

Five things you need to know today



Traffic Diversions at the West End

Amnesty International demo today

Scottish Independence Referendum attracts world interest

Edinburgh : Sepia Town

Exhibition at The Scottish Gallery

The tram works start again at the West End today so you have to think carefully about travel in that area. Lothian Buses tell us about the routes that their buses will take to avoid the closed streets:-“From Saturday 14 January 2012, buses will be diverted away from Shandwick Place due to the commencement of further tram works. This is in addition to existing Princes Street diversions.

West End diversion (for buses normally using Shandwick Place):

EASTBOUND – one way from West Maitland Street via Manor Place, Melville Street, Queensferry Street, Charlotte Square to George Street.

WESTBOUND – one way from George Street via Lothian Road, West Approach Road, Morrison Link to Morrison Street.

Details of the diverted routes will be shown at each affected bus stop and will be updated if any changes are made. Bus Tracker real time information signs are also fitted to George Street bus stops to give up-to-the-minute times of your next bus.”

Where: Register House, cnr. Princes Street and North Bridge

When: Saturday 14th January, 12:00pm – 3:00pm

Local Amnesty campaigners will take to the streets today to highlight 10 years of human rights abuses perpetrated at Guantánamo Bay and ask the public to sign a petition calling on Barack Obama to close Guantánamo by ending indefinite detentions.

Members of the Edinburgh University Amnesty Society and St Marks Amnesty local group will don orange boiler suits, which have come to symbolise this aberration of human rights around the world, and call for the immediate release of British national Shaker Aamer and closure of the facility.

This week marks the 10th Anniversary of the Guantánamo Bay detention centre in Cuba, where 171 men are still being held, despite President Obama's pledge to close Guantánamo by 22 January 2010. Of these, at least 12 were in the original group first transferred to Guantánamo on 11 January 2002. One of them is serving a life sentence after being convicted by a military commission in 2008. None of the other 11 has been charged.

One of the 167 still held without a trial is the former UK resident Shaker Aamer, a 43-year-old father-of-four whose family live in south London. Mr Aamer, who has been held at Guantánamo since February 2002, is originally from Saudi Arabia but is married to a British citizen and has four British children. Mr Aamer had permission to live in the UK when he was detained in Afghanistan by Afghan forces in the autumn of 2001 (among other places, he was held at the notorious US military prison at Bagram). He was subsequently transferred to US custody in Afghanistan and later taken to Guantánamo.

To mark the anniversary, Amnesty International released a 64-page report, "Guantánamo: A Decade of Damage to Human Rights",

highlighting the unlawful treatment of Guantánamo detainees and outlines reasons why the detention centre continues to represent an attack on human rights.

Laura Shepherd, Chair of the Edinburgh University Amnesty Society, said:

“It is appalling that ten years on and we are still calling on the US government to close Guantanamo. Kidnapping and imprisoning people indefinitely without charge or trial, denying them their freedom and human rights, gratuitously denigrating and abusing them physically and mentally – all of this needs to end and it needs to end now.

“By signing the petition you are saying that this violation of human rights and international law has to stop, for Shaker Amer, his family, and the families of all other detainees.”

In ten years, only one of the 779 detainees held at the base has been transferred to the USA for prosecution in an ordinary federal court. Others have faced unfair trials by military commission. The administration is currently intending to seek the death penalty against six of the detainees at such trials.

Current Guantánamo detainees include those who were subjected to torture and enforced disappearance prior to being transferred to the camp. There has been little or no accountability for these crimes under international law committed in a programme of secret detention operated under US presidential authority. Instead, the US government has systematically blocked attempts by former detainees to seek redress for such violations.

The Obama administration has blamed its failure to close the Guantánamo detention facility on Congress, which has indeed failed to ensure US compliance with international human rights principles in this context.

Alex Salmond's announcement that the referendum on independence will be held in autumn 2014 has sparked an unprecedented level of international interest from the world's media on Scotland.

Scotland and the SNP are no strangers to media interest; from the historic victory at the 2007 Scottish elections to last year's landslide result when the Scottish people delivered a resounding SNP majority at the Scottish Parliament. However, the referendum date announcement has scaled new previously unknown levels of worldwide coverage.

The BBC's political editor Nick Robinson described the First Minister – who is currently in the Middle East signing a ground-breaking deal on renewables – as “the canniest political operator in these isles”. This sentiment wasn't confined to London alone as international enquiries kept the phones ringing red hot at the SNP's Central Office.

Digital media has seen a spike too, with Facebook pages packed with the stories about the SNP being ahead of the David Cameron's anti-independence gang's game, and Twitter timelines filled with trending topics including #Indyref, #ItsStarted, #SNP, #Salmond and #Scotland.

Humza Yousaf, MSP for Glasgow, said:

“It has been a phenomenal start to 2012; David Cameron and his Lib Dem and Labour anti-independence pack look lost, while Alex Salmond and the SNP continue to keep moving Scotland forward and the level of interest from the media in England, Ireland, across Europe and beyond has been remarkable.

“I personally have done interviews and spoke with journalists working for media organisation from Australia, Catalonia, Wales, Northern Ireland and England.

“It is really encouraging for the drive towards independence to have this level of interest focused on Scotland, as is the level of warmth and support my colleagues and I have received from new friends from overseas.

“People recognise Scotland as an ambitious, outward looking and progressive nation. Now, far beyond these shores, it is understood that our noble desire for self-determination is within the grasp of the people of Scotland.”

Edinburgh City Libraries tell us about the fascinating archive of sepia photographs of the capital which you can find on the [Sepia Town](#) website.

Adrian Hope and Linda Lewin are exhibiting their work at The Scottish Gallery on Dundas Street today. Their work is handmade jewellery and silverware. To contact the gallery Tel 0131 558 1200