

September 2020 NEWSLETTER



Linlithgow & East Falkirk Constituency

Welcome

...it's hard to believe that this is my penultimate Newsletter for 2020. The lockdown and ongoing restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic has made this a year like no other in my lifetime. The new restrictions announced last Tuesday brought into stark reality the fact that, sadly, this is far from over. Scotland remains in Phase 3 of the Route map out of lockdown - where it has been since the 10th of July. These steps are necessary to prevent a resurgence in community transmission of the virus and a potentially rapid return to NHS pressures. Further information about the new rules is included below.

Westminster Update

Women against State Pension Inequality (WASPI)

This long-running campaign - and the 3.8 million affected women - suffered a disappointment this month when the High Court ruled on the judiciary appeal that was lodged on four main grounds; each of which were dismissed by the judges. As this was a judicial review it relied heavily on case law.

I took the opportunity the next day to call on the Prime Minister to honour the pledge he made last year to "return to this issue with fresh vigour and new eyes and see what I can do to sort it out." So far he has done sod-all and he cannot be let off the hook so I make no apology for continuing to raise this matter in Parliament. Instead of a straight answer, Johnson said he would write to me.

The way these 1950s born women - 350,000 of whom are in Scotland - have been treated is appalling. Restitution must be made because everyone deserves the right to retire with dignity. The House of Commons library produced a set of previously undisclosed figures showing an upswing in the numbers of these women claiming Universal Credit, Jobseekers Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance. In my constituency this is a 292% rise from 149 in 2013 to 584 last year. You can read more about this here: davidhencke.com/2020/09/19/revealed-dramatic-rise-in-benefit-and-disability-claims-from-women-born-in-the-1950s/

I will let you know if I get a letter and keep you updated on the BackTo60 Campaign that is now applying to the Supreme Court for permission to bring the case to the highest court in the UK. Meanwhile, I'll continue to raise the issue whenever I get the chance.



Coronavirus Economic Update

On the 24th of September the Chancellor, Rishi Sunak, made a statement in the Commons about his "plans to protect jobs and the economy over the winter period". He, who once said he would "do whatever it takes" to protect the economy, is watching over a winter of redundancies. Nearly 3 million workers across the UK, 12% of the workforce - including 217,000 Scots - are on furlough. If it had continued, Scottish Government analysis considers 61,000 jobs in Scotland would be saved.

His new Job Recovery Scheme is aimed at jobs and businesses deemed "viable". This brings no comfort to those who were working successfully prior to the pandemic. It was never suggested that the taxes they previously paid weren't viable!

This scheme means the UK Government picks up a maximum of 22%, capped at £697; a massive drop from the initial 80% with a £2,500 cap. On top of that, a business must pay a worker at least a third of their contracted time, so those who work less than a third - because of scaling down or closure - are excluded.

The self-employed will get 20% of average trading profits, capped at £1,875. They could previously get 80% up to the 13th of July and then 70%. Sunak wouldn't commit to filling the gaps, for example, freelancers, seasonal workers and the newly self-employed who have been excluded from the outset. Too many people have missed out on support. Support should have been extended and expanded to cover everyone affected. My concerns about gaps getting wider and risking redundancies are being realised.

Currently, both pensions and borrowing powers are controlled by Westminster. Independence is the only way we can take control.

Active in the constituency

New Rules on Lockdown Restrictions

The First Minister announced the most recent review of the Covid restrictions last Tuesday. This was due to 383 Covid-19 cases being confirmed in the 24 hour run up to the 22nd of September; taking the average daily number of new cases recorded to 285 - compared with 9 in mid-July. That figure represents 7.6% of newly tested people testing positive. The next day saw 486 confirmed cases - the highest ever recorded in a single day in Scotland up to that point - representing 7.8% of newly tested people testing positive. So, you can see why the

tough new measures were introduced.

Today saw 640 new cases being announced, which is 10.3% of newly tested individuals. Just last month, that percentage was consistently below 1%.

Of course, we must remember that many more people are now being tested. However, the figures show it could not continue unchecked and why the additional measures are necessary to try to control the

Keep yourself and others safe

- Face coverings
- Avoid crowded places
- Clean your hands regularly
- Two metre distance
- Self isolate and book a test if you have symptoms

nhsinform.scot/coronavirus #WeAreScotland

Healthier Scotland

COVID-19 STAY SAFE PROTECT OTHERS SAVE LIVES

NHS SCOTLAND

spread of the virus.

To stay safe and protect others, please follow these stricter rules, more details of which can be found in the link provided. Please also consider the safety of yourself and others at all times.

Remember that reducing the spread of infection continues to

rely on people following essential hygiene measures and physical distancing, but when we reduce our day-to-day contact with other people, we reduce the chance of the infection spreading. Every person in Scotland should comply with the measures that affect them. These include the difficult directive to not make indoor social visits to other households. Also, from the 25th of September, pubs, bars and restaurants must close at 10pm.

All coronavirus related guidance is on the Scottish Government website in the Guidance Hub here: <https://www.gov.scot/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance/>

Remember too that some people are more vulnerable, and some may find physical distancing rules more difficult to follow. Take the First Minister's advice to "Be strong, be kind and let us continue to act out of love and solidarity."

Remember FACTS for a safer Scotland

- F** Face coverings
- A** Avoid crowded places
- C** Clean your hands regularly
- T** Two metre distance
- S** Self isolate and book a test if you have symptoms

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Healthier Scotland

COVID-19 STAY SAFE PROTECT OTHERS SAVE LIVES

NHS SCOTLAND

Contact Tracing App

A wee reminder to download NHS Scotland's Test and Protect app. if you can. It complements existing contact tracing methods and helps to protect you and those around you. It is compatible with iPhones 6S and above, and Android 6.0 and above. I would encourage everyone to download this free app, if they have a compatible smartphone, to help slow the spread of COVID-19. Find out about it here: <https://www.protect.scot/>

Links between Parliament and the constituency

UK Parliament Week

It was once said that "Elections were for people who don't take politics that seriously" and the important stuff happened in between. That is just one reason I am supporting #UKPW UK Parliament Week runs from the 1st to the 7th of November. It is an annual festival about political engagement that aims to empower people to get involved and learn how the UK Parliament impacts on our lives. It won't surprise you that I am not a fan of how Westminster impacts us in Scotland. I think the more people in Scotland learn about the UK Parliament, the more support for independence will grow. <https://www.facebook.com/MartynDaySNP/videos/974301283050612>



Falkirk's Forgotten Villages Group

I'm still awaiting a debate on "Fuel Poverty and Energy Price Caps" so I can raise various issues that have arisen in my constituency in general, and with Falkirk's Forgotten Villages in particular. At Business Questions on the 17th of September I flagged up that, despite Parliament having a statutory requirement to debate fuel poverty annually, this has not been met since 2018. Rees-Mogg's answer did not indicate that the UK Government plans to look at this issue soon. It makes me wonder why it is dodging this obligation? Westminster Hall debates resume from the 5th of October, so I hope to report next time that my Backbench Business Debate has taken place as this issue affects millions of households across the UK. We need independence to tackle this scourge in Scotland.

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