

ALEX'S STANDARD

SERVING
CENTRAL
SCOTLAND

Scottish Parliamentary Newsletter from Alex Neil MSP, Issue 10, November 2004



The Scottish
Parliament

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ALEX LAUNCHES CONSULTATION FOR BILL TO ESTABLISH OLDER PEOPLE'S COMMISSIONER

As reported in the last edition of Alex's Standard, Alex Neil MSP intends to bring forward a Members Bill in the Scottish Parliament to establish a Commissioner for Older People in Scotland. As part of that process though there is a consultation period for members of the public and organisations to give their opinions on the bill.

Alex launched his consultation document in October and is hopeful of attracting a lot of responses; such has been the interest in the idea for a Commissioner thus far. Respondents have until 14th January 2005 to formally submit their evidence to the consultation process.

Alex feels that there is currently a significant gap in the protection of older people in Scotland as certain cases have highlighted and that there is a need for a greater emphasis for the needs of older people to be respected in society and by government and a burning need for a champion for older people. He feels that a Commissioner could fill that very role.

Elderly people's rights have re-entered the political arena with a high profile, and it is Alex's intention that this debate should centre round the proposal to create a Commissioner for Older People as to ensure a tangible outcome, for the benefit of Scotland's older people as a consequence.

He is currently seeking views on this matter through the consultation process. If you, or anyone you know wishes to contribute to the consultation process please do not hesitate to get in touch with Alex's office to receive a copy of the Consultation Paper.



Alex is pictured (left) in his office in the new Scottish Parliament building. He is holding his consultation paper for his Members Bill to establish a Commissioner for Older people. He is hopeful that this consultation will attract a significant amount of interest.

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 Neil MSP Working for Central Scotland

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Alex's Surgery Details

6th December 2004

2pm-3pm	Charlotte Community Centre, Dundyvan Coatbridge	Toll Centre, Road,
4pm-5pm	Lilybank Centre, Chapel Street, Airdrie	
6pm-7pm	Cultural Centre, John Street, Bellshill	

Alex Appointed Chair of Enterprise and Culture Committee

In September Alex was appointed as Convenor of the Scottish Parliament's Enterprise and Culture Committee. Having previously convened the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee it is a role that he knows well and one he is delighted to take on.

It is a job of supreme importance because Scotland must aim to get its economy moving again to provide jobs for all and get rid of poverty, and the area of enterprise is absolutely central to this task.

Already Alex has had to speak in a debate on behalf of the Committee. On the 6th October there was a debate on the Committee's report on Renewable Energy in Scotland and it was Alex's responsibility to close the debate in which he commented, "Renewable energy sources provide three fundamental benefits for Scotland, as compared with traditional sources. First, they make a substantial contribution to the reduction in CO₂ emissions and the environmental benefits that go with that. Secondly, they help us to diversify our supply of energy, which is essential in any modern economy. Thirdly, they reduce our reliance on imported energy, which is always good for any country, both financially and in terms of economic security."

The next major task for the Committee and Alex as its chair is an inquiry into Arts in the Community.

Alex Speaks in Economy Debate

Alex took part in an important debate in the Scottish Parliament on 16th September 2004. This debate was on the vital topic of growing Scotland's economy, and Alex was quick to make the point that in countries of a similar size as Scotland there has been a much higher economic growth rate.

Norway has for example had a growth rate about 50% higher than the Scottish one; and Finland, Sweden and Luxembourg have had growth one and a half times that of Scotland; whilst the Republic of Ireland has had a growth rate twice that of ours. Alex made the point that smaller nations are performing better economically than larger ones and that Scotland must learn lessons from that.

Alex also criticised certain economists who do not include oil revenues in analysing Scotland's economy, as this shows Scotland as being worse off than it would otherwise be if they did include that revenue. The figure they are leaving out of the estimate of Scotland's economic worth is estimated to be up to **£8 billion per year**. If this figure was included it would give a much healthier picture for Scotland's economic potential.

Alex Questions First Minister on Immigration Powers

At First Ministers Question Time on 30th September, Alex questioned the First Minister about what powers over immigration he had requested to be given to the Scottish Executive from the British Government. Alex asked this question in light of recent reported comments from Jack McConnell that he would be requesting such powers.

Alex believes it is important that such discussions take place as the current population of Scotland continues to fall and this will leave the country with all sorts of problems in the future. Swift action is needed to secure a long term solution to the problems of depopulation before it is too late to deal with the issues associated with it.

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 is pictured (left) with Eddie Corson on the day the Scottish Parliament building opened. Each MSP brought a guest to the opening ceremony, and Eddie, from Bellshill, was Alex's guest for the day.

ALEX NEIL MSP – WORKING FOR CENTRAL SCOTLAND