

Parliamentary Patter is published by John Mason MSP to give members of the community a window into his parliamentary and constituency work. This newsletter is distributed monthly to those who have asked for an opportunity to read what their Member of the Scottish Parliament does and thinks.

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## Shettleston shakes off 'sick man of Europe' tag

Glasgow Shettleston's MSP, John Mason, has welcomed news that life expectancy in his constituency is increasing. Statistics revealed in a recent parliamentary question, lodged by Mr Mason, show that the average male and female life expectancy in Glasgow Shettleston is beginning to increase.

John Mason, SNP MSP for Glasgow Shettleston, commented:

"After years of the East End getting a bad name for its poor life expectancy, these statistics are encouraging and things seem to be moving in the right direction.

"Governments of various colours have tried to improve health and life expectancy in the East End, but clearly it takes a long time to turn things around. Actions like the introduction of the smoking ban, healthier food in schools, and encouragement to breast feed have undoubtedly helped. I would hope that attempts to tackle ultra-cheap alcohol will make a difference in the future too.

However, we cannot be complacent. Much as these figures may pull Shettleston off the bottom of the league tables, it's still important to keep working.

"With the Commonwealth Games coming to Glasgow in 2014, we have a remarkable opportunity to engage in more sporting activities, cut back on the excesses of smoking and alcohol and continue this good work"



## East End MSP leads call for polling place review

A City MSP is calling upon Glasgow City Council to carry out a root-and-branch review of polling places used at election time. Scottish National Party MSP for Glasgow Shettleston, John Mason, said in a recent letter to Glasgow City Council that a break in the election cycle is a perfect opportunity for the local authority to carry out a review of the conduct of elections and, in particular, the use of local polling places. Mr Mason's call comes after the recent local authority elections in May.



Some residents within the Baillieston part of Mr Mason's constituency have voted eight times since 2007, meaning disruption for parents who require child care, due to schools and nurseries being closed and teaching time being reduced as a result of Schools being used as polling places.

Mr Mason, who also represents the City's St Andrew's Square, is also asking the Council to consider specific areas where residents have to travel further away from their communities to vote, when there are local buildings nearby which could act as a polling place.

Commenting, the East End MSP, John Mason, said: "Following what has been a pretty full cycle of elections, I think now is a good time to pause and reflect on the City's plan for all elections. I am asking the City Council to consider a number of scenarios but, above all, whether we could do things more efficiently at election time. Local democracy is absolutely vital and anything we can do to help engage people in the democratic process must be considered. Glasgow's election turn outs are nowhere near where they could be, so this is an opportunity to see how we can make voting easier for local folk.

"One of the things I'd like the Council to consider is its reliance on using local schools as polling places. I think this tradition of using schools was something that might have worked a generation ago when we had fewer elections, but with regular elections to Holyrood, George Square, Westminster and Brussels – not to mention unforeseen by-elections - the pressure on local schools has simply become too much, in my opinion. Every time there is an election, we are looking at closing a school for the day, which means a loss of teaching time and problems for local families who have to identify alternative childcare – often at considerable cost.

"Turning to the local issues in the East End, we have some bizarre anomalies whereby residents living in St Andrews Square have to travel to the former St James' Primary to vote, when there are other buildings closer by which could be considered.

"We also have the strange situation at my own polling place, Sandaig Primary School, where there is another polling place only about 200 metres away in Our Lady of Peace Primary School. The ironic thing is that, in between these schools there is a perfectly good community centre which could be used."

## **Bridgeton's MSP demands answers**



SNP MSP John Mason has written to Royal Mail

Bridgeton's MSP, John Mason, has written to Royal Mail to demand answers about its plans to close the sorting office on Cubie Street.

Following reports in the Evening Times that the sorting office will be closed in January 2013, the SNP MSP has written to the Chief Executive of Royal Mail, Moya Greene, to demand answers about the lack of consultation carried out with the local community in the Bridgeton area.

Under Royal Mail's plans the G31-40 delivery office is due to move to the Glasgow South East Delivery Office in the Cambuslang Investment Park.

Commenting, Bridgeton's MSP, John Mason, said: "This is deeply concerning news.

"A number of big questions remain outstanding, for example what local consultation was carried out with residents? Has any consideration actually been given to the fact that public transport from Bridgeton to the Cambuslang Investment Park is practically non-existent?

"This is just a real concern for my constituents and I fear this hasn't been thought through properly.

"Asking people to travel from Bridgeton to the Cambuslang Investment Park to pick up a large envelope is just a nonsense."

## **John Mason "appalled" by alcohol stats**

Glasgow Shettleston's MSP, John Mason, has commented on statistics produced by Alcohol Focus Scotland, which estimate the financial cost to the community caused by alcohol abuse in Glasgow.

For the first time these statistics have been produced across Scotland, broken down by local authority area, and estimates that the total cost of alcohol harm to the city is around £364 million a year. This equates to a cost of £615 per Glasgow resident.

Commenting on the revelation, local MSP John Mason, said: "The news that alcohol abuse is costing Glasgow £365 million a year is, I am afraid, merely a confirmation of what many people will have feared. The figure does not, of course, quantify the

human cost to individuals and families, or the wider loss in economic potential. However, it does give us some idea of what a significant amount of time the health service, police and social services spend on dealing with this issue.

"I am certainly not against people enjoying a drink, and do so myself. However, these figures are clearly a major wake-up call. They remind us that Glasgow Shettleston has an alcohol death rate over five times higher (574%) than the UK average. All this makes me more convinced than ever that Scotland is doing the right thing by clamping down on the availability of ultra-cheap forms of alcohol through minimum pricing".

## **SNP's John backs cancer cure campaign**



John Mason is backing the fight against breast cancer by taking part in Breast Cancer Campaign's award winning fundraiser, wear it pink day – and he wants constituents to join him.

Now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year, wear it pink, on Friday 26 October 2012 will see supporters from all over the country in schools, colleges and businesses embracing the event's new theme, superheroes. The theme stems from the charity's belief that everybody who joins the fight – from people affected by breast cancer, to Breast Cancer Campaign scientists and all wear it pink participants – is a superhero.

Breast Cancer Campaign is asking everyone to pull on something pink and donate £2.00, whether it's a superhero cape, pink socks or pink pants you wear over your tights, you can help the charity achieve its target of raising £2 million, so they can continue to fund ground-breaking research.

Join the hundreds of thousands of people who take part in wear it pink every year. With your help Breast Cancer Campaign can improve survival rates for

the one in eight women who experience breast cancer during their lifetime.

Commenting, John Mason MSP said:

"I am proud to be able to show my support for the 'Wear It Pink' campaign. Cancer as a whole affects around 1 in 3 people across the UK, and breast cancer is one of our biggest killers.

"Everyone will know family, friends or colleagues who have been touched by cancer in some way, and it is vitally important that we raise funds to help fight back against the disease.

"It is essential that both women and men get themselves checked if they notice any kind of abnormality. That way treatment can be sought fast and there will be a better chance of beating the condition."

To take part in the UK's original and best pink day visit [wearitpink.co.uk](http://wearitpink.co.uk) and register to receive your free fundraising pack now. Vanish is backing the fight against breast cancer for the third year running by raising an incredible £250,000 for wear it pink.