

Brendan O'Hara MP



SNP

**Summer
2018**

Welcome to my Summer 2018 newsletter and may I extend a particularly warm welcome to the hundreds of new SNP members who have joined the party in the last wee while. As you can imagine, the last few months at Westminster have been unbelievably hectic as Theresa May's hapless government stumble from crisis to crisis over Brexit. At the same time your SNP Group has been busy fighting the Tories' unprecedented power grab on our Scottish Parliament; a fight that culminated in every SNP MP walking out of the Commons chamber in protest. Of course I have still been getting out and about across Argyll & Bute, supporting individuals, communities and businesses. So there's quite a lot to report...

SNP fury at Westminster's Power Grab

IN JUNE, in an unprecedented move by the Tory government, our democratically elected Scottish parliament was stripped of its powers by a vote in the Westminster parliament. To add insult to injury, our Scottish parliament was stripped of those powers at the end of a so-called parliamentary "debate" on the EU Withdrawal Bill, that consisted of just ONE single contribution... and that was a fifteen minute lecture from the Tory Minister David Lidington. It is beggars belief that one fifteen minute lecture was all it took for the Tories to enact the greatest power grab in the history of



devolution. That day, any lingering doubts anyone may have had about the contempt in which the Scottish parliament is held by the powers at Westminster were dispelled. The following day at Prime Minister's Questions, SNP Group Leader Ian Blackford was ordered from the House of Commons after legitimately using the House of Commons' own rule book to protest about the shameful treatment of our parliament. I and every single one of my parliamentary colleagues were proud to join him... with me and Mhairi in particular taking the opportunity to tell the Tories exactly what we think of them as we headed out the door!

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I call out the Tories over their betrayal of devolution



"Regardless of what Government Members would have us believe, it is now clear to everyone that, following last week's unprecedented power grab on the Scottish Parliament, the Conservative party and this Government have finally abandoned any pretence of having even the remotest commitment to devolution. That a power grab of this scale can be enacted by one Parliament over another demonstrates once and for all that the Tories have not the slightest interest in respecting the fundamental principles of devolution. The contemptuous way in which Scottish democracy was dismissed last week, with a 15-minute lecture was simply further proof that Scotland has no future in this United Kingdom and that the sooner we are free from it, the better. The Tories' disgraceful disdain for the will of the Scottish people shows the Tories in their true colours—anti-democratic, narrow-minded, backward-looking and insular. And let us never forget that these are people who, as devout British nationalists, were vehemently opposed to the creation of a Scottish Parliament from the outset"



Yvonne MacHugh @vonn... · 19/06/2018 ✓
@BrendanOHaraSNP stood up for myself and my husband when the British Government turned a blind eye. His speech today in @UKParliament was outstanding. Himself and @theSNP are standing up for Scotland
#ScotRef



Oor Morag Sees @MoragSiewwright · 19/06/2018 ✓
Before I nod off, just want to say my favourite speech of today came from @BrendanOHaraSNP Never a truer word. You spoke for me and all other Scots who want change for the better. Thank you, Brendan



James Kelly @JamesKelly · 19/06/2018 ✓
This is a wonderful speech, wonderfully delivered, and everyone should watch it.
twitter.com/BrendanOHaraSNP

Brendan O'Hara,

Sewell Convention debate, 18th June 2018

You can view the debate here: <https://youtu.be/FLYa5ba-RPE>

Surge puts Argyll & Bute SNP membership at record high

In the weeks following the SNP walk-out at Westminster, the SNP has enjoyed a huge increase in membership. Here in Argyll & Bute, while we have been boosted by hundreds of people renewing their membership, we have also been joined by 242 brand new members. I am in the process of writing to every one of our new friends and where possible, making a personal visit to hand over a letter of welcome. Last week, on a visit to Ardrishaig, I caught up with one of those new members, Logan Collins to welcome him to the SNP. It would be impossible for me to get round every new member but whether I'm able to make a visit to your front door or not, believe me, you are all equally welcome to Argyll & Bute SNP. We are delighted to have you.



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Supporting Catalan Political Prisoners

JUST before recess at Westminster, I met with some of the families of those Catalan political prisoners who are still being held in Spanish jails. Among those I met was the journalist and film maker Txell



Bonet, whose husband Jordi Cuizart has been held in prison since October 2017. Jordi, who is president of the *Onmium Cultural*, a Catalan language and cultural organisation, organised protests against the Spanish government in the run up to the Catalan Independence Referendum. He now faces charges of sedition, which can carry a jail sentence of up to 15 years.

Shining a light on "Dark Money"

RECENTLY I wrote to Damian Collins MP, the Chair of the Digital Media and Sport Select Committee recommending that he summon the vice-chairman of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party,



Richard Cook to give evidence as part of our inquiry into Fake News and Disinformation. I want our committee to get to the bottom of Mr. Cook's role, as chair of the secretive Constitutional Research Council in the processing of

£435,000 from Vote Leave, into the coffers of Democratic Unionist Party during the EU Referendum. In my letter I praised the work of the *Spotlight* team from BBC Northern Ireland, whose recent investigation into the activities of Constitutional Research Council raised a whole series of questions and I think that in the current climate, it is incumbent on the DCMS Select Committee to investigate further.

Scotland demands immigration power

Léa Timsit is a French national who has chosen to make Scotland, in particular Oban her home. I met her recently in Soroba and like many others, she is incredibly worried about her future post-Brexit. It is absolutely appalling how callously the UK Government have treated those EU nationals who have chosen to live and work here. The Scottish Government and the SNP group at Westminster have consistently demanded that if the UK cannot give EU Nationals cast-iron guarantees about their future status, then immigration policy should be devolved, so that we in Scotland can say to EU nationals living here that they are valued, welcome and very much needed as together, we build a new Scotland.



Not giving up on Inveraray RBS

Last week I met with Johnston Carmichael, the consultants brought in by the Royal Bank of Scotland to review their

proposed closure of the branch at Inveraray. As I have done



since the plan to close Rothesay, Campbeltown and Inveraray was announced, I reiterated the case being put forward by local people and businesses that we believe rural Scotland in particular is being treated appallingly by the state-owned bank. For a tourist hot-spot like Inveraray, with three hotels, numerous cafes and bars as well as a wide variety of retail outlets, not to have a single bank in town is completely unacceptable. With a widely dispersed, elderly population who rely on an over-the-counter service, asking them to go online or attend the occasional mobile bank, simply isn't a viable option.

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Tea and cake with Alan and Joyce

ON a recent visit to Dunoon I popped in to see SNP members Joyce and Alan Dixon. Alan doesn't get out much these days so on the strict condition that if they supplied the tea and I provided the cake (from the excellent Holy Loch Coffee Shop) I'd drop in to say hello. I had a lovely afternoon talking about Alan's adventures in the Royal Navy before their move to Scotland several years ago. Many thanks to Joyce and Alan. I'll be back!



EqualiTea with Alison Thewliss

IN 1918 women finally won the right to vote. To celebrate this centenary, I was joined in Helensburgh by my colleague Alison Thewliss MP for and a lively Q&A session organised by Helensburgh Heroes. The event was to honour Eunice Guthrie Murray, a resident of the town who was the first female parliamentary candidate when she stood as an Independent in Glasgow Bridgeton in the General Election of 1918.



Life is sweet for reunited Syrian family on Bute

I AM absolutely delighted to see the Syrian community on Bute continue to go from strength-to-strength. And it was real pleasure to accompany Scottish Government Minister Angela Constance in sampling the delights of the newly opened Helmi's Patisserie in Rothesay. I have gotten to know the Helmi family pretty well over the past couple of years and I recall, back when we first met, dad

Bashar talking about how his dearest wish was to be reunited with his daughter and son-



in-law, who is an award-winning pastry chef and for them to, one day open a café on Bute. It's now all coming true and knowing just how much this means to them, and I wish Helmi's Patisserie every success in the future.



LAST week I wrote to the Prime Minister expressing my grave concern about the catastrophic no-deal Brexit that is emerging as the most likely option for the UK. With genuine fears of shortages and stockpiling, I asked her to spell out exactly what contingency planning was being done to ensure that the fragile economies of rural Scotland would not be left behind in this scenario.

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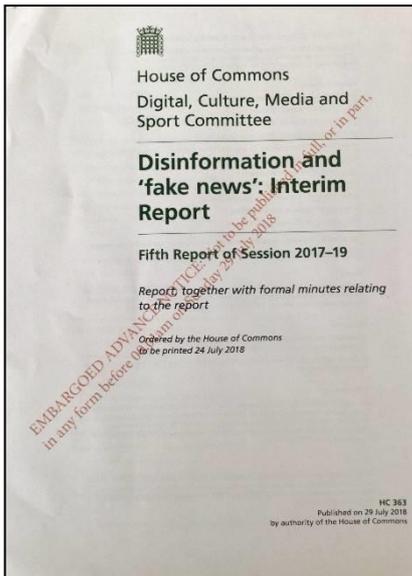


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Fake News and data misuse are a real threat to Democracy

The House of Commons DCMS Select Committee has just released its interim report into Disinformation and 'Fake News'. And it makes for sobering reading. The committee on which I have served for the last 14



months, has investigated the role played by social media giants, wealthy individuals and state actors in what we describe as the *“relentless targeting of hyper-partisan views, which play to the fears and prejudices of people, in order to influence their voting plans and their behaviour”*.

In the past year we have taken evidence from, among others Facebook, Google, Twitter, The New York Times, Cambridge Analytica, the ICO, Dr. Aleksander Kogan, Christopher Wylie and Leave.EU. Among the raft of recommendations we make are that online political adverts should carry the name of the organisation who paid for and published it and that social media companies be legally responsible for harmful and illegal content on their platforms. Our interim report concludes that unless governments across the world move to regulate social media platforms and do something about the crisis in data manipulation, then democracy is under

threat. The full report can be viewed at <https://bit.ly/2vgbuFe>

Team SNP working together across Argyll & Bute

I HAVE always held our SNP councillors in the highest regard. In my opinion they are the unsung heroes of the party and our movement here in Argyll & Bute; hard working, dedicated and willing to go the extra

mile for their constituents. More often than not, it is they who are the public face of the SNP in our local communities. I have to be honest and say that in the last few months, since I started holding joint surgeries with our local councillors, my admiration for them and the work they do has soared. I have been amazed time and again, not just at their grasp of local issues but the personal attention they show and the knowledge they have about their individual constituents. I cannot recall someone coming to a surgery about a local issue that our local councillor wasn't already across.

Not only does this prove how good they are at their job but it also saves a huge amount of time and unnecessary duplication of effort. To date I have had held surgeries with John Armour, Gordon Blair, Anne Horn, Audrey Forrest, Jim Findlay, Lorna Douglas and Jim Lynch. It has been really successful and I look forward to doing many more in the future.



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So proud of the Helensburgh pupils supporting child refugees

I WAS very pleased to meet up with some of the pupils from Hermitage Academy's Rights Respecting Group when they visited Westminster just before the summer holiday. Over the past few months they have been raising awareness in the town about the plight of child refugees who have been separated from their families. Having collected hundreds of names, the pupils were in London to hand over a petition calling on the UK Government to reunite unaccompanied refugee children with their families. I am immensely proud to represent such a caring, compassionate and informed group of young people.



Digging up the past on Lismore

GETTING stuck in and having dirt under my fingernails has never been a problem for me. So when the chance came to take part in an archaeological dig on Lismore, on the site of St. Moluag's original Cathedral dating back to the year 592, I didn't hesitate. I joined



Dr. Bob Hay of the Lismore Heritage Centre, Dr. Claire Ellis of Archaeology Argyll and a team of enthusiastic volunteers that included our very own Lochgilphead stalwarts Andy and Maryanne Bunton, deep in the trenches. Blessed by magnificent July weather, the team's quest was to find the boundary wall of the ancient Celtic monastery. The trenches I visited revealed a host of artefacts including ancient pottery, nails and slag (evidence that showed smelting had taken place on the island), as well as a number of medieval skeletons. It was a fascinating and thoroughly enjoyable day out, although it pains me to say it but unfortunately I don't think the decades old cow bone I painstakingly uncovered is going to make any future exhibition.

Tom Devine, Lifetime Achievement

THE All Party Group on Archives & History rewarded my old history professor Sir Tom Devine with a lifetime Achievement Award last month. Although Tom taught me Scottish History at Strathclyde University for four years, given the number of people he has taught in his career, I didn't think he ever



remember me. So you can imagine my delight when the invitation arrived to join him at his award ceremony and celebratory lunch.



Sweet smell of success is in the CS Wind

AT THE end of July I was honoured to join the owners, management and staff of CS Wind at their Machrihanish factory to celebrate with them the conclusion of their highly successful *Productivity Innovation Project*, which saw a doubling of



production of their massive off-shore tower sections to six per week. The huge increase in productivity puts the Kintyre plant on a par with any of CS Wind's plants around

the world and I pay tribute to the workforce at Machrihanish on how well they responded to this hugely demanding challenge. The commitment of the Scottish government to the future success of plant was evidenced by the presence of Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Minister for energy, connectivity and the islands, who in his keynote speech spoke about the significant economic benefits that renewable energy can bring as well as restating the Scottish government's commitment to transitioning to a low carbon economy.



Celebrating the success of CS Wind's *Productivity, Innovation Project* with company Chairman, Mr Seong Gon Gim and the Speaker of the Korean National Assembly, Mr Chung Sye-kyun.

UK's wind energy boom will boost Kintyre company

Mark Davey
editor@campbeltowncourier.co.uk

South Korean senior executives from round the globe flew into wind tower manufacturer CS Wind this week.

On Monday, as the UK government agreed up to £557 million to support off-shore wind farms, Campbeltown's tower producer CS Wind explained its philosophy which has boosted production:

This took place at a gala dinner on Monday evening, followed by a full scale factory tour on Tuesday.

At Tuesday's multimedia exhibition, to an audience including Argyll and Bute MP Brendan O'Hara, and Sun Nan Kook, the Republic of Korea (ROK) UK Chargé D'Affairs, the firm's executives explained its 'One dream, one team' scheme.

Abbreviated to PIP, the firm's *Productivity Innovation Project* has



Paul Wheelhouse

boosted manufacture of huge off-shore wind tower sections to six per week.

During a short movie numerous teams of workers were seen chanting the slogan: 'One dream, one team,' with the addition of a loud 'Aye,' as they marked the completion of a week's quota.

During the morning's briefing the Scottish minister for energy, connectivity and the islands, MSP Paul Wheelhouse, made a keynote

speech about the strides forward the company has made since investing in Kintyre. Speaking to an audience including many factory workers, Mr Whitehouse toasted the success of the project since he last attended the ground-breaking ceremony in 2016.

He said: 'The Scottish Government knows that the transition to a low carbon economy can create significant economic opportunities and bring valuable jobs.

'Machrihanish is a great example of what is possible. Scotland has massive off-shore potential.'

CS Wind made about 60 workers redundant in January 2017, taking its head count down to near 100. But it has steadily increased this to 119 and is currently recruiting.

The *Courier* understands that some of those laid off in

2017 have returned and there are six vacancies paying up to £11.75 per hour, with shift enhancements and overtime.

Three vacancies are in the black tower facility and, with full training part of the package, offer the opportunity to work towards becoming a certified welder.

The other three are in the paint spraying white tower section and, again, are open to people with no specific experience of the work.

Argyll First Councillor Donald Kelly said: 'I am delighted that CS Wind has successfully met its production targets.

'The importance of this facility to the local community should not be underestimated.

'We need to ensure that the company continues to receive the support it deserves from all levels of government.'

Scottish Government Minister Paul Wheelhouse MSP giving the keynote address at the CS Wind factory in Machrihanish in July

Spinning discs on Bute Island Radio

AND FINALLY, it was great catching up again with Mike Blair and the team at Bute Island Radio last month. They'll forever be my favourite station as they allowed me to channel my inner DJ last year. It really was



one of the highlights of my year. With Mike at the controls and me spinning the discs, I indulged myself for two hours playing everything from The Smiths to Janis Joplin. And they've promised I can do it again! **"This is your local MP - who does a lot of good work for cheriddy - wishing you all a fan-tabulous weekend"**. See, I'm a natural!



Argyll & Bute SNP Members Day September 16th, Corran Halls, Oban. 1200 noon

KEITH BROWN MSP
Depute Leader, SNP



WE ARE FROM the absolutely outset, delighted the roll-out of Universal Credit has been a disaster and

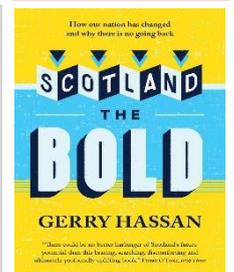
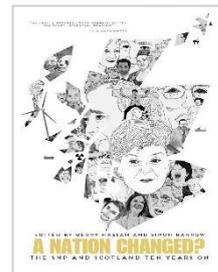
leader Keith Brown MSP, has accepted our invitation to come to Argyll & Bute to take part in Members Day. Keith has promised that as depute leader, he will be engaged with the grassroots members of the party as we prepare for the next independence referendum and he is determined to mobilise our mass membership, as never before to build that positive case for Scottish independence. This is our chance to make sure the voice of Argyll & Bute is heard as part of that process. After hearing Keith's initial thoughts, the meeting will, as we always do break into smaller workshop / discussion groups and Keith will get round every one of those smaller groups, to listen and participate. Keith will also host a plenary / feedback session for the whole meeting.

Cllr JIM LYNCH
Argyll and Bute Councillor,



it has caused real and unnecessary hardship for individuals and families. Until very recently, Jim Lynch was the manager of the Job Centre in Oban and he has over the years, amassed an enormous amount of experience of the Department of Work and Pensions and the whole of the benefits system. With Universal Credit due to be rolled out across Argyll and Bute later this year, Jim is uniquely placed therefore to give an insight into the likely impact Universal Credit will have on our communities and those individuals who will be put on it. Following Jim's short presentation, there will be a Question & Answer session about Universal credit. This is a really important issue and it is something that is going to affect many, many people in Argyll & Bute and we are very lucky to have Jim to explain it to us

Dr. GERRY HASSAN
Author and Broadcaster



DR. GERRY HASSAN is a Senior Research Fellow in contemporary Scottish history at Dundee University but is probably better known for being a Scottish political commentator and the author of several books including *The Strange Death of Labour in Scotland* (2012); *Scotland's Referendum and the Media* (2016) and *Scotland The Bold...Why There is No Going Back* (2016). Gerry will share his opinion about the current state of the national movement before hosting a question and Q&A session to finish off the day.

Every member counts... make your voice heard on September 16th