

Voting on Essential Edinburgh's future begins next week



Essential Edinburgh has been in action for five years, and now a renewal ballot is to be held among business owners in the city centre to allow them to continue to work after the end of June 2013.

So what does Essential Edinburgh actually do?

Business owners in the city centre area pay a levy to the body who then look after a range of services from cleaning chewing gum off the pavements to running events in the city centre designed to bring in more customers. Essential Edinburgh has a budget of around £1m per year to make the city centre attractive and safe, and works separately from the council. This is what is known as a Business Improvement District, and there are others in the city, one in the Grassmarket and the other just starting in South Queensferry, aiming to give local businesses a voice in what goes on around them.

Essential Edinburgh organise a Clean Team to clean up litter on the streets, and have masterminded a facelift for Rose Street including the installation and care of the poetry flower planters. They have also installed new signage in areas of the city centre and they use their collective purchasing ability to save money for all their members. Even if a business in the area has not voted they still have to contribute. It is a majority of the businesses in the area stretching from the West End to the East End who are eligible to decide Essential Edinburgh's future, beginning next week.

This was the body behind the refurbishment of St Andrew Square Garden, and so if it does not continue to exist then the future of that civic space might be in doubt, as well as all of their other activities in the square and surrounding streets.

Last week [The Edinburgh Evening News](#) reported that Essential Edinburgh were to petition the council to have bye-laws passed making begging illegal on Edinburgh streets. A movement has sprung up to counter such a petition and you will find information about it [here.](#) The petition currently has 21 supporters.

[The Independent](#) also published an opinion article claiming that getting rid of the beggars does not deal with the problem of the homeless on our streets, and that to try to do so is both 'naive and heartless', but the idea behind the proposal was perhaps not as heartless as it first sounded. The Edinburgh Reporter asked Andy Neal, Chief Executive of Essential Edinburgh about it during an interview with him.

This is the document produced by Essential Edinburgh which will tell you all the initiatives they hope to undertake on re-election. They also have [more information on their website.](#)

[Essential Edinburgh Business Plan](#)

A map of the BID area is [here.](#)