

# November 2023 NEWSLETTER



## Welcome

Happy St. Andrew's Day! One week after my last Newsletter, the long-standing issue of recognising a Palestinian state within the borders set out in 1967 was, once again, given prominence with a terrorist attack on Israel by Hamas and the taking of hostages. Amid the ensuing onslaught, the SNP is steadfast in believing that a ceasefire is the only way to gain safety and security for both Palestinian and Israeli citizens. The urgency of a ceasefire and delivery of aid to Gaza goes beyond politics. It is about saving innocent lives. Why does the UKG not agree? *Matthew Day*

## Westminster Update

### Israel - Gaza Crisis

On 24th October, I asked the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Minister what level of civilian suffering it would take before his government back calls for a ceasefire. I got the usual "non-answer". Then on 15th November, in an SNP amendment to the King's Speech calling on the UKG to join the international community in urgently pressing all parties to agree to an immediate ceasefire, 288 Tories voted it down. The Commons vote saw a significant Labour rebellion to Sir Keir Starmer's stance that rejects supporting a ceasefire, with several frontbenchers resigning their position. Similarly on 21st November in the Scottish Parliament, the First Minister laid down a motion calling on the international community to use all diplomat avenues to create conditions on the ground to make a ceasefire a reality. The Scottish Tories were the only MSPs not to back it. Only a permanent ceasefire and a lasting two-state solution can halt this cycle of violence. Public opinion in Scotland strongly supports ceasefire demands. The UKG and its Scottish allies do not represent our values. Independence is crucial for establishing a country that does. #YES



### King's Speech and the Autumn Statement

When the King's Speech reopened Westminster on 7th November, help with the cost of living and new powers for the Scottish Parliament failed to materialise. SNP Westminster leader, Stephen Flynn MP, had previously called for the transfer of powers over energy, employment, and the economy to enable Holyrood to go further to help families with the cost of living and boost economic growth. The SNP SG is helping families with a council tax freeze and progressive policies like the Scottish Child Payment, but the request for urgent UKG action on the cost of living - including a £400 energy bill rebate, mortgage interest tax relief, and action to reduce food prices for Scottish households - fell on deaf ears. Independent European nations just like us are wealthier and fairer than the UK, so why not Scotland? Households here are suffering from a Westminster-made cost of living crisis, but have been abandoned by the Tories. This was reinforced by the Autumn Statement on 22nd November that delivered the worst-case scenario for Scotland's finances. After 13 years of Tory government, soaring household bills are outpacing the limited help Westminster offers; and this latest budget is simply too little, too late for the squeezed majority of households across Scotland and beyond. Independence is essential to deliver economic growth and boost household incomes. #YES

### Honesty in Politics

On 23rd October I led a debate for the Petitions Committee, and supported calls to make it a criminal offence for MPs to lie in Parliament and thereby mislead the House of Commons ... and the public. I believe the foundations of democracy, like justice, depend on trust and credibility. There is no doubt that the #Partygate saga put trust in politics and politicians at an all-time low, and it laid bare that there is a significant lack of accountability for MPs who mislead Parliament and the public. Actions should have consequences. Regaining public trust and confidence is of the utmost priority, and that can only occur when politicians are held to account for their actions. You can read the full debate here: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2023-10-23/debates/4BF9E107-17B6-4633-86FA-D46057D11F2C/details> Earlier this month, I also had a related piece published in Comment Central that you can read here: <https://commentcentral.co.uk/reform-is-needed-to-ensure-honesty-in-politics>

## Active in the Constituency



### Remembrance Day

This Remembrance Sunday I was honoured to attend the Royal British Legion parade in Bathgate and lay a wreath in memory of those who have served and sacrificed to defend our freedoms and protect our way of life. During these troubled times I think it is significant that we should also pay tribute to those who continue to serve their countries during times of war, conflict, and peace; and those who have lost their lives as a result of conflict or terrorism. [#RemembranceDay2023](#)

## Links between Parliament and the Constituency

### Scientific hearing on animal experiments

I consistently receive correspondence from constituents about animal welfare issues, something I take very seriously. While animal welfare is devolved to the Scottish Parliament, animal testing is reserved to the UKG with the Home Office in charge of regulating animal experimentation and such procedures approved for scientific and educational purposes on live animals. You might remember from July's Newsletter that I chair the All-Party Parliamentary Group on human-relevant science and took part in a debate "Human-specific Medical Research Techniques". I was therefore delighted to be able to table a further EDM at the start of this Parliamentary session, calling on the UKG to mandate a scientific hearing on animal experimentation; cease funding of the now-proven failed practice of animal experimentation; and increase funding for state-of-the-art human-based research to end the suffering of innocent laboratory dogs and other animals and prioritise treatments and cures for human patients. I am equally delighted that this is being championed by Ricky Gervais: <https://twitter.com/BetsyAmbassador/status/1727303018255675617?s=20>

### Public Petitions

When I get the chance, I formally present petitions in the Commons Chamber from the constituents of Linlithgow and East Falkirk on matters I have been contacted about. These consist of a statement on the issue and a request or "prayer", asking the House of Commons to urge the UKG to take action. Doing this means an official record of the petition appears in Hansard, as does the UKG's written response or "observation". The Petitions Committee also considers the response, and it can recommend further action, such as sending a petition to the relevant select committee. Therefore, although bound by Parliamentary procedure, taking this action can be useful in addressing matters. Since Parliament resumed earlier this month, I have presented two such petitions.



The first was on a UK Meal Card Scheme, asking the government to follow the lead of 35 other nations and look at introducing a UK meal card scheme to provide a tax-free allowance for employees to spend on ready-to-eat food and non-alcoholic beverages, that could be implemented by updating HMRC's existing tax exemptions list for employee benefits and expenses, with a graduated tax treatment to ensure that support is targeted at those on the lowest incomes. A good way to help reduce household food bills and support local businesses on the high street.

The second was in relation to energy bill support. I believe there is a great deal more that the UKG could - and should - be doing to support people, such as an energy bill rebate or an emergency social tariff. However, the very least it should be doing is signposting the many good schemes that energy companies are running to support people. This request therefore urged the government to publish accessible information on support available from all energy companies so that people who are struggling can maximise their chances of surviving this cost-of-living crisis.

### General Election Campaign

And finally...

There is nothing more relevant between Parliament and the Constituency than campaigning for the next General or "Independence" Election. Our campaign is well underway with regular canvassing and leafleting sessions taking place every week. The constraints of being tied to Westminster are hindering Scotland's ability to reach its full potential.

Only as an independent country, with full powers, can Scotland enhance our public services and provide greater protection and support for both families and businesses.

Only by engaging with the public can we convince our friends and neighbours that the powers independence will bring are exactly what we need to tackle the cost-of-living crisis, and deliver a fairer and more equal society. Another Scotland is possible, and together we will deliver it. There is much to be done and many hands make light work so do get in touch if you can help out in any way.

[#WhyNotScotland](#)



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