

# Five things you need to know today



**Famous visitors to Edinburgh – Free parking at the West End this weekend – Parking spaces to be removed in George Street? – Steve Hackett – Friday Fun**

Prime Minister David Cameron was in town yesterday with the separation roadshow. And Michael Moore, the Secretary of State for Scotland, who accompanied him is due to provide evidence [at Westminster on Wednesday 22 February 2012](#) in what is called:-“Scottish Affairs: The Referendum on Separation for Scotland.” The political commentators are divided on who is now in front in what is generally seen as a kind of private tussle between the First Minister and his UK counterpart. [The Telegraph](#) thinks that the Prime Minister won the day simply by asking one question – Why? But he also offered more powers to Scotland if the referendum vote went against the Nationalists. Lesley Riddoch writing in [The Guardian](#) meanwhile thought that Cameron’s speech had style but no substance.

During the Prime Minister’s visit to Edinburgh he was in the Grassmarket, perhaps trying to pass himself off as James McAvoy...but actually the actor had finished with the Grassmarket and was out at the Forth Road Bridge yesterday where filming took place, and you luvvies [can see the photo here.](#)

Two protesters were arrested in the Grassmarket during the PM’s visit. He also had to use the back door at St Andrew’s House as protesters were barring the entrance. To us, some of those at the front door looked rather familiar. We have seen a few of them before at the Occupy camp in St Andrew Square.

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Regular parking promotions and a series of special events were just some of the business-boosting initiatives discussed at a meeting with West End Traders this week.

Traders had been invited to the specially arranged update with council officials to learn more about, and discuss, local tram works, their impact and the proposed mitigation strategy going forward.

The 'West End Action Plan', which includes free parking and a [come-and-try session](#) with Scotland's rugby stars, Mike Blair and David Denton, this Saturday 18 February 2012, plus the development of a targeted marketing campaign, improved route signage and additional communications support, is being funded by the Council's 'Open for Business' budget, which will see £175,000 invested directly into driving footfall towards the West End in the coming months.

Also on the agenda at the meeting was the formation of a dedicated West End Action Group, which will assist in the delivery and monitoring of the proposed programme of activities. An invite to traders to volunteer for the group, which is also likely to include representatives from the Council, Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, and the West End Village Association, was met with a positive response.

The overall 'OFB' budget now stands at over £600,000, available between now and March 2013, following a £100,000 injection by the city's councillors earlier this month.

Dave Anderson, the Council's Director of City Development, chaired the meeting.

He said: "Prior to last night's discussion, we had already received a number of constructive suggestions which would help West End traders. Many of these now form part of our Action Plan, which we hope will drive footfall into the area in the coming weeks and months.

“Elsewhere, we will continue to work closely with all city centre businesses and other stakeholders to ensure that we can mitigate the effects of the latest diversions and ensure that all those affected have access to the most up-to-date information.”

Councillor Gordon Mackenzie, Transport Convener, City of Edinburgh Council, added:

“It’s important that we work closely with businesses in the West End to get the maximum benefit out of the funding available. In boosting the ‘Open For Business’ budget by £100,000 this year, we were conscious of the need to build on the support already on offer and target it where it was needed most.

“What really matters now is that these proposals are delivered as soon as possible and we will pull out all the stops to make that happen.”

*Free parking available all day Saturday 18 February 2012 on the following streets:*

*Alva Street, Atholl Crescent, Chester Street, Drumsheugh Gardens, Manor Place, Melville Crescent, Melville Street, Palmerston Place, Rothesay Place/Terrace, Stafford Street, Walker Street and William Street*

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But in other news the [Edinburgh Evening News](#) suggests that George St parking spaces might be removed during August to allow for the Spiegel tent to be sited in the middle of what has become an upmarket retail street.

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Former member of Genesis, Steve Hackett, is appearing at the Queen’s Hall tonight. You may still be able to [get tickets](#)

[here.](#)

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You are promised Friday Fun at Wester Hailes Library today from 11 a.m to 1.30p.m. More details from the [Library information page.](#) Their Facebook page could do with a little update...