

Hepburn at Holyrood

Jamie Hepburn MSP - Serving the People of Central Scotland
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The Scottish
Parliament



Welcome to my latest Parliamentary

Newsletter. The past few months have been an exciting time in Parliament. I was proud to vote for the reintroduction of free university education by abolishing the graduate endowment, and at the start of April cheaper prescriptions and lower business rates were introduced as a result of the Scottish Government's budget. I've launched a new website and have been out and about in

Central Scotland working with individuals and communities to make sure Parliament works for you. If I can be of any help to you or someone you know, please get in touch using the contact details below.

Central Scotland Rail Improvements:

Jamie has held his first 'Members' Debate' in Parliament, in which he called for the Scottish Government to continue its investment in the Central Scotland Rail Network. In his speech, Jamie highlighted the importance of electrifying both the Cumbernauld and Glasgow-Edinburgh via Falkirk railway lines. He also used the debate as a chance to call for a National Railcard in Scotland, which would provide regular off-peak rail users with a discount on ticket prices. Similar schemes in Europe and South-East England help to encourage train use and reduce pollution. Transport Minister Stewart Stevenson replied to the debate and undertook to write to the UK Department for Transport on the issue.



Jamie visited **Whitelees Primary, Cumbernauld** to mark the start of Fairtrade Fortnight. Pupils performed a song they have recorded to raise funds to promote fair trade. Jamie is pictured with the band; head teacher Ann Kay; Culture Minister Linda Fabiani and Councillor Liz Irvine.

[Photograph courtesy of SCIAF]

National Conversation: Jamie has been supporting the Scottish Government's debate on Scotland's constitutional future. You can take part by visiting the website at www.anationalconversation.com. Jamie has lodged a motion calling for all sides taking part in the debate to recognise the importance of the issue. His motion reads:

That the Parliament notes with concern the assertion by the Minister of State at the Scotland Office in a Westminster debate that the Scottish Government's National Conversation website is "a forum for every swivel-eyed, bigoted, anti-English lunatic in Scotland and beyond to spew forth hate-mongering and obscenities and to cast aspersions on the United Kingdom and its flag"; believes that such comments are themselves provocative and offensive, especially to the wide range of representatives from civic society in Scotland who have chosen to engage thoughtfully and calmly with the debate on Scotland's constitutional future, and believes that level heads on all sides of the debate should prevail so that the next stage of constitutional reform in Scotland delivers a parliament with all the powers it needs to bring about a better Scotland.

www.jamiehepburn.org

Jamie has launched a new website to keep people up to date with his work on behalf of families and communities in Central Scotland. The site features latest news, Parliamentary activity, and photos. The site can also be used to find contact details and surgery times. Please visit and have a look at www.jamiehepburn.org

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Iraq War: Jamie has used a number of parliamentary occasions to speak out against ongoing hostilities in Iraq. During a debate to mark the fifth anniversary of the invasion, Jamie said “the fact that there has been a US and UK military presence in Iraq for five years and that there is no sign that that presence will end any time soon is testament to the lack of forward planning and thinking through of the consequences by those who took us into conflict during the headlong rush to war in 2003.” Jamie also lodged two Parliamentary motions on the issue – one to mark the 4,000th American military death in the conflict, and the other on a Red Cross survey which reported “millions of Iraqis have insufficient access to clean water, sanitation and health care”.



Jamie is pictured showing his support for **Scottish Tourism Week** at an event in the Scottish Parliament.



Jamie is pictured speaking to students at a demonstration at the Scottish Parliament to mark the **Parliament's vote to abolish the graduate endowment**. Jamie campaigned as a student to see the reintroduction of free education, and it was a proud moment to be able to vote for this in Parliament. This now means that university education is free for students in Scotland.

Abolition of 10p Tax Rate: Jamie has expressed his concern about the abolition of the 10p income tax rate by lodging a Parliamentary motion and encouraging his Parliamentary colleagues to sign it.

The motion reads: That the Parliament notes with concern the abolition of the 10p income tax rate; further notes that this will increase the taxes of some 324,000 low paid Scottish workers; agrees with the assertion of the House of Commons' Treasury Committee that this raising of the tax level for the poorest taxpayers in society is “unreasonable” to say the least; calls on Her Majesty's Government to reverse this decision with immediate effect, and believes that the Scottish Parliament should be endowed with full control over taxation matters to put in place a fair and progressive form of income tax that does not penalise our poorest citizens in this manner.



Day out on business: As part of the Scottish Parliament's Business Exchange Programme, Jamie spent a day with SELECT, the trade association for the electrical industry. He visited Thistle Generators in Bothwell, Glen Electrical Services in Cumbernauld and Crown House Technologies in Bellshill to learn more about issues facing small businesses in the region. Among the topics discussed were changing procurement practices, the industry's vocational training system and hourly pay.

Council Tax Freeze and the Local Income Tax: Now that the Government-funded Council Tax freeze has come into force across Scotland, attention is turning to the Government's consultation on replacing Council Tax with a Local Income Tax based on the ability to pay. Jamie has supported moved to change the Council Tax system, and has lodged the following motion in Parliament: That the Parliament welcomes the support of the Scottish Action Against Council Tax campaign for the Scottish Government's consultation on local income tax; notes that the campaign believes that a local income tax Bill “should not be turned into a political football” and that “obstructing the introduction of a local income tax shows contempt for the wishes of the Scottish people”, and calls on members from all parties to respect the campaign's appeal “to all fair minded political parties and MSPs not to let Scotland down in this respect”.

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