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Winter Update 2009



PROFIT FOR A PURPOSE

At the end of October I organised a meeting at Westminster on fuel poverty and I was pleased to see that the UK Government is now going to introduce legislation to force energy companies to offer social tariffs. They should remember that they are providing a service that meets a basic human need, fuel to cook and keep warm, not a luxury accessory.

I also raised the issue of social enterprises in Parliament and spoke at a meeting of the Scottish Social Enterprise Coalition which is based in the constituency. Social enterprises are businesses with a social purpose. They may work with people with a disability of some kind or support people outside the labour market in getting back into work. It is estimated that they contribute about £24 billion to the economy each year so they are big business as well as helping to create a fairer society.

CLIMATE CHANGE

I know that many people locally share my belief in the urgent need for an ambitious agreement at the UN Conference on Climate Change currently taking place in Copenhagen. This autumn I have been supporting the UK Government's push for a far-reaching agreement at meetings with leading NGOs, industrialists and politicians. I also quickly signed up to the 10:10 campaign for each of us to reduce our own personal carbon emissions by 10% through simple things like turning off lights and computers when not in use. Governments need to act urgently and so do we.

FOUR SQUARE FACILITY, BROUGHTON

I recently attended the opening of the new Four Square facility for the homeless in Broughton. As well as providing advice and support, Four Square now runs the biggest charity warehouse shop in Edinburgh. The opening of the new facility is good news as the fantastic work done by this voluntary organisation has become even more important recently as a result of the economic downturn.

HOUSING ISSUES

We need to help people both find and keep homes so I am glad to see that the UK Government has put in place support for people struggling to keep up with mortgage payments. Last week I organised a meeting at Westminster to discuss the issue of mortgage arrears and repossessions which brought together Government, MPs, and voluntary organisations working in the field.

Housing problems come in many different forms. I continue to work with residents in a number of areas in the constituency (most recently in Leith and Broughton) who have bought newly built houses or flats and found it really hard to get action to deal with problems with their property such as work unfinished or of poor quality, damp and even flooding.

SAVE OUR CRECHE!

Local facilities are an important part of whether a community is a good place to live. That is why I have sponsored a motion in Parliament to support the campaign against the proposed closure of crèches at leisure centres around the city by the City Council.

It was bad enough when the crèche at Leith Victoria was closed last year and the closure of the crèche at Ainslie Park Leisure Centre as well will badly affect parents who depend on it in order to be able to use the swimming pool. Last week, I joined some of the parents campaigning against the closure in a protest outside Ainslie Park Leisure Centre.

AND FINALLY....

I was pleased recently to attend the unveiling of a plaque at Dudley Bowling Club, in memory of Henry Ward, the builder who built the Dudleys. An interesting piece of local history – not least for the fact that he chose to put a bowling club and tennis courts as a community facility in the middle of the development, instead of cramming in as many houses as possible. An example some of today's builders could well follow!