



Raised in Parliament

- Commonwealth Games legacy in Edinburgh
- Improving recycling in urban areas
- Opposed unfair changes to child maintenance payments
- Spoke against persecution of Christians in Middle East
- Police action to tackle violence against women
- Health impact of overprovision of licenced premises
- Air quality in Edinburgh
- Supported tenants recovering illegal fees
- Supported Hearts ditching a payday loan sponsor
- Fair trade purchasing in the public sector

Supporting Edinburgh

- Supported successful campaign on a bus route for Dumbiedykes
- Met with Friends of the Meadows to discuss how the Meadows are used during the festival
- Campaigned on broadband access in the city centre
- Supported introducing Land and Buildings Transaction Tax, which means a homebuyer will pay over £4,000 less tax than before on an average central Edinburgh property worth £265,231.

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Weekly surgeries

Mondays at 6:30pm, 77 Buccleuch St

Extra surgeries

Second Monday of the month
10.30am Saughtonhall Community Association,
Saughtonhall Avenue

12.00pm St Bride's Centre, Orwell Terrace
1.30pm Stockbridge Library, Hamilton Place

Appointments available but not necessary.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Fighting for a better private rented sector

St Stephen's Centre saved for community use

Edinburgh fire control centre saved

Water of Leith flood defences funding agreed

Student housing in Southside raised in Parliament

Advice line launched for older people

Campaign to save the Picture House

Time for answers on the trams

With the trams now running, most Edinburgh residents will now be happy to see their city return to normality after years of disruption.

But that disruption came at a massive cost and caused huge damage to many businesses. The public deserve to know why the tram project spiralled out of control.

I was delighted when the First Minister agreed, after I raised the issue in Parliament, to establish a public inquiry into the handling of the tram project.

We need to learn the lessons from these failures in order to have confidence in infrastructure projects in the future.

But there are still real concerns about the viability of the trams as they stand and whether they'll be a drain on the public purse.

I've been a consistent critic of the business plan for the trams and I've yet to be convinced that they'll make money in the long term.

The fact that the premium route from the airport to the city centre takes longer than the bus service – at a higher cost – shows that the shortened route may struggle to find a viable purpose.

I've argued that there must be an extension, likely down Leith Walk, for the trams to become financially sustainable.

But doing so will be a challenge for the City of Edinburgh Council, and likely won't carry public support until we know exactly why the initial project went so badly wrong - which is why the tram inquiry is so badly needed.



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba



Learning about the value of CPR training in saving lives

Making private renting work

One of the biggest issues I encounter is housing. Edinburgh Central has a comparatively high level of people in private rented accommodation and I've been determined to improve the private rental market, both for tenants and for landlords.

This year I supported the Scottish Government's Housing Bill, which will improve the rental market by regulating letting agents and provide a streamlined tribunal system for both tenants and landlords if disputes arise.

This Bill also ended the sell-off of social housing under Right to Buy legislation. This is in addition to previous changes which I've supported, including tightening legislation to prevent letting agents charging illegal admin fees, and ensuring that deposits are handled by third party schemes.

In response to a parliamentary question I asked, the Scottish Government confirmed that they will bring forward another Housing Bill before the end of this parliamentary term.

The Scottish Government has run a consultation on introducing a new type of tenancy and on introducing controls on rent increases.

As the MSP for Edinburgh Central, I want to see an accessible, affordable and high-quality housing market in the area.



Getting a grilling from Tynecastle High pupils in Parliament

Student housing Southside

There is currently a cluster of proposed developments of student accommodation in the Southside of Edinburgh, and many residents have expressed concern that expensive private developers are pushing out affordable homes.

I secured a Members' Debate in the Scottish Parliament on this issue in October, but this unfortunately had to be postponed due to legal action being taken against the development at Luton Court.

Edinburgh is a diverse community and we need a mix of housing that reflects that. Custom built student accommodation is part of that, and the university's developments on its' own land will play a role in meeting increasing demand. But

the big corporate student blocks charge rent at the high end of the market and a concentration of these could push up the going rate in the area for student and non-student alike.

One reason for the number of these developments is that private student developers are exempt from the requirement to include the equivalent of 25% affordable housing that other residential developments face. This gives student developments an in-built advantage when any city centre land comes onto the market.

As constituency MSP for Edinburgh Central, I have raised this issue with City of Edinburgh Council, who are responsible for this policy.

Water of Leith flood defences

Since my election in 2011 I have actively pursued the issue of a shortfall in funding for vital flood defence works in Murrayfield/Roseburn due to over-spend on the first stage of the project.

The Scottish Government have invested £32million in Water of Leith flood defences, and more

money could have been available if the Council Leader had argued for a change in eligibility rules in the COSLA Leaders Group.

Phase 2 of the project now looks set for completion after the Council agreed to increase funding, which I'm sure will be of great relief to those affected.

Working for Edinburgh



Signing joint letter to fire service with other Edinburgh MSPs

Fire control centre saved

Earlier this year plans to close some regional fire control rooms, the vital communication organs at the heart of the service, were announced.

I was deeply concerned about the impact the closure of the Edinburgh control room would have had on the quality of service, and lobbied management to keep Edinburgh open.

I am delighted that the long-term future of the Edinburgh control room has now been secured.

Save the Picture House

Edinburgh's music lovers were shocked when the Picture House venue on Lothian Road was sold to J D Wetherspoon.

Although Edinburgh's cultural scene is thriving, there is a shortage of venues that allow us to compete with Glasgow and other

big cities in attracting touring artists.

The Picture House has since sat empty and unused while JD Wetherspoon apply for permission to convert the building into another superpub in an area already well catered by licenced establishments.

Advice Line launched for elderly

I recently met Esther Rantzen in the Scottish Parliament to discuss Silver Line Scotland, a helpline for the elderly launched in partnership with Age Scotland.

Esther Rantzen was previously involved in launching ChildLine,

which has helped countless vulnerable children over the years.

Silver Line Scotland is available to offer information, advice and riendship, 24 hours a day, for those who need it. Silver Line Scotland can be contacted on: 0800 4 70 80 90.



St Stephens Centre

The sale of the St Stephens Centre in Stockbridge raised concerns that a much-loved building could be lost for community use.

I followed developments closely and supported an unsuccessful bid for community ownership.

I was glad that the new owner intends to invest in the building and keep it in use for the community.

I was particularly happy that the new owner has agreed with my suggestion that the board of the new charitable trust, which will be given ownership of the Centre, will include local residents.

Working for Edinburgh