



@PeteWishartPerth



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@PeteWishartMP

The latest

FM & DFM resignation

Since my last newsletter, our party and the country have been rocked by the resignations of Nicola Sturgeon and John Swinney. Scotland has never had leadership like this unstoppable duo. They took support for independence to record levels and won all eight national elections over their eight years at the top, by margins that were a mere pipe dream for our opponents. They did all this with an unwavering sense of grace, compassion and integrity.

I want to pay particular tribute to John. John has been a giant of the SNP for decades. In fact, it is hard to think of anyone in Scottish public life who has done more for his country and the cause of independence. It's equally hard to imagine a Scotland without him at the helm. It has been a privilege to work alongside him locally for the last 22 years, which I look forward to continuing.



New leadership

At the time of writing, Humza Yousaf has just been elected as our new party leader. I would like to offer him my warmest congratulations. Humza has a wealth of experience in senior government roles, which I have no doubt he will draw upon to advance the SNP's progressive agenda. It is also a historic moment for Scotland, with Humza being the first leader from an ethnic minority background, and the first Muslim leader of any Western democracy. Scotland is a proudly diverse country and it is fantastic to see that being reflected at the very top of our government.

After the departure of two such longstanding figures, a degree of

anxiety about the prospects for the party is natural, particularly with general election fast approaching. But I hope that, with the leadership contest now over, we use this change as an opportunity for the party to regroup and solidify our strategy towards independence.

Scotland is now up against a UK Government that is using increasingly hostile tactics to restrict our devolution and keep us firmly in their orbit, because they are terrified of losing us. Against this backdrop, we too need to adapt our tactics and formulate a strategy that will prevail over their escalating contempt for Scottish democracy.

New leadership is a chance to do just that, whilst continuing to deliver for the people of Scotland at a time when so many are struggling. We have been electorally dominant for 15 years, and by regrouping after this period of turbulence with a renewed focus on our aims, I am confident that will continue.

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A selection of Perthshire visits



It was fantastic to visit Oakbank Primary School in Perth during their assembly. I was given an inspiring presentation by their eco-committee on what they have been doing to make the school more environmentally friendly and their vision for a zero-waste Scotland. I also got to present pupil, Nina Shah, with an award for being shortlisted for BRITA's schools sustainability project. The competition involved creating a design for a BRITA recycling bin that will inspire others to reduce, reuse and recycle. The future is bright with this next generation of environmentalists at the helm.



I got to catch up with the Perth Parrots floorball club, Perth's LGBTQ+ inclusive sports & community group, at their weekly training session. The visit came as the team are preparing to form a wider collective, representing Team Scotland in the July 2023 EuroGames in Switzerland. I heard about their goal to put inclusivity at the heart of everything they do as a team and about their ambitions for growing the club. I wish them all the best of luck and will be rooting for them in July.



I visited the James Hutton Institute in Invergowrie to discuss economic issues with Chief Executive Colin Campbell. The new £62m International Barley Hub and Advanced Plant Growth Centre are coming along nicely. Expected to be completed in early 2024, the centres will bring together industry and world-leading science. They will focus on solutions for the food and drink industry regarding climate change and a green recovery from the disruption caused by Covid-19. This is a massive investment in the constituency, which will provide a seismic boost to the local economy.



I met up with the team at SCYD in Blairgowrie to hear about the latest youth work projects, and the transformative experience they provide for local young people. They offer a range of activities and events, provide access to services for the wider community and, more recently, have opened up their venue as a warm space for locals struggling to heat their homes. I am always inspired by the enthusiasm of the entire team whenever I visit SCYD and I look forward to seeing what great initiatives they come up with in the months and years ahead.



It was a privilege to say a few words at the opening of the Active Kids indoor adventure park at Stanley with Angie Ferguson from Perth Autism Support. Since opening in 2007, Active Kids has been a place of adventure for children in Perthshire and beyond. This new indoor facility has been years in the making, with several local companies offering their support to bring it to fruition. It will be open all year round and has created around a dozen new jobs. It promises a great day out for anyone with kids.

Out and about with colleagues

It was great to meet with Roddy Grant and Ian Flaherty at St Johnstone Football Club, alongside Cllr Grant Laing and Jim Fairlie MSP. We discussed a range of issues around the club in light of its proposed sale. Management have ambitious plans and we all agreed on the need to establish a closer partnership between the club and local and national government. This will promote Perth as a first-class destination to live, visit and invest in. I look forward to continuing this dialogue in the near future.

I attended Blairgowrie's one-year anniversary service of the war in Ukraine with John Swinney. It was an emotional event, with many of the Ukrainians who have settled here gathering together with locals. Perth and Kinross was recently found to have the highest number per capita of Ukrainians refugees out of all local authorities in Scotland. This is a testament to the generosity of the people of Perthshire who have gone above and beyond to welcome the people of Ukraine with open arms. I have no doubt this will continue for as long as they wish to stay.

In partnership with Quality Meats Scotland, Jim Fairlie and I had an excellent visit to Mains of Murthly Farm in Aberfeldy with Callum McDiarmid. We heard about the unprecedented struggles in the farming sector right now, from labour shortages to energy costs. Most pressing was their concern about the Retained EU Law Bill, which is expected to cause regulatory turmoil for the sector. It goes without saying that my SNP colleagues and I vehemently opposed this bill and will continue to stand up for our farmers on this matter.

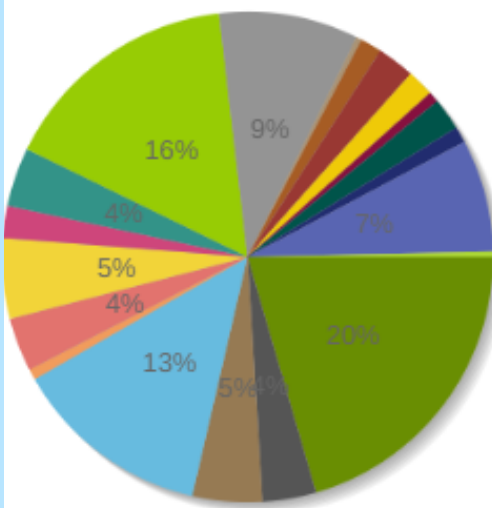
I had a great evening at the opening event of the 2023 Soutar Festival of Words with Cllr Andrew Parrot at AK Bell Library in Perth. The event saw a programme of readings, performances and conversations with writers, poets and storytellers from Scotland and across the globe. There were also live and pop-up performances across Perth city centre. The Soutar Festival is a fantastic way to celebrate Scots literature and to teach the younger generation about its historical significance.

John Swinney and I recently had a meeting with Rapid Relief Team (RRT) Global. RRT offers assistance to charity, government and emergency services responding to extreme weather incidents. This includes catering provisions for workers and the distribution of sand bags for flood defence. More recently, RRT have also been donating family food boxes to schools in Perthshire to help families through the cost of living crisis. It was heartening to see all the great work they have been doing to uplift local communities, and John and I look forward to supporting them in any way we can going forward.



Casework

Energy Bills Ukraine tours
Yemen hmrc animal testing
open doors visa ovo DVLA cost of living crisis
Pension credit childcare
Fair Fuel Bee Lobby water issues
sse
right to strike Asylum case arms sales to saudi arabia



Energy, utilities and environment
Asylum, immigration and nationality
Agriculture, animals, food and rural affairs
Crime, civil law, justice and rights
Employment and training

Since my last newsletter, one in three cases my office has dealt with has related to either energy or immigration.

On energy, readers will know all too well how difficult the winter period has been. My office has received a huge volume of correspondence on this matter, particularly in relation to constituents who rely on alternative electricity or heating provisions and therefore didn't qualify for the monthly vouchers. Two alternative support schemes have now launched for people in this situation. For more information, please don't hesitate to get in touch with my office.

On immigration, it is clear that the Tories are resorting to evermore extreme tactics in order to appease their voter base in fear of electoral wipe out next year. This is creating a hellish situation for people genuinely trying to come here in search of a better life and makes absolutely no sense at a time when most sectors are on their knees because of labour shortages. My office has been doing everything we can to ensure anyone trying to settle in the constituency can do so with as minimal stress as possible. We have also tried to ensure that those who have already arrived have everything they need to start their new life here.

Some recent votes

VOTED NO

Illegal Migration Bill
- 13 March 2023

Readers will already be familiar with this hideous bill. It aims to prevent people who arrive here illegally from claiming asylum. This is a clear breach of international law and is entirely unworkable. This is the bill of a desperate government that has run out of time and ideas.

VOTED AYE

Non-domicile Tax Status Bill
- 31 January 2023

This bill sought to abolish non-domicile tax status in the UK. This allows a person who was born in another country, or if their parent is from another country, to only pay tax in the UK on their UK income. Unsurprisingly, the Tories voted down this bill.

VOTED NO

Strikes Bill

- 30 January 2023

This is yet another backward bill, which will force certain workers to work when they wish to strike. This will incentivise employers not to engage with unions and ultimately lead to more dismissals resulting from trade union activity.