



John Wilson MSP

Representing Central Scotland

July 2015 Newsletter



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Help with Funeral Poverty

In an effort to reduce the financial burden of losing a loved one the QSA have asked providers to sign up to a Fair Funeral Pledge designed to encourage openness and transparency in funeral arrangements, ensuring customers receive information on packages to suit all budgets.

A recent report by the Quaker Social Action (QSA) charity found that the costs of funerals had increased by 80% over the last decade “out stripping wage rises and inflation massively”. The charity stated that 47% of requests for social fund applications are rejected; and that it can take up to six weeks before applicants hear back.

John has challenged the Scottish Government on how it assists those struggling to pay funeral costs. In direct questions he has inquired how they intend to support those on low or insecure incomes due to zero hours contracts, who are unable to access social fund assistance.

“Clearly this is an important issue that needs to be tackled. Those who find themselves at the most distressing time of losing a family member or loved one also face the prospect of being pushed into further hardships by their financial situation due to the increasing costs of making funeral arrangements.”

Reducing ‘in-work’ Poverty

A report by the Scottish Government in January 2015 found that 52% of adults living in poverty are currently in work and that the number is increasing.

John has welcomed the proposals by the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board (SAWB) to increase the minimum wage for agricultural workers by 10p per hour as a step in the right direction to tackle in-work poverty.

“I welcome the decision to increase the national minimum wage for agricultural workers. I look forward to the continued protection of wages in this sector and the day we introduce the living wage.”

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A&E Wait Times Fail to Meet Targets

Recent figures published by NHS Scotland show that A&E waiting times within Lanarkshire consistently fail to meet the Scottish Government’s target of patients being seen within four hours of arrival. Waiting Times at the three A&E departments at Monklands, Hairmyres and Wishaw General Hospitals are among the highest in Scotland.

John recently questioned the Scottish Government on various aspects of NHS Lanarkshire’s performance, highlighting this issue and the variation in quality of services across NHS Scotland. John also challenged the fact that NHS Boards in wealthier areas see consistently shorter waiting times than those in less wealthy areas and questioned the Scottish Government on how it intended to ensure that NHS Lanarkshire patients receive treatment times on par with the rest of the country.

“Many people are facing unacceptably long waiting times at the three A&E departments in Lanarkshire. Action must be taken to restore confidence for those attending on emergency visits.

Whilst I acknowledge that the board must work with limited resources, every effort must be made to support their hard working dedicated staff and improve the situation for patients.”

Network Rail Training Event.

John recently attended a Network Rail training event in Larbert. John and other visiting MSPs learned how rail employees ensure the safety of all those who travel by rail across Scotland and also covered the key issue of public safety at level crossings.



“Information and events such as these, give MSPs a greater insight into the delivery of vital transport services, such as the rail network.”

Severe Weather link to climate change

John recently urged the Scottish Parliament to take immediate action on climate change following new research linking global warming to severe weather patterns in Europe and the UK.

“Given the vast fluctuation in the weather cycles, this highlights the need to address climate change as a matter of urgency to ensure the future survival of the planet”

The Royal Society report, *Evidence Linking Rapid Arctic Warming to Mid-latitude Weather Patterns*, demonstrates a link between melting ice caps and extreme weather patterns in Western Europe and the UK.

According to the report, melting Arctic ice disrupts the polar jetstream, which in turn causes severe weather patterns in the UK, including the flooding which has occurred in recent years.

Local Focus

John recently asked in the chamber whether or not there was any intention of building a new multidisciplinary health facility in **Chryston** to redress the issue of residents receiving treatment from two separate health boards and thus complicating services.

On June 24th John chaired a public meeting in **Shotts**, to draw attention to the dangers of **Unconventional Gas Extraction**. Over 50 concerned locals attended the meeting organised by a local activist group.

From September John will be holding a new monthly surgery in **Falkirk**. Come along and meet John in **Falkirk ASDA** between 11am and noon on Friday 11 September 2015. Surgeries are a fantastic way to meet your MSP and bring any issues you are experiencing to his attention.

John requested that the government continued to seek answers from Scottish Water regarding the recent water pollution incident affecting areas of **Motherwell and Airdrie**. He insisted that the cause of the contamination incident which led to thousands of homes being without useable water supplies in late June be investigated fully.

Scottish Youth Parliament - Poverty: See it Change It

John has pledged his support to a Scottish Youth Parliament campaign to send the message that now is the time to act on child poverty. One in five children and young people in Scotland live in poverty; which can undermine their health, wellbeing, and educational opportunities.

The *See It Change It* campaign sets out to tackle this issue by raising awareness, opening discussion and reducing the stigma around child poverty.

“Through on-going campaigns to introduce the living wage for all workers in Scotland we can highlight the fact that zero-hour contracts and low pay are leaving more children and young people living in poverty.”



SURGERIES

The following surgeries will commence in September, details in next newsletter:

Chryston Cultural Centre
Coatbridge ASDA

Coatbridge, New Townhead Cultural Centre

Bellshill Cultural Centre

Motherwell, South Dalziel Studios

Falkirk ASDA

If you have any suggestions as to new areas where John could hold a surgery, please let us know.

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