

E-news *December* **2011**

Latest Parliamentary News from Sarah Boyack MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Lothian (Scottish Labour)



BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE – A LOOK BACK AT 2011



This week I attended the annual Hutchison Vale Christmas Hamper night where gift hampers are distributed to elderly people in the community.

The Christmas period offers the chance to reflect on the year just past and to look to the challenges ahead.

Throughout 2011, I have been involved in a number of local campaigns and local issues and wanted to provide a brief look back at some of them.

Health is one of the main topics that constituents have contacted me on and this year I have lobbied NHS Lothian on a number of issues including [waiting lists](#), [cuts to nursing staff](#), the delivery of the new [Sick Kids Hospital](#) and delays to new local facilities at [Firhill](#).

Housing is another big issue due to the [shortage of affordable housing](#) and I have called on the Scottish Government to match its commitment to build 6,000 socially rented homes a year during this Parliament.

Moving from availability to the maintenance of housing, concerns

over [statutory repairs](#) have continued this year and I am still pressing for a more robust system that will deliver confidence and value for money for households.

On antisocial behaviour, there was a breakthrough in my [campaign to tackle party flats](#) while later in the year I have been lobbying on public safety issues such as the [lack of CCTV at the Telfer Subway](#).

The second half of the year has brought some severe weather to the region and [flooding continues to be a problem](#). I have been lobbying Scottish Water and the insurance industry to [ensure that homes and businesses are protected](#) and have continued to press for the Council and Scottish Government for support for large flood prevention schemes like the Water of Leith.

With the financial outlook still bleak I have been supporting calls for policies that will help to promote growth and tackle youth unemployment. I am [particularly concerned about social impact of cuts to college budgets](#) and will continue to ask questions.

Many of these issues are ongoing and I will be continuing to work on them in the year ahead.

However, in the meantime I would like to wish all of my constituents a very merry Christmas and best wishes for 2012.

NEW YEAR, NEW ROLE

As we move into 2012 I am excited to be taking on a new role in opposition as my party's Shadow Cabinet spokesperson for Local Government and Planning.

This is an exciting brief holding the Scottish Government to account on how it supports local Councils to deliver the range of services that people in our towns and cities expect.

Councils are facing extreme budget pressures and I have heard from constituents concerned about how cutbacks are affecting services like social care and education.

Against this backdrop it is more important than ever to scrutinise the Scottish Government's approach.

The role also has responsibility for the planning system raising important questions of how we use our land resources to best effect to stimulate growth, protect communities and protect the environment.

The role sees me return to policy areas I covered as a Minister in the first Scottish Executive and I am excited by the challenges ahead.

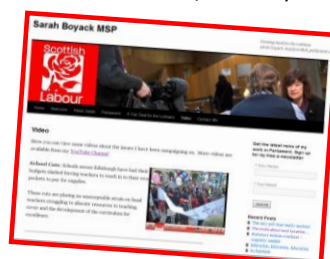


Get the latest news online...

For all the latest news of my work in the Scottish Parliament, visit my new website.

The website is updated on a regular basis with news of what I've been up to in Parliament and a video diary on current issues.

There are also links to a variety of useful information on the workings of Parliament.



www.sarahboyack.com

Contact Sarah

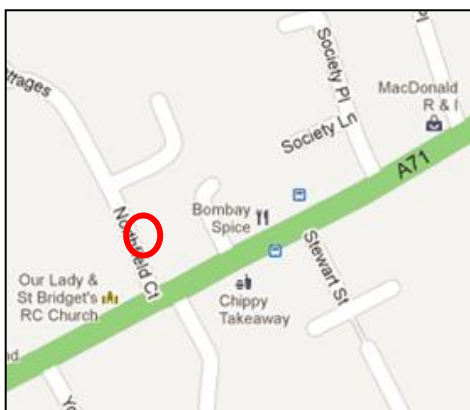
As an MSP for Lothian I am keen to hear any problems or concerns you may have. If you think I could help you, get in touch...

Write: The Scottish Parliament
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Online: www.sarahboyack.com

NEW OFFICE LAUNCHED



Earlier this month marked the official opening of our new Lothian office in West Calder.

The new office, based at 4 Northfield Court, is operated jointly with my Lothian colleagues Kezia Dugdale MSP and Neil Findlay MSP.

Given the size of the constituency, it was a considerable challenge to decide on the best location for the local office but we believe that West Calder fits the bill.

The office will provide a local point of

contact for constituents in the western half of the region while constituents in Edinburgh, East Lothian and Midlothian will still be able to contact their MSPs through the Parliament.

I am very excited to see the new office up and running and offering constituents another point of contact with their local representatives.

If you would like to contact me on any issues of concern to you, you can do so by using the details on the front of this newsletter.

Useful Contacts...

Over the Christmas and New Year period, my office will be closed from midday on Friday December 23rd to Monday January 9th. All enquiries will be dealt with in the New Year.

I hope that constituents across the Lothians will have a fantastic festive period. However, should you encounter a situation where you need emergency assistance I hope that you will find the following numbers and links useful.

- **Emergencies** (Fire/Ambulance/Police) – 999
- [Lothian and Borders Police](#) (non-emergencies) – 0131 311 3131
- [Crimestoppers](#) – 0800 555111
- [NHS 24](#) – 08454 24 24 24
- [National Grid Emergency Service](#) (Gas) – 0800 111 999
- [Scottish Hydro](#) (Electricity) – 0800 300 999
- [ScottishPower](#) (Electricity) – 0845 27 27 999
- [Scottish Water](#) (Emergency Helpline) – 0845 600 8855
- [City of Edinburgh Council](#) – 0131 200 2000
- [West Lothian Council](#) – 01506 775000
- [East Lothian](#) – 01620 827 827
- [Midlothian Council](#) – 0131 270 7500
- [Samaritans](#) – 08457 90 90 90
- [Breathing Space](#) – 0800 838587

HIGHLIGHTING COMMUNITY FUNDING INITIATIVES

Earlier this year I ran an event offering local groups the chance to meet organisations offering funding through grant schemes.

Recently I have been passed details of similar schemes and I wanted to pass details of them on to you...

Community Gardens in Edinburgh

The Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust have been awarded funding to increase availability of community gardening.

Therapeutic gardening has proven health benefits and the ELGT will be supporting groups to get community growing projects going.

For more information contact Liz Stewart on liz@elgt.org.uk.

Voluntary Action Fund - Community Chest

This programme provides grants of up to £1,000 to help small community groups to develop their activities.

They are particularly focused on groups that work with disabled people, those facing discrimination, families and young people and older people.

For more information [click here](#).

Edinburgh and Lothians Health Foundation

The ELHF have launched a £1.9m grants programme to help improve the health of local people.

The organisation is welcoming applications from organisations for local projects designed to improve people's health.

For more information [click here](#).

SCVO and Unity Trust Bank

These organisations are teaming up to help charities buy their own premises.

The £50m loan fund will run for five years and offer member charities the chance to bid for up to £5m to allow them to own their own premises.

For more information on the scheme [click here](#).

working hard for Lothian