

STEWART MAXWELL MSP - REPRESENTING YOU IN THE WEST OF SCOTLAND



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Concerns Remain About Local Services After Argyll & Clyde Closure

Health Minister Andy Kerr MSP announced a three month consultation on the future of NHS Argyll & Clyde with the intention of scrapping the health board. The health board services are then to be shared out between NHS Greater Glasgow and NHS Highland and Islands. However, when asked by Shadow Deputy Minister for Health Stewart Maxwell MSP what local services would be returned to the Vale of Leven and Inverclyde Royal Hospital as a result of the closure of NHS Argyll & Clyde the Health Minister refused to acknowledge that there had been any reduction in services.

This refusal followed on from the refusal of the First Minister Jack McConnell to answer Mr Maxwell when quizzed at a previous First Minister's Questions about the effects of scrapping Argyll & Clyde Health Board. Mr Maxwell said

"When I quizzed both the Health Minister and the First Minister about the effect scrapping Argyll & Clyde Health Board would have on the services already lost to the area and if they would now be reinstated at the Vale of Leven

and Inverclyde Hospitals and if not how scrapping the Health Board would benefit patients they refused to answer. When I asked the First Minister if the proposed closure would result in writing off the £100 million deficit run up by Argyll & Clyde he refused to answer and finally when I looked for confirmation from the First Minister that the proposed closures of the A&E facilities at the Victoria Infirmary and other Glasgow hospitals would be delayed indefinitely until the effect of the expected new boundaries were fully understood he still refused to answer."

"Unfortunately the Health Minister and the First Minister felt it more important to make cheap party political points than debate the most important issue facing the people of the West of Scotland. Given the announcement just made by the Health Minister, that there is to be a three month review on the Health Boards future, it is now time for the Executive to 'raise their game' and explain to the people of the West of Scotland just exactly what is in store for them when the closure of Argyll & Clyde Health Board goes ahead."

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Maxwell Exposes Loophole in Lib/Lab Smoking Bill

Shadow Deputy Minister for Health, Stewart Maxwell MSP, exposed a loophole in the Lib/Lab smoking bill during the stage 1 debate on the bill in the Scottish Parliament. During the debate Mr Maxwell held up two near identical cigarettes and asked the Minister for Health whether he could tell which cigarette contained tobacco and which was a non-tobacco cigarette. The Minister was unable to differentiate between them.

Speaking after the debate Mr Maxwell said, "I am a firm

supporter of a ban on smoking in enclosed public places and that is why I believe that the legislation to introduce a ban must be completely watertight. I was disappointed to discover this loophole in the Executive bill that would allow the smoking of non-tobacco cigarettes to continue after the ban was in place even though they produce tar and carbon monoxide.

"It is imperative that we create a level playing field and ensure that any legislation is easily enforceable and that is why I

have called on the Minister to support an amendment from me to properly define smoking in the bill. Such an amendment will ensure that the legislation will cover all smoking and not ignore the smoking of herbal cigarettes.

"I will be meeting with the Minister and the Executive's civil servants and lawyers before the bill reaches stage 2 in an attempt to persuade them to support my attempt to close this loophole in their bill."

Maxwell Uncovers Computer Scandal

SNP West of Scotland MSP Stewart Maxwell denounced the Executive's failure to replace the Criminal History System Database - a system that is "vital to the harmonisation of criminal justice in Scotland".

Answers to Parliamentary Questions tabled by Mr Maxwell have revealed the Executive's failure on this issue, and show that the system which was supposed to be implemented in March 2004, is now over a year late and with no budget defined the costs are

set to spiral even further.

Mr Maxwell said "This database is imperative to ensure that criminals are sufficiently monitored, ensuring no one is released or facilitated without their criminal history being taken into account.

"But under the Labour/Liberal watch this project has been a complete disaster. With no budget set, no one in charge and five years into the project the whole thing has not surprisingly collapsed. Even with two sets of management consultants, the project has not

met its targets and has had to start again from scratch.

"To make matters worse, the new system that was set to be implemented does exactly the same as the system being replaced and is set to cost the tax payer at least £3.3 million.

"This is simply not good enough and marks yet another botched job for the Lib/Lab coalition. The Criminal History System is a vital tool needed to protect the public, and the Executive have, once again, simply failed to deliver and at great cost to the public."

Rouken Glen Wood Saved—Again

Plans to build blocks of flats on Rouken Glen wood have yet again been blocked by local residents. Speaking after the announcement by the planning committee of East Renfrewshire Council that they were refusing planning permission for the flats Stewart Maxwell MSP said,

"I am delighted that once again

plans by builders to destroy this wood have been thwarted by the determined efforts of local residents. This wood is a beautiful local amenity in the Giffnock/Thornliebank area and it would have been a scandal if it had been destroyed.

"I have supported the campaign to save this wood from the

beginning and I hope that the builders will at last give up on their attempts to build on it. I have now written to East Renfrewshire Council urging them to protect the wood from any further attempts to build on it by upgrading the wood's classification and thereby making its future more secure."