more young people to change things for the better. Thousands of public-spirited young people across the UK are campaigning to make improvements in their own communities. By providing a platform to highlight their voluntary work and many achievements, Fixers demonstrates the positive contribution thousands of committed young people are making at a local level and challenges negative stereotypes."

Company Contact:

Fixers

T. 01962810970

E. sarahj@fixers.org.uk

W. <https://www.fixers.org.uk>

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