

ALEX'S STANDARD

SERVING CENTRAL SCOTLAND

Scottish Parliamentary Newsletter from Alex Neil MSP, Issue 8, March 2004



The Scottish
Parliament



Alex Neil MSP

CONTACT INFORMATION

Room 2.21,
Scottish Parliamentary HQ,
George IV Bridge,
Edinburgh EH99 1SP

or

Room 0.04,
Dalziel Workspace,
Mason Street,
Motherwell ML1 1YE

E-mail:

alex.neil.msp@scottish.parliament.uk

Tel:

0131-348-5702/5703 (Parliament)
01698-249000 (Constituency Office)

Fax:

0131-348-5716 (Parliament)
01698-249000 (Constituency Office)

Surgeries:

Friday 21st May 2004 –

10am-11am
**Dalziel Workspace,
Mason Street, Motherwell**

12noon-1pm
**Charlotte Toal
Community Centre,
Dundyven Road,
Coatbridge**

2pm-3pm
**Lilybank Centre, Chapel
Street, Airdrie**

SCOTLAND SHOULDN'T PAY FOR LONDON OLYMPICS

Alex Neil MSP has placed before the Scottish Parliament a motion calling for London to bear greater financial responsibility for the city's bid to host the 2012 Olympic Games. While he wishes London every success in securing the games he does not believe that Scotland should only help fund them if it is going to benefit from the Games. It is only right that whilst London will benefit most economically and in terms of prestige attached to hosting the games that they should meet any shortfall in funds in the limit previously agreed with the Westminster government.

If and when the motion that Alex has tabled is debated he will be making sure the message that Scotland shouldn't be footing the bill will be heard.

Alex's motion reads: "That the Parliament notes with concern the decision by Her Majesty's Government to provide an unlimited funding guarantee for the London bid to host the Olympic Games in 2012 and, whilst happy to support the bid's success, believes that London should share financial responsibility for the guarantee in line with the original intention of Her Majesty's Government, outlined in the response to *A London Olympic Bid for 2012* by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport."



Alex meets with Councillor Sophia Coyle from North Lanarkshire and a local constituent at the Scottish Parliament. They formed part of a visiting group from the village of Greengairs protesting at the proposed placing of a new landfill site in their area.

If you are a member of, or know of any organisation in the Central Scotland area who would like Alex Neil MSP to visit them please get in touch using the contact information on this page.

ALEX MEETS COUNCIL TAX CAMPAIGNER

Back in January Alex met with Srathaven based Alastair Murdoch. Alastair is heading up *Scottish Action Against Council Tax*, campaigning to put an end to the council tax and replace it with a local tax system that takes account of individuals ability to pay. With the level of council tax rising in Scotland again this is a very pertinent campaign and Alex was only too happy to meet with Alastair to discuss the issue.

The Scottish Executive has planned to hold a review of local government finance and have discussed this with COSLA. They have stated that local taxation may well form part of that review and Alex will be campaigning to make sure that it is.

The *Scottish Action Against Council Tax* website can be found at:

<http://www.iowctc.isitfair.co.uk/default.asp>

SEAT BELTS

Alex signed a Scottish Parliament motion designed to ensure greater safety on school transport. Motion S2M-839 called upon the introduction of seat-belts on all buses contracted by local education authorities to carry children between school and home and on school trips. Alex believes that the safety of our school children is of paramount importance and he fully supports the measure of fitting seat-belts on all school buses.

SCHOOLS PETITION

Alex welcomes the decision of the Scottish Parliament's Public Petitions Committee to pass on the petition and supplementary evidence provided by the campaigners against the closure of secondary schools in East Kilbride to the Education Minister.

The committee met and discussed the petition on 21st January where they took this decision. Those who handed in the petition were unhappy with the way in which the consultation into the plans for secondary schools in South Lanarkshire was undertaken. Their hope is that their petition will result in a review of the way in which these are undertaken in the future.

ORGAN DONATION

Alex has signed a Bill proposal to change the rules for organ donation. Currently the system for organ donation is based on the idea that people must volunteer to donate their organs after their death. However, despite a majority of people saying they would be happy to donate it is only a small minority of people who do. This means there is a serious shortage of organs for transplant. The bill Alex is supporting is designed so that people have to opt out of donating their organs rather than opting in, as they currently have to do. This should increase the number of organs available for operations and save many peoples lives.

ALEX WANTS CIVIL LIBERTIES GUARANTEE FOR SCOTLAND

The United States government has announced that in future individuals wishing to travel to America will need to apply for a visa until 'biometric' passports are introduced. Alex had significant concerns that this would lead to the revelation of individuals' criminal records to the US authorities including minor misdemeanours from years ago. Alex can understand the revealing of terrorist activities being necessary, but doesn't believe the US needs to know if someone committed a breach of the peace ten years ago. If all details were to be revealed this would represent a significant erosion of Scots civil liberties and Alex put down a written question to make sure that this wasn't happening.

The answer Alex received seems to indicate that this isn't happening, but he will continue to look into the issue to ensure that there is no dilution of Scotland's civil liberties.

Answers to written parliamentary questions can be accessed at:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/wa.htm>

RENEWABLE ENERGY DEBATE

Alex spoke in the recent debate in the Scottish Parliament about renewable energy. In the debate he called for greater investment into the renewable energy sector so that Scotland can become a leading player.

He believes that not only will the growth of renewable energy improve the environment, an important enough goal in itself, but that it can also benefit the Scottish economy, potentially providing thousands of people with work. Therefore not only is renewable energy good for the environment but also for people's pockets too.



Alex Neil MSP

Get in touch

Got an issue you want to bring to Alex Neil MSP's attention? Then take a minute to write about it in this box and then cut it out and return to us using the contact information on the other page.

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Name.....

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