



Linlithgow & East Falkirk Constituency

## Welcome

...to this Newsletter that follows on from the stonking Scottish Parliament election victory for the SNP, who were returned to power at Holyrood with the largest number of constituency seats, the highest share of the vote and the most votes of any party in the history of the Scottish Parliament. More about this below. Thanks to all who voted for our candidates, who persuaded others to do so, and to everyone who worked so hard for this success. It is a powerful mandate to progress with the recovery from Covid-19 and take Scotland forward with a referendum on independence. #indyref2 is now a question of when, not if.

## Westminster Update

### State reopening of Parliament



The Queen's Speech on the 11th of May officially marked the start of this Parliamentary Session. Within it she highlighted the UK Government's priorities, which are markedly different from the SNP's policy programme. For example, while the UK Government dithers and delays on reforms to social care, our Scottish Government is acting to establish a National Care Service, backed by a 25% increase in social care investment that includes significant investment in staff. The State Opening ceremony is followed by days of debates on different subject areas before a Commons vote takes place. Along with my colleagues, I voted against the Tory Queen's Speech due to the lack of action to improve workers' rights, tackle poverty, boost NHS pay, or reform social care. Instead, the UK Government announced

measures around voter ID, allegedly to preserve electoral integrity. However, in reality, this will narrow democratic participation. There is no evidence of widespread voter fraud and requiring ID will discourage many of the most vulnerable in society - a group that tends not to vote Tory - from exercising their right to vote. The SNP have long spoken against such methods, and indeed have done all we can to ensure voting is open to all who choose to live and work in Scotland, such as extending the voting franchise to 16 and 17 year-olds, and subsequently to refugees and others who make their home here. We utterly oppose voter suppression. We also reject the UK Government's asylum proposals that were set out in the Queen's Speech, which fly in the face of the international law and the Refugee Convention. Referring to the coronavirus pandemic, Ian Blackford said the Queen's Speech showed the Tories "have learnt nothing from the crisis and have no plans to address the deep inequalities it has exposed". The SNP want a strong, fair and equal recovery - not a hostile environment, Tory cuts, Brexit and power grabs. It is clear that we are on completely different political paths.

### Another SNP success

My former SNP Westminster colleague Neil Gray, who represented our neighbouring Westminster constituency of Airdrie and Shotts, was elected to the same Scottish Parliament constituency seat on the 6th of May. The consequent by-election saw Anum Qaisar Javed win 46.4% of the vote - a 1.4% increase in vote share. Coincidentally, Anum made her excellent maiden speech during the Commons debate "A Plan for the NHS and Social Care" on the 19th of May, where she thanked and paid tribute to the NHS - including her doctor husband - and highlighted the valuable contributions made to the NHS by people from other countries as well as immigrants. In doing so Anum drew attention to the UK Government's deeply flawed points-based immigration system and pleaded "...let Scotland be free. In the short term, devolve immigration so that we can set policies that are reflective of the needs of Scotland." You can read her full speech and the debate here: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2021-05-19/debates/703AB637-170B-4A32-AB97-A38251EEDE7/details>.



Yet, immigration is just one of the reasons Scotland needs independence. We also need independence so we have the powers to design and implement a new social security system in Scotland based on dignity, fairness and respect. We need independence so that our values can be rooted in human rights and equality. We need independence so we can tackle poverty head on. We need independence so that Scotland can be a place that prioritises transformative policies that put the wellbeing of people first. Ultimately, independence will ensure that decisions about Scotland are taken by the people who live here. #Scotland's Future Scotland's Choice

## Active in the constituency

### Out and About on the Campaign Trail



I am sure it will come as no surprise to learn that much of my time and energy since my last Newsletter was spent in the constituency and surrounding area supporting the local SNP candidates in elections to the

Scottish Parliament and the Airdrie and Shotts UK by-election ... but wasn't it worth it! My congratulations go to my fantastic local colleagues Fiona Hyslop MSP, on her re-election in Linlithgow, and Michelle Thomson MSP, on succeeding Angus MacDonald as the new MSP for Falkirk East. It is worth reiterating that, in the history of devolution, the 2021 Scottish Parliament elections saw the highest ever turnout, and the SNP secured the largest number of constituency seats by any party on the largest ever share of the vote - by any political party.



SNP solidarity across the parliaments was shown when the First Minister and the SNP Westminster Leader joined other SNP MPs and MSPs to support Anum in achieving her excellent result. Anum Qaisar Javed MP has received a warm welcome in the Commons Chamber and I look forward to work with all 3 colleagues as we take Scotland forward to independence.



### Virtual Surgeries

The ongoing health crisis prevents me from holding surgeries in person but it does not prevent me from continuing to conduct online surgeries every Friday between 10 and 11am. If this time doesn't suit, video meetings can be arranged at other times. Just contact my office for more details.

## Links between Parliament and the constituency

### Democracy or Autocracy?

The election results this month demonstrate our positive election message was well received and that our commitment to a second independence referendum was welcomed. If our achievements aren't a clear mandate to deliver on our manifesto and give Scotland the choice over independence, then there will never be a mandate for anything ever again and democracy has ended for Scotland.

We have reached the nexus point between Democracy and "know your place unionism". Boris Johnson must respect the will of the Scottish people, who have voted for a choice over our future in a post-pandemic referendum, if not he is a despot. Look at the facts:

- The SNP has won a landslide victory, the highest vote share of any party anywhere in the UK, in any election, since 1966.
- The people of Scotland elected an increased pro-independence majority, of 72 MSPs, with a record number of votes and seats for pro-independence parties.

But more than that. Unlike the UK Government's wasted opportunity of the Queen's Speech, the SNP Scottish Government wants to reset the relationship between government levels and the people it serves, founded on a renewed social contract that delivers for the people of Scotland. A social contract focused on realising human rights and pursuing equality that will guide all policy and spending decisions. The Social Justice and Fairness Commission, which was set up by First Minister to present a route map for delivering a fairer Scotland, has now published its report "A Route Map to a Fair Independent Scotland". The findings are based on the principle that government's job is to make life better for everyone and ensure no one is left behind. It is a conversation starter to find consensus about the kind of Scotland we want to build with independence and how best to get there. The Commission's Depute Convener, Neil Gray MSP said: "One of the obvious and important lessons learned by producing this report during the period of the Coronavirus crisis is that huge changes can be achieved if the political will exists to be bold, dynamic and innovative...And while we consider the opportunities in the short term and what is achievable with the powers of devolution, the report has a clear focus on how much more we can achieve with independence." The report is here: <https://www.snp.org/social-justice-and-fairness-commission-a-route-map-to-a-fair-and-independent-scotland/>. Let us all build on our recent success and not waste one moment in persuading our friends and neighbours to vote Yes.



 Martyn Day  
6 Preston Crescent  
Linlithgow  
EH49 6HW  
 [www.martynaday.scot](http://www.martynaday.scot)  
 [martyn.day.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:martyn.day.mp@parliament.uk)

 [facebook.com/MartynDaySNP](https://facebook.com/MartynDaySNP)  
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 [youtube.com/martyndaysnp](https://youtube.com/martyndaysnp)

 01506 654415

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