

Johann Lamont – MSP for Glasgow Pollok

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Welcome to Obama

Throughout the world there has been huge support for the election of Barack Obama as President of the United States.

In voting for Obama, the people of America have sought to put behind them the racial tensions which have often scarred the history of that country.

Obama's election spells a victory for a more progressive and fair America with a positive relationship with other countries. Through his election to the position of the most powerful man in the world, America has sent a message of hope to us all.

The cost of Local Income Tax

Recently I had the opportunity of asking Alex Salmond at First Minister's Questions what success he had in his discussions with the management of Lloyds TSB on the impact of the proposed merger with HBOS in terms of jobs and decisions being made in Scotland.

I asked whether they had discussed proposals to introduce a local income tax to replace the council tax. My concern, which is shared by representatives of business and the trade unions, is that the proposed tax will discourage job creation in Scotland by making Scotland the highest taxed part of the United Kingdom.

Unfortunately, Mr Salmond did not say whether the local income tax had been discussed nor whether he would commission research into its cost to the Scottish economy, all of which does nothing to lighten the concerns shared by so many people.

2008 Christmas Card Competition

My annual Christmas card competition has come up with another cracker!

The competition, open to all Primary 7 pupils in the constituency, was won by Bobbi Pollock from Hillington Primary School.

Second Prize was won by Davina Panesar from St Angela's Primary and Third Prize was won by Michael Lyons from Howford School.

Many thanks to all who took part! The brilliant designs sent in show just how talented children across the constituency are.

Community Councils

There are a number of Community Councils throughout the constituency which meet regularly and do very useful work through involving local people in seeking to improve the areas in which they live.

They have brought pressure to bear to clamp down on anti-social behaviour and to improve the local environment in a variety of ways.

Community Councils also do valuable work in getting people more interested in having pride in where they live.

If you are interested in finding out more about your local Community Council and how to get involved, you can telephone 0141 287 4723.

Seniors' Forum visits Parliament

I was delighted to welcome recently a visit to the Scottish Parliament from Cardonald and District Seniors' Forum.

After sitting in on First Minister's Questions, they had lunch and a chat with myself and Trish Godman, Deputy Presiding Officer, before being given a tour of the Parliament building.

I am always pleased to have groups of constituents visit the Parliament and learn more about the ways in which it affects their lives.

Johann Lamont Speaks Out

As we head for our Christmas festivities, there is an air of uncertainty and anxiety mixing with the anticipation of celebration and gift-giving.

These are unprecedented economic times: banks bailed out, businesses faltering and recession looming. The Labour Government has acted decisively to support economic activity and employment. It is essential that government strategy focuses not just on stabilising the banks but supporting communities and families who are worried about their mortgages, their jobs and the quality of services like health and education.

Government at every level - UK, Scottish and local - must work to ensure every £1 of public money makes our lives more secure.

In tough times, I know many across this constituency take time to think about those who are lonely, vulnerable and at risk.

Shelter, the housing charity, asked MSPs to choose what song reminds them of home. I chose Sailing Home, the tune that is played before the Shipping Forecast on Radio 4, as it takes me back to my childhood home in Anderston, listening to the weather forecast for Tiree - the place which my parents thought of as their real home. Which tune would you choose?

It is sad to think that some still have no such happy memory of home - and we need to continue to tackle homelessness. I am happy to support Shelter in keeping this issue in the public's mind.

Another visit to a local primary school last week - this time to St Monica's – where, along with MSPs from other political parties, I took part in a Primary 7 Question Time. The children could teach us a thing or two about asking tough questions - polite, thoughtful and determined.

I had a great time - and again was reminded just how many young people across the constituency are a credit to themselves, their teachers and their families.

Finally, another year doing the job I love - doing my best to represent you - has passed. Thank you for making it challenging, fascinating and a continued privilege.