



## Maxwell votes against 24 hour drinking

West of Scotland MSP Stewart Maxwell voted against the proposal to allow drinking 24 hours a day throughout Scotland. Stewart said,

"I was horrified to see the proposal to allow pubs and clubs throughout Scotland to open round the clock. This could now mean that there will be no time of the day or night when many communities will be free from the prospect of being disrupted by those under the influence of drink.

"It is well documented that the vast majority of violent offences are alcohol induced and research shows that alcohol was a factor in over 70% of assaults. I'm surprised

that certain members of Parliament want to allow even longer hours for those involved in such offences to get drunk? I am at a loss to see how this measure helps assist the police in their fight against the ongoing problem of anti-social behaviour? We have all witnessed the alcohol fuelled anti-social behaviour of the minority and I feel it is clear that longer opening hours will only make matters worse for us all.

"However, it is not just the damage that people under the influence of drink can do to others that is at stake here. Recent figures show the incredible damage that drink is doing to the

mental health of our nation. New figures show that 100 patients a day are discharged from Scottish hospitals with alcohol-related mental and behaviour disorders.

"We have all been aware for some time of the toll alcohol is taking on the physical health of thousands of Scots, but these appalling figures graphically illustrate the impact alcohol is having on the nation's mental wellbeing.

"I consider these figures clearly expose the Scottish Government's push to extend opening hours as a reckless gamble which does nothing to tackle the

binge-drinking culture that continues to blight Scotland.

"Alcohol-related problems are straining not only the mental and physical wellbeing of Scots, but the resources of an NHS already struggling to meet demand.

"The Scottish Government must end its chaotic stumbling and take decisive action to tackle this devastating problem. I am proud that, along with my colleagues, I voted against the proposals to allow 24 hour drinking. Unfortunately, Government MSPs decided, for whatever reason, to vote to allow it.

## Maxwell attends launch of Independence Convention

Stewart Maxwell MSP attended the launch of the Independence Convention held in Dynamic Earth, Edinburgh, on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2005. Stewart said,

"I was delighted to attend the launch of the Independence Convention on St Andrew's Day. The Convention already has cross-party support from three of the parties

represented in the Scottish Parliament as well as from Independent MSPs. However, for the convention to be a success it needs the support of civic Scotland. Members and representatives of the Churches, Trade Unions, business community, the voluntary sector, artists, musicians, actors and other groups must be encouraged to play their

part."

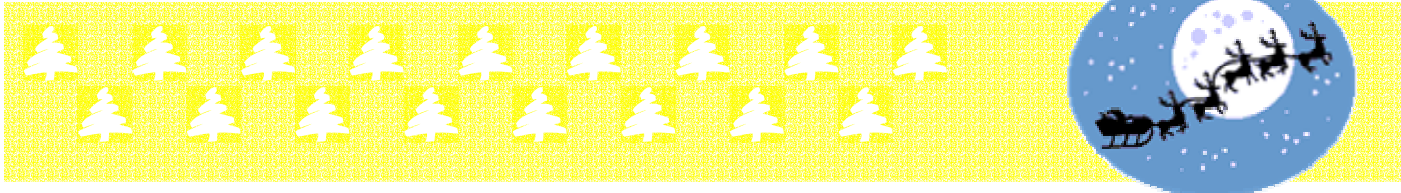
"One of the highlights of the launch was the contribution of Elaine C. Smith who entertained the packed meeting, but also showed her passion for Scottish Independence with her witty and entertaining speech."

"I was very encouraged by the wide range of

people who attended the launch of the Independence Convention and the messages of support from people such as Sean Connery who were unable to be there. The popularity of the launch of this movement was shown by the fact that people had to be turned away at the door because it was so busy. This is a great start for the Convention."

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and all the best for the forthcoming year.





## Maxwell pledges support for Scotland's National Day

Stewart Maxwell MSP pledged his support to the motion to make St Andrew's Day a public holiday. Stewart said,

"I fully support the move towards making St Andrew's Day a public holiday. It is important that Scotland has a day when we can celebrate our national identity and as St Andrew is the Patron Saint of Scotland, St Andrew's Day is

particularly appropriate."

"The move to have St Andrew's Day proclaimed a public holiday has been supported by business leaders, community leaders and Scots from all walks of life and there are many potential benefits in celebrating such an event. The tourist industry is particularly keen to see such a move as they recognise what many of these benefits would

be and how the tourism trade throughout Scotland would profit considerably from this move.

"You only have to look across the water to Ireland to see the incredibly positive effect St Patrick's Day has had, not only in Ireland but throughout the world. I look forward to the day when Scotland celebrates its own National Day."

## Maxwell calls for the mandatory reporting of knife injuries

Stewart Maxwell MSP recently called for the mandatory reporting of knife injuries by hospitals to the police in a bid to tackle knife crime in Scotland.

Mr Maxwell said "I made this call after information revealed to me under the Freedom of Information Act showed that there is no uniform set of statistics kept by hospitals and also no co-ordinated approach in relation to the reporting of knife injuries. This means the true extent of knife crime in Scotland is not clear. Figures researched by Dr. Rudy Crawford of Glasgow Royal Infirmary estimate knife injuries to be up to three times higher than police statistics show."

"How can we tackle the scourge of knife crime in Scotland when we do not have the information to show us how bad the problem is and where the problem is?"

"While I support any moves to tackle knife crime, I am asking for cross-party support to enable Parliament to ensure that there are clear guidelines instructing hospitals to make information available to the police. This is a pro-active measure which can start immediately to allow police to focus their resources in tackling knife crime in a more targeted way.

"At present there appears to be confusion amongst Health Boards

over what information can or should be released concerning knife injuries. The introduction of new guidelines would bring about a co-ordinated approach to the reporting of knife injuries, ensuring hospitals know their obligations to report knife related injuries.

"We cannot base policy on knife crime on current statistics published by the police and Scottish Government as they underestimate the true extent of knife crimes committed in Scotland. If hospitals shared information with police on what weapon was used and where it happened, we could begin to tackle once and for all the problem of knife crime in Scotland."

## Maxwell reveals that speed camera profits fill Treasury coffers

Stewart Maxwell MSP has revealed that the profits from fines generated by speed cameras across Scotland go straight to the Treasury in London. However, if the same cameras operate at a loss, the bill has to be picked up from local council taxes. Commenting on this discovery Stewart Maxwell said, "In 2003-04, the last year for which figures are available, Dumfries and Galloway speed cameras made a profit of £125,000, Fife made £134,000, the North East £293,000 and Strathclyde £714,000. Tayside broke even, while Lothian and

Borders made a loss of £129,000, which had to be made up from local sources the following year. This means that the Treasury's coffers were swollen by more than £1 million from speeding motorists instead of that money being re-invested in road safety measures in Scotland.

"There were 307 deaths and 18,000 injuries in road accidents in Scotland last year. As well as the horrendous personal loss involved in each of these incidents, each death is

estimated to cost the Scottish economy £1.5 million, and each injury £78,000. This amounts to total costs of almost £2 billion a year.

"It is well documented that road safety measures save lives. The money which is raised in Scotland through the speed cameras should be kept in Scotland and contribute towards the cost of saving the lives of the people in Scotland, rather than filling the coffers of the Treasury."