

Alan Brown MP for Kilmarnock and Loudoun



SEPTEMBER 2016 - NEWSLETTER #1

Welcome to the first edition of my newsletter, it has been just over a year since the Constituency office opened in Kilmarnock and rather a lot has happened in my first year as MP for Kilmarnock and Loudoun.

I hope you find this first newsletter interesting and informative. I have tried to keep fairness, common sense and public scrutiny at the heart of my decision making whenever questioning the Government, making a contribution to debate or casting my vote in Parliament.

Austerity in the UK

Austerity is a Tory ideological move which attacks the most vulnerable in our society. The Government's call for 'living within our means' is disguised as balancing the books, but the books could be balanced if the Tories did not introduce so many tax cuts and giveaways at the same time.

I have identified £20bn of tax cuts in the form of reductions in corporation tax, inheritance tax and capital gains tax. Additionally there is a further £12bn giveaway under their new Right to Buy legislation. This means a total of £32bn of reduced income or giveaway that is totally needless.

It should not be forgotten that this austerity drive has cut the budget allocated to the Scottish Government by around 10% and will continue to do so in future.

The Scottish Government and East Ayrshire Council have done an amazing job at balancing the books at the same time as mitigating the cuts however these cuts are passed on by Westminster knowing that there will be less money to allocate to public services and local councils. No matter how skilful the Scottish Government and local council are, the continued cuts threaten support and services for the most vulnerable.

EU Hokey Cokey

The referendum vote to leave the EU has shaken up politics, the economy, and has left an uncertain future for many. With the overall UK vote being to leave the EU we are in the ridiculous position that even though every council area in Scotland returned a remain vote we may be forced to leave the EU.

There has been an unacceptable lack of leadership from the Westminster Government following the result and it became quickly apparent that there was no plan for what would happen after a leave result.

This has left many worried about what that means for them and their families and how it will affect their jobs, businesses and residency in Scotland.

My SNP colleagues and I felt that it was important to reassure those EU nationals living in our respective constituencies. Shortly after the result I organised a letter to be sent to all registered EU nationals in Kilmarnock and Loudoun making clear that they continue to be welcomed and valued in Scotland.

Given the clear choice of the people of Scotland we will look at every option to protect our place in the EU and the benefits that brings.



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Roon the Toon for GAIN

I decided to help fundraise for GAIN after meeting Kieran and Jack recently, two inspiring boys who are determined to raise awareness about Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS) and other similar debilitating conditions.

Kieran was severely affected by the condition when he was younger, thankfully now you wouldn't be able to tell how ill he had been however he still requires some support. Kieran's cousin Jack decided he would help by fundraising for others affected by GBS. With some great examples in Kieran and Jack I decided to do my part for GAIN.



It was the first ever Roon the Toon 10K in Kilmarnock on Sunday 12th June and I took part along with around 1400 other runners. My wife Cyndi and my office colleagues came to cheer me on and with their help I managed to complete the 10k road race in a respectable 51 mins and 42 seconds and raised almost £200 for GAIN.

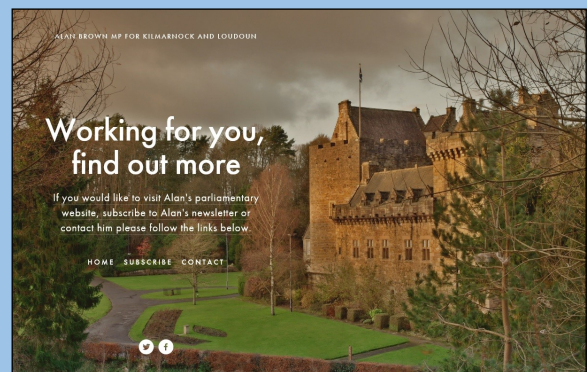
Saying 'Thank you' on Volunteers Week



I was honoured to meet Natasha Kerr from Catrine during Volunteers Week in June and to thank her for her amazing contribution to volunteering in Kilmarnock and

Loudoun. Natasha has overcome some difficult personal challenges to get to where she is but she has shown an aptitude and amazing dedication to coaching children and young people. Last year she devoted over 800 hours to coaching with the Catrine Youth Club, Kilmarnock Harriers and East Ayrshire Vibrant Communities through her Ayrshire College course. Thanks again Natasha!

If you are interested in finding out more information about me, the local constituency or how I represent you in Parliament and locally please visit my website for up to date details <http://www.alanbrownmp.scot/>



You can contact me through my constituency office, website or email me directly. I also have regular surgeries throughout the constituency.

Talking Buses - Audiovisual (AV) Information

On the 8th June I asked the Prime Minister to look at including an amendment to the Bus Services Bill currently being considered by Parliament. I proposed that buses and trains should be required to provide audio visual information by law and that this would benefit not just those who are blind or deaf but general users as well. After the question was raised at Prime Ministers Questions I was invited by RNIB Connect Radio to discuss the issue of AV as an accessibility requirement on all new buses. You can listen to the interview with RNIB Connect and the GDBA in the [current issues](#) section of my website.



In association with Guide Dogs for the Blind Association (GDBA) I have also undertaken a walk through Kilmarnock town centre. Wearing goggles that simulated visual impairment, I used a cane for guidance, then a guide dog to help me navigate the short distance from my constituency office to the bus station. The daunting challenge of taking a bus while blindfolded confirmed to me that 'talking buses' are a necessity and that, as we already have in trains, AV information should be a requirement in buses.

Local Broadband Delivery

One of the hot topics for local constituents and businesses alike over the last year is access to high speed and reliable broadband.

This issue has been highlighted in the media recently with the changes to the industry being announced by OFCOM, the communications regulator in the UK, to improve competition and investment.

In order to facilitate discussion and debate on this important issue I have organised a public meeting on Broadband delivery in Kilmarnock and Loudoun.

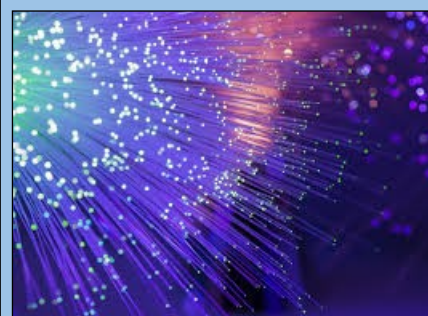
If you would like to attend the public meeting you can register for a free ticket online. We have some knowledgeable speakers confirmed and we expect a lot of interest so to be guaranteed a place please visit the Eventbrite page - <http://ea-superfast.eventbrite.co.uk>

Mark Dames - BT Regions Head of Policy

Duncan Nisbet - Senior Stakeholder Manager, Digital Scotland

Michael Keane - Head of Planning and Economic Development, EAC

Hisashi Kuboyama - Development Manager, FSB



Public Meeting @ 7pm

Tuesday 27th September

Park Suite, Rugby Park

Kilmarnock

Westminster Contributions

Spoken Contributions 222

Written Questions 145

Early Day Motions 18

Well above average for Spoken and Written Contributions

Nuclear Weapons - Trident renewal

My SNP colleagues and I are unanimously against the renewal of the Trident weapons system. Even the former Defence Secretary and MP for



Kilmarnock and Loudoun, Des Brown acknowledges they are no longer fit for purpose.

The indiscriminate death and destruction caused by only one nuclear warhead would constitute crimes against humanity. Using these weapons of mass destruction is not only morally reprehensible but they are completely useless against recognised modern day Tier 1 threats as identified in the 2015 Strategic Defence Spending Review by the UK Government.

Looking at modern technology there is the very strong possibility that the new Trident submarines could be redundant before they are even completed. It has been suggested that underwater drones could be used to detect submarines thereby taking away the main advantage of having an at sea deterrent.

You can search on my webpage using the key word '[Trident](#)' to find my contributions to the debate so far.

Surgery Schedule

1st Friday of the month

10.00-10.30am Darvel Town Hall

11.00-11.30am Newmilns Morton Hall

12.00-12.30pm Galston Community Centre

1.00-2.00pm Kilmarnock Constituency Office

2nd Friday of the month

12.00-12.30pm Mauchline Community Centre

12.45-1.15pm Auchinleck Boswell Centre

1.45-2.15pm Muirkirk BB Hall

3.00-4.00pm Kilmarnock Constituency Office

3rd Friday of the month

12.00-1.00pm Kilmarnock Constituency Office

2.00-2.30pm Crosshouse Area Centre

3.00-3.30pm Kilmaurs Community Centre

4.00-4.30pm Stewarton Sports Centre

4th Friday of the month

Appointments are available, please contact the Constituency Office to arrange a suitable time.

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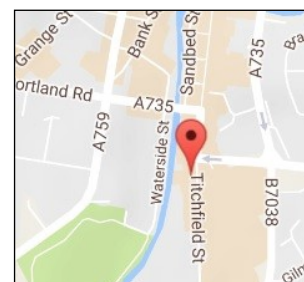
Opening hours

Mon to Thurs: 9am-5pm

Friday: 9am-4pm

Saturday: Closed

Sunday: Closed



Supporting Women Against State Pension Inequality

I am very proud to be a founding member and vice chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on State Pension Inequality. The group was formed after the Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI), campaign brought to light the unfairness caused by the 2011 Pensions Act.

In Kilmarnock and Loudoun, around 4520 women are directly affected by the 2011 Pensions Act. If you are not aware the Act has accelerated the equalisation to the pension age for women bringing it in line with the pension age for men.



That in itself is not the issue! The difficulty for those affected is that they were not sufficiently informed of the changes by the respective governments and therefore were unable to plan financially. This has left many women born on or after 6th April 1951 disadvantaged due to this mismanagement.



The WASPI women accept that equalisation of the State Pension age is correct but are campaigning to achieve fair transitional arrangements for women born in the 1950s.

You can find out more about the [WASPI campaign](#) on their webpage and find my contributions to debate in Westminster in the [current issues](#) section of my website.

Motability and Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessments

I am increasingly interested in the changes to the welfare system being brought through by the DWP and how those changes are affecting people on DLA or PIP in regard to mobility. The Motability Scheme is available to those who have been awarded the higher rate of DLA or PIP and means that people can lease a suitable adapted vehicle, powered wheelchair or mobility scooter, in return for their weekly award.

This is particularly important for enabling disabled people to live an independent life and to help manage their condition. It allows users to participate in social activities and do the things that many of us take for granted, such as being able to continue to care for their children or to get to their job.



The changes have caused concern as DLA and PIP are assessed differently; it is not guaranteed that the same level of claim will be awarded and in fact some 14,000 people have already lost the higher PIP mobility rate and, therefore, their car as well. This issue has been highlighted in the press recently by Paralympian Ben Rowlands who explained that some of his team mates in Rio have had mobility vehicles stripped from them. Assessments ruled them "too able" and they were then put in a position where they had to fight the decision. He himself fears that it would be the end of his career if he no longer had access to his mobility vehicle.

I brought a motion before the House and led a Westminster Hall debate on the Motability car scheme on 23rd February, which meant a Government minister had to respond to the points I raised during the debate. I had to intervene on the Minister at one point who actually gave incorrect information about the new assessment process. We heard many different accounts of constituents affected by the changes to the scheme. It was clear from the examples given that the system is failing people, some who clearly require the higher rate of PIP being refused almost arbitrarily. You can read more on this issue in the [current issues](#) section of my website.

If you have been affected by this issue and feel that you have been unfairly treated please get in contact with my constituency office on 01563 501412 or email me at alan.brown.mp@parliament.uk.



Key for Photos

Top Row: Killie Can Cycle, Ayrshire Credit Union, Supporting Animal Aid - CCTV in Slaughterhouses

2nd Row: Domestic Abuse debate, FSB Resilient Communities, RNIB Town Centre walk, Heart Valve Voice Awareness

3rd Row: Volunteer Week - Natasha Kerr, EU campaigning with Coby, CND Stop Trident, Meeting with WASPI campaigners

4th Row: Aye Welcome Refugees, Visit to Stewarton Academy, IC Change - Istanbul Convention

5th Row: Holocaust Educational Trust, Midnight League, Roon the Toon 10K, Association of Ayrshire Business Women