

# Five things you need to know today



**Better Together? – Trams – Queensferry bid for a BID – Plastic bags – Mercat Bar**

[Here is the music](#) which accompanies the Better Together campaign video which will be launched today in Edinburgh. Alistair Darling MP will be at the forefront of the movement against independence which is said to have the support of all three opposition parties in Scotland.

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[The Edinburgh Evening News](#) reports that the erstwhile directors of the tram company tie were not paid as employees and thus saved income tax on the payments made to them on cessation of their contracts. Rather than paying higher rate tax, they are said to have paid corporation tax as the payments were made to limited companies.

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Businesses in Queensferry today (22 June) voted yes to creating change, attracting further investment and having a real say in decisions that impact their business.



Ballot papers were distributed from May 10 asking local businesses to vote on whether they want to move ahead with a Business Improvement District (BID) initiative which will enable businesses to take vital steps to improve the prosperity of the town. Areas of focus will be creating a robust events and marketing campaign, business grant support

and initiatives, improved signage and parking.

A company will now be set up with representatives of all sectors and areas of the BID, to ensure the overall £500,000 budget delivers maximum return.

Before voting was carried out over 100 one-to-one consultations with businesses were carried out with 250 questionnaires issued to businesses for their views of the town which also asked if in principal they would support a BID.

Cllr Tom Buchanan, Convener of the Economic Development Committee, said: "This is fantastic news for Queensferry and sends out a strong message to businesses in other areas of Edinburgh that BIDs help businesses to collectively enhance trading conditions. The yes vote will now help to deliver over £500,000 of additional investment over the next five years to Queensferry to be spent on projects led and managed by the business community."

### [Business Plan](#)

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The Greens have welcomed news that the Scottish Government will publish a consultation on reducing plastic bag waste, despite being almost a year later than promised.

Alison Johnstone MSP tabled questions in the Scottish Parliament last week asking why the consultation had not been published in autumn 2011 as set out by the Environment Secretary last summer. (1) A promised marine litter strategy has also failed to materialise, two years after it was promised during the passage of the Marine Act.

The introduction of a 5p charge in Wales last year has led to a reduction in the use of plastic bags of up to 90%, and a similar charge will come into force in Northern Ireland in April 2013. (2). A Green motion was submitted to Parliament

congratulating Wales on their success. (3)

Green MSP Alison Johnstone said:

“Scotland is now trailing far behind Wales and Northern Ireland in tackling this very visible form of waste, and the SNP need to explain why they delayed this consultation by almost a year. The evidence from Wales is that a small charge is easy to implement and has a huge impact on shopper’s behaviour, which can only be a good thing for litter in our towns and for our wildlife, seas and beaches. Countries as diverse as Rwanda, Italy and Bangladesh have gone even further and have an outright ban on certain plastic bags because they recognise the negative impact that they are having.

“I ask those who oppose this policy to question whether there is such a thing as a free plastic bag and who picks up the bill for littered cities and polluted seas. The SNP must now stop dragging its feet and deliver the marine litter strategy that was promised two years ago and is nowhere to be seen. Greens will always fight for the strongest possible measures on waste because a zero-waste economy means more jobs and a better environment for all.”

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The award-winning Mercat Bar & Restaurant in Edinburgh’s West End, recently had its function area refurbished and to celebrate, they are offering free hire between now and 31 August 2012.

The stylish, private function area can accommodate up to 100 guests (45 for table dining and 100 for receptions) and is ideal for family gatherings, wedding receptions, birthday parties, team meetings, corporate dining through to early morning business breakfasts. The normal hire price ranges from £150 to £500 for exclusive use of the function area.

However, for the Mercat's special promotion, this area will be complimentary for bookings between now and 31 August 2012 based on a minimum of 30 for a two-course meal (priced from £11.20pp) or 80 for a buffet and drinks (priced from £8.50pp).

The refurbished function area boasts a private bar, new flooring, upholstered leather chairs, lovely lighting (all energy efficient) and new ladies and gents washrooms – all set within attractive stone feature walls. There's also a 50" plasma screen and sound system if required.

The Mercat's talented head chef Claire Allan can tailor an excellent selection of catering options, from a four-course meal, canapés or buffet for private events. The team prides itself on providing customers with wholesome and tasty dishes with fresh produce sourced from Scotland's impressive larder. There's also a wide selection of quality wines, beers from around the world, spirits and soft drinks. And guests will be exceedingly well looked after by the Mercat's friendly, attentive and well trained team.

Private events can be held anytime from 9am until 1am, seven days a week at The Mercat Bar & Restaurant and subject to availability, the venue can also open earlier.

For more information please contact The Mercat Bar & Restaurant on 0131 225 8716 or email [info@mercatsby.com](mailto:info@mercatsby.com).