

Brendan O'Hara MP

ARGYLL & BUTE



Winter
2020 | 2021
Newsletter

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'B O'Hara'.

Working for you throughout the pandemic

Argyll
& Bute



**FIND OUT HOW I VOTED
ON THE ISSUES THAT
MATTER TO YOU AT
THEYWORKFORYOU.COM**

Thanks to everyone who has been in touch over the last few months. It has been a busy time for both the constituency office and in Westminster.

Like everyone else, the Coronavirus pandemic has changed how we work, with restrictions meaning staff having to work from home, the office remaining closed and, for me, instructions from the House to be in Parliament only when absolutely necessary.

But while attendance for some weeks has been limited to taking part online via Zoom, it has not stopped my SNP colleagues and I from continuing to give Scotland strong representation as the Third Party at Westminster.

You can find out how I voted on the issues that matter to you via theyworkforyou.com.

My own website is at brendanoharamp.scot.

Brexit and the Internal Market Bill

A great deal of my time over the last few months was devoted to opposing Brexit and the economic and social disaster it will be for Argyll & Bute and Scotland.

I opposed the Tories' Internal Market Bill which could see deals done with America to the detriment of our own high food and animal welfare standards and, at the same time, grabbing powers from the devolved governments.

We also opposed the UK Government's plans to renege on the terms of the Withdrawal Bill which would have breached international law and the Good Friday Agreement.

On Christmas Eve MPs had to vote on Boris Johnson's woefully deficient post-Brexit trade agreement, one which even Theresa May said was worse than her deal.

This is an agreement that undermines our farmers and our fishermen and deprives our young people of the opportunities we have all had. We could only vote on what was presented to us, there was no option for amendments.

Contrary to what the Tories and Labour would want the public to believe, voting against Boris Johnson's deal was not a vote for no-deal.

No one wanted no-deal but to vote for the PM's deal would have been a vote to make my constituents poorer, to damage our economy and ignore the fact that the people of Scotland voted overwhelmingly to remain in the EU.

Brexit and the Internal Market Bill

My SNP colleagues and I called on the UK government to provide a multi-million pound compensation package to the fish and seafood industry which faced huge losses when Brexit red tape stopped their produce from getting to European markets.

This has cost the industry millions and resulted in top quality produce left to rot. We still don't have enough detail on who will get compensation and when and for some, particularly the smaller businesses, it will be too little too late.



The convoy of seafood producers that took their protest to Westminster included several from Argyll & Bute

Protecting Scotland's industries and supporting people

Argyll & Bute

My SNP colleagues and I have repeatedly voted against policies that would damage Scottish farming and other food producers including Argyll & Bute's esteemed seafood industry; we have stood up for those who are struggling including calling for the Chancellor to continue the £20 additional payment for those receiving Universal Credit; and calling for the Prime Minister to follow the lead of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland by extending free meals for school children over the festive season and up to Easter.

It's thanks to footballer Marcus Rashford that the Tories were eventually forced into an embarrassing climb down.



Protecting Scotland's industries and supporting people

Argyll & Bute



I have also been working with the GMB union and others involved in the Scotch whisky industry to call for the UK Government to do more to remove deeply damaging tariffs on imports to America.

Scotland creates the finest whisky in the world and with many world-renowned, long established distilleries, as well as several new players emerging, there's no doubt that Argyll & Bute with its 15 distilleries and two

designated whisky regions, has made and continues to make a significant contribution to popularity and success of Scotch Whisky.

Scotch Whisky employs around 11,000 people – including 7,000 in rural locations – and in 2019 global exports made almost £5 billion for the Treasury.

The Scotch Whisky industry also accounts for 20 per cent of UK food and drink exports.

It is a global success story, a major employer and an industry which supports a large supply chain.

I was first elected chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Whisky in 2015.

Since then I have worked hard to ensure that the industry is supported in the Westminster parliament, to push for its interests being effectively promoted, and to continually look out for its employees being protected.

Standing up for Human Rights and supporting others

In my role as SNP spokesperson for International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution, I have been working closely with organisations set up to protect those whose human rights are compromised including young Christian girls in India kidnapped from their homes or on the street and forced to marry into Islam and bear children when they are mere children themselves.

I've also been involved in supporting Richard Ratcliffe in his bid to secure the release of his wife Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe from prison in Iran as well as calling on the Foreign Secretary to stop UK arms sales to Saudi where the war with Yemen continues to be the worst humanitarian disaster since the Second World War.

Many constituents also contacted me about the UK Government's plans to

slash the aid budget and my colleagues and I will continue to press the Foreign Secretary to reverse this deeply damaging decision so we can fulfil our international obligations and help those who need it most.

Closer to home, I've been offering support to asylum seeker Harriet Ndlovu, meeting up with her and her supporters at a socially distanced campaign day in Helensburgh.

Like so many others Harriet's future here in her adopted country is not secure and I will continue to lobby the Home Secretary to reverse the hostile immigration system so that people like Harriet who contribute so much to their community, are allowed to stay.



Keeping Argyll moving and looking after our workforce

Argyll & Bute



In addition to the challenges of Covid, the closure of the A83 following the landslips and subsequent adverse weather has taken its toll on residents, businesses and visitors.

This is the gateway to Argyll and the islands and we must make sure that whatever replacement we get, it is the best option for people living and working here and something that we can use all year round

as we continue to face the battle against climate change. Tackling climate change is hugely important and I am very pleased to have been appointed to the SNP COP26 team.

COP26 will be the largest summit ever hosted in Scotland and in the UK, bringing together representatives from nearly 200 countries including world leaders, experts and campaigners.

I have also been contacted by many constituents affected by bullying and harassment issues within the NHS and Argyll & Bute HSCP.

I raised this with the Health Secretary Jeane Freeman asking her to back a full independent review into the culture within the HSCP, as recommended in the Sturrock Report, so people can feel valued, respected and safe in their workplace.

Communities coming together

Argyll & Bute



While 2020 has been a year like no other it's also important to reflect on what good did come from this year, particularly how as a society we pulled together and supported each other through the hard times.

Online meetings, although not the same, have made it easier in some ways for me to connect with people in what is a geographically huge constituency.

It was great to meet pupils from both Rhu Primary School and Oban High School for events they took part in for Parliament Week.

I was also able to do a video for Achievement Bute and engage with so many constituents including the new Time for Change Argyll group, via Zoom.

I will be holding many online surgeries over the next few months so if there is an issue you think I can assist with please get in touch. You can email me at brendan.ohara.mp@parliament.uk

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ARGYLL & BUTE



As we begin 2021, I wish to express my gratitude to everyone including our NHS staff and key workers, teachers and school staff and others who have and continue to work so hard to keep essential services going across Argyll & Bute through extremely difficult circumstances.

Thankfully vaccines are now being rolled out, but we must continue to follow Scottish Government guidance, especially during this period of lockdown, keep each other safe and look out for those who may be isolated or vulnerable.

Please stay safe, stick to the rules and look after each other, so we can begin our journey back to normality together.

Best wishes,
Brendan