



Good wishes for 2021

May I begin this first newsletter of 2021 by extending my good wishes to all my readers for what I hope, longer term, will be a much better new year. The current virus infection rates and the accompanying severe restrictions continue to be a matter of grave concern for us all and therefore so much is resting on the speedy roll-out of the Oxford vaccine.

All being well, 2021 is, of course, Scottish General Election year and, despite the current difficulties, a great deal of planning has been taking place over the past few weeks to support my campaign for Perthshire South and Kinross-shire – a seat in which we trail the SNP by only 1,422 votes. That is something which I am determined to overturn and I need your help in the next four months.

Inevitably, it will be a different format for campaigning given that Covid19 will prevent us from too much door to door canvassing as is normal practice. But that does not mean we can sit back and wait. Our emphasis has to be on telephone canvassing, leafleting and on social media engagement.

If you are able to help us, you will find the main contact details below.

We are particularly looking for assistance with our regular one hour telephone canvass sessions which are undertaken by a team of volunteers. Even if you have not phone surveyed before we can give you all the help and advice you need.

We are also looking for help with leafleting. Even a commitment to deliver a run of 200 leaflets in your local area would be a huge help. These are challenging times and so the more people who will commit to help in their local area the better.

If you are on social media then please follow and "like" my facebook, Twitter and Instagram posts. Please share them with your contacts. The more we can get our messages out the better. Our opponents are mobilising all their resources so we must do the same.

To get involved please contact Caroline Shiers at pkconservatives@gmail.com or call [01828 640181](tel:01828640181).

PARTY	CANDIDATES	VOTES	%	+/- %
	SNP Roseanna Cunningham	15,315	42.4%	-9.1
	CON Liz Smith	13,893	38.4%	+9.9
	LAB Scott Nicholson	3,389	9.4%	-3.4
	LD Willie Robertson	3,008	8.3%	+1.1
	SCP Craig Finlay	544	1.5%	+1.5
Change compared with 2011				

Table shows the results from the 2016 Scottish Election for Perthshire South and Kinross.

Health Matters

It was very good news to hear on 30th December that the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine had gained approval for use and that the first doses started in early January. This was welcome news given the very worrying third wave of cases which has been gripping most of the UK – indeed the last few days have shown successive daily higher totals compared with the first wave. The good news about this vaccine is that the roll-out should be easier as a result of it not requiring such low storage temperatures.

Readers will recall from my last newsletter that I had written to NHS Tayside and NHS Fife seeking confirmation that the health boards were on course to deliver vaccinations as planned and that there was sufficient trained staff available. I also asked them to publish as soon as possible the details for the regional roll-outs of the vaccine programme, so that the public have maximum clarity on when they can expect to receive the jabs. I am pleased to say that I received a positive response from both and, since then, the following update has been provided by the Scottish Government.

It is essential that as much information as possible is provided about the approximate dates when people can expect to receive their vaccinations is published, which is why it was very

good news that Nicola Sturgeon has agreed to Scottish Conservative demands to publish regular vaccination numbers so we can scrutinise the roll-out.

[Link - Chief Medical Officer's Letter On Vaccination Roll Out](#)

Over the Christmas break a great deal of newspaper coverage focussed on Covid19; on the different strains of the virus, on the vaccines and on the pressures on the health service. In most cases, the coverage was naturally a matter of concerning reports but there has been some good news too. In particular, it has been encouraging to see the pace at which clinical trials can take place – and succeed – and the international co-operation which has been so necessary to support the necessary science. Covid19 has also been a very serious wake-up call for governments across the world and that can only be a good thing as we continue to tackle this most deadly disease.

Salmond v Sturgeon



Daggers are now well and truly drawn between Alex Salmond and Nicola Sturgeon with the former accusing the latter of providing evidence to the Holyrood Committee investigating the Scottish Government's handling of the harassment complaints that is "simply untrue". Salmond has also accused Sturgeon of breaking the ministerial code which would, of course, be a resignation issue should it be proven.

It is an unseemly war between the former and current First Ministers and whilst it would be better if the SNP could fully focus their minds on Covid19 rather than on this (and on another independence referendum of course), it is helpful in exposing just exactly what is going on at

the heart of the Scottish Government.

Salmond's and Sturgeon's versions cannot both be true. The question is, which one is fake news?

We have a Brexit Deal



On Christmas Eve Boris Johnson and Ursula von der Leyen finally signed the all important UK-EU trade deal, as a result of which both the Westminster and Holyrood Parliaments were recalled on 30th December to debate the emergency legislation. In the House of Commons, the bill passed easily by 521 votes to 73 votes.

In Holyrood, mainly thanks to the extraordinary hypocrisy of the SNP and utter incompetency of Scottish Labour, the accompanying legislative consent motion (LCM) did not pass – not that it had any binding commitment.

I still find it hard to believe that the SNP who, at every turn for four years, have been arguing about the “terrifying consequences” of No Deal and Nicola Sturgeon saying persistently that “a deal, any deal, is better than a No Deal”, should end up rejecting a Deal when it was put on the table. Talk about hypocrisy.....

The Stone of Destiny Returns to Perth



In late December, we heard the good news that the Stone of Destiny will return to its spiritual home in Perth where it will be the centrepiece of the new visual arts museum in the renovated Perth City Hall, due to open in 2024. As such, it is excellent news for the local economy and for the tourist industry and I want to pay tribute to all those who have been involved in securing its return including Murray Lyle as Leader of Perth and Kinross Council. Murdo Fraser, said he was delighted with the news after many years of campaigning and I raised the issue with the First Minister in the chamber.



Just over a year ago, pre-lockdown, Murdo and I were privileged to be shown the Perth City Halls renovations taking place.

The Green Recovery

As this e-letter lands in your inboxes, Holyrood will be about to debate the Green Recovery following the extensive evidence that was presented to the Environment, Climate Change

and Land Reform Committee (on which I sit) just before Christmas.

The Committee Report can be viewed here:

[Link - Green Recovery Inquiry Report](#)

The Scottish Conservatives will be concentrating our policies on the following key areas, most of which go across several portfolios such as energy, the economy, transport and infrastructure as well as the environment. We believe this joined up approach to policy is essential.

At the forefront of our policy development are infrastructure green projects designed to create more jobs and deliver better returns.

- We want to see a wider definition of infrastructure to include bricks and mortar.
- We want to deliver a much more sustainable and integrated transport network similar to those which work so well in other countries (eg Switzerland).
- Installing renewable heating and doubling energy efficiency is a key to housing policy.
- Public procurement must be focussed on low carbon options.
- We need policies which will unlock private investment including those which will benefit training and skills.
- We want to promote active travel and the use of hydrogen powered vehicles.
- We believe free ports can be economically beneficial in the post Brexit era.

Here is my speech below:

Members across the chamber both recognise and agree that the primary focus for 2020-21 is to rebuild Scotland's post Covid economy and that as much of this as possible should be in line with the ambitions of a sustainable green recovery. And there is also recognition and agreement that there must be willing co-operation between the private, public and third sectors when it comes to meeting that challenge - whether that is in relation to policy making, job creation, stimulating investment and economic growth or, of course, tackling head on the immense challenge of climate change.

The green recovery spelt out by this July's Climate Emergency Response Group specifically asked for careful consideration of where government – Westminster and Holyrood – should invest public money to deliver best value and what incentives would be needed to stimulate the private sector to invest in key sectors and infrastructure, including within our rural communities which are so critical to a green recovery.

Effective procurement is essential and that is something which the committee's report clearly identifies as critical when it comes to aligning funding with infrastructure development and capital investment. The role of the new Scottish Investment Bank is very welcome but it can only succeed if there is the willing co-operation I spoke about between the private, public and third sectors and full focus on delivering best value for money, including on a regional as well as on a national basis.

But even if we have better infrastructure in place, a green economy is also about jobs and ensuring that the necessary training is put in place to ensure we have the right skills available to sustain the green economy. And I draw Members' attention to a remark made by Benny Higgins in his recent report and echoed by Lord Smith of Kelvin, that the Scottish Government had to do much more to ensure there is better engagement between business and government about the necessary strategic thinking and about how best to develop the skills required in the coming years. And that means closer engagement with schools, colleges and universities all of whom – notwithstanding the very difficult period they are currently facing – are at the forefront of developing the basic skills, many of them very different from those adopted by previous generations.

And I think Benny Higgins' message is critical since it picks up the point – as does the committee report – that there needs to be a much stronger policy coherence across different portfolios with emphasis on low carbon projects but also on the targets set out in the Climate Change Plan. Let's be clear the Scottish Government's record is very patchy in this regard. Not only have several key targets been missed but there has been slow progress when it comes to a holistic approach across different sectors. My colleagues will discuss these matters in detail in their own contributions, especially with regard to the rural sector which feels so badly let down by this government but, in opening for the Scottish Conservatives, I want to stress just how important the messages are from the committee's findings. Warm words will achieve nothing and will send out all the wrong messages ahead of COP26 in Glasgow later this year.

But may I finish my remarks on striking the right balance between rights and responsibilities and ensuring that policy is evidence led. On this side of the chamber, and in the opinion of just about every group which properly represents all those who look after our natural environment, legislation in this Parliament has not always been evidence led and it has become skewed towards the public's rights with much less focus on the responsibility that needs to come with these rights. Much of this means a change in behaviour by members of the public but it also means a change in approach from the Scottish Government.

David Duguid's Article



By David Duguid MP - Minister at the Scottish Office

THE UK is the torch-bearer for those seeking practical steps to tackle problems of genuine global significance, not least action against [climate change](#).

This November will see Glasgow host the eagerly anticipated joint UK and Italy COP26 UN climate change conference. This is the first time a COP summit has convened in the UK, and the 12-day event will be one of the largest ever to be hosted in [Scotland](#).

The stakes could not be higher as we bid to prevent the catastrophic warming of our planet that drives extreme weather – droughts and associated fires; inundating downpours and lethal floods; storms of terrifying ferocity and increasing frequency – which wreaks global havoc.

Yet in this crucial gathering of [world](#) leaders lie the seeds of hope and practical solutions as meaningful, achievable, progress towards net-zero on an accelerated timetable is at the very heart of COP26 – and at the heart of our global economic recovery.

The UK Government is not waiting for the conference to begin to take steps to address matters. Prime Minister Boris Johnson has already set out his 10-point plan for a green industrial revolution.

It is bold, it is ambitious – but it is also deliverable, outlining real-world steps to bring us closer to our commitment to deliver net zero emissions by 2050. We were the first major [economy](#) to make that pledge. It was hugely encouraging for those of us who grasp that we today are mere custodians of this precious planet to see movement from the likes of China, Japan and Korea, who declared commitments of their own. The 10-point plan is not only designed to deliver our progressive environmental agenda, it is also a blueprint for creating jobs and building back greener from the pandemic. It utilises £12 billion of Government investment to prime the pumps for three times as much private sector investment by 2030. It has the potential to support 250,000 highly skilled British jobs over the next 10 years, as the UK economy pivots towards affordable clean energy and greener transport, utilising innovative technologies that can transform our environment.

Scotland is at the forefront of the plan, not least with offshore wind, where the objective is to quadruple electricity production to 40GW by 2030. To set that in perspective, that's enough electricity to power every home in the UK. Impressive, of course, but that's not all. In the process the intention is that this drive will support up to 60,000 new green jobs.

Jet Zero will aid the aviation industry's efforts to decarbonise while technology can also make our maritime sector greener. £20 million has been earmarked for a competition to develop clean sea-going technology, with feasibility studies on key sites such as Orkney and Teeside. We are making strides towards that all-important net zero goal, whilst creating a cleaner, more sustainable future for our businesses and people.

We are shaking up public [transport](#) with a drive towards increasing take-up of electric vehicles for private use, a consultation about the phasing out of diesel HGVs, exploring the use of

hydrogen as a sustainable and cleaner fuel for power-generation, and an enhanced role for small-scale nuclear power.

Energy efficient technology can make our homes, hospitals and public spaces warmer as well as greener and create 50,000 jobs. We want to install 600,000 heat pumps, weaning us off fossil-fuel boilers, each year by 2028. We are exploring too how hydrogen might have a role as a domestic fuel.

We also intend to make the UK a front-runner in green finance and to expand our carbon-capture expertise to the extent that we strip out 10 megatonnes of carbon dioxide by 2030.

We are ideally placed to deliver. Our oil and gas sector has a huge part to play as we move along this roadmap to a cleaner and greener future. They have a proven track record of creating cutting-edge technology and deploying it successfully. Support for energy transition will help make sure that their expertise will push the creation of low carbon energy solutions while maintaining energy security.

That transition has begun with the announcement at the virtual Climate Ambition Summit – a milestone precursor to COP26 – late last year that the UK Government intends to end its support for UK companies' fossil fuel projects overseas.

It is important that we carry the oil and gas sector with us on this journey. Deirdre Michie, CEO of Oil and Gas UK, representative body for the UK offshore oil and gas industry, has said: "The UK is taking a global leading role in how to tackle emissions at home and we recognise we should do the same abroad. We are also in advanced discussion with the Government on a North Sea Transition Deal that can provide a model for how the industry can transform in a fair way which creates jobs, boosts the economy and delivers the essential policy goal of net-zero emissions."

Alok Sharma's role as the UK's Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, puts him in the best position as President of COP26. His words about the Glasgow conference are deeply prescient: "Whether future generations look back at this time with admiration, or despair, depends entirely on our ability to seize this moment."

The UK Government has already taken the initiative and now we look forward to standing in Glasgow, shoulder-to-shoulder with friends from around the world, as we strive to find solutions to the climate crisis.

David Duguid is a Scotland Office minister and Conservative MP for Banff and Buchan.

Neighbourhood Alert System

Just recently, MSPs have started receiving very regular email updates from the Neighbourhood Alert System which provides a community messaging system about specific safety issues in our local areas (including incidences of crime). The system has been in place for ten years but is now expanded and I am finding it a very useful tool, as are many constituents. The public are able to register for the Alert emails if they so wish.

Details are available on the neighbourhood alert website:

Link - www.neighbourhoodalert.co.uk

Edinburgh to Perth Railway Update

It has obviously not been possible to undertake too many constituency visits in recent weeks but I did manage a site visit to the old railway line route which used to run through Glenfarg and which we hope can, in due course, be re-opened if the new UK infrastructure funding can be allocated to key projects in Mid Scotland and Fife. We received welcome news before Christmas that this project is well up the list of transport priorities.

The journey time between Edinburgh and Perth is still the same as it was a hundred years ago and 20-25mins slower for the same distance on other comparable routes in the UK. This isn't good enough especially when Perth is supposed to be an expanded hub for Dundee, Aberdeen and Inverness trains.

There are construction issues just south of Perth near Moncrieffe Hill and obviously there would have to be careful consideration given to housing developments and other infrastructure access along the old route especially near Kinross and Milnathort.

Ensuring there is a more integrated and "green" transport infrastructure is critical nonetheless and I will be continuing my longstanding campaign to ensure Mid Scotland and Fife is a major beneficiary.



The UK Government's Kickstarter Programme

Readers will have seen the recent comments from the Resolution Foundation warning that many young people are particularly at risk during Covid19, not just because of lost education but also because of lost job opportunities. Youth unemployment levels are likely to rise substantially in the coming months and, in response to this, the UK Government has set aside £2 billion to support around a quarter of a million 16-24 year olds who are on universal credit to get back into work. The scheme will pay employers £1,500 per post in set-up costs and then cover all of the minimum wage for 25 hours a week for 6 months.

This scheme will help but it is by no means enough on its own. We need more investment in start-up grants, apprenticeships and technology, plus a favourable tax system for those who want to provide these new opportunities.

For anyone wanting more information visit the Kickstarter webpage:

Link - www.talentspa.co.uk



Benefit 1
Get FREE Young Talent
For 6 Month Placements.

Benefit 2
Sector Specific Employee
Training.



Benefit 3
Automated Payments &
Updates.

Benefit 4
We Take Care Of The
Administration.



Winter Conditions

Several readers have been in touch about the lack of pavement gritting in some areas following which I have been in touch with the relevant officers in the local authorities. They agreed there have been issues and are now doing their best to ensure there is greater coverage of roads and pavements in our towns and I happen to know they are working with farmers who have offered assistance. With more winter weather forecast, and accident and emergency departments clearly under severe strain, do take care. I did wonder about the merits of BBC Reporting Scotland offering advice from a professional ice-skater!



And Finally....

And finally, just to let you know, the Party has made an official complaint about the SNP using civil servants to post highly biased media footage. Quite right too - it is nothing short of disgraceful that taxpayers' money should be spent in this way. We await the response.....

Government 'peddling SNP propaganda' in Brexit film, critics claim

● Civil servants accused of breaching strict rules on political neutrality

By **ALEXANDER BROWN**

Scottish Government civil servants have been accused of breaching strict rules on political neutrality by peddling "SNP propaganda".

The row comes after a video promoted on the government's official social media accounts yesterday made a series of anti-Brexit claims.

In the footage, a narrator states the UK-EU trade agreement is "a bad deal for Scotland" that will damage business and communities.

He also warns the Brexit deal will cause "greater risk to national security".

The narration concludes by saying: "We believe Scotland has the right to choose a better future as an independent country."

Now Scottish Conservative leader Douglas Ross has demanded an apology and immediate removal of the video.

The MP for Moray said: "This video is a work of shameless propaganda and it's incredible that a politically neutral civil service would think it is

in any way appropriate. For taxpayers to be bankrolling a work of one-sided Nationalist distortion is not on.

"The government is supposed to represent everyone in Scotland.

"I have written to Simon Case, the UK Cabinet Secretary and head of the Civil Service, and also to Leslie Evans, Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government.

"We know Nicola Sturgeon and her party cannot accept reality as seen by her no-deal hypocrisy, but the civil service should play no part in peddling SNP propaganda, falsehoods and grievance.

"The truth is the UK-EU trade deal has been welcomed by Scottish business leaders, who say it is good for jobs and the economy.

"This video tries to take us all for fools, especially the one million plus Scots who voted to leave the EU.

"We need an apology for this video, its removal from Scottish Government sites and an explanation of how this was authorised and the cost to taxpayers." The Civil Service Code

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Tommy D

Former Scotland, Chelsea known as 'The Doc' - w/caps for Scotland - has

Perth & Kinross Conservative Website



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