

The Newsletter of Argyll & Bute Conservatives

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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Autumn is approaching, and so are the two electoral events scheduled for next year.

First, the European elections next year. As you know, these elections are based on a list system. In Scotland, our Party has six candidates ranked in order of preference which was chosen by the members; the number of these candidates elected to the European Parliament depends on our share of the Scottish vote next year.

Our list is headed by Dr Ian Duncan, who writes for us elsewhere in this newsletter. He's a worthy successor to our retiring MEP Struan Stevenson. However, to elect any more than one candidate, we must maximise our vote and, to do so, we need all our supporters and friends out at the polling stations!

The second event is the Referendum on separation on 18 September 2014. This is probably the most important political decision that we shall ever be asked to make. I am proud to be Scottish and proud to be British, and I wish to keep both affiliations.

The Nationalists' campaign amounts to a trail of vague and unsupported assertions. If this is the quality of Government that we would see in an independent Scotland, then heaven help us. It is imperative that we ensure we have a resounding 'No' at the referendum, thereby kicking this daft idea into the long grass for at least a generation or two. I therefore encourage you to support both the multi-party Better Together campaign and our own Conservative Friends of the Union movement. These have separate electoral spending limits, so we should donate to both.

I wish you a pleasant autumn.

Bill Hanbury

Chairman, Argyll & Bute

Scottish Conservative and Unionist Association

FISHERIES, TRANSPORT, CROFTING, AND HOUSING



By Jamie McGrigor MSP, Regional Member for the Highlands and Islands

The UK Fisheries Minister, Richard Benyon MP, is to be commended for the new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) deal. Hopefully, the reforms on discards, fleet capacity, and decentralised governance will end over-fishing, and create more jobs (and fish) for our people. In terms of how the discard ban will work in practice, the Scottish Fishermen's Federation is right to say that the 'devil will be in the detail'.

Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is the big issue for farmers and crofters in Argyll and Bute. As Convenor of the Scottish Parliament's Cross-Party Group on Crofting, I am lobbying the Scottish Government to ensure that any new scheme recognises the specific needs of livestock producers and crofters in our remote, rural, and island communities. Crofting producers in the peripheral areas of Scotland need a practical support system which will tackle the continued reductions in livestock numbers,

as well as promoting cropping and the communal management of common grazings.

Argyll and Bute relies on major roads like the A83 and A85 being fit for purpose, and on ferry services which meet the needs of islanders and tourists alike. The SNP's removal of Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) from commercial vehicles has been met generally with dismay. Ferry issues are of great importance in Dunoon, and now also in Campbeltown (which, at last, and after endless broken promises, is linked to the Ayrshire coast).

In July, the SNP announced its intention to abolish the right of tenants to buy their council house. This is despite the fact that the original Conservative policy creating the entitlement was a truly popular step, affording huge numbers of Scots the opportunity to own their own homes. Yet again, the SNP is simply wrong.

STABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY THE KEY TO SORTING THE COUNCIL

As Argyll and Bute Council plots a way forward with its new governance structures, stability and sustainability must be the key. With nearly four years to go until the next council elections, we need stability, not a sticking plaster solution.

In May this year my fellow Conservative councillors and I, together with our four Liberal Democrat colleagues, disbanded our individual political groupings on the Council and, with three Independent councillors, formed the ten-member Argyll, Lomond, and the Island Group (ALIG).

At the time of writing, a 12-member cross-party committee is due to work through the issues. With feedback from Audit Scotland, hopefully we can find a

solution that enables all thirty-six elected members to play their full part. As Conservative councillors, David Kinniburgh, Maurice Corry and I will assist in that process, but, for a solution to be found, two things must happen. Political groups and individual councillors must be prepared to work together, and external political interference must cease. Perhaps there should be a third development - that we select the most capable person for each job. Now, that would be progress! Talking of the best people for particular jobs, Councillor Maurice Corry is Argyll and Bute's Armed Forces & Veterans Champion, and has taken this non-political role and made it his own. He defends and supports enthusiastically

Councillor Gary Mulvaney
Helensburgh Central



the interests of forces personnel, their families, and veterans throughout Argyll, and receives backing from across the Council. I am sure you will read of Maurice's exploits in a future edition - not to mention David's work on the planning committee.

COPING WITH GOPE'S LAW

Whilst it is many years since I taught geology, I do recall a "law" that I would use to summarise why dinosaurs were so big; Cope's Law states that, over time, small things evolve into bigger things. Remind anyone of the EU?

Over time, the power of the European Parliament has grown steadily. Today, its powers are broadly equal to those of national governments. Often, the laws struck in Strasbourg can be little changed by Westminster or Holyrood.

The reach of the Parliament touches everyone in Argyll & Bute, whether it is how crops are grown, how

livestock is reared, how fish are caught, how food is labelled, how energy is produced, or how beaches are monitored. In each instance, the lead authority is Brussels. Despite this, at the last Euro-election less than one third of Scots voted.

Scotland needs a strong Conservative voice in Europe. With the SNP on the march, and UKIP dancing round the fringes, every Conservative vote is essential. We can't leave our vital interests in the hands of nationalists or socialists.

So my message, like Bill Hanbury's, is 'Vote!' And get your family, your friends, and your neighbours to vote. It could make all the difference.



Ian Duncan is joined by Scottish Party Leader Ruth Davidson MSP and The Prime Minister, David Cameron, on the PM's recent visit to Argyll and Bute.

HOUSING, RENEWABLES, & THE GRID

By Alastair Redman, Council Candidate, Kintyre & the Islands Ward

The provision of affordable and social housing is a major concern in our communities. Argyll and Bute Council must, through the planning system, speed up decisions on potential developments, and work with housing associations to ensure the availability of good quality homes.

Whilst I support the ethos of renewable energy, I believe that we must guard against the possibility that the amenity of the islands, and the Kintyre Peninsula, will be overwhelmed by massive windfarms. And, where renewables do make their mark, local communities must derive some benefit to offset the damage to local industries such as fishing and tourism.

Last year, I campaigned for improvements to the unreliable electricity distribution network on Islay. I made a submission, in person, to the Scottish Affairs Select Committee at Westminster. As a result, Islay has seen a huge and overdue investment in its electricity infrastructure. I will continue to maintain pressure on Scottish & Southern Energy (SSE) to ensure that it does not overlook the rural communities of Argyll and Bute.

