

# ALEX'S STANDARD

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CENTRAL  
SCOTLAND



Scottish Parliamentary Newsletter from Alex Neil MSP, Issue 9, June 2004

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## TIME FOR OLDER PEOPLE'S COMMISSIONER

Alex Neil MSP is bringing forward a members bill to create the post of Commissioner for Older People in Scotland. He lodged the proposal last month and it has quickly attracted support from members of the various parties.

The need for a commissioner was pressed home recently with the press coverage of some of the worst instances of abuse of the elderly in Scotland. It quickly became clear to Alex that there was a real vacuum in terms of the protection of older people and he moved swiftly to lodge his bill proposal to fill that gap.

Broadly Alex sees the commissioner as being responsible for ensuring that there is no discrimination against older people; instances of abuse against older people are dealt with in a much more responsive manner; that the United Nations principles for older people are adhered to in Scotland; and that older peoples individual and collective rights are secured. He also envisages them working closely with elderly rights organisations such as *Help the Aged* and *Age Concern*.

The bill will firstly need to go through a public consultation exercise, so if you wish to contribute to this process you can get in touch with Alex's office, using the information in this newsletter, and they will assist you with this.

## ALEX SUPPORTS VIEWPARK GLEN CAMPAIGNERS

Pictured below are Alex and the *Viewpark Conservation Group*, handing in a petition to the Scottish Parliament, calling against building on Viewpark Glen in Lanarkshire's Douglas Support Estate and more generally for a review of the way in which Green Belt policy is handled. Alex was pleased when this petition was heard by the public petitions committee on 12<sup>th</sup> May who decided to refer it onto the Scottish Executive for their consideration.

Alex does not support a blanket ban on to the development of green belt sites, but does believe that brown field sites should be used in the first instance. He is disappointed that Viewpark Glen may be developed, as it is a site of important local heritage that locals are justifiably protective of. It deserves protection.



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.



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## IN BRIEF...

**Media Regulation...** On Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> March Alex had the pleasure of taking part in a meeting held by the Royal Society of Edinburgh about the issue of media regulation. At the meeting he spelled out what he believes is necessary for more effective regulation of broadcasting and other types of media in Scotland. Among Alex's suggestions were that OFCOM in Scotland should be independent of London and directly answerable to the Scottish Parliament and the need for a stronger press complaints commission. Alex believes that these measures would mean greater protection for individuals from obtrusive action by the press.

**Greengairs Protest...** Alex took part in a protest on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2004 with villagers from Greengairs who were campaigning against a proposed new Landfill site for the village. Alex has been campaigning to try and ensure that this does not go ahead and has raised the issue in parliament on various occasions.

## ALEX VISITS THISTLE TELEVISION STATION IN HOLYTOWN

Alex visited Lanarkshire's local television station, Thistle TV at their Holytown offices on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> March. He was very impressed with their professional set-up and is delighted that Lanarkshire has a local television station once more, after Lanarkshire TV wound up a couple of years ago.

What impressed Alex most was the range of different programmes available through the station all focussed on serving the local people of Lanarkshire. Surely it is time to try and encourage other localised television stations to be established across Scotland, so that other areas as well as Lanarkshire can have a similar service.

Alex has also signed a motion (number S2M-1202) before the Scottish Parliament congratulating Thistle TV for the work they do.

## ALEX SPEAKS UP FOR TRANSBUS WORKERS

*Alex Neil MSP addresses parliament*

On 29<sup>th</sup> April Alex spoke in a debate in the Scottish Parliament about the future of Transbus International's operations in Falkirk and Larbert. He called for a combined effort from MSPs, the local council, trade unions and the local enterprise company to secure the plants long term viability.

Alex spoke about his grave concerns for the future of the Transbus operations and the knock-on effect to the local economy if they go under. He called for an appropriate buyer to be found and for every effort to be made not to sell the company onto an asset stripper who would take what they could from the Falkirk plant without securing its future and the jobs of the workers employed there.

## ALEX ADDRESSES POPULATION SEMINAR

Alex was happy to address a seminar held on 27<sup>th</sup> May by the Economic Development Association in Edinburgh to discuss the problem of Scotland's declining population. This is an issue Alex is greatly interested in and he has raised awareness of it in the past.

Scotland's population trend, if it continues as at present will result in our current population of 5million dropping below 4million by the 2060s. This will bring major problems to Scotland in terms of sustaining a growth economy; for the provision of benefits to our elderly and sick; and to our self confidence as a nation in general.

At the seminar Alex called for a three point plan to stabilise and then grow our population calling for an improved birth rate; the encouraging of ex-pats to return to Scotland as well as new immigrants; and to put Scotland's economic house in order to make the country a desirable place to live.

## ALEX ADDRESSES WIDER ACCESS FORUM

On June 9<sup>th</sup> Alex had the pleasure of addressing a meeting of the West of Scotland Wider Access Forum at Glasgow Caledonian University on the topic of expanding access to university education for more people in Scotland. Currently although some 40% of people in Scotland come from a manual worker background, only 24% of students at university come from this background, with even less coming from our poorest communities. Alex pressed home the need to seek out solutions to this problem and to try and ensure that more people from these backgrounds can make it to university in the future.

**If you have any issues you wish to bring to the attention of Alex Neil MSP then please do not hesitate to get in touch using the contact information overleaf.**

**If you know of anyone else who you may think be interested in receiving a copy of this newsletter then please let us know their details and we will send it to them.**

*Alex meets with Thistle TV's managing director.*

### IN BRIEF...

**Rowallan General Practice** in Blantyre was under threat of closure despite massive opposition from the patients registered with them. Alex was involved in trying to keep the practice open and was pleased that the tendering process for GPs to apply to take over the practice was re-opened. He is hopeful that now a suitable GP can be found to take over at Rowallan.

**Dunbeth Park** in Coatbridge is under threat at the moment. North Lanarkshire Council want to build a football park over part of it, despite local opposition. Alex attended a public meeting about this and believes that there are alternative sites the council should use for this. He is also concerned at the lack of consultation of local people by the council about the development.

**Fire Sprinklers Bill...** as well as bringing forward his own member's bill for the creation of a Commissioner for Older People, Alex was happy to add his name in support of his colleague Michael Matheson's members bill to ensure fire sprinklers are fitted as standard in residential properties in the future. This proposal has the potential to save many lives.

## ALEX SECURES OLYMPICS DEBATE

Alex Neil MSP secured a debate in the Scottish Parliament about the implications for Scotland if London secures the 2012 Olympic Games. Whilst 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 necessary to secure the rights to host them.

Alex's motion that was debated on the 31<sup>st</sup> March was: *"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."*