

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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John Mason to lead debate at Holyrood

Glasgow Shettleston's MSP, John Mason, will be leading a Scottish Parliament Members' debate soon on the issue of parenting and fathers.

Mr Mason has worked closely with Families Need Fathers and says he very much looks forward to discussing the following motion which was lodged at Holyrood and has attracted cross-party support:

S4M-04456 ♦ John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (Scottish National Party): That the Parliament welcomes the publication of the Scottish Government's national parenting strategy, *National Parenting Strategy: Making a positive difference to children and young people through parenting*; considers that parenting is one of the most important jobs that anyone could have in their life; welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to developing a national parenting strategy that includes an investment of £18 million to improve access to information, advice and support for parents; notes the comments

from Families Need Fathers, which, following the publication of the strategy, said that it "welcomes the emphasis on fathers in this new strategy, including fathers who live apart from their children", and considers that Glasgow and Scotland as a whole would benefit from a debate on the role of fathers and their rights and responsibilities.



Local MSP comments on Freshlink closure

Glasgow Shettleston's MSP has spoken out of his frustration and disappointment at the news that Freshlink sausage factory in his constituency is set to close. There are 145 people currently employed at the site and efforts will now turn to ensuring that they are given every opportunity possible to find alternative opportunities.

Commenting, SNP MSP John Mason who has campaigned to save Freshlink said: "I'm extremely disappointed at the company's decision and know that this will come as a bitter blow to staff at the site.

"It is difficult not to conclude that Freshlink had little enthusiasm for finding a solution that would keep jobs in Glasgow, as the company persistently only sent a junior manager to the task force aimed at saving jobs.

"Having been part of that taskforce for the last four months, I know that substantial offers of help and assistance were put forward. In addition, senior officials from Scottish Government, Glasgow City Council, Scottish Enterprise, Clyde Gateway and others have invested significant amounts of time in trying to find a solution. It is extremely frustrating that the company chose not to take them up.

"The 145 staff at Freshlink will now be facing an uncertain future, but I welcome the confirmation that the Scottish Government will be putting a PACE team in place to help staff move into alternative employment.

"The company has still not clarified its timescale for closing the plant and this makes it more difficult for staff to find other jobs. This morning a Freshlink employee who has been there 18 years spoke to me and showed me the letter she had received from the Company. It was in very vague terms and, for the sake of the staff, I would appeal to them to clarify each employee's position.



"My thoughts are with the staff who have had such disappointing news today and my focus will now be on ensuring that they have access to every possible opportunity to find new employment."

Mr Mason has tabled the following motion in Holyrood:

S4M-04673 (ABP Foods Turns Its Back On Shettleston): That the Parliament expresses disappointment and frustration at ABP Foods' announcement on 2 November 2012 that it is to close the Freshlink sausage factory in Shettleston and relocate production to Yorkshire; considers that a tremendous amount of work has been carried out by Scottish Enterprise, Glasgow City Council, the Scottish Government, Clyde Gateway, numerous public agencies and politicians from across the political divide in trying to save the 145 jobs at the factory; is particularly disappointed by what it sees as ABP Foods' lack of willingness to engage effectively with the task force; considers that this was demonstrated by the company sending only a junior member of staff to the task force meetings throughout the entire process, and calls on major supermarkets and customers in Scotland to review their relationship with ABP Foods, which, it believes, has treated staff and Glasgow's east end with a complete lack of respect or concern.



SNP MSP John Mason with Clyde the Thistle, the Commonwealth Games mascot

Games MSP hosts 2014 event at Holyrood

John Mason, SNP MSP for Glasgow Shettleston recently hosted a reception in the Scottish Parliament to help pass the baton from London 2012 to Glasgow 2014.

Mr Mason's constituency is largely where the games facilities are situated and the event saw 200 people come together in Holyrood to celebrate the passing of the baton from the London Olympics to Glasgow's Commonwealth Games, which will take place in the summer of 2014.

Commenting after the reception, Mr Mason said:

"With the Commonwealth Games largely in my constituency, I was delighted to be sponsoring this event.

"It is clear from walking around the East End that the landscape is changing significantly with some fantastic facilities being built as part of Glasgow 2014. All of these facilities will leave a lasting legacy that will help transform the East End of Glasgow.

"With just two years to go until the opening ceremony, I am immensely excited about the opportunities this will bring for the East End, Glasgow and Scotland."

Games boosting Scottish jobs and businesses

As North Lanarkshire based IT firm NVT secures a £2 million Commonwealth Games contract, the economic boost that the games is bringing to Scottish companies is clearer than ever. To date, companies based in Scotland have won 312 of the 418 Games contracts awarded over the last three years, including almost 90% of the lucrative tier one contracts worth £276 million.

Meanwhile, iconic drinks makers AG Barr which produces Irn-Bru has been unveiled as the latest sponsor of the Games. Many of the companies that have been awarded contracts, including NVT, have been able to expand their Modern Apprenticeship programmes as a result, bringing valuable opportunities to young people in Scotland.

Commenting John Mason, said:

"The SNP Government has been determined to ensure that the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2014 delivers a lasting economic legacy to businesses and communities in Scotland.

"With the vast majority of contracts and almost 90% of tier one contracts having been awarded to companies in Scotland, it is clear that this is happening.

"Jobs are being created and Modern Apprenticeship programmes are being expanded, as the Commonwealth Games brings opportunities to people in Scotland. "That is great news for Glasgow, great news for Scotland but most importantly great news for the businesses and communities which are already benefitting from the Commonwealth Games in 2014."

Charity regulator pressed on £500k pay-off

MSP demands answers after 8 month enquiry

The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) is being pressed to disclose what information it has on the £512,000 payoff of a former head of a charity set up to tackle poverty.

Ronnie Saez, formerly the Chief Executive at Glasgow East Regeneration Agency, obtained a half a million pound golden handshake on the approval of the five GERA directors, three of whom were Labour councillors, in January.

John Mason, SNP MSP for Glasgow Shettleston, contacted OSCR asking them to investigate the matter, which they duly obliged to undertake. However, since February 1, they have passed on no further information, despite Mr Mason's regular requests.

The Shettleston MSP has now written to Enterprise Minister, Fergus Ewing MSP, asking for assistance in pressing OSCR.

Commenting, Mr Mason said:

"I am becoming increasingly concerned about OSCR's reluctance to disclose what information they may have on the payoff of Mr Saez.

"They have had over eight months to investigate the matter. Even by their own definition this exceeds their target quoted in their Inquiry and Intervention policy, which states: 'We aim to conclude inquiries within as short a period as possible and, generally within 6 months'.

"Mr Saez's morally questionable pay off of over half a million pounds, sanctioned by Labour councillors, needs explained and the public needs to have confidence that the regulator is able to deliver what it is designed for.

"Perhaps Johann Lamont could reclaim some much needed credibility by publicly distancing herself and her party from any future dealings with Mr Saez. If she refuses to do this then Mr Saez and Labour are wrapped up in each other both in the past and in the present.

"I have written to Enterprise Minister Fergus Ewing to assist in my efforts to insist that the OSCR give an explanation of who, why and how Mr Saez's pay-off was decided and to make the whole affair totally transparent."



Shettleston's MSP is demanding answers about how public money has been used