

Latest Parliamentary and community news: June 2011

Mark Lazarowicz, MP for Edinburgh North & Leith

Women's pension changes cause concern

I am concerned that many people are unaware that the UK Government is planning to sharply accelerate the rise in the state pension age (SPA) to 66 by 2020 – 6 years earlier than originally planned. In particular, this would hit women in their mid-fifties. Around 5000 women in Edinburgh as a whole and 900 women in Edinburgh North and Leith could be affected.

Some women could face having to work up to two years longer than they had expected before being able to claim their pension. Of course there are people who are happy to work on but for others who have caring responsibilities or who are in ill-health it isn't so simple. I have been actively campaigning on the issue, and you can find more details about the changes on my website at:

<http://www.marklazarowicz.org.uk/5000-edinburgh-women-will-be-hit-by-coalition-governments-hike-i>

Disability benefits

I recently met a number of local people who came to Westminster to lobby against the changes to disability benefits being proposed by the UK Government. I know from earlier meetings with local organisations the anxiety that the changes are causing and it was inspiring to see so many people who had come to make their voice heard despite sometimes being severely disabled or in poor health.

I made a speech in Parliament setting out some of my concerns which you can find here:

<http://www.marklazarowicz.org.uk/mark-meets-edinburgh-disability-campaigners-on-cuts>

And for more general comments and information on changes to the benefits system and tax credits see

<http://www.marklazarowicz.org.uk/changes-to-the-benefit-system-and-tax-credits>

Green Investment Bank

As you will know I have been arguing strongly for the UK Government to press ahead with the last Government's plans to set up a Green Investment Bank and to site it in Edinburgh.

The Government finally announced at the end of May that it was going to go ahead which is good news, but, as with future targets for cutting carbon emissions, there was a long delay in resolving the issue when other countries are already pressing ahead with investing in green technology.

There is no sign so far of when the location will be decided but the Secretary of State for Business did praise the professionalism of the Edinburgh bid in Parliament. I was closely involved in a broad alliance of politicians, business leaders and researchers in the green energy sector here in Edinburgh who all came together in the campaign for the bank to be based here.

You can find more information on this at:

<http://www.marklazarowicz.org.uk/mark-argues-the-case-for-edinburgh-as-home-for-green-investment->

House of Lords reform

The UK government has outlined its proposals for House of Lords reform. I have been a strong supporter of an elected second chamber, and questioned Nick Clegg on the issue when he announced the proposals. You can find the question and answer at: <http://bit.ly/mLpWyu>

If you have any views on this, or any other issue of constitutional reform, do let me know. You can vote in the on-line poll on my website at www.marklazarowicz.org.uk

Sudan

In my role as a Shadow Minister for International Development, I spoke in a recent House of Commons debate on Sudan. On 9 July a new state will be born as South Sudan becomes independent following a referendum in January in which almost 99% of its people voted in favour.

However, as one of the world's poorest states it faces immense challenges in developing its institutions of Government and justice and meeting the needs of its people. You can read my speech in full at: <http://bit.ly/jLEm4T>

Recent renewed violence in an oil-rich region disputed between North and South has raised the threat of a return to conflict. In what are difficult times here at home, it is tempting to shut our eyes to what is happening beyond our borders but our engagement and support through international institutions like the UN is essential to ensuring a future for this new but fragile state.

Local issues

The UK Parliament has just had a week's 'recess' which has been a good opportunity for me to visit and meet with a number of local organisations. These have included Drummond High School Parent Council, Leith Links Community Council, Telford College, Newhaven Children's Gala, Montgomery Street Picnic in the Park, as well as the regular City Council briefing for MPs and MSPs on key local and city issues. I've commented on some of these on my blog at <http://bit.ly/mP8lhM>, <http://bit.ly/mlqfVp> and <http://bit.ly/jYXRbM>

As an MP, I often get sent information about or of interest to local community groups. For more details, look at

<http://www.marklazarowicz.org.uk/-news-from-the-community>

There's recent information about the Digital switchover, Stockbridge school fair, local police news, Phoenix Wind Band, the Scottish Disability Golf Partnership, and Sky Arts, to name but a few. And of course, the ever popular Leith Festival is happening shortly, from 10 – 19 June – you can find details here: <http://www.leithfestival.com/>

In addition, I've been sent details of two important local consultations – one on the Council's winter weather preparations, and the other from the police on Safer Communities.

Winter weather consultation

The last two winters have seen the city hit by heavy snow with disruption to businesses, schools closed and the army called in to clear roads and pavements. During the severe weather I kept emergency phone numbers prominently displayed on my website and it's vital that people are able to find information and advice easily.

Beyond that we need to be as well prepared as possible for next winter – rather than reacting in the initial stages to what is hardly a rare occurrence we need proper planning which can be put into action as quickly as possible.

You can still give your opinion through the online survey at www.edinburgh.gov.uk/winterweatherworkingtogether

Hopefully the Council will improve its responses in future as a result of the findings of the survey – and the Scottish Government will make sure councils have the funds to do so.

Safer communities survey

This is being carried out by Lothian and Borders Police to help them plan local services for the future. You can find more details here <http://bit.ly/17LWDI>

How to contact me

This newsletter gives information on just some of the activities I have been involved both in the UK Parliament and here in the constituency. Have a look at my website www.marklazarowicz.org.uk for more details! I'm also on Facebook and twitter.

You can contact me at my office at

5 Croall Place, EH7 4LT

Tel.: 0131 557 0577

Monday to Friday: 9.30am - 12.30pm & 1.30 - 4.30pm

Or by emailing mark@marklazarowicz.org.uk

*You can also come along and speak to me at one of my weekly advice surgeries (**no appointment needed**):*

Every Friday at

4pm [Stockbridge Library, Hamilton Place](#)

5pm [Constituency Office, 5 Croall Place, Leith Walk](#)

Please do circulate this newsletter to any of your friends, members, or contacts. And if you don't want to receive it, please email doranka@parliament.uk and let us know.

Promoted by Mark Lazarowicz, 5 Croall Place, EH7 4LT