

HOLYROOD BRIEFING – MARCH 2009

LET GLASGOW FLOURISH

Many of you will be aware of the campaign being run by the Evening Times on a better financial deal for Glasgow.

All of the city's MSPs were asked for their opinion on this matter.

In my response, I said that I thought there should be more recognition of the value of Glasgow's treasures to Scotland's cultural heritage and to our tourism industry.

I also said that the formula for funding the repair of roads needs to consider more than mileage but should also take into account the extent to which the roads are used.

There should be an examination of the possibility of Glasgow receiving a greater share of business rates than it does at present and there should be recognition of the key role that the city plays in the life of Scotland generally.

With my colleagues I will continue to press these points upon the Scottish Government.

SCOTSWOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARDS

I recently had the pleasure of attending the ceremony for the Evening Times Scotswoman of the Year Awards.

Joint winners of the title were Jean Donnachie and Noreen Real for the sterling work they have done in defending the rights of asylum seekers. Mary Miller from Castlemilk was recognised as International Scotswoman of the Year for her work with local communities in Zimbabwe, especially those facing HIV and AIDS.

I was particularly pleased to see Aileen McGlynn from Cardonald being awarded the title of Scots Sportswoman of the Year in recognition of winning 2 cycling gold medals at the Paralympics in Beijing.

I have submitted 3 motions to the Scottish Parliament saluting their achievements and their awards and these motions have received strong support from politicians of all political parties.

SOUTHERN GENERAL HOSPITAL

I was deeply concerned to read about John Mulligan from Pollok who spent 12 hours waiting at the Southern General Hospital for an ambulance to take him home and had nothing to eat during that time. Mr Mulligan is 86 years old and has Alzheimer's.

Cathy Jamieson MSP, shadow health spokesperson, raised this issue with Nicola Sturgeon, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, asking for an urgent meeting. Cathy Jamieson said that the health trade union, UNISON,

had raised concerns that the hospital, which is to be replaced by a new super-hospital, was being neglected.

I strongly support her demand that NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde ensures that funding be made available to ensure that patients at the Southern General are not put at risk during this transitional period.

KINSHIP CARERS

Support for family members - very often grandparents - who look after children when their own parents are unable or unwilling to do so is an issue I have been pursuing.

Many find themselves offering full time support for these children out of love and compassion and would have it no other way. All too often they receive no financial help.

I am pleased that Glasgow City Council is seeking to address the needs of kinship carers. I am pressing the Scottish Government to ensure that the City Council receives enough funding to make this happen.

GAELIC DEBATE

I participated in a recent debate in the Parliament on plans for a Gaelic language strategy - sadly not in Gaelic.

I am proud of the importance that Glasgow City Council has placed on supporting the language of my forebears - particularly through Gaelic education.

I am always keen to ensure that Gaelic culture and language take their place within the rich diversity of experiences that make up our modern Scotland.

JOHANN LAMONT SPEAKS OUT

It seems that it has been a long time coming but the Disabled Persons' Parking Places (Scotland) Bill has now passed into law.

I was very proud to play a small part in arguing for this legislative change which seeks to ensure that disabled parking spaces are kept free for those who need them.

The legislation seeks to enforce the rights of disabled people and challenge the lack of courtesy and selfishness of those who use a disabled parking bay simply for their own convenience.

Disabled people can face huge disadvantages in their lives - from access to employment to simple things like access to shops and transport. This is only a small step towards a far greater aspiration to ensure that we all - regardless of disability - are able to reach our potential and play a full part in our communities and broader society.

COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

No doubt many readers will be aware of the Evening Times excellent Community Champions awards.

The next area to be targeted is Govan/Craigton with the awards taking place this month (deadline for nominations is 12th March 2009) and Greater Pollok will follow in August.

If you live in these areas and think that someone is deserving of an award, you can nominate them via the Evening Times website at: **www.eveningtimes.co.uk** or by contacting my office and requesting a nomination form.

SURGERIES

Friday 13th March – 2.00pm – The Wedge, 1066 Barrhead Road, Pollok

Saturday 21st March – 10.00am – Labour Rooms, 996 Mossspark Drive, Cardonald

Friday 27th March – 2.00pm – Labour Rooms, 996 Mossspark Drive, Cardonald

Saturday 28th March – 10.00am – Pollok Civic Realm, 27 Cowglen Road, Pollok