



Linlithgow & East Falkirk Constituency

## Welcome

...to my final newsletter of the Parliamentary term. The House of Commons adjourned on the 25th of July and is not scheduled to sit again until the 3rd of September. Two days before recess Boris Johnson became our new Prime Minister - elected by Tory members to deliver a right-wing Tory agenda. Away from Westminster I'll be keeping busy in the constituency, with the office open for business as usual, so don't hesitate to get in touch if you need to. With best wishes.

## Westminster Update

### New Tory Leader

Exactly two months after the decisive EU elections, which saw the SNP win half of Scottish seats in the European Parliament, previous concerns over the prospect of a hardline Brexiteer dragging us out of the EU without a deal on Halloween became a reality. Boris Johnson's "No ifs or buts" rhetoric has no mandate in Scotland: we didn't vote for him, this Tory government, or Brexit. Notably, in his statement to the House on the 25th of July he never mentioned the £350m each week the NHS would receive if the UK left the EU, which was pledged

on the side of the Vote Leave bus. However, he is preparing to spend up to £100m in the coming months on the biggest ad campaign since the Second World War to get Britain ready for a no-deal Brexit. So, prepare yourselves for a barrage of propaganda on radio, television and billboards. We must do all we can to reiterate the message of the 23rd of May that Scotland's for Europe. If the UK doesn't change course then Scotland must have the choice of a better, independent future. If you haven't already done so, please pledge your support at [www.YES.scot](http://www.YES.scot) because Scotland deserves better.

**TIME TO CHOOSE OUR OWN FUTURE. BEFORE SOMEBODY ELSE DOES.**



### Child Maintenance Service Debate

In the last newsletter I reported on the various debates that take place in the House of Commons and Westminster Hall. On the same day that the new Prime Minister was officially announced I was able to lead a Westminster Hall Debate that I managed to secure on the effectiveness of the Child Maintenance Service (CMS). In the course of my constituency work it had become clear to me that the current CMS system was letting many people down: both resident and non-resident parents; and their families. The subsequent research showed that these were failings across the country, with over 100 Written Parliamentary Questions having being tabled in this year alone by 28 MPs, including myself. Therefore, I felt it was important to progress the efforts that had thus far been made, not least by my SNP colleagues, to improve CMS' procedures so that all children can benefit from receiving maintenance payments that are consistent and



compatible with the paying parent's income level. Ahead of the debate I arranged for the House of Commons Digital Engagement Team to organise online surveys for service users to share their experiences. Almost all respondents said they had negative interactions with the CMS. There were recurring themes like service users receiving inconsistent information and standards of service; lack of communication between staff and service users; problems arising from payments being calculated on gross income, and incorrect and out-of-date information, which consequently results in poverty and debt and an adverse impact on service users' mental health. In some instances this led to suicidal tendencies. I will continue to hold the Department to account whenever possible to encourage the CMS to fulfil its charter commitments to keep the interests of children at the heart of everything they do by being responsive, reliable and respectful of the best ways to manage individual cases.

## Active in the constituency



### Events in the constituency

One of the great privileges of being a Member of Parliament is getting to participate in various community and civic events that are held over this season throughout the constituency.

Unfortunately it is never possible to get to all of them but pictured here are two that I was able to attend. Above, alongside Fiona Hyslop MSP, I was at Whitburn Gala Day; and to the right, I was at the Bo'ness fair with Angus MacDonald MSP.



### 1298 Battle of Falkirk commemoration

It was a pleasure to speak at this family fun day, and I greatly enjoyed the re-enactments and entertainment. Helped along by



the good weather and great turnout it was a huge success that I think was appreciated by everyone who attended.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who contributes in their own town to ensuring these important community events can take place. Without the army of volunteers who work behind the scenes our local cultural life and traditions would be much weaker. Please continue to keep up the good work everyone. Thanks again.

## Links between Parliament and the constituency



### Cricket in the constituency

It may not be the most popular sport in Scotland but I learned this month that the ECB and sportscotland both fund Cricket Scotland. On a visit to Westquarter and Redding Cricket Club I found out how this club promotes health and

fitness, not just through competitive cricket but by encouraging young people to get physically active and interact with their peers. They also engage in other community activities with local schools and organisations in the area. An excellent intuitive club working in my constituency for the good of others. I'm happy to support them in any way I can.

### Westminster Visits

If any of my constituents are visiting London over the holiday period please bear in mind that my office can help to arrange Palace of Westminster tours if this is something that interests you.

### Pensioner Poverty

On the 1st of July I challenged the Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on the shameful rate of the UK state pension - the lowest in the developed world; and asked what assessment had been made on the level of pensioner poverty in the UK. I followed this up by writing to the DWP Secretary, Amber Rudd, to raise my concerns about the number of older people in my constituency who are struggling financially because they are not receiving the support they are entitled to through Pension Credit. Over 2 million pensioners in the UK are living in poverty; and in Linlithgow and East Falkirk alone, over £5 million goes unclaimed every year. I'm therefore backing Independent Age's CreditWhereItsDue campaign, calling on the UK Government to act.



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