

Brendan O'Hara MP



SNP

**October
2018**

It has been a hectic couple of months since my last Constituency Newsletter. In that time I have had numerous surgeries and engagements across the constituency including in Dunoon, Campbeltown, Tiree, Oban, Helensburgh, Tarbert, Garelohead, Rothesay, Luss, Lochgilphead and Innellan. On top of that I have been on a couple of parliamentary delegations to Palestine and Greenland, enjoyed a hugely successful SNP conference in Glasgow and joined with 99,999 others on a joyous pro-independence march through the streets of Edinburgh. I'm now back at Westminster where, after the Budget, it'll be all about the Brexit Deal or No Deal, as the Prime Minister is finally forced to address the crucial issues she has, for so long simply kicked down the road. Stay tuned!!

Prime Minister rejects immigration plea as Mundell turns a blind eye

TWICE this month I've highlighted how deeply damaging UK immigration policies are to Scotland. On both occasions my questions have been dismissed, first by the Prime Minister and again by the Secretary of State for Scotland.

"RURAL Scotland, including my Argyll and Bute constituency, is facing a depopulation crisis that will be exacerbated by Brexit. Last week, Cleland Sneddon, the chief executive of Argyll and Bute Council, added his name to those calling for a more flexible, devolved and regional immigration policy and offered Argyll and Bute as a pilot area to test it. Will the Prime Minister agree to meet me and the chief executive to discuss the merits of such a proposal?" - PMQs, 5/9/18



"THE Secretary of State is turning a blind eye to the depopulation crisis facing rural Scotland. His Government's refusal even to consider devolving immigration powers to the Scottish Parliament will cause further damage to these fragile communities. Will he explain to the people and businesses in my constituency how ending freedom of movement will help to solve that depopulation crisis?" - Scottish Questions, 17.10.18



THE population of Argyll and Bute is forecast to drop by 13% by 2040. This depopulation crisis is so serious that following a conversation with the Chief Executive of Argyll and Bute Council we resolved that I would put to the UK government the idea that this constituency become a test case for a devolved or regionalised immigration scheme. The idea was supported by the Scottish Government and many other agencies but at Prime Minister's Questions, Theresa May completely rejected the idea and wouldn't even agree to meet with me to discuss it.

Call for urgent meeting with Minister after A83 Landslide



IT HAS been a tough few weeks for those whose businesses and livelihoods depend on the A83. The virtually unprecedented deluge in the early part of October caused a huge landslide that closed the Rest and Be Thankful and the Old Military Road, causing havoc for over a week. I have asked for an urgent meeting with the Transport Minister to discuss how we move towards a permanent fix for this vital artery that runs through the heart of this constituency. Last week, I visited the scene of the landslide with local SNP Councillor Iain Patterson (Lomond North) to say thank you to all the folk who toiled in atrocious weather to remove more than 3000 tonnes of debris from the road. I also met with the on-site engineers, BEAR Scotland and Transport Scotland and we have agreed to pick up the conversation again at the meeting of the A83 Task Force next month.

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PALESTINE 2018

I HAVE just recently returned from my first visit to Palestine. I went at the invitation of Medial Aid for Palestinians (MAP) and the Council for Arab British Understanding. The trip was enlightening but at times harrowing and deeply disturbing as everything we saw and were told, suggested that the humanitarian crisis in the West Bank and Gaza is set to worsen in the coming years. In the five days we were there, we visited East Jerusalem, Ramallah, Hebron, Bethlehem and Jericho as well as a number of Palestinian villages



including the Bedouin village of Abu Nawar, who, like their near neighbours in Khan Al-Ahmar are living under the constant threat of their community being demolished by the Israeli military in order to make way for further illegal settlements. While in the West Bank I met with the UK Consul General in East Jerusalem, the UN Relief Agency UNRWA, went out into the Jordan Valley with a MAP mobile health clinic, heard from representatives of the Palestinian Farmers Union, was briefed by international Human Rights organisations and toured the Makassad hospital with the hard pressed doctors and nurses who work there. In addition I had discussions with the former Israeli Cabinet minister and Supreme Court Justice Eliyakin Rubinstein and met with officials from the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



Greenlandic independence: not IF...but HOW?

DURING the summer, in my capacity as the Vice-Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on the Polar Regions I visited Greenland to talk to the Greenlandic government about a whole range of issues including climate change, Brexit, Chinese investment, colonialism and their plans to become fully independent of Denmark. As well as being one of the most beautiful places on the planet, its history, culture and politics make it an absolutely fascinating place. The discussions about the Greenlandic experience of being a Danish colony



for centuries was particularly interesting as the legacy of that colonial past appears to be felt just as strongly among the young as it does the older generations.



Currently the debate in Greenland isn't about should Greenland become independent, rather it's about how should Greenland become independent. Is independence about protecting the ancient culture of the Inuit people, who make up 88% of the population or is it be about taking control of the vast mineral wealth that Greenland has under the

ice, in order to grow the economy and become as developed as any other northern European nation. The situation in Greenland is worth keeping an eye on.

If any branch (or any community group) would like to hear more about my visits to Palestine and Greenland, just drop me a line and we'll arrange it.

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HOPE. That was the message that came loudly and clearly from a jam-packed SNP Conference in Glasgow earlier this month. Four thousand members attended over the course of the three



days and I've no doubt each would have left with a spring in their step and renewed passion for the fight ahead. The debates were numerous and lively and I was fortunate to be called to speak on two occasions. First I spoke on the need for immigration powers to be devolved to Scotland, highlighting the disgraceful treatment of one EU national who was detained while heading to work in Oban. The following day I was delighted to support a motion congratulating my dear friend Nadia Murad on winning the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize.

The message of HOPE from 2018 SNP Conference



EDINBURGH WELCOMES BIGGEST EVER INDY MARCH



Catherine, the weans, Hamish the dog and me were so proud to have been part of the biggest ever march for Scottish independence. On a beautiful sunny, Autumn day an estimated 100,000 happy, optimistic people took our message of hope for a better future on to the streets of the capital. I am delighted that so many of my parliamentary colleagues from both Holyrood and Westminster turned out to support what was a wonderfully happy occasion. It was particularly pleasing to see so many folk from Argyll & Bute there and thanks to all those who took the time to come over and say hello to us.

PUPILS ARE A CREDIT TO THEIR SCHOOL

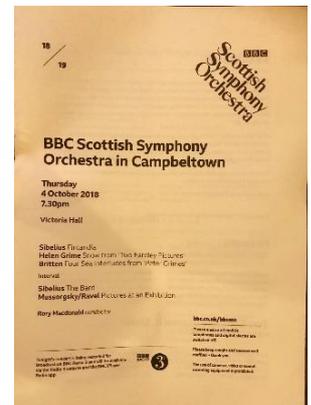
THERE are few parts of this job I enjoy more than visiting our local schools and having a vigorous Q&A with the students, particularly those studying for National 5 or Higher Modern Studies. I was fortunate to do two such visits recently; the first to Tiree High School and earlier this week with the pupils at Oban High. This was my first visit



to the new campus at Oban and it was a real pleasure to be given a guided tour by four of the senior pupils, Kirsty, Katie, Angus and Maikolaj. They were fantastic ambassadors for the school and their parents and their teachers should be extremely proud of them.

BBC ORCHESTRA WOVES "WEE TOON"

ONE of the undoubted highlights of my year has been the concert by the 80-strong BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra in Campbeltown at the start of October. The concert in the Victoria Hall was completely sold out, with those on the extensive reserve list being left sorely disappointed. The orchestra had been in town all week ahead of the performance, teaching local children, visiting hospitals and care homes. So by the night of the concert itself, Campbeltown had fallen in love with the SSO...and I got the impression it was not unrequited.



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Dr. Philippa Whitford is special guest at Members Day Inveraray, Saturday January 12th 2019

I AM delighted that my parliamentary colleague Dr Philippa Whitford MP has agreed to be the lead contributor at our next Members Day. No one involved in the 2014 referendum campaign will ever forget the way Dr. Philippa emerged via social media, as one of the undoubted champions of the grassroots independence movement. Her speeches inspired and galvanised far beyond her home turf of Ayrshire and she was without doubt, one of the heroes of campaign.



At Members Day, to be held at the Inveraray Inn, Dr. Philippa will talk about her experiences of 2014 and give advice as to how we can build similar grassroots movements in all of our diverse communities across Argyll & Bute, ahead of the next independence referendum. Dr. Philippa is also a passionate supporter of the Palestinian people and has for many years given of her spare time to work as a breast cancer surgeon in Gaza. I am not long back from a visit to Palestine and Dr. Philippa has agreed that she and I will talk about the absolutely dreadful situation we witnessed on the

ground in Gaza and the West Bank. As always, ALL SNP members are invited and I hope you make it along.

DESPITE the change of venue from Inveraray to Oban, September's Members Day proved to be another hugely successful event, with our members thoroughly enjoying the wide variety of speakers on offer. Cllr Jim Lynch, Christina McKelvie MSP, Dr. Gerry Hassan and our Chair Breege Smyth were all in fine form but I must admit, it was particularly gratifying to hear the kind words of the party's depute leader Keith Brown who praised the work we are doing here in Argyll & Bute, acknowledging the high level of member engagement we have and saying that in many ways we are ahead of the curve in having already established our Liaison Committee.



**Open to all SNP Members. Get involved.
Be heard. Build a better Scotland.**

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