



Linlithgow & East Falkirk Constituency

Welcome

... Since my last newsletter the cronyism and corruption that Westminster has always suffered from and tried to keep under wraps came under the spotlight in the Tory government's direct intervention in the Owen Paterson paid lobbying scandal. The PM's attempts to rip up ethics rules and let Paterson off scot-free certainly exposed the worst of Westminster. The paid lobbying, dodgy Covid contracts and cash for peerages underlines just how broken the Westminster system is.

Any Scottish Government would do better, it's time for independence. 🇪🇺

Westminster Update

PMQs: 1950's born Women

In my first Prime Minister Question since September last year, I returned to the same issue - the accelerated timetable for increases in women's State Pension Age, which short-changed 1950's born women and created a pension injustice. When the PM was campaigning in 2019 he said he would return to this issue "with fresh vigour and new eyes and see what I can do to sort it out." Well the answer I got was a far cry from his campaign promise. Instead, his usual bluff & bluster exposed his pre-election lies. Yet his reference to "continue to reflect on all the options" gave me the opportunity to table some Parliamentary Questions to find out what has been done in the last 12 months to support those affected by the changes. No surprise, it's as expected in the caption! The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman has recognised the inequity and the issue now needs political action as our women waited too long. I will continue with my efforts for a just resolution. This matter is just one example of this Tory government's deceit and failure but, don't forget - like the longstanding policy on frozen pensions - it's been the policy of successive UK governments over many years. The 2014 promises made by Better Together would have had us believe independence would jeopardise our pensions: "Our pensions are safer as part of the UK." Allow me to state the glaringly obvious. Our pensions are not safer as part of the UK. Indeed, the only way to protect them is with independence.



the 1950s born women, in which

"He has done hee-haw"

English Channel Small Boats Incident

Priti Patel was disappointed by my "tone and comments" during this debate last week. Suffice to say, her feelings are insignificant compared with the needless loss of 27 lives. Her stubborn adherence to the Tories' "hostile environment" dogma is inhumane. SNP MPs repeatedly speak out against this policy, which targets some of the most vulnerable people in the world. We will continue to press the UK Government (UKG) to drop this ideology and give Scotland the immigration powers it needs to reflect our values of an open and welcoming nation.



Success for Motor Neurone Disease (MND) campaign

For two years the "United to End MND" coalition have been campaigning for targeted funding for motor neurone disease research. From previous Newsletters you'll know that, since July, I've been privileged to join forces with this legendary campaign by leading a Westminster Hall debate on the issue, writing to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to support the coalition's Spending Review submission, and raise the matter directly with the Business Secretary in the Commons Chamber.

In response to the charity-led campaign the UK Government has announced £50 million investment over five years into targeted motor neurone disease research, as part of a package of £375 million to fund innovative research into neurodegenerative diseases. The UKG has listened, heard, and responded to this much needed call for targeted investment into the terminal illness. Its support for the campaign's Spending Review bid is crucial to the 5,000 adults who are living with the disease at any one time.

Active in the constituency

Lest we forget...

I was delighted to be able to attend both of the Legion Scotland remembrance parades and services that took place in the Linlithgow and East Falkirk constituency. It was particularly good that we could mark Remembrance Sunday in the usual way, after the social distancing required at last year's events. The parades, which were in Grangemouth and Bathgate, are a small civic gesture whereby our communities come together to honour those who have given so much.

This year was especially significant due to it being the centenary of the Royal British Legion and 100 years of the Scottish Poppy as a national symbol of remembrance. In this time the Legion has helped serving and ex-serving personnel and their families; from those who served in the First World War to those



serving in our Armed Forces today. The Legion stands ready to support the next generation when needed. No-one should suffer for serving, or having served, others.



Invinity Energy Systems

I recently had the pleasure of visiting Invinity Energy Systems new vanadium flow battery manufacturing facility in Bathgate. I was extremely impressed by the technology this company has designed and their commitment to reducing carbon emissions in the environment.

These batteries store energy from renewable sources, making power available when the wind is not blowing or the sun is not shining. This innovative technology is inherently safe and non-flammable, lasts for decades without degrading, allows unlimited cycling, and are proven in commercial installations around the world. Invinity's growing commercial success has led to partnerships with EDF, Siemens Gamesa, Scottish Water, the California Energy Commission and Wärtsilä. The company has notably expanded in the past year, including adding 25 new green jobs in Bathgate, with many employees transferring their skills from the oil and gas industry to support the energy transition.

Links between Parliament and the constituency

COP26

I was privileged to attend the United Nations COP26 summit in Glasgow. It was a wonderful opportunity to show global leadership and seize the opportunities the green economy offers. The Glasgow Climate Pact is progress in recognising the loss and damage that the climate crisis, a creation of developed nations, is already causing in developing nations. But, it goes nowhere near enough to avoid climate disaster. The world is on a path to temperature increases of well over 2 degrees; a death sentence for many parts of the world. To keep 1.5 degrees in reach, global emissions must be almost halved by 2030.

In the run up to COP26 the Scottish Government (SG) championed the issue of loss and damage and we became the first developed country globally to commit to support countries experiencing loss and damage. That commitment has since been supplemented by Wallonia, and by a Children's Investment Fund Foundation contribution. It is regrettable that establishing a Glasgow Financial Facility on Loss and Damage was blocked by some developed nations. Our First Minister (FM) pledged £2 million to assist nations facing irreversible challenges from climate change saying: "Scotland is a relatively small country of just 5 million people, and we don't have substantial powers of borrowing. However, we can still lead by example, and there has never been a more vital time to do so." She met with Dr Saleemul Huq, the climate science expert from Bangladesh, and committed to working with him and others to build the case on loss and damage ahead of COP27 in Egypt. Referring to their meeting Dr Huq said: "The true leader that has emerged here in COP26 is not a party to the convention. She's our host." Loss and damage is just one example of Scotland's leadership during COP26. Yet, the UKG spent months trying to [shut Nicola Sturgeon out of COP26](#) - despite it taking place in Glasgow.

In contrast, the British PM was widely criticised. He made only fleeting visits to the COP26 discussions, and didn't even turn up at the end when talks got tough with the likes of India and China. His underwhelming involvement reached a peak at the post-conference briefing where he suggested COP26 took place in Edinburgh. Once again, Boris Johnson made it abundantly clear why Scotland would be better off fully governing ourselves and representing ourselves internationally.



 Martyn Day
6 Preston Crescent
Linlithgow
EH49 6HW
 www.martynday.scot
 martyn.day.mp@parliament.uk

 facebook.com/MartynDaySNP
 twitter.com/martyndaysnp
 instagram.com/martyndaysnp
 linkedin.com/in/martyndaysnp
 youtube.com/martyndaysnp

 01506 654415

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