



Alex Neil  
MSP

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## AFFORDABLE HOUSING BUILD RECORD

### SALSBURGH PEOPLE POWER WINS DAY

A strong local campaign in Salsburgh fronted by Alex Neil MSP and local Councillor Malcolm MacMillan has forced a North Lanarkshire Council (NLC) U-turn and improved road safety measures in the area.

Local residents were not satisfied with the proposals put forward by NLC to dismantle a footbridge over the old A8 through the area. After strong representations from Alex and a protest from local campaigners the Council was forced into changing its plans and introducing a series of road safety measures. North Lanarkshire Council eventually caved in to install a temporary footbridge, a 30mph speed restriction, a puffin crossing and other traffic calming measures.

Commenting Alex said:

*"It would appear that North Lanarkshire Council have conceded to the strong local campaign in a very welcome U-turn. This proves that people power can deliver very meaningful results."*

*"This is common sense prevailing, the measures that North Lanarkshire Council appear ready to put in place are crucial for people needing to cross a very dangerous stretch of road. Cars have been driving too fast in that area, and without the temporary crossing and speed restriction there would have been a serious accident."*

Alex Neil MSP has welcomed official figures showing a record number of public sector affordable homes were built in the last year.

The figures show that nearly 5,000 affordable homes were built last year by housing associations or local authorities. The Scottish Government brought forward £120 million of investment in affordable housing last August to help the construction industry through the downturn. In addition £50 million has been made available to local authorities for new council house building.

Alex, who is the Scottish Government Housing Minister said;

*"I am delighted to see more Council and Housing Association properties being built here in Lanarkshire, at a critical time. The impact of the recession on private developers is clear but the figures show the record funding from the Scottish Government to housing associations and councils has helped to ease the pressure on the construction industry."*

*"The Scottish Government acted quickly last August to bring forward £120 million of housing investment to support our construction industry through tough times."*

*"The whole of Lanarkshire is going to benefit from a record investment in new Council housing in the coming year."*



**On Site:** Housing Minister Alex Neil MSP in Bellshill with Lanarkshire Housing Association's Catriona Blyth, Ann-Marie Collins and Tracey Winters.



**Big cheque!** Alex and Real Radio's Steve McKenna help fundraiser Ray Mitchell (back centre) present a £500 cheque to patient Julie McHutchinson for Wishaw General's Children's Ward. Charge Nurses Margaret Marshall (back left) and Pamela Buddy with 3 year old Leone Galgani look on.

## "SHOCKING" LEVEL OF ALCOHOL DEATHS

New figures show the high death toll from alcohol in health boards and constituencies across Scotland and expose the scale of Scotland's alcohol problem compared to the rest of the UK. The figure for Lanarkshire NHS Board is 207% of the UK total, the third highest in Scotland. Of the 73 Scottish Parliamentary constituencies, 64 had an alcohol related death rate above the UK average.

Alex Neil MSP says these figures show the scale of the challenge we face to tackle alcohol abuse:

*"Double the UK alcohol related death rate is a shocking figure for Lanarkshire. The figures demonstrate the absolute need for an end to 'pocket money priced' alcohol and for the Scottish Government measures to curb irresponsible drinking to be introduced.*

*"There can be no doubt that we must take action on alcohol now before more lives are lost."*



**Rallying for Jobs:** Alex takes part in the recent demonstration against the closure of the Johnny Walker plant in Kilmarnock

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## PENSIONER POVERTY SHAME REVEALED

A report by the House of Commons Work and Pensions Select Committee has criticised the benefits system as a key cause of poverty - with some 1.7m pensioners failing to claim money to which they are entitled.

The report follows European statistics released earlier in the year showing that the number of pensioners living in poverty in the UK is among the highest in Europe with over-65s in countries like Romania and Poland faring better. Mr Neil said:

*"It is outrageous that the complex UK benefits system is failing poor pensioners and 12 years of this UK Government has failed to address the poverty of the 80s and early 90s.*

*"Scotland must be allowed to make its own decisions on tax, spending and benefits to address its poverty issues."*

## SURGERY DATES

### Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> October:

Airdrie Arts Centre  
11 am – 1pm

Shotts Community Education  
Centre  
2 - 3pm

### Friday 9<sup>th</sup> October:

Bellshill Cultural Centre  
10 – 11am

Uddingston Community Centre  
12noon – 1pm

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