




Welcome

It's just over one week since Parliament rose for Summer recess. Since then, I have enjoyed getting out and about in the constituency and I am looking forward to more of the same over the coming weeks. Recess gives me much needed time to hold extra surgeries in areas not regularly visited and at the constituency office. If you require an appointment, please do not hesitate to contact my office on the number supplied below and my staff will be happy to accommodate a mutually suitable time and place. I'll also be campaigning around the constituency, so feel free to stop me for a chat if I pop up in your area, or join me on the campaign trail for a better Scotland. #YES 

Westminster Update

20th July 2023: Voter ID: National Elections

On Westminster's last sitting day before recess I raised concerns about the UK Government's (UKG) new Elections Act. I highlighted that initial analysis of Voter ID in the May local elections in England by the Electoral Commission indicates 14,000 people were turned away due to Voter ID restrictions. Especially worrying is that voters with disabilities, and those who were unemployed or from particular ethnic groups, were disproportionately affected. I asked what steps are being taken to ensure that thousands of voters are not turned away at the next General Election. SNP MPs repeatedly condemned this undemocratic legislation as it passed through Parliament and put up more opposition to the Bill's rolling back of PR voting in England than Labour did; demonstrating that even when this Tory government rolls back on democracy Labour cannot be relied on to offer effective or vocal resistance. The Tories ensured it was passed into law in its worst possible form - voting down every SNP amendment that would have removed its worst elements, rejecting every amendment that would have improved it, even very slight amendments the Lords attempted to include. It must be bad when Jacob Rees Mogg, one of its chief supporters, referred to it as "gerrymandering" to fix the election.

While the UKG is determined to undermine the right to vote and the integrity of UK elections, the Scottish and Welsh devolved governments are developing as well as protecting the franchise. So, why should we be worried?

Look at the graphic to the right. The only way that Scotland can be protected from the grasping ambitions of Westminster Tories and a Labour Party that refuses to stand up to them is through independence and the creation of a modern, democratic Scotland where the integrity of electoral democracy cannot be undermined by a Tory government that has a majority of seats, not voters, and contempt for democracy.

Not only must no more powers be devolved to Scotland, it's time to reverse the process.

Lord David Frost
Tory peer, former minister
and Telegraph columnist



4th July 2023: Debate on Human-specific Medical Research Techniques

As chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on human-relevant science, this issue is close to my heart. I took this chance to point to Home Office statistics showing 3 million testing procedures involving animals took place across the UK in 2021 and that the UK is the top user of primates and dogs in experiments in Europe. This inflicted suffering on sentient animals is quite unnecessary and a staggering waste of animal lives, with millions of non-genetically altered animals being bred for scientific procedures and killed without even being used in procedures. I have previously called for laboratory animals to be included in the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022; and I reiterated those calls during this debate. The reality is that animal experimentation is not a good enough predictor of human reaction. For example, it delayed the introduction of penicillin and the development of the polio vaccine by decades, as well as failing in HIV research. But human-relevant techniques work because they are based on human biology. There are also computer models, use of AI, organ-on-a-chip technology, advanced use of human cells and tissues, and rapidly developing gene-based medicine, which personalises medicine to a patient's DNA. There is clear and compelling evidence that the regulatory requirement to test on animals before humans is simply not fit for purpose. Ending animal testing would also be good for our economy, with an opportunity to elevate our place as a world leader in life sciences. I called on the UKG to mandate a rigorous, public, scientific hearing on the issue. If we are evidence-led it would reduce the unnecessary harm involved in animal experiments, and ultimately lead to a ban on this immoral practice. We must open up legislative paths that allow us to pursue alternatives, or risk being left behind.

Active in the constituency

Events in the Constituency

At this time of year, it is always a great privilege to be able to participate in various community and civic events that are held over the season. This year in particular it was great to see a return to pre-Covid activity with Gala Days in Grangemouth, Whitburn, Armadale, Linlithgow, as well as the Bo'ness Fair Day and Bathgate Procession and Community Festival all getting a good turn out. Unfortunately for me, I'm not always able to get along - like the Linlithgow Marches when I was in Westminster for Procurement Bill votes - but when I can it's great to watch the parades, catch up with folks, and see everyone having a good day out. This is us at Whitburn Gala Day alongside Councillors Mary and Jim Dickson. It's easy to forget that these important community events don't just happen by themselves! Congratulations to the committees for their hard work throughout the year and thanks to all who contribute in their town to make them such a success. All your efforts are much appreciated.



Links between Parliament and the constituency



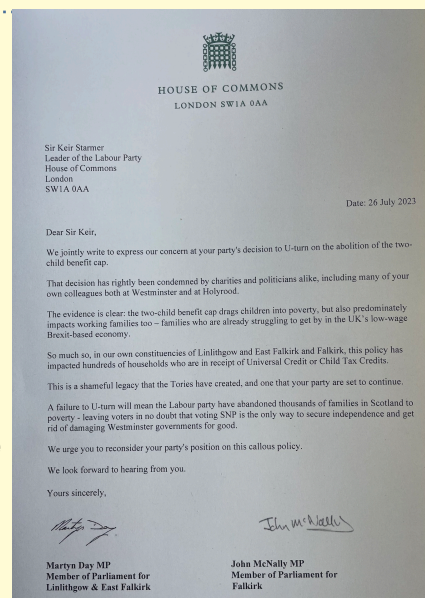
OSI Renewables

The wealth and breadth of talent in my constituency never ceases to amaze! Earlier this month I met virtually with a business that is headquartered at Heartlands Business Park in Whitburn, to find out about their work and offerings for the offshore wind market. I learned that OSI Renewables has received four Spotlight on New Technology® awards from the Offshore Technology Conference in Houston Texas, which span Oil & Gas, Deepsea Minerals, and

Floating Wind. It is the premier awards program in the offshore energy industry. The engineering company has also received a Hart Energy award, and Scottish Engineering's Innovation Excellence Award 2023. I followed up the meeting with a site visit alongside the SNP Spokesperson for Energy Security and Net Zero, Alan Brown MP. In the picture above I'm presenting an Early Day Motion (EDM) that I tabled in Parliament to George Adams, the company's Business Development Manager. The EDM commends OSI Renewables on over forty years' experience in delivering solutions to the offshore energy market and its accomplishment in designing F-TLP, an offshore wind turbine foundation that targets the Floating Wind market sector. The unique design of this foundation has the potential to generate around 1.2 and 1.5 billion pounds of revenue per year. This company's success is a perfect example of what can be achieved when Scotland's renewable energy potential is harnessed. Scotland's offshore energy market is a greener use of our abundant natural energy resources and can significantly contribute to meeting our Net Zero commitments. Well Done!

Two-child benefit cap: What is the point of the Labour Party?

Following new SNP analysis, showing 100's of households in my constituency and that of my neighbouring constituency Falkirk have been hit by the two-child benefit cap, I joined forces with my colleague John Mc Nally MP. Writing to Sir Keir Starmer MP about his U-turn on abolishing this cruel policy, we urged him to reconsider Labour's position on this deliberate choice to keep children in poverty. The analysis revealed that 20,000 children across Scotland have been pushed into poverty this year as a result of the two-child cap. It is shameful that Keir Starmer has admitted the pro-Brexit Labour Party will continue to impose this Tory policy. His admission comes amid acknowledgement that Labour may maintain other damaging Tory cuts. The UKG's inaction on tackling poverty is in stark contrast to the meaningful support the SNP Scottish Government (SG) is supplying to all low-income families. The recently published progress report on tackling child poverty estimates that 90,000 fewer children in Scotland will live in poverty this year as a result of SG policies, including lifting around 50,000 children out of hardship with the Scottish Child Payment. Not available anywhere else in the UK, this exists because the SG is prioritising lifting children out of poverty. Despite constrained resources, the SG is doing all it can to tackle child poverty and protect vulnerable people from UKG policies. It is clear the SNP is the only Party offering real change.



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