

Education secretary heaps praise on St Ninian's High



(L-R) Council Leader Gordon Low, Head Boy Jack McDowall, Education Secretary John Swinney, Head Girl Monica Kierny and Rona Mackay MSP.

Head teacher discusses education reform with cab. secretary

BY STAFF REPORTER

SCOTLAND'S education secretary has praised the good work of St Ninian's High School in Kirkintilloch on a recent ministerial visit.

John Swinney met with staff and pupils before Maths Week Scotland in September.

Maths Week Scotland is a brand new initiative to help everyone in Scotland see maths positively.

The Scottish Government's aim is for everyone to experi-

ence the benefits, joy and beauty of maths in exciting new ways. Rona Mackay MSP and Mr Swinney discussed the school's participation with head teacher Paul McLaughlin, East Dunbartonshire Council's leader Gordon Low and Chief Executive Gerry Cornes and head boy and girl Jack McDowall and Monica Kierny. Mr Swinney tweeted after the visit, saying: "Delight to visit St Ninian's High to promote #MathsWeekScot. What an exciting programme they have lined up."

Ms Mackay, Strathkelvin and Bearsden MSP, said: "I am delighted the Education Secretary John Swinney took the time out of his busy schedule to visit the staff and pupils at St Ninian's High School to launch Maths Week.

"I know Head Teacher Paul McLaughlin, and indeed the whole school, appreciate Mr Swinney coming to see them and listen to their own unique approach to Maths Week and their general approach to education.

"I have an excellent view of

St Ninian's High School, the staff are incredibly hard working and the pupils very polite and professional. I am always left impressed, and I know the Education Secretary was, too."

Recently, a robust package of indicators to determine progress on closing the poverty-related attainment gap have been put forward for consultation. The SNP Government's ambition is to substantially eliminate the gap within 10 years and make strong progress this parliament.

MSP forms community council group



MSP GIL Paterson recently held a meeting with representatives from community councils in his constituency of Clydebank & Milngavie.

The meeting was part of a new initiative to increase communication between community councillors and the MSP so he can better assist with important local issues.

It was held on October 2 in the Titan Business Centre in Clydebank.

Mr Paterson said "This was a very successful, first meeting where we discussed a number of matters affecting my whole constituency such as issues around community involvement and problems with the Hardgate Roundabout.

"It also gave me a great opportunity to hear specific local concerns of each of the community councils who, in turn, benefited from hearing what others are doing in their locales.

"Community councils have a huge amount to contribute and I hope to hold these meetings regularly to ensure I that I continue to support them in their excellent work."

Cllr Ferretti Delivers For Constituents



COUNCILLOR Paul Ferretti's motion asking for a cost and feasibility study into an all-weather football pitch in Lennoxton was passed at a recent full council meeting.

Cllr Ferretti also played an important part in bringing new play equipment to Battlefield Park in Milton of Campsie and managed to get new mannequins and goals for the Astro Park.

And, following his intervention there will be more dog fouling patrols in Lennoxton and the Council will look at putting more bins along the Strathkelvin Railway Path.

East Dunbartonshire SNP

Know who to contact if you need help.

Ask your councillors about education, housing, parks, roads & transport, health & social care, libraries, museums, recycling, blue badges, sports, pools, planning, employability.

Ask your MSP about local and national issues, including everything listed above, plus health, disability benefits, income tax, justice, railways, jobs, arts & culture, the Scottish economy. See over, or check www.parliament.scot.

Ask your MP about most social security issues, the economy, immigration, defence, employment law, VAT, Corporation Tax, European Union, foreign affairs, austerity. Check www.parliament.uk.



Did you know...

... that the primary responsibility for mobile phone coverage currently lies with the UK Government, limiting the Scottish Government's progress on digital connectivity.

The Scottish Government is currently using its limited powers to guarantee people benefit from better mobile coverage by working closely with the industry through the Mobile Action Plan by further planning reform, using publicly-owned land and buildings for telecoms, maximizing the impact of the UK Government's 4G-based Emergency Services Network and the development of a Mobile Infill Project to extend coverage into rural areas not served by commercial rollout.

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News and views in East Dunbartonshire



MSP launches new community council group

MP hits out as shocking Universal Credit stats revealed

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SNP unites Holyrood behind fracking ban

BY STAFF REPORTER

MSP Rona Mackay has spoken of her relief that there will be no fracking in East Dunbartonshire or anywhere in Scotland.

The Scottish Parliament backed the SNP Government's motion to ban fracking by 91 to 28, following an announcement from Energy Minister Paul Wheelhouse.

The extraction of unconventional oil and gas from beneath the ground would have been a disaster, the MSP said.

Ms Mackay added: "I am overjoyed that MSPs have, by a landslide, rallied behind the SNP government's recent fracking ban.

"The democratic will of Scotland is that fracking will not, under any circumstances, take place in our incredibly beautiful country.

"We know that Torrance and Bishopbriggs, at least, were targeted by energy giants, who sought to take in huge profits from the destruction of our



incredibly precious and valuable environment. This would have seriously risked the contamination of our water supply, torn apart greenspace and caused great upheaval in the earth below us.

"And, that is just scratching the surface of the problems it

causes. I'm sure the majority of people in Strathkelvin and Bearsden will be delighted that our ban on fracking has been backed by the Scottish Parliament."

Labour, Greens and Liberal Democrats lined up behind the Scottish National Party's mo-

tion to ban, with the Tories left isolated to defend the harmful practice.

Gil Paterson MSP also voted for the ban.

He added: "It is excellent to see the progressive parties in our parliament uniting in opposition to fracking."

New public energy firm will help poorer

BY STAFF REPORTER

CLYDEBANK and Milngavie MSP Gil Paterson has welcomed plans to set up a publicly-owned energy company.

Mr Paterson hit out at big energy companies for "ripping off" customers, especially the poor. At the SNP party confer-

ence in October Nicola Sturgeon said that the company will sell clean energy at as "close to cost price as possible".

Further details will be announced by the Scottish Government in its Energy Strategy, with the company being set up by the end of this parliament.

Mr Paterson said: "Far too

many people in East Dunbartonshire, and indeed Scotland, are suffering from the sheer cost of heating a home properly in the winter months.

"This has a detrimental effect on people's health, and there are well documented instances where elderly people have died as a result. This plan is a radical

one, and already the anti-SNP media are trying to crush the notion that it could be successful.

"A public-owned energy company, run for the public won't prioritise corporate interests, like bonuses and dividends for shareholders, it will prioritise the consumer and I welcome that."

Council matters



BY GORDAN LOW
LEADER OF EAST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

SINCE the council election last May it has been increasingly difficult for the minority SNP administration to carry out their progressive anti-austerity agenda.

May's EDC election resulted in a council comprising 7 SNP members, 6 Tories, 6 Lib Dems, 2 Labour and 1 Independent.

The SNP group managed to form a minority administration and are attempting to put forward our positive manifesto agenda. However, this depends on other parties being prepared to work together in a constructive manner.

As the administration, we are concerned that the alliance of Tory and Lib Dem councillors is proposing to reduce EDC employee's terms and conditions.

We will continue to try and introduce our progressive anti-austerity policies and to protect our workforce from reductions in their working terms and conditions. We were elected on this platform and we have a duty to the public to carry it out wherever we possibly can.

Broken Brexit



By JOHN NICOLSON
COLUMNIST

WILL Brexit happen? We know Scotland doesn't want it. 62% of us voted to remain in the European Union to protect jobs and investment.

Remember what Brexiters promised? An EU deal would be simple with tariff free trade and £350 million extra every week for the National Health Service.

But none of this was true. If you've been abroad this summer you will know that the value of the £ has plummeted.

UK growth is at the bottom of the international league.

And even Brexiters now admit we will have to pay billions to leave the EU. We won't get tariff free trade access – and that means prices will go up.

So much for 'taking back control'.

As your MP, I sat on the powerful Culture, Media, and Sport Select Committee. We toured Europe to test attitudes on Brexit. I was asked time and time again if Scotland really wanted to be outside the European Union in an insular Brexit Britain. Or inside like Denmark, Ireland, or Sweden with a seat at the top table.

Brexit will go ahead. Scotland will be pulled out of the EU against our will.

But as one senior German politician said to me "Scotland will gain faster and easier re-entry than any other country in history."

As the Brexit clouds gather that's a ray of sunshine.



SHAMBLES: A mass roll-out of Universal Credit has been criticised by MP Stuart McDonald.

Universal Credit rollout is 'utter madness'

DEBT and POVERTY: Latest UC trial figures in East Dunbartonshire

By STAFF REPORTER

THE ROLL-OUT of controversial benefit Universal Credit (UC) has been slammed by MP Stuart McDonald.

In East Dunbartonshire alone, where UC is being trialled, horrific statistics show that claimants are being pushed further into debt and rent arrears.

Universal Credit is a single monthly payment for people in or out of work. It replaces six main benefits, including

Housing benefit, Child Tax Credit, Income support, Working Tax Credit, Jobseeker's Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance.

People claiming UC have to wait six weeks or longer for their first payment—causing financial distress to many.

Mr McDonald said: "It is utter madness that when moving to Universal Credit, it is considered a new claim - meaning struggling citizens need to wait six weeks or more for their first payment. It

seems unbelievable, but it is happening and driving people into massive debt and rent arrears."

The Tory UK Government was forced to drop the charge for the UC helpline - which costed up to 55 pence per minute - after a campaign lead by SNP MP Chris Stephens. Claimants reported waiting up to thirty minutes to get through, and then having to call back multiple times for help with their "new" claim.

Mr McDonald added: "In East Dunbartonshire alone, as

reported in our local press, 92 per cent of council tenants on Universal Credit are in rent arrears, which is 264 members of the public. Crisis grants have also risen by 50 per cent. A quarter of all of those in rent arrears with the council are on Universal Credit. It is a total shambles and I will continue to work with colleagues to demand urgent changes.

"It would be a total disaster if UC was to be rolled out to the entire country before that happens."

Mr Paterson, MSP for



Cllr Gillian Renwick welcomes free child care boost.

Free childcare will have huge effect on children and families

COUNCILLOR Gillian Renwick has applauded plans to increase provision of free childcare.

Cllr Renwick, deputy leader of East Dunbartonshire Council, said it was "transformative".

She said that more jobs will be created in the childcare industry and families will have the freedom to look for and develop employment opportunities. She told us: "By the time our children reach primary education, they have access to some of the best performing

schools in the country, right here in East Dunbartonshire," the SNP cllr added. Childcare has been increased to 16 hours per week for all 3 and 4 year olds and will increase again by 2021 to a provision of 30 hrs per week. The policy has now been extended to 2 year olds from low income households, saving families £2,500 a year.

Cllr Renwick added: "Our commitment to providing this level of free child care will have a transformative effect on the children and families."

East Dunbarton 'best place' for women

By STAFF REPORTER

EAST Dunbartonshire should be incredibly proud of being named the best place in the UK for women to live, said MSP Rona Mackay.

Following research across local authority areas in Scot-

land, England and Wales, commissioned by BBC radio 4's Women's Hour, East Dunbartonshire took the top slot.

Researchers looked at a number of criteria from green space to income as well as the views of local women.

Ms Mackay, SNP MSP for Strathkelvin and Bearsden,

said: "This is a real result for East Dunbartonshire but that is not to say that everyone lives in luxury. There are still major challenges affecting women across the area that we have to acknowledge.

"Attention must be paid to the pockets of poverty in our midst.

"I am proud that the SNP government has introduced measures such as increased free child care as well as bringing forward the Child Poverty Bill and radical changes to domestic abuse laws to help women get justice for psychological as well as physical abuse."

Allander rail halt and the twinning of line is needed

MSPs make the case for improvements on the railways

By STAFF REPORTER

MSPs are making the case for simple transformations on the railway between Westerton and Milngavie that will vastly improve the service.

Gil Paterson and Rona Mackay have put forward their vision of re-twinning the track and adding the much-desired rail halt at Allander.

In the latest data for the last 12 months for all 77 stations, published on June 24, Milngavie was listed as the worst performer.

The practice of skipping stations to make up for time is adding even more problems for rail users.

MSPs believe that a major cause of this disruption is the single track.

Mr Paterson has written to Network Rail, ScotRail and Transport Scotland looking for answers to the deplorable rail service to Milngavie, and putting forward the need for infrastructure change.

Mr Paterson, MSP for



MAKING THE CASE: Gil Paterson MSP is appealing to rail authorities.

Clydebank and Milngavie, said: "The Westerton to Milngavie line needs transformed for the greater good of the public using the line on a daily basis, who are currently facing unacceptable delays.

"At the moment, there is a single line, but we're calling for the line to be returned to a twinned track to allow trains to move up and down the line

faster and with greater ease, and less delays."

Ms Mackay, MSP for Strathkelvin and Bearsden, added: "Commuters and communities along the Westerton-Milngavie line are crying out for this change, and we will be representing these views as strongly as possible. When the line is re-twinning we can go ahead with the plan

– which has been proposed by East Dunbartonshire Council – to build a new rail halt at Allander with a park and ride. With such poor results on this line, we need action as soon as possible, and everyone knows what the answer is."

In November, Rona Mackay brought the matter to the transport minister who said he would "explore" the idea.

Bishopbriggs boundary

By LYNDIA WILLIAMSON

RESIDENTS of Bishopbriggs were shocked to hear of the submission which East Dunbartonshire's Liberal Democrats lodged with the Boundary Commission in response to their consultation on the proposals to redraw Westminster constituency boundaries.

The Boundary Commission proposals, which would reduce Scotland's constituencies from 59 to 53, would see Bearsden split between East and West Dunbartonshire. The SNP oppose such a change, but unlike the LibDems, they believe that none of East Dunbartonshire's communities should be broken up.

The LibDems in contrast, suggested that, rather than splitting Bearsden, Bishopbriggs should be sacrificed instead. In the proposal submitted on behalf of the local Liberal Democrats by LibDem Councillor Rod Ackland, they argued that: "The extent to which voters in Strathkelvin as a whole, and Bishopbriggs in particular, demonstrably realised that the issues in the neighbouring Glasgow constituency affected them and mattered to them, does, we think, suggest that if some portion of East Dunbartonshire does have to be assigned elsewhere, this southern border is the one where breaching will cause the least distress."

Strathkelvin and Bearsden MSP, Rona Mackay said "This idea is completely unacceptable to the residents of Bishopbriggs. The SNP will always fight to keep East Dunbartonshire together."

Royal opens new facility



HRH The Princess Royal met Rona Mackay MSP and Councillor Gillian Renwick during the opening of Deafblind Scotland's new facility, Field of Dreams, in Lenzie.

Princess Anne unveiled the plaque on Thursday October 19 and spent time hearing about the good work the charity does. Deafblind Scotland raised funds for a decade to build and open the new base.



ORGANISING: Campaigners (L-R) Billy Hatch, former councillor Anne McNair, Rona Mackay MSP, Council Leader Gordan Low and Councillor Paul Ferretti.

THE PLANNED closure of Bishopbriggs Delivery Office has come as a shock to members of the public in the area.

Despite package deliveries increasing massively in recent years, due to online shopping, Royal Mail is to close down its delivery office in Bishopbriggs.

This is a direct result of the unpopular privatisation of Royal Mail steered through by Tory-Liberal Democrat UK Government from 2010 to 2015 when Jo Swinson MP was a minister.

The Scottish National Party has been campaigning to stop this important local service being taken away from the town.

SNP campaigner Anne McNair said: "More than 1,500 have backed our petition to keep this vital public service open in Bishopbriggs."