

STEWART MAXWELL MSP - REPRESENTING YOU IN THE WEST OF SCOTLAND



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Victory for Maxwell After Two Year Smoking Bill Campaign

Deputy Shadow Minister for Health, Stewart Maxwell MSP spoke of his delight at the passing of the Smoking, Health and Social Care (Scotland) Bill on the 30th June. Mr Maxwell said,

"I am delighted that my campaign to ban smoking in enclosed public places has culminated in the passing of this legislation. It is two years to the day since I first laid my proposal in Parliament to bring forward a members bill to prohibit smoking in enclosed public places. At that time I was almost a lone voice in Parliament calling for this legislation and many MSPs and journalists thought there was no chance of my campaign succeeding. It is therefore particularly gratifying that the bill was passed with such a large majority.

"I was particularly pleased that during the passage of the bill through the Health Committee of the Parliament I was able to persuade the Committee to support my amendments to the bill. The committee members and the Executive agreed that the definition of smoking in the bill was flawed and left a loophole that could have been exploited by the tobacco industry. By accepting my amendments the bill now makes clear that it will be

illegal to smoke any substance in an enclosed public place. It would have been ludicrous if the bill had banned the smoking of tobacco products while continuing to allow the smoking of non-tobacco cigarettes.

"One of the other amendments that was passed at committee stage was the proposal to alter the age limit for purchasing cigarettes. I supported this change to the bill so that after consultation the Parliament could alter the age limit for buying cigarettes, but that amendment had a fatal flaw.

Therefore on the final day of the bill's parliamentary passage I managed to get MSPs to pass a further amendment to the bill, which ensured the age limit for purchasing tobacco could only be raised and could not be lowered from the present age of 16. If my amendment had not passed then it would have left it open for a future Scottish government to lower the age limit on tobacco sales to under 16."



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Maxwell Challenges Executive to Publish Scottish Health Statistics

Shadow Deputy Minister for Health, Stewart Maxwell MSP recently issued a comparison of the UK figures on the World Health Organisation's 'Health For All' European Database and the Scottish equivalents as published by the Health Minister.

Mr Maxwell said, "Scotland is very sick, sicker even than I expected and I am horrified by these figures. It has taken many months of effort on my part to get the Executive to publish the Scottish figures and now that they have I can well understand their reluctance to do so.

"These figures highlight the importance of Scotland publishing

its own data and not relying on the data provided for the entire United Kingdom, which simply masks our problems. Until we understand the extent of our problems we will never be in a position to improve. I have now called on the Health Minister to publish Scottish figures for all 517 indicators for which data is available, rather than only the 306 indicators which he has so far published.

"I was shocked to discover that the standardised death rate for trachea, bronchus and lung cancer among Scottish women was almost 50% higher than in the rest of the United Kingdom. I was staggered to discover that the standardised death rate for

cirrhosis of the liver was 116% higher in Scotland than in the rest of the UK and that other alcohol related deaths were 64% higher.

"The figures that I have managed to force the Executive to publish show why it is absolutely essential that Scotland has its own entry on the international health league tables. Our position is hidden by the effect of having our figures subsumed within the UK figures and presents a totally false picture of the situation in Scotland. The publication of separate Scottish figures will allow us to understand the extent of the problem and allow us to focus resources where they are most needed."

Maxwell Discusses Crofting Problems on Arran

Along with his colleague Rob Gibson (SNP MSP for Highlands) Stewart Maxwell MSP visited Arran to discuss with some of the islanders many of the problems they are facing. Mr Maxwell said,

"During my visit to Arran I met several small landholders, whose needs are not met by the Agriculture Holding Act of 2003. Due to their uncertain position, they hope the Crofting Reform Bill proposals will help them out. Therefore my colleague Mr Gibson has written to the Scottish Executive under Freedom of Information provisions to ask them

to explain why the 2003 Act ignored them. He has also asked the Scottish Executive how many small holders there are in Scotland to clarify the size of the problem."

"The small holders that I met in Arran were hopeful that an amendment could be placed in the Crofting Reform Bill that would allow their situation to be addressed at long last. While they are not crofters their situation is very similar. If Arran becomes a part of the Crofting counties, as has been proposed, then the Arran small landholders cannot be ignored."

"It is clear that the issue of land reform is one that still needs to be addressed in many communities across Scotland. The situation on Arran is exacerbated by the lack of affordable housing and the almost complete lack of land being freed up to provide housing for local people."



Maxwell Urges Longer Opening Hours for Minor Injuries Units

West of Scotland MSP, Stewart Maxwell has urged Greater Glasgow Health Board to extend the hours of opening for its proposed Minor Injuries Units. He said

"Minor Injuries Units can play an important part in the treatment of patients for a wide range of injuries such as: cuts, bruising and grazes, sprains and strains, minor burns and scalds, arm and leg injuries, splinters, minor broken bones,

minor bumps to the head, nose injuries, bites and stings. We are all aware of cases where people need treatments for many of these injuries at any time of the day and night.

The proposed hours of opening for the forthcoming Minor Injuries Units are 9am to 9pm. However, I am sure we all know people who have needed such treatment outwith these hours. Therefore I am urging Greater Glasgow Health

Board to consider extending the hours of these Minor Injury Units by a minimum of one hour in the morning and one hour later in the evening. This extended period would allow a greater number of the public to be treated at the clinics which would go some way to compensating for the loss of much of the accident and emergency provision which Glasgow and the West of Scotland is facing.