

Five things you need to know today



Finance & Resources Committee

Big Energy Week

Margo MacDonald on Pre-Referendum Education

Olympic Logo for the Mound?

St Patrick's Day Ball

The Finance & Resources Committee meet today and we are conducting a Liveblog from the City Chambers. Join in from your desk!

Rising fuel bills are stretching household finances and people are looking for ways to save money on their energy bills.

Help is at hand through **Big Energy Week (16-21 January 2012)** which is being run by Citizens Advice – and has received support from Edinburgh West MP **Mike Crockart**.

During Big Energy Week you can get practical advice on cutting your fuel bills and help to see if you are getting all of the

financial support you are entitled to. You can pick up a leaflet with tips and advice on cutting your fuel bills at your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

A new website – www.bigenergyweek.org.uk – is full of tips on how to cut your energy bills. The website also has details of local Big Energy Week events in your area.

Citizens Advice, Chief Executive, Gillian Guy said:

“We know hikes in prices have put extra pressure on people’s budgets at a time when money is already tight. Day in day out our Bureaux helping people who can’t afford their fuel bills.

“We’re worried that some people are struggling unnecessarily because they’re not on the best deal; live in homes that haemorrhage heat or are not getting all of the financial help available to them.”

Mike Crockart added: “Fuel bills are a big worry for many people at the moment. I am pleased to support Big Energy Week and hope it will make a big difference to my constituents by saving them money on their bills.”

Big Energy Week tips to help you save money on your bills:

- Contact your supplier to check you are you are on the

best tariff and payment method for you. Monthly direct debit is on average £100 cheaper per year than paying by cash or cheque.

- Visit an [accredited switching website](#) to see if you could get your energy cheaper elsewhere. You may be able to save up to £200 off your annual bill by shopping around for a different supplier, particularly if you have never changed energy firm.

- Insulate the walls and the loft of your home and you could save on average around £120 per year. All major gas and electricity suppliers are giving away free or discounted insulation to any household, not just their own customers. Ask if you're eligible so you don't miss out. That goes for heating oil customers too.

- Check you are not missing out on any benefits or tax credits that could up your income; your local Citizens Advice Bureaux can help you with this.

- Using less energy could save you money, just by doing simple things like turning off lights and switching appliances off at the wall. Turning your thermostat down 1°C alone could cut your heating bill by £60 on average.

- If you are unable to pay your bills you should contact your energy supplier immediately as they have to help you manage your bills in a way that you can afford.

- If you use heating oil or liquid petroleum gas to heat your home, shop around and compare prices from different oil suppliers. You could also save money by buying in bulk with your neighbours; check if there is an oil club you can join or start one up.

The Broughton Spurtle have [an interesting article](#) about the answer they received from Margo MacDonald Independent MSP about the proposed independence referendum.

The Olympic logo may yet come to Edinburgh if the [Edinburgh Evening News](#) is correct with its prediction that the Olympic rings may be erected on The Mound, rather than Edinburgh Castle as originally planned by the Games organisers.

The Ball Committee have written to us to say:-“The Saint Patrick’s Day Ball is making a comeback...on Saint Patrick’s Day 2012!

The date for the diary is 17th March 2012 at our favourite venue, The Sheraton Grand Hotel and Spa, Edinburgh.

As before, we are focused on all the right things: value for money, fantastic food and wine, ‘our’ brilliant band (Brass and Co.), plenty of craic and giving a little back.

A table for ten works out at £95 per head which includes drinks reception, four course meal, half a bottle of wine per person, bacon rolls at the end of the evening and plenty of dancing and entertainment. All inclusive tickets! As before, we’ll be applying for a late licence– it’s been a while, so

we need to make up for lost time!

We will be selling tables (£950) but if you'd like to go solo/as a couple, we'd ask you to chat amongst your pals to see if you can put a group of ten together to make up a table. If nearer the time you haven't managed to do that, just let us know and we'll work something out.

In Rugby terms, Ireland will be playing England in Twickenham at 5 pm – the last game of the Six Nations Championship. We are arranging a big screen (and the bar will be open!) for those who'd like to kick off the party that bit earlier.” You can contact them on email stpats2012@virginmedia.com