



**Alex Neil
MSP**

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Alex opens new housing in Wishaw



Well done folks: Alex opening a new housing development on behalf of Wishaw Housing Association.

Alex was delighted to be given the chance to open a new housing association development in Wishaw in July. He congratulated the work done by the team to complete such an ambitious project to such a high standard.

Alex said he was hoping to see more of the same across Lanarkshire: "This development is a good example of the kind of project we need more of here in Lanarkshire and across Scotland.

"This month Alex Salmond announced that there was to be £100million more invested into the social housing sector. This investment is key, not only to save some of the 4,500 Scottish house building jobs that are predicted to be lost, but also to beat any forecast recession.

ALEX CALLS FOR URGENT ACTION ON FUEL POVERTY

Following yet more announcements of energy price rises Alex feels it is crucial that action is taken on the issue as a matter of urgency. He is looking to press home the message that more needs to be done by the UK Government to tackle fuel poverty and help the most vulnerable customers with rising energy costs.

Alex wants to see an eight point plan put into place by Westminster, which would help achieve the target of eradicating fuel poverty by 2016. It includes ensuring a legal limit on pre-pay meter charges for gas and electricity to ensure they are no higher than those paying by direct debit; a further increase in this year's winter fuel payment; a scheme to replace outmoded domestic appliances with modern, energy efficient appliances and the establishment of a Scottish oil fund.

Alex said: "The minority Scottish Government is to be congratulated for the action it is taking to tackle fuel poverty. Lanarkshire is now benefiting from a record number of central heating installations last year, plans to extend benefits health checks to all those applying to the Warm Deal programme, and the re-establishment of the Fuel Poverty Forum are all signs of how seriously the Scottish Government takes its responsibilities.

"However we need real action now from the UK Government after these massive price hikes by the big six energy companies. We have already seen gas and electricity price increases of some 15% this year.

"It is unacceptable that the rate of fuel poverty is three times as high in Scotland as south of the border at a time when the Treasury is being propped up by billions of pounds of extra revenue from Scottish oil.

ALEX HIGHLIGHTS LANARKSHIRE POVERTY FIGURES

Alex has moved to put the recent World Health Organisation report, which showed parts of Glasgow having a poorer life expectancy than India, into some kind of context for Lanarkshire.

The report found that in Airdrie and Coatbridge 74% of 15 year old boys are expected to reach their 65th birthdays, compared to 78% in Hamilton. Female life expectancy at birth in Hamilton is 77.1 years with Airdrie and Coatbridge at 77.4. In North Lanarkshire's council area the average life expectancy was found to be 71.9 years, compared with 73.5 across Scotland and just 69.1 in Glasgow city. Commenting on the news Alex said:

"The figures released by the WHO are damning statistics of a legacy of years of neglect from previous administrations, but the Scottish Government is determined to tackle these appalling health inequalities. In terms of health care North Lanarkshire has been better served already under the new administration compared to the previous administration who wanted to close Monklands A&E.

"The current Scottish Government is also going to the heart of the problem by introducing successive policies to try and tackle the health situation across Scotland. A greater health budget, waiting times at a record low, a new Hepatitis C strategy, the first National Drugs strategy since devolution have already been delivered and there is more to come during the new Parliamentary session, including a debate next week on our Obesity Action Plan.

Alex thrilled with waiting times at record low

Alex welcomed the news that waiting times in Scotland's A&E departments are at an all time low. Across Scotland in June 98.3% of patients were seen in A&E within four hours. In Lanarkshire 97.7% were seen within this time, compared to just 86.4% in June 2006.

Alex said: "I am delighted to see the people of Lanarkshire are continuing to wait less for treatment from their local hospitals and A&E departments under this government than they have previously.

"We can only achieve these excellent results in Lanarkshire because we are keeping Monklands A&E open and reversing the previous administration's plans to shut it. I am pleased to see this Scottish Government are not resting there and are supporting boards further to cut waiting times for patients.

Upcoming Surgeries

Airdrie Arts Centre –
15th September 11am

Bellshill Cultural Centre –
26th September 1pm

Uddingston Community Centre –
26th September 3pm

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Alex Supports Betting Shop Anti- Violence Campaign



Local Campaign: Alex with Ian Telford from
Community Trade Union in Uddingston

Alex recently added his support to a campaign to prevent violence against betting shop workers. He joined Ian Telford from the Community Trade Union in Uddingston to highlight the dangers faced by betting shop staff.

The union's campaign features a poster of a woman with bright yellow crime-scene tape on her face. It reads "SP on the man who spat at her - £500 fine."

Alex said: "Staff in betting shops have the same rights as everyone else to a safe and secure working environment. No-one should have to face the levels of abuse and assault that betting shop staff – who are mainly women – face on a daily basis.