



Ayrshire Growth Deal

I was glad the UK Government have finally made a positive announcement on the £350m Ayrshire Growth Deal. However, a pledge to “open talks” is hardly earth shattering. Rest assured along with fellow Ayrshire MPs I will continue to push the UK Government on timescales and money. So far I have raised this with the UK Government a total of 18 times. Of course the work done by Willie Coffey MSP and his colleagues have already secured the support of the Scottish Government.

The Ayrshire Growth Deal will provide significant investment and employment opportunities for our area, and includes specific projects such as: proposals to develop the aerospace industry at Prestwick Airport; Investment at the Bellfield Interchange and A76; Development of the Moorfield industrial park in Kilmarnock; and the Halo Regeneration at the old Johnnie Walker site.

Constituency group visits during Easter break

Easter recess allows more to be done in the constituency. I was delighted to formally open ‘The Portland’ in Galston. The refurbishment of this is a fantastic outcome for a building that had become a derelict eyesore. Some of the disruption may have been painful but we now have a first floor occupied by local businesses, a community room with lots of community events planned and another retail unit available for lease. A real hub.

I visited the “Wednesday Waffle” in Onthank. This is a community run group which offers a hot meal to everyone attending, and many activities including trips out and cooking lessons.

I also attended the Town Centre Partnership Board Meeting to hear the work being undertaken with Celebrate Kilmarnock. I am really looking forward to further town centre events this year, for example Killie-ween and K-Fest. Additionally, ambitious plans are being formulated for community ownership and running of buildings with the aims of regeneration, events and the night time economy.



ICE Fellowship and Year of the Engineer

In February I was presented with a fellowship certificate of the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE). I was very honoured to receive this and I am proud to be part of a profession that contributes to transform people’s lives for the better.

Having graduated from Glasgow University with an Honours degree in Civil Engineering I worked in both the public and private sector for 21 years as a principal engineer before resigning to take up the position as MP for the Kilmarnock and Loudoun constituency.

My engineering career highlight was being a hydraulic engineer for the Ayr sewerage scheme which was designed to clean up the bathing beach. Doing work to improve my local area was really rewarding. As an aside it was being a member of the EU which made the UK stop discharging raw sewerage onto the bathing beach. I saw first-hand how the UK government didn’t want to comply but were forced to spend the money. Hopefully we don’t return to being the dirtiest man in Europe as far as clean beaches go.

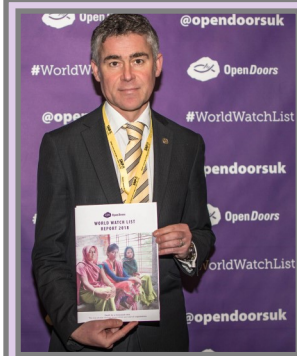
As current Westminster Co-Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Infrastructure I am also pleased to be able to continue to support the work of engineers and highlight the importance of infrastructure, engineering to the economy and society, and to hear from experts on emerging priorities.

Closer to home, it is my intention to support the work of Kilmarnock Engineering Science Society (KESS) in the constituency, especially as 2018 is the Year of Engineering. If any school or community group is interested in finding out more or wants to get involved then please contact my Constituency Office on 01563 501412.



Kilmarnock Academy Holocaust Memorial

It was a privilege to attend the Kilmarnock Academy Holocaust Memorial event on the 30 January 2018. As the Holocaust moves from living history, to just history, it becomes ever more important that we take the time to remember the victims and also pay tribute to the survivors. I would like to thank the pupils and staff for including me in such an important event to reflect on the tragic events of the Holocaust, and to Henry and Ingrid Wuga for sharing their personal stories with us.



Open Doors UK

I attended the launch of the Open Doors UK, World Watch List 2018 report during January to hear first hand about worldwide suppression and persecution of Christians. Tolerance and freedom of belief for all would be a good start to make the world a better place.

You can find out more about Open Doors UK, their World Watch List 2018 and the work they do via their website. <https://www.opendoorsuk.org/>

British Heart Foundation

I popped into the British Heart Foundation - Scotland (BHF) shop in Titchfield Street, Kilmarnock to meet the staff and volunteers who help turn donations into funds for life-saving cardiovascular research. Many thanks to manager Matthew for the invitation and his time for showing me around.

It was great to meet the dedicated members of staff and volunteers who work there. The shop is well stocked with a great variety of goods both donated and brand new items - all good quality and well presented in the spacious shop.

I'd encourage locals to have a root around at home and donate any unwanted items to the local shop or give the gift of time by volunteering.



Matthew and his team are ready to welcome anyone who is interested in volunteering - and this can sometimes be a great first step into employment. During the visit I was introduced to the warehouse manager Dean who started out as a volunteer and I met Julie who was enjoying her work placement in the shop. It was very interesting to learn about the BHF work that goes into generating vital donations, sorting and displaying stock and making sales that all contribute to funding the £70m worth of life saving cardiovascular research in Scotland.

Further information available from: telephone 01563 481240; email K14@bhf.org.uk; web site: www.bhf.org.uk



Back in January it was a very scenic outlook as I arrived for my first Burns event at the Mauchline Burns Club memorial to the bard. Thankfully I was warmed up afterwards with fine entertainment at the memorial cottages.

I was also delighted to be invited to an alternative Burns Supper event where a specially written play by Stuart Lyon was performed in aid of Ayrshire Cancer Support. Stuart's play was about Robbie Burns and his cronies in the pub, lots of banter and singing, it was really good and very funny, the best alternative Burns Supper I've ever been to and I've been to a lot! On a serious note £3,800 was raised on the evening for Ayrshire Cancer Support.

Ayrshire Cancer Support are constantly raising funds for the local services they provide, for example this year they are taking part in the Kiltwalk, and have fundraising packs for their Cocktails, Mocktails and Tiara. Full details on their website: www.ayrshirecs.org



Curling Stones fae Mauchline at the Winter Olympic Games

If you got the chance to watch any of the Curling matches at this year's winter Olympic Games in PyeongChang, then you might be interested to learn that all of the competition stones are manufactured by Kays Curling in Mauchline.

Kays Curling have provided the competition stones to the Winter Olympic Games since 1998. So congratulations! to Kays on their 20th anniversary of being the sole supplier of Ailsa Craig granite stones manufactured here in Mauchline, Ayrshire and used by all the competitors from around the world.

VOTE 100: ANNIVERSARY OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

Vote 100 is a year-long programme of events organised by the UK Parliament to mark 100 years since the 1918 Representation of the People Act, which gave all men and some women the vote for the first time.

The Representation of the People Act 1918 was a vital step towards the rights women have today, and the centenary of the Act is an incredibly important opportunity for us to reflect on how far we have come, thanks to the extreme bravery and sacrifice of the women who fought – and in some cases died – for equality.

Whether it's chatting about the issues over a cup of tea (www.equaliteas.org.uk) or engaging with one of the many exciting events as part of this year's [UK Parliament Week 2018](#). There are several opportunities for schools and community groups to get involved in this key anniversary.



Campaign to ban electronic shock dog collars



I pledged my support to the Dogs Trust campaign calling for a ban on the use and sale of electronic shock collars.

Dogs Trust, the UK's largest dog welfare charity has launched its [#ShockingLegal](#) campaign to help urge the UK Government to ban the sale of electronic shock collars.

While the Scottish and Welsh governments have already banned the use of such devices the power to ban the sale in the UK lies with Westminster.

These aversive training methods are outdated and cruel, and there is no need for them to be used when there are so many positive training methods available. This is a hugely important issue for dog welfare and I hope my support will help make a difference.

10 Minute Rule Motion - Multi-Employer Pensions

Recently I presented a 10 Minute Rule Motion to make provision about **Multi-employer Pension Schemes**, including provision for the protection of unincorporated businesses, such as plumbing businesses, from certain multi-employer pension scheme liabilities.

The background to this was the revelation that the multi-employer scheme operated for plumbers in Scotland and Northern Ireland, (SNIPEF) is having to advise some members that they owe hundreds of thousands of pounds and even over £1m due to the perceived debt or black hole in their pension fund.

However, this is as much to do with changes in legislation to the 1995 Pension Act and how the debt is calculated. And the debt includes "orphan debt" – debts assigned to members who left the scheme prior to the last legislation change in 2005.

As it stands several employers/individuals face financial ruin despite having responsibly tried to look after employees, and many live in fear of financial ruin and cannot change ownership or pass the business on for fear of triggering the debt.

I believe changes to the legislation are required before matters get worse across the country.

What is a 10 Minute Rule Motion?

Ten minute rule motions provide an opportunity for MPs to make a short speech on the floor of the House outlining a legislative proposal.

The speech by the Member who has given notice of a motion formally seeks the leave of the House to bring in a Bill.

The motion may be opposed by another MP, who may also make a ten minute speech and seek to divide the House on the motion.

If the motion for leave is agreed to, the MP moving the motion formally presents the bill immediately after the question is agreed to. The MP may then arrange for the bill to be published.

Kilmarnock Engineering and Science Society (KESS)

The annual KESS Science Fair for Willowbank School was held on 12th March. Earlier this year I had met KESS members to learn about their regular programme of lectures for adults which are held in the Ayrshire College Kilmarnock campus (full details on their website: www.KES2012.org).

So it was great to catch up with KESS members again at the Willowbank Science Fair to see first hand some of the activities that they had organised for the children at the school.



Ayrshire Business Woman of the Year

Congratulations! to Mhari-Clare Green of Flutterby Newborn Photography on winning the 2018 Ayrshire Business Woman of the Year Award.

It is wonderful to meet such successful, inspiring and entrepreneurial women as Mhari-Clare.

Well done also to all the members of Ayrshire Business Women for all the help, support, and encouragement they deliver to professional business women throughout Ayrshire.



Pretty Lilac Baby Shop

I also had the pleasure recently of visiting another Ayrshire business woman—Vicki Begg. Thank you to Vicki for inviting me along to see round her new Pretty Lilac baby shop at 19 Portland Street in Kilmarnock. I was very impressed with Vikki's plans to offer a breastfeeding welcome venue, and her obvious talents for hand-made baby clothes and accessories.

Wishing both Mhari-Clare and Vicki every future success in with their business ventures.



Home Energy Lifestyle Management Systems Limited (HELMS) Mis-selling under the Green Deal

Between 2013 and 2015, a government approved assessor and installer for energy measures in homes under the Green Deal. These measures included solar panels, new boilers and external wall insulation all whilst telling many of the householders that it would be free to them. However, as time passed, the house owners with HELMS fitted measures discovered they were paying extra on their electricity bills that they didn't expect and over the years, many people have come forward to say they feel they were scammed by HELMS.

As a result of the activities within Ayrshire, I hosted a public meeting back in January where 40 people attending had the opportunity to hear from the advice panel about how they would take these issues forward. It was also an opportunity for members of the public to share their story and the complexity of their individual circumstances relating to Green Deal.

Since the meeting I have also been raising questions to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy regarding redress for those individuals who have been affected and will continue to pursue the matter in the coming months. At Westminster I am also working with my colleagues on the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) set up to deal with this subject and I will be suggesting we invite the Minister along so she can hear the harrowing stories we have heard. I have submitted a number of written questions and will continue to do so as well to probe the UK Government and try and force action.

In the meantime, anyone who suspects they have been mis-sold the Green Deal should make contact with their local Citizens Advice Bureau and ask to speak to the CAB Energy Adviser.

Mentoring for Future Politicians

Down at Westminster I have had the opportunity to mentor an intern from the London School of Economics. Frederik Mey from Germany is over here studying MSc in Environmental Policy and Regulation and has been shadowing me in my role as SNP Spokesperson for Transport, Infrastructure and Energy. However, rather than me explain what this experience means to Frederik, I thought you'd prefer to hear what he has to say:

"Working with Alan has given me great insights into Parliament - not only because he gave me a tour on my first day and took me to debates later, but also because I got to support him on his energy policy work. I wish I could have stayed longer!"

While back in my constituency office, two local lads: Cailean Tait from Kilmarnock and Cameron Raeside from Crosshouse both had the initiative to contact me direct to ask about the possibility of volunteering in the office. Both with a keen interest in politics Cailean is studying BA Social Science at Glasgow Caledonian University, while Cameron is Head Boy at Grange Academy. Cameron is also the Chair of East Ayrshire Young Persons' Cabinet and has the portfolio for Community Safety.

Hopefully, all three will find the work experience of value and it will stand them in good stead for their future careers.



Cailean Tait from Kilmarnock



Frederik Mey from Germany



The Great Energy Storage Debate

I took part in The Great Energy Storage Debate on 06 February as SNP spokesperson for Transport, Infrastructure and Energy. This was a session with politicians from all parties joined by representatives from industry to answer questions about the future of energy security in the UK. What are the emerging threats? How does industry need to adapt to cyber security threats? Does it matter if Britain builds batteries? How will batteries contribute to our industrial plan and economic future? How can we ensure technologies push forward decentralised energy and remain environmentally sustainable?

There was a real consensus that electricity storage co-located with renewable energy generation is a must for future energy. I highlighted again the ridiculous position that onshore wind generation is now the cheapest form of electricity generation, but yet the Tory UK Government do not allow new windfarms to bid for the electricity contracts. It is crazy. Aligned with their policy of new nuclear power stations they are actually causing our future electricity bills to go up.

One perk of attending the conference is that I shared the platform with Robert Llewellyn who as an actor was best known as Kryten in the hit TV show Red Dwarf and now as a presenter of the TV engineering gameshow Scrapheap Challenge. It is fair to say he stole the show in terms of comedy lines as well as real knowledge of the subject.

Celebrate Kilmarnock



I was delighted to attend the April board meeting of the Kilmarnock Town Centre Partnership to hear about the work being undertaken with Celebrate Kilmarnock. Last year I was lucky enough to be able to attend both the inaugural K-Fest and the spectacular Killieween experience. So I am already looking forward to this year's K-Fest on Friday 27th through to Sunday 29th July, and Killieween on Friday 26th October.

However, at the board meeting I was also informed of Celebrate Kilmarnock's recent distribution of £30,000 to support other groups and individuals with ideas and plans to help improve the town centre.

It was also really inspiring to learn of Celebrate Kilmarnock's ambition towards community ownership and running of buildings with the aims of helping deliver a community-led solution for Kilmarnock town centre.

"Wednesday Waffle" Community Drop-In



I visited the "Wednesday Waffle" Community Drop-in at the Onthank Community Centre.

This is a community run group which offers a hot meal to everyone attending, and many activities including trips out, bingo, quizzes etc. The group have recently branched out into doing cooking lessons on a Thursday, and teaching how to cook healthy meals on a budget.

Members were pleased to share with me their recent success at about being awarded funds from a participatory budgeting event.

The Drop-In is open every Wednesday from 1-3 pm in the Onthank Community Centre. For more information contact 07551 570376.



Formal opening of The Portland in Galston

As a Galston resident it was more than a privilege to be asked along to formally open 'The Portland' on Saturday 31 March 2018. It was great to finally see this former derelict building refurbished and transformed into a valuable resource for the local community. The hard work by all involved with this project was clear for all to see.

Well done to all the trustees, volunteers and workers who organised such a successful and enjoyable Open Day to welcome the local residents – it was great to feel the buzz around the building and see it full of people.

The building has already rented out all of the business space to local businesses and will be providing a wide range of activities for the local community. You can find out more about all the upcoming events via their newly launched website: <https://www.theportland.org.uk/>

Get in Touch

Depending on your query another office may be best placed to help however I will help if I can or signpost you to the office that will get the best result for you.

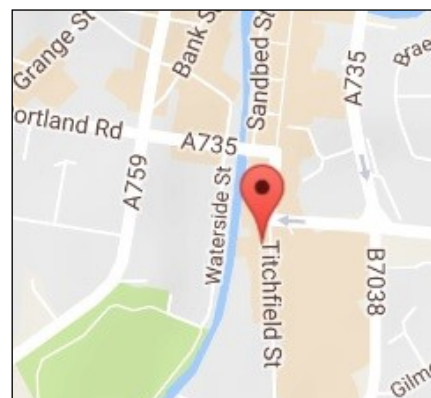
Local Issues: [East Ayrshire Council](#)

Devolved Issues: [Holyrood, Willie Coffey MSP](#)

Reserved Issues: [Westminster, Alan Brown MP](#)

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If you have an issue you want to raise and cannot attend a surgery, or if you need immediate help please get in touch with me or my office by email at alan.brown.mp@parliament.uk

