

Autumn/Winter 2010.



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

LOTHIANS NEWS

From Robin Harper,
Member of the Scottish Parliament.



SCOTTISH MINISTERS FAIL ON CLIMATE EMISSIONS TARGETS

The Scottish Government has seen it as an excuse for business as usual.

FINDING AN ALTERNATIVE TO LOCAL PUBLIC SPENDING CUTS

One which protects the most vulnerable people in Lothians and creates a fairer region

ROBIN HARPER'S WORK IN THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

- Robin is a member of the Public Petitions Committee, the Cross Party Group on Children and Young People, and the Cross Party Group on Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency.
- Over the past few months Robin has hosted Parliamentary events on allotments and city gardens, Eco-schools and Land Value Taxation.
- Robin has lodged numerous Parliamentary motions on important issues including cuts to Edinburgh sports facilities, new building energy efficiency standards and HIV.
- In the Chamber Robin recently voted against the Government's inadequate Climate Change Act targets.

For more information, visit: www.greenmsps.org/parliament

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Please don't hesitate to contact Robin to discuss any issues that are affecting you, or to make an appointment to meet in person.



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If you require a copy of this publication in an alternative format, please just get in touch.



“unwavering hope for a greener, more sustainable Scotland.”

THE HARD WORK CONTINUES

Welcome to my MSP newsletter for Autumn/Winter 2010.

After 11 years as Member of the Scottish Parliament for the Lothians, the past six months have been as busy as ever, and I continue to enjoy the challenge of working towards a greener and fairer Scotland.

Across the region I have been fighting for the retention of vital sports facilities, conserving our precious green spaces and marine environment, and working for better public transport.

There's so much more to do. We need a huge push to get better energy standards and cut people's bills, especially in tenements. I'll also be pushing the Government for a commitment to the future of the Climate Challenge Fund.

In my final six months as an MSP the urgent priority is to defend the vital public services under threat from the UK Government's cuts.

It has been an honour to represent the people of the Lothians for so long and to have had the opportunity to make such progress on the issues you elected me to work on. I look forward to passing the baton to future colleagues with pride, satisfaction and unwavering hope for a greener, more sustainable Scotland.

Please do get in touch if you want to express your views on some of the issues raised or to alert me to the issues which are important to you.

A handwritten signature in purple ink, which appears to read 'Robin Harper'.

Robin Harper MSP

ROBIN'S WORK ACROSS THE REGION



Fix the bridge, save billions (see page 11)

Image credit: Peter Schofield



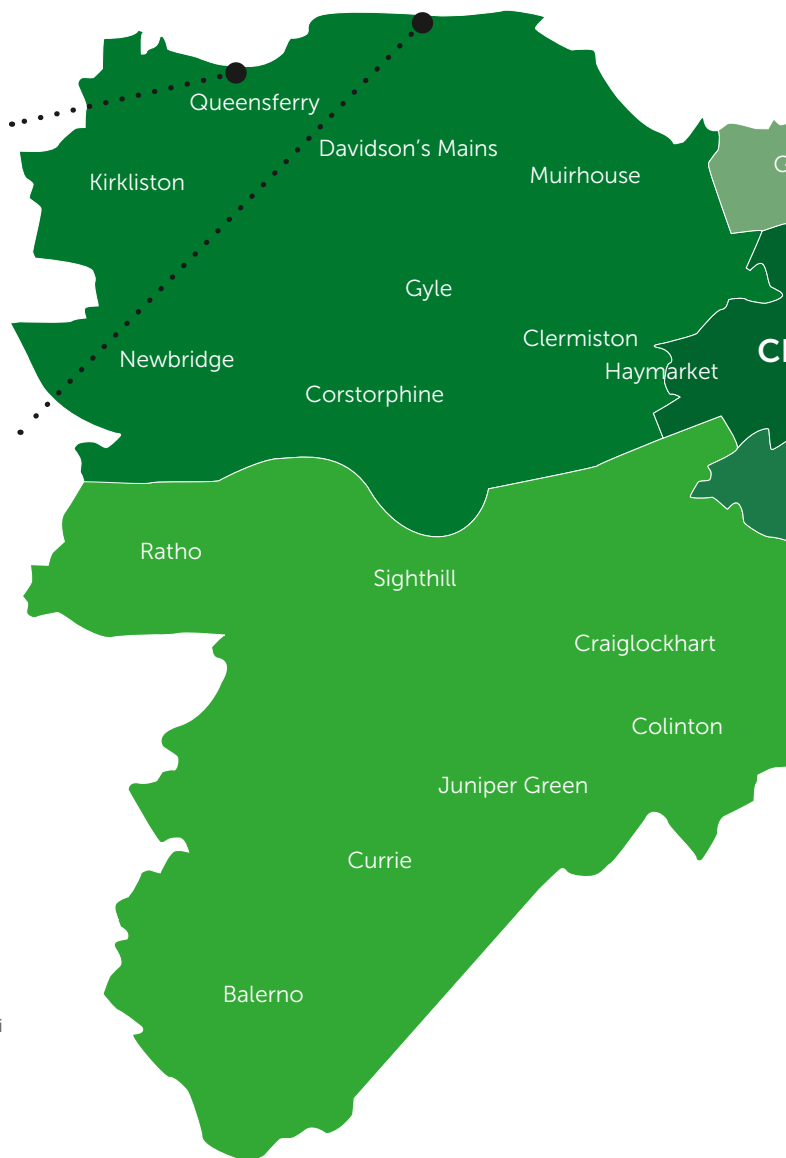
Marine Environment (page 7)

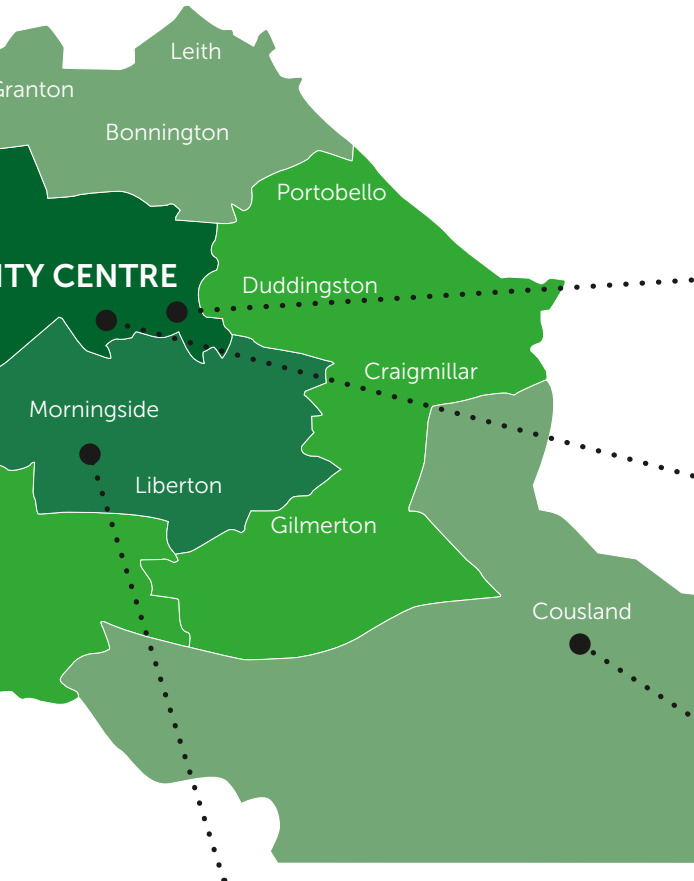
Image credit: Marine Conservation Society



Get growing (see page 9)

Image credit: <http://is.gd/hlbXi>





Pedal Power
(see page 10)

Image credit: <http://is.gd/hlcZX>



Representing you in
Parliament (see page 8)



Save our sports facilities
(see page 10)



Victory- coal mine rejected
(see page 7)

Image credit: Chris Watt



Transition Edinburgh South
Eco Festival (see page 9)

Image credit: Elizabeth McKenzie

For more information, visit www.greenmsps.org

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for the content of this website)

CUTS – WHAT'S THE ALTERNATIVE?

“Scotland
wants a more
progressive
approach”

One of Parliament's final responsibilities before the end of the session is to debate the Scottish Government's budget in the face of the huge cuts being threatened. It will be a real challenge for Scotland to find a better way forward rather than just handing on deep cuts to our public services, the approach already chosen for England. But I believe that Scotland wants a more progressive approach, one which protects the most vulnerable and creates a fairer society.

The evidence from around the world has never been clearer - equality is better for everyone. It makes society healthier, happier, safer and greener. I have campaigned against cuts already facing Edinburgh; cuts to sports facilities, to lollipop people protecting school children, and to the charity Blindcraft, giving blind people job opportunities. I have supported them through a combination of lodging Parliamentary motions to raise awareness of these unfair cuts, putting questions to the Government and meeting with the people or facilities most at threat.

So we are not only opposing the UK Government's cuts; we're not only trying to shape an alternative Scottish budget which will protect public services, one which raises revenue using the existing powers of the Scottish Parliament; we're also speaking up for the values of a better society which will put the emphasis on health, wellbeing and quality of life.

For more information, visit: www.greenmsps.org/cuts

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VICTORY- AIRFIELD OPENCAST COAL REJECTED!

I am delighted that Midlothian Planning Committee has unanimously voted to reject Scottish Coal's application for an opencast coal mine near Cousland, where 2 million tonnes of coal would have been mined from Airfield Farm. Over the summer I helped Communities Against Airfield Open Cast campaigners erect a road-side banner adjacent to the proposed site.

A new coal mine would have been terrible for the environment, local communities and planning policy, and we must reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, not encourage new sites. Congratulations to all those involved in the campaign.

For more information visit:
www.greenmsps.org/victory

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PROTECTING OUR MARINE ENVIRONMENT



The prospect of ship-to-ship oil transfer in the Firth of Forth still threatens wildlife and our economy. As part of an agreement I struck with the Scottish Government in 2007, Scottish Ministers agreed to tighten regulations.

However, Westminster's regulations are now being delayed by the Coalition. I have written to the UK Minister for Transport to urge a responsible decision which would protect our coastline from the environmental and economic risks associated with ship-to-ship oil transfers.

For more information, visit:
www.greenmsps.org/cramond

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SCOTTISH MINISTERS FAIL ON CLIMATE EMISSIONS TARGETS

“the Government is supporting the headlong rush for more oil”



The Climate Change Act was passed last year; an achievement, yes, but only as a means to a low-carbon Scotland. Sadly, the Scottish Government has seen it as an excuse for business as usual. With their 0% target for this year, and just 0.5% for 2011 and 2012, how will the 42% target for 2020 ever be achieved?

Parliament committed to a major carbon reduction programme to help limit climate change to 2°C of warming, but the world already has more than enough fossil fuel to make that aspiration impossible. Yet the Government is supporting the headlong rush for more oil drilling, including risky deepwater projects, meaning all the carbon targets in the world will make not a jot of a difference.

The real economic future for Scotland, and for jobs, is in renewable energy. The commitments of other MSPs to a low-carbon Scotland are meaningless unless we block new oil extraction, open-cast mining, and the coal-fired power station proposed at Hunterston. It sounds good on its own, until we see that the Government wants clean power plus fossil fuels; they fail to grasp that it must be a replacement not an addition.

For more information visit: www.greenmsps.org

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AN END TO THE COUNCIL TAX?

In October, Patrick Harvie MSP and I launched a report called "A Land Value Tax For Scotland - Fair, Efficient, Sustainable" by land reform specialist Andy Wightman.

By taxing the value of the land alone, not the developments on it, Land Value Tax benefits communities not property developers, acting as a financial discouragement to leaving land vacant.

It also puts money back into communities when publicly-funded improvements to an area increase its land value.

This could make a huge difference to the Lothians region and tackle the unfairness of the Council Tax system.

To see the savings that you would be making visit: www.greenmsps.org/lvt

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GREEN SPACES



Robin at Transition Edinburgh South Eco festival with Councillor Alison Johnstone, and Dirk Douglas, Earthy Director.

Image credit: Elizabeth McKenzie

Growing food is an entirely win-win experience for people of all ages, whether you have an allotment, a garden, or a window box. In September I chaired an awareness event organised by the Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society (SAGS) to get growing organisations and MSPs to liaise in the Parliament.

I also sponsored Holyrood's Apple Day which encourages children to grow, harvest and press apples. The benefits of growing our own food are endless – it promotes healthy eating, exercise, the minimising of waste, urban regeneration, and personal independence – and it is always wonderful to be involved in such positive events.

For more information visit: www.greenmsps.org/sags www.greenmsps.org/apple

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HEALTHY IS WEALTHY



PEDAL POWER

I'm delighted that City of Edinburgh Council has pledged that 15% of all journeys will be by bike by 2020 under the Brussels Charter - a challenging target requiring practical action and cultural change.

Safe cycle parking, cycle paths and cycle training all need to improve in order for this to happen. This could easily be achieved if the Scottish Government spent just 10% of the transport budget on greener options instead of their out-dated transport policies which only increase the traffic levels on our roads.



SPORTS CUTS ARE A RISK TO NATION'S HEALTH

Last summer I was involved in campaigning to secure the future of Hillend Ski Centre. I am pleased with the announcement that a rescue plan has been backed by Midlothian Council, but it is only a short-term reprieve and people must continue to support and use the centre.

I am appalled by proposals to close other sports facilities in Edinburgh, though. The Crags Sports Centre, Dalry Swim Centre, Kirkliston Leisure Centre and Portobello Golf Course are all threatened by Council cuts to Edinburgh Leisure's funding. Local authority budgets are tight but these closures could have drastic effects on health and on obesity rates, straining NHS resources. I have written to Edinburgh Leisure asking for reassurance that facilities will not be closed and seeking a meeting to discuss these issues.

For more information visit: www.greenmsps.org/sportscuts

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FIX THE BRIDGE, SAVE BILLIONS

“a waste of public money, additional congestion and pollution”



We all know that public services are being threatened with financial cuts. So why is the Government planning to spend £2.3 billion on another Forth Road Bridge? I find this ludicrous! A more prudent approach would be to repair the existing bridge for a maximum of £122m.

A poll last year indicated that the public supported proposals to repair the existing bridge rather than building a new one, by a majority of 57% to

34%. Patrick Harvie MSP and I are the only MSPs at Holyrood who see a replacement bridge for what it is; a waste of public money, additional congestion and pollution, and a squeezing on public transport projects nationwide.

The same money would allow us to keep local sports facilities open and invest in local schools and hospitals.

For more information, visit:

www.greenmsps.org/frb

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Robin helping volunteers at PF
Counselling Service in
Morningside with Councillor
Alison Johnstone
(Image credit: Matthew Haggis)



Robin showing his support for
the Movember campaign which
raises awareness of men's health
and raises money for The Prostate
Cancer Charity.



Robin meeting
Caroline Lucas MP in Edinburgh
(Image credit: Callum MacLellan)

For more information and useful links, visit: www.greenmsps.org/links

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(Front cover image credit: Callum MacLellan)



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