

Working for Central Scotland

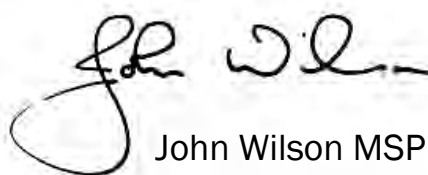
JOHN WILSON MSP

ANNUAL PARLIAMENTARY REPORT 2015

I have been working hard on behalf of communities across the region, tackling the issues which affect our health and welfare and ensuring that the Scottish Parliament and Government are pushed to reduce poverty, inequality and injustice. This report contains more information on the questions I have asked the Government and the issues I have raised.

In the centre pages is a poverty toolkit which I hope can bring together those experiencing poverty and hardship, and those fighting to eradicate it.

It has been fantastic to see the incredible work being undertaken in communities across the region and it remains a privilege to represent you as a Central Scotland MSP. You can raise an issue with me at any time, I can be reached by telephone, e-mail or letter, my contact details are on the back of this report. You can visit me at any of my constituent surgeries listed below, you do not need an appointment.



John Wilson MSP

Friday, January 8, 2016	ASDA Falkirk	1:00pm
Monday, January 11, 2016	Chryston Cultural Centre	10:00am
	Townhead Community Centre	11:30am
	ASDA Coatbridge	1:00pm
Monday, January 18, 2016	Bellshill Cultural Centre	10:00am
	South Dalziel Historic Building	11:30am
Monday, February 15, 2016	Chryston Cultural Centre	10:00am
	Townhead Community Centre	11:30am
	ASDA Coatbridge	1:00pm
Friday, February 19, 2016	ASDA Falkirk	1:00pm
Monday, February 22, 2016	Bellshill Cultural Centre	11:00am
	South Dalziel Historic Building	12:30pm
Friday, March 11, 2016	ASDA Falkirk	1:00pm
Monday, March 14, 2016	Chryston Cultural Centre	10:00am
	Townhead Community Centre	11:30am
	ASDA Coatbridge	1:00pm
Monday, March 21, 2016	Bellshill Cultural Centre	10:00am
	South Dalziel Historic Building	11:30am

Public Transport

Traffic emissions along motorway corridors and busy main streets are affecting the health of our communities.

Continually investing in the roads network only leads to more cars on the roads and contributes to air pollution which claims thousands of lives in Scotland every year.



I submitted questions asking how the government plans to reduce pollutant levels to protect public health and also asked for its stance on returning the railways to public ownership. I have also written to the transport commissioner on several occasions questioning the withdrawal of bus services and the lack of routes to help people travel to hospitals in Central Scotland.

In the Parliament I have asked the Scottish Government whether it will review the powers of the (a) Traffic Commissioner for Scotland and (b) public to take action against bus operators who fail to deliver agreed routes or withdraw or cancel services without advance notice.

In the Parliament I have asked the Scottish Government, in light of the finding that air pollution in central Scotland reached its worst level in three years on 17 March 2015 - largely due to car emissions according to environmental groups - how it will encourage individuals to use public transport.

Fracking and Coal Gasification

Since the sale of drilling rights over a vast swathe of Central Scotland I have attended meetings and rallies opposing unconventional gas extraction and fracking and supporting the huge numbers of communities who oppose it.

I have submitted a series of questions to the Scottish Government, asking what their plan, budget and timetable is for the promised public consultation and health impact assessments. The answers received, some taking over six months to be provided, fail to give decisive answers on this serious matter or to indicate if the government is simply delaying it's decision on



"There is no place for this destructive and toxic industry in Scotland, for the sake of generations to come we must protect our communities and our planet".

whether to allow fracking to go ahead until after the Holyrood and local governments elections.

“ It is clear that a large number of people are opposed to fracking taking place and the Government must, as promised, give them a platform to express their views. ”

In the Parliament I have asked the Scottish Government what its position is on concerns that it is purposely withholding substantive answers to questions regarding fracking and what action it is taking to allay these concerns.

No to Trident

I have been a long term campaigner against nuclear weapons and against the huge danger of keeping a nuclear armed fleet of submarines at Faslane. The financial burden of Trident to a country struggling to maintain public services is beyond sense, the rising cost of replacement could be used to allow public services to recover from years of imposed austerity.

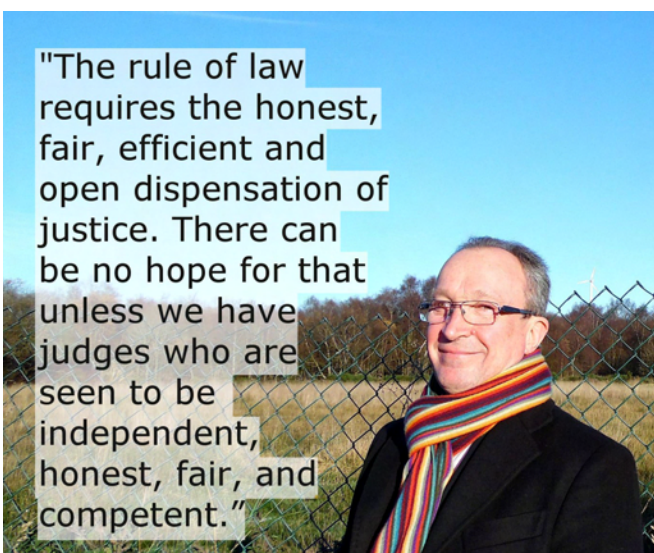


John demonstrated against Trident outside the Parliament.

“ Nuclear weapons are a potential accident waiting to happen. That they are located in the central belt, Scotland’s most populated area, cannot be allowed to continue. It is time to put an end to nuclear weapons once and for all. ”

Criminal Justice

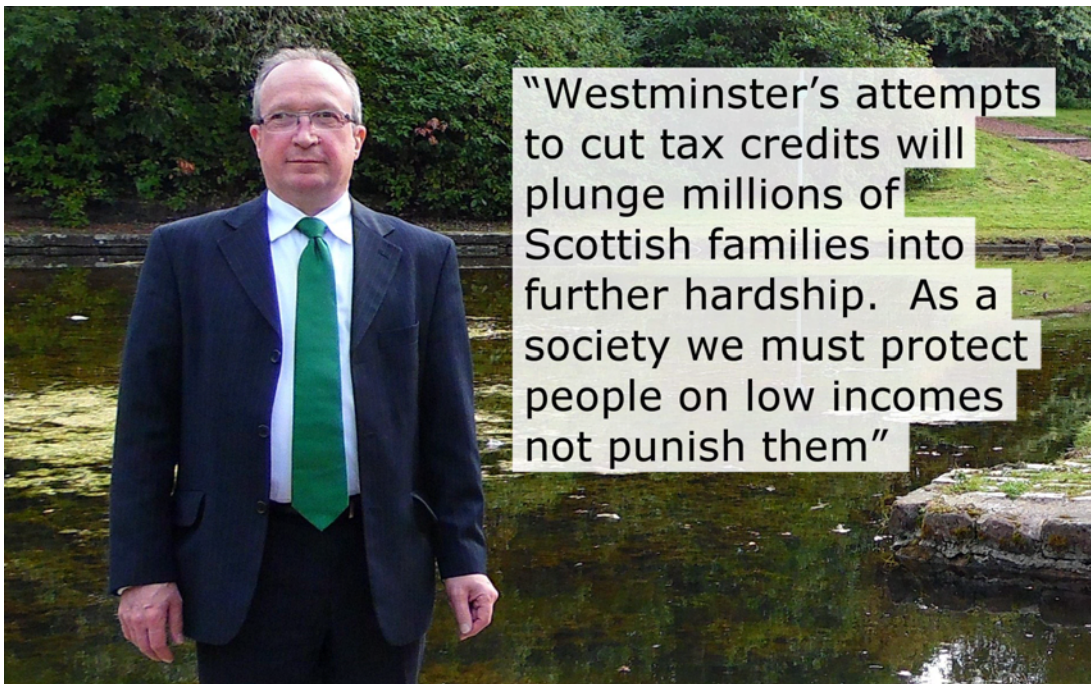
I have asked the Scottish Government if it will review it’s commitment to tackling animal abuse, and for a register of judicial interests.



In the Parliament I have asked the Scottish Government, in light of the recent Scottish SPCA strategic review, which noted that the average fine for animal abuse is £139 and the average community service sentence is 3.2 days, what its position is on the need for stricter penalties for animal abusers.

Poverty and Welfare

People have the right to a life free from poverty, and in a wealthy society like ours no-one should suffer hunger or be unable to heat their homes. Yet high rents, soaring utility bills, falling wages and insufficient welfare support leave many households without the money for basics like food and school uniforms. I will continue to fight against austerity and argue that the extensive cuts to the welfare of our most vulnerable is a political choice and not an economic necessity.



I have questioned the Scottish Government on what it plans to do to protect communities from Westminster's cuts to welfare and called for more powers to come to Scotland to tackle our high fuel poverty levels. I have also questioned the fact that only one in five of Scotland's largest companies pay their employees the living wage.

In the Parliament I have asked the Scottish Government how it will mitigate the effect of a reduction in tax credits and in-work support in order to prevent further increases in in-work poverty.

Poverty Toolkit

In a modern society with adequate resources for everyone, poverty is a national disgrace. Whether you are struggling to make ends meet, have money worries or want to help out those who are facing poverty in the region, I hope this toolkit can put you in touch with organisations which could help or indeed enable you to identify local voluntary services and projects you could offer your support to.

Advice Organisations

Airdrie Citizens Advice Bureau 01236 754 109
bureau@airdriecab.casonline.org.uk

Coatbridge Citizens Advice Bureau 01236 421 447
adviser@coatbridgecab.casonline.org.uk

Cumbernauld and Kilsyth Citizens Advice Bureau 01236 723 201
bureau@cumbernauldcab.casonline.org.uk

Rutherglen and Cambuslang Citizens Advice Bureau 0141 646 3191
bureau@rutherglencab.casonline.org.uk

Bellshill and District Citizens Advice Bureau 01698 748 615
manager@bellshillcab.casonline.org.uk

Motherwell and Wishaw Citizens Advice Bureau 01698 251 981
bureau2@motherwellcab.casonline.org.uk

East Kilbride Citizens Advice Bureau 01355 263 698
administration@eastkilbridecab.casonline.org.uk

Denny and Dunipace Citizens Advice Bureau 01324 823 118
bureau@dennycab.casonline.org.uk

Falkirk Citizens Advice Bureau 01324 626070
bureau@falkirkcab.casonline.org.uk

Grangemouth and Bo'ness Citizens Advice Bureau 01324 666 935
bureau@grangemouthcab.casonline.org.uk

The Voice of experience Forum 01236 439 550 info@voef.org.uk

Tannochside Advice Centre 01698 810 387 tiacadvicecentre@hotmail.co.uk

Foodbanks and Food Kitchens

Coatbridge 07434 406902 coatbridgecommunity@outlook.com

Airdrie 01236 793 423 www.airdrie.foodbank.org.uk

Falkirk 07809 340919 www.falkirk.foodbank.org.uk

Hamilton District 07884 451 512 info@hamiltondistrict.foodbank.org.uk

Coatbridge Helping Hands 01236 423 044

Women's Aid Organisations

North Lanarkshire 01236 730 992

Monklands Women's Aid 01236 432 061

South Lanarkshire Women's Aid 0808 2000 247

Falkirk and District Women's Aid 0800 027 1234

Housing and Furniture

Shelter Scotland 0808 800 4444 www.scotland.shelter.org.uk

Housing Options Scotland 0131 247 1400

Care and Repair Scotland 0141 221 9879

Saint Patrick's Furniture Project Shotts 01501 821187

Society of St Vincent de Paul 01236 424484

Recap - Cumbernauld 01236 728872

Hamilton Furniture Initiative 01698 820 608

I am recycled—Cumbernauld 01236 899 102

Carer's Organisations

North Lanarkshire Carers Together 01698 404 055 www.carerstogether.org

Lanarkshire Carers Centre 01698 428 090 www.prtlcc.org.uk

Central Carers Falkirk 01324 611 510

National Organisations

Scottish Welfare Fund 0303 1231 007

Tax Credits Helpline 0345 300 3900

Money Advice Service 0300 500 5000

Other Organisations

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul - 01236 424 484

Lanarkshire Muslim Welfare Society 01698 730 650

Credit Unions - Credit Unions are smaller-scale not-for-profit financial organisations that offer community saving and lending for the benefit of those in their local communities. As convenor of the cross party group on credit unions, It has been an immense pleasure to see the movement grow and flourish, with new offices opening, such as the Tay Walk office of the Cumbernauld Credit union pictured right



To find a credit union near you, visit www.findyourcreditunion.co.uk

If you are unable to use this search you can call the Scottish League of Credit Unions on 0141 774 5020

Debt - Organisations which will provide advice about managing finances, dealing with debt and help with budgeting.

Step Change 0800 138 1111 www.stepchange.org

National Debtline 0808 808 4000 www.nationaldebtline.org

North Lanarkshire Your Money 01698 403 170

North Lanarkshire Money Advice Centre 01698 274 690

Tackling Fuel Poverty - For help keeping your heating bills down the following organisations may be of assistance.

Home Energy Scotland 0808 808 2282

Gas - Help to Heat 0800 183 0025

Electricity - SP Energy Networks 0800 092 9290

Support for Asylum Seekers

Scottish Refugee Council 0141 248 9799

Positive Action in Housing 0141 353 2220

Older People's Services

Silver Line Scotland 0800 470 8090

Age Scotland www.agescotland.org.uk

Age UK 0800 169 656

Help and advice for one parent families - Gingerbread 0808 802 0925

Not all poverty is economic

The effects of years of cuts to social services and funding for communities mean that many people at some point in their lives find themselves suffering from isolation and loneliness, a common cause of depression and mental ill health. People in this situation often struggle to know who to turn to, so I have included here a list of organisations who can offer befriending and counselling services.

Counselling and Emotional Support

Samaritans 01698 429 411 (local call charges apply)

National telephone 116 123 (free to call)

jo@samaritans.org

Breathing space 0800 83 85 87

North Lanarkshire Helpline

Well Informed 0800 073 0918

Learning and Adult Education

The SAGE Centre 01236 426 916

Falkirk 01324 504 450

East Kilbride & Strathaven

01357 528 719

Hamilton, Blantyre, Bothwell, Uddingston

01698 452 154

North Lanarkshire 01236 812595



The majority of organisations listed in this toolkit rely partly or fully on the generosity of volunteers or public donations to provide their invaluable services, If you can help them in any way, they would be delighted to hear from you.

To find out more about volunteering with these or other organisations contact your local voluntary sector body:

Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire 01236 748 011 info@vanl.co.uk

Voluntary Action South Lanarkshire 01698 300 390 volunteer@vaslan.org.uk

CVS Falkirk and District 01324 692000 info@cvsfalkirk.org.uk

Local Democracy

As a member of the public petitions committee I work to ensure that the Government is kept well informed of people's views and opinions on the many issues they face. Some of the issues people contact me about are to do with planning applications. Communities have the right to challenge planning decisions which impact on their health and wellbeing.

In the Parliament I have asked the Scottish Government what criteria it's reporters use when considering whether to overturn planning applications that have been previously rejected by local authorities.

In the Parliament I have asked the Scottish Government what consideration its reporter gave to the reported over 540 objections to the proposal from the public to Clean Powers Properties' application to build an incinerator in Hamilton.



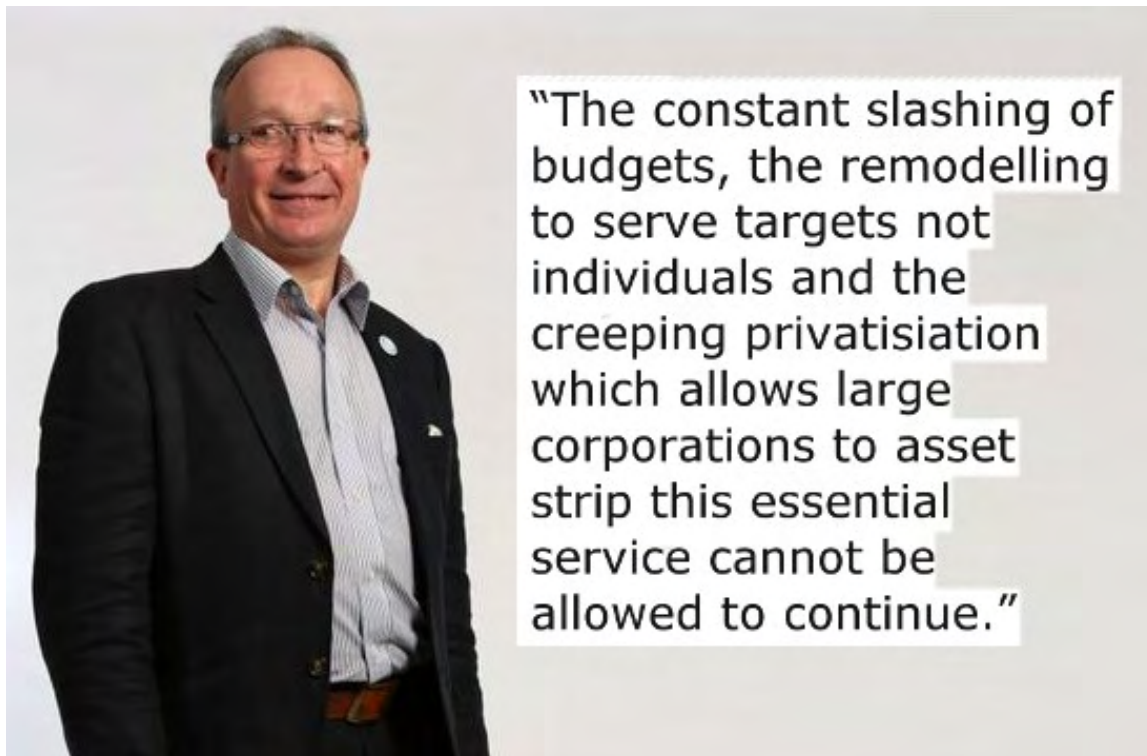
Over recent months I have supported the community in Bellshill in opposing a new rail freight terminal which will take away valuable local greenspace; supported the community in Caldercruix in opposing the opening of a Super Quarry on their doorsteps and questioned the government on the planning application for a new incinerator in Hamilton.

Protect our NHS

Our NHS service must be protected from privatisation and austerity cuts. From the emergency services to social care, hardworking staff are underfunded and unsupported due to budget cuts. The closure of out of hours centres, A&E waiting times, cuts to mental health services and the blurring of lines between free 'point of need' health care and social care which must be paid for are all issues which I have repeatedly taken up at the Parliament or directly with the Health Boards themselves.

NHS Lanarkshire has faced particular difficulties in managing to maintain service standards on its limited budget, I have asked the Scottish government on many occasions how it plans to help the struggling service and in particular how the crippling burden of public finance initiative (PFI) debt can be removed from NHS service budgets.

In the Parliament I have asked the Scottish Government how it will redress the reported imbalance between NHS boards in wealthier areas having consistently shorter waiting times than those in less wealthy areas.



Workers' Rights

As a long standing member of Unite, I will support workers and their representatives across Central Scotland as they stand against the appalling erosion of union rights, which Westminster intends to bring in with it's new Trade Union Bill.



"The Tory government seem determined to compound their hammering of Scotland's working class, with an assault on worker protections reminiscent of the Thatcher years."

I am a lifelong supporter of the rights of employees to have a safe working environment, earn a fair day's pay and have access to union representation. Worker protections are more important than ever when zero-hour contracts and low pay are leaving more children and young people living in poverty.



John demonstrating in support of CalMac workers outside the Parliament.

In the Parliament I have asked the Scottish Government what progress local authorities have made in settling equal pay claims.

The recent increase of the living wage in Scotland to £8.25 per hour is a massive step in the right direction and I very much look forwards to the day when everyone regardless of age is paid a living wage.

No to Special Relationships

The wheels of power have for too long been allowed to turn out of sight of public scrutiny, from council deals with arm's length external organisations to government dealings with large corporations I believe the public has the right to know what is being said behind the closed doors of the representatives who work for us.

I have campaigned for a register of lobbyists and believe that we must take a stand against the secretive international trade deals, such as TTIP, which aim to hand power to multinational corporations to allow them to override democratic decisions, worker protections and health regulations.



Community Projects

I would like to thank all the community projects, voluntary organisations and charities I have had the pleasure of visiting, meeting or learning about this session.

I am always overwhelmed by the dedication of the volunteers I meet during my MSP visits, I myself volunteer on Sundays to assist elderly residents in my local area, and have absolute respect for the time and effort volunteers give when donating their time to their communities.

Recently I have visited Sam and ME – Moodiesburn, Auchinloch Community Council, Drumpellier Allotments Society, St Andrew's Hospice, RSPB Baron's Haugh, Jupiter Urban Wildlife Centre, The SAGE Centre, The Gingerbread Café, MSUK, SAMS, The Alpha Project, Delivered Personally Next Day, Salvation Army New Future Employability Initiative, Froglife, Chryston Seniors Forum, Mornay and Nithsdale Tenants and Residents Association, Plains Community Council, Wishaw Credit Union and Cumbernauld Credit Union.



Changing Times, Opportunities and Challenges



When we measure living standards in terms of economic growth we take no account of health impacts or indeed how wealth generated is distributed. The consequences of smash and grab economic policy are written in our proud industrial heritage and the poverty left behind when industry moves on.

The current situation in Central Scotland is turbulent. New sustainable industries have emerged, creating jobs in tourism and renewables, we are beginning to see areas devastated by industry regenerated by investment. At the other end of the scale we have seen devastating job losses in traditional sectors. We must create sustainable jobs within our communities.



The natural resources which rightly belong to all of us should benefit our communities, It is fantastic to see renewable energy projects get underway in the area, and wonderful to see Central Scotland becoming a cleaner, safer and more sustainable place to live.



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

The costs of this publication have been met out of Scottish Parliamentary resources. Please note that the Scottish Parliament is not responsible for the content of other internet websites

John Wilson MSP (Central Scotland)

www.johnwilsonmsp.com

Parliamentary Office:

Room M3.18, Scottish Parliament

Edinburgh EH99 1SP

Tel: 0131 348 6684

john.wilson.msp@scottish.parliament.uk

Regional Office:

Unit 37, Coatbridge Business Centre

204 Main St, Coatbridge ML5 3RB

Tel: 01236 429 120