

Stewart Maxwell MSP

LAUNCH OF INDEPENDENCE REFERENDUM CONSULTATION - HAVE YOUR SAY!



Picture: Stewart with the Scottish Government consultation paper on Scotland's constitutional future.

The people of Scotland have been clear about their desire for our Parliament to have more responsibilities and in the white paper, *Your Scotland, Your Voice*, the Scottish Government has set out the options for our country. The next step is to allow the people to have their say in a free and fair referendum.

Last month saw the launch of the consultation paper "Scotland's Future: Draft Referendum (Scotland) Bill". This consultation provides an opportunity for people who want a say in Scotland's future to shape the framework for undertaking that referendum.

The draft Referendum Bill set out in the consultation will be introduced to Parliament later this year and would give the Scottish people the opportunity to have their say on two questions: first, whether the Scottish Parliament should have more devolved responsibility; second, whether there should be an additional transfer of power to enable Scotland to become an independent country.

The document seeks views on the best option for the question on further devolution: full devolution including

fiscal autonomy, or the more limited proposals for the financing of the Scottish Parliament made by the Commission on Scottish Devolution.

I strongly believe that the time is right for Scotland to have its full independence, however, I also recognise that there are those who argue that the responsibilities of the Scottish Parliament should be extended in more limited ways. I therefore fully support holding a referendum to let the people have their say on this - something we have never been given the opportunity to do.

I would encourage everyone to get onto the Scottish Government website and have their say before the closure of the consultation on Friday 30 April 2010:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Consultations/government/draftreferendum.asp>

STEWART APPOINTED GIRLGUIDING AMBASSADOR FOR EAST RENFREWSHIRE

I was honoured to recently accept the post of Guiding Ambassador for the Girlguiding group in East Renfrewshire.

It was a real pleasure to accept my role as Guiding Ambassador from Ms Evie Yedd, the East Renfrewshire District Commissioner. This was especially exciting due to this year being the centenary year of the founding of the Girl Guide movement.

The Girl Guiding organisation has been, and continues to be an outstandingly successful movement for girls and young women. It has enriched the lives of generations of girls and it is all made possible by the work and dedication of

the volunteers who give up their time to provide this tremendous experience for our children.

I am delighted to support the Guiding movement in every way that I can, as I think it plays an enormously important role. Our girls, and our society, would be very much the poorer if there were no Guides.

As a guiding ambassador, it was a particular pleasure to hear the recent announcement from the Scottish Government that £500,000 of cash retrieved from criminals will be used to help six youth organisations, including Girlguiding Scotland through the-

CashBack for Communities initiative.

It's fantastic news that youth groups which support our young people and provide them with organised fun should benefit from the money retrieved from the proceeds of organised crime. We owe so much to the good work carried out by these volunteers and I am very pleased that the Scottish Government has provided them with this support.

CashBack for Communities is a program of diversionary activities for young people to increase the opportunities they have to develop their interests and skills in a supported way using funds recovered from criminals.

DEBATE PAVES THE WAY FOR REFORM ON ‘DOUBLE JEOPARDY’ LAW



Picture: Stewart debating proposed reforms to the ‘double jeopardy’ law in the Scottish Parliament.

The law in Scotland at the moment prevents a person from being tried twice for the same crime. This is commonly referred to as the rule against ‘double jeopardy’, or ‘tholed assize’ which is the

traditional Scots Law term. The Scottish Government has launched a consultation seeking views on how to reform the law relating to ‘double jeopardy’.

I was able to participate in a parliamentary debate on the proposals for modernising the law in this area. It was pleasing to hear cross-party support in general for ensuring that Scotland's approach to double jeopardy reflects the interests of justice.

When it emerges after a trial that the trial was tainted in some way, if the person confesses to the crime or if new evidence emerges, through advances in DNA technology for example, it cannot be right that the guilty are not brought to justice.

However, I oppose the idea that the Crown should have the right to go after people until it gets a conviction, and would push for appropriate safeguards to be in place to prevent this.

I also believe this should apply retrospectively so that previous injustices can be corrected, and that it should apply to a range of serious offences such as sexual offences against children or serious drugs offences, and not just murder or rape as suggested by some parties during the parliamentary debate.

I strongly support reform in this area and I look forward to the law being modernised in the near future following the findings of the consultation.

STEWART PAYS RESPECT TO VICTIMS OF CLYDEBANK BLITZ

West of Scotland MSP Stewart Maxwell has paid his respects to the victims of the ‘Clydebank Blitz’ who were killed by Nazi air assaults on the 13th and 14th March 1941 and has praised the town's regeneration for incorporating its historic link to World War II.

Commenting Stewart said: “Survivors of those horrific two days in March 1941 will never forget the tragic loss of life and level of destruction to the town, but neither will younger generations who can learn about how Clyde-

bank came together as a community and rebuilt itself despite such a catastrophic event.

“Next year will mark the 70th anniversary of the ‘Clydebank Blitz’ and no doubt there will be a number of events throughout the town to mark it. Meanwhile, on this year's anniversary, I ask everyone in the West of Scotland to pay their own respects by learning about what happened on those two tragic days in March 1941.”

“It's important that we never forget the contribution and sacrifices made by the people of Clydebank and across Scotland. In commemoration of the blitz, I have lodged a parliamentary motion which I hope all MSPs, particularly those from the West of Scotland, will take time to sign in remembrance.”

Parliamentary Motion S3M-05915: Stewart Maxwell (West of Scotland) Remembering the Clydebank Blitz - That the Parliament marks the anniversary of the Clydebank Blitz, which, on 13 and 14 March 1941, involved the bombing of what were seen by the Nazis as strategic military targets, including shipyards as well as the Singer sewing machine factory; also remembers the bombing of Hillington, Renfrewshire, which resulted in the destruction of the Rolls Royce factory and other manufacturing outlets; acknowledges that Clydebank suffered the most concentrated bomb damage of any part of the British Isles during World War II; pays respect to those injured and killed by the raids and recognises the sacrifices made and the role played by the people of Clydebank and Scotland in their contribution to the Allied effort that finally defeated the Axis forces in 1945, and congratulates the town of Clydebank in retaining its link to the events of World War II in its continued and ongoing regeneration.

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