



HOLYROOD UPDATE

From Wendy Alexander MSP

Your constituency MSP for Paisley North



May 2009

Good news for Linwood

Sanctuary Housing are on schedule to complete phase 1 of their new house building between Brediland and Erskinefaulds Roads in Linwood. However I did receive some complaints from locals regarding excessive noise and mess. Sanctuary has now promised me to try to minimise this wherever possible.

In **Moss Avenue** intensive long time lobbying by neighbouring residents angered at the unacceptable condition of a local garden at last paid off. The owner had repeatedly ignored appeals to clear up his derelict land. Last week the Planning Department enforced a clear up. Subsequently the Council will pursue the owner for the associated costs incurred.

Tesco have again assured me they are on track to get on site by the autumn to begin demolition and rebuilding. The new shopping centre is to have three pieces of public art. Public art is often controversial, so I am supporting the plans to hold design workshops involving local people. One request to me has been for a new memorial for soldiers lost in conflict – that sounds a worthy idea. A local artist has also offered her services.

News too on the Police in Linwood – see over.

RENFREWSHIRE EDUCATION SHORT CHANGED

Some of you will be aware of the latest figures regarding Renfrewshire education. The cuts in teacher numbers continue. The budget will be cut in real terms this year and for the first time ever Renfrewshire now has the worst ratio of pupils to teacher numbers in Scottish secondaries. Below is a summary of key concerns.

A key consequence of this underfunding has been to hit teacher numbers and class sizes.

- **Renfrewshire had 122 fewer teachers last year (07-08).** Over the last year Renfrewshire has lost at least 2 teachers every week. And Renfrewshire is now in the top 3 authorities in both total teacher losses and in the percentage of teachers axed across Scotland.
- **Renfrewshire now has the worst pupil teacher ratios in all Scottish secondaries**
- **All progress on teacher numbers made by the last administration (03-07) in raising teacher numbers has been wiped out** – 74 extra posts were created between 2003 and 2007 but now 83 have already been wiped out.
- **At least 28 more teachers will be lost** this year and many nursery teachers forced to redeploy to primary schools or go.

Sadly Renfrewshire's school report is looking like a fail.

- Teacher numbers - failed
- Music Tuition failed - failed
- Class sizes of 18 - failed
- PE in schools failed - failed
- Nursery teachers - failed

The Scottish Government want local councils to use falling rolls to cut class sizes. But this is not happening in Renfrewshire. Instead teachers are being cut faster than rolls are falling

Father Patten, St Mirin's Cathedral visits Holyrood

I was delighted to welcome Father Eoin Patten from St. Mirin's Cathedral to the Parliament recently. Father Patten led the Chamber in 'Time for Reflection' and I was pleased to have the opportunity to spend some time with him beforehand.

More in this month's News ...

Police numbers and beating crime

There is both good and bad news when it comes to the struggle for safer streets. First the good news.

I had a very encouraging meeting with the Police Divisional Commander Paul Main in Mill St to talk about local policing in Renfrewshire. I was encouraged by his plans to roll out more community police officers.

My top priorities are to see speedy progress on the building of the planned new police offices for both Renfrew and Linwood.

More police on the beat make a difference. The last Scottish Government increased police numbers by 1500. It is encouraging to see local police chiefs increasingly ensuring these extra officers are actually out on the streets.

Over recent years I have been consistently impressed by the quality of our local community police officers. It is often a demanding job that falls on young shoulders. So it is vital young Police Officers get the high-quality training they deserve. It is therefore very disappointing that refresher courses for Police recruits that have been qualified for a year have been scrapped and no extra funding has been provided for the Police Training College at Tulliallan.



Maintaining Modern Apprenticeships

At Holyrood we are calling on the Scottish Government to deliver on the guarantee that any apprentice made redundant will be able to complete their training.

At Scottish Budget time Scottish Labour forced a reluctant Scottish Government to create 8,000 new apprenticeships.

The latest figures from Skills Development Scotland show that over 800 apprentices have been made redundant and less than a third of them had found a new training place. More than half were still searching. If these training places are to make a difference for ordinary Scots they must be nationally recognised qualifications that help people stay in work or retrain for a new job.

The unfortunate reality is that over the past two years training places cuts have been so extensive that Scotland has fallen behind the rest of Britain.

Figures from Skills Development Scotland for Modern Apprentices (23 March 09):

- (a) 833 trainees made redundant;
- (b) 261 found alternative employment or training;
- (c) 439 still looking for alternative options;
- (d) 133 have left the MA programme.

It has also just been announced that one-in-eight teacher training places are to be cut meaning 500 fewer teachers graduate next year. So the anxiety for apprentice promises not to be broken is very real.

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Working for you in Renfrew, Linwood & Paisley North

To be kept informed of my work in Paisley North and the Scottish Parliament please contact me.
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