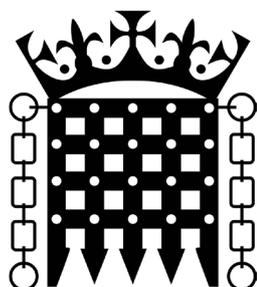


Brendan O'Hara MP

Argyll & Bute

September 2022 Newsletter



Update

Following parliamentary recess and the sad passing of Queen Elizabeth II, I will be heading back to Westminster next week to face a Tory Prime Minister who - if you can believe such a thing is possible - actually appears to be worse than her predecessor!

I'll be returning against a backdrop of a tanking UK economy, with the pound reaching an unprecedented low against the dollar, and a government, who during the worst cost of living crisis in living memory, have initiated massive tax cuts for millionaires, while leaving the poor, low-earning and middle-income families to fend for themselves.

My top priority at Westminster will be to highlight the impact of the energy crisis on the people of Argyll & Bute, particularly those who rely on heating oil to heat their homes.

I have expanded further on the following pages on what steps I have taken to fight for those facing an uncertain winter ahead, simply because of their postcode.

Most homes in this constituency are off gas grid and the Tories' paltry offer of a one-off payment of £100 will do nothing to help those vulnerable people who, because of skyrocketing prices won't be able to fill their heating oil tanks this winter.

For individuals and business across Argyll & Bute, the cost of energy / fuel and how they'll survive the winter has been by far, the main topic of conversation. But remember, there are people and organisations who can help and advise, so don't be shy in asking for help this winter.

Energy crisis



'Paltry' heating oil relief slammed



The UK Government's scheme to help those living off-grid with soaring energy bills has been described as 'insulting' by Argyll's MP.



In a recent article for the Oban Times, I described the UK Government's plan to make a one-off £100 payment for homes not connected to the gas-grid as an 'insult'.

The average home that does not have a mains gas connection and is reliant on heating oil or LPG pays more than £2000 to fill up their tank each year.

The offer of £100 amounts to 2-3 weeks of energy if you are lucky and is negligible compared to the support which has been announced for most of the houses across these islands.

You can find the full Oban Times article, [here](#).

While I will continue to fight at Westminster for a much-improved package of support for those off gas grid constituents, it is essential that those who need help and advice on this matter seek it as early as possible.

I have outlined some useful advice and support agencies on the next page.

Local Support Agencies

ENERGY SUPPORT

HOME ENERGY SCOTLAND - 0808 808 2282

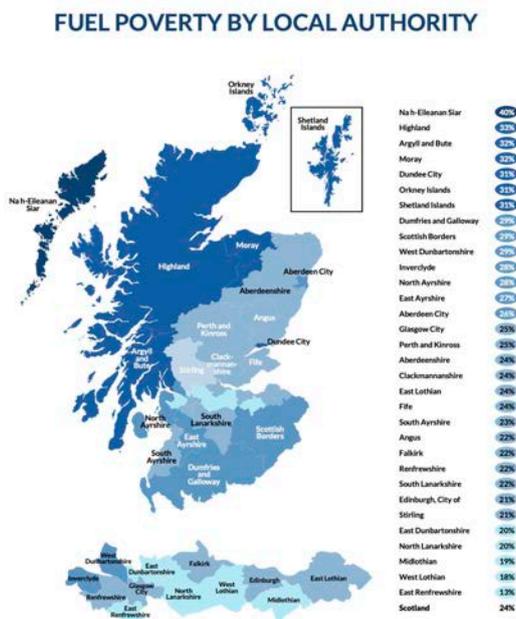
Free, impartial advice on lowering energy bills, insulation and energy efficiency grants and loans.

ALI ENERGY - 01631 565 183

Argyll & Bute based charity championing affordable warmth and advice for those that are experiencing fuel poverty.

WINTER FUEL PAYMENT

If you were born on or before 25 September 1956 you could get between £250 and £600 to help you pay your heating bills. Check your eligibility [HERE](#)



Graphic: Energy Action Scotland

FOOD & RENT SUPPORT

ARGYLL & BUTE FOOD BANKS

There are many volunteer-led food banks operating throughout the constituency - click [HERE](#) for an up-to-date list.

ARGYLL & BUTE SCOTTISH WELFARE FUND

A fund to support those on low incomes pay energy, food or fuel bills. Call A&B Council on 01546 605 -512.

OTHER ADVICE RESOURCES

CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU

Argyll & Bute Citizens Advice Bureau can provide advice on anything from disputes with your energy provider, to immigration, to rent advice. You can call them on 01546 605550.

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT COST-OF-LIVING SUPPORT PAGE

The Scottish Government have put together the resource with advice on financial, benefit, mental health and disability support. Click [HERE](#) to access it.

Energy crisis



In February, I co-sponsored my SNP colleague Drew Hendry's Bill which proposed that the UK government introduce an energy price cap for households which do not have access to mains gas supply.

He said that without a cap on the price of heating oil for example, those off the gas grid will suffer even greater financial hardship. And given that the vast majority of those homes are in rural, colder parts of the UK, and are predominately lived in by older people, this was a disaster waiting to happen.

He concluded by saying, "Ofgem and the UK government cannot now say that they have not been warned of the dire consequences of inaction." Predictably, they did nothing, and the crisis we predicted back in February is here.

I raised the issue again earlier this month, [here](#), telling the government that inaction could be a death sentence for some this winter. I also wrote to them calling for increased financial support for the many households that rely on LPG. Again, the response I received (below) was sadly predictable ...



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

***“Thank you for bringing your constituents’ concerns to my attention. The Government recognises that both heating oil and LPG prices have risen steeply over the past year and I deeply sympathise with consumers who rely on these fuels for everyday use. The Government continues to monitor this closely and is proactively working with industry to mitigate any supply risks to ensure that prices stay as low as possible.*”**

In the constituency

Dunoon Grammar School - World's Best School Awards 2022



It was a privilege for me to be asked to participate in the event which celebrated Dunoon Grammar School making it into the top 3 in the 'Community Collaboration' category of the World's Best School Prizes 2022.

It is a remarkable achievement and one which the pupils, the teachers, and the whole community should be very proud.

The whole school turned out in the town's Argyll Gardens at the end of September to hear headteacher David Mitchell announce the remarkable news that along with a school in Brazil and another in India, Dunoon Grammar had made it into the top 3 finalists in this category.

It was a very special moment for everyone involved and I was honoured to be asked to participate in the event and say a few words to celebrates the outstanding work the school has done in instilling the value of how important being part of their community is for their young people.

The overall winner of World's Best School Prizes will be announced on October 19th, but you can show your support for Dunoon Grammar by going online and voting for them before midnight on October 2nd. Please take a few moments to show your support and get these wonderful young people the reward that they all deserve.

Click the button below to vote!



Image: Ronnie Cairns Photography

In the constituency

Visit to Islay



Recently I visited Islay and was delighted to meet up with Neil Woodrow of the Ionad Chaluim Chille Ile, who are celebrating their 20th anniversary of promoting the Gaelic language, culture and heritage at their centre in Bowmore. While there I visited Rachel MacNeill's Islay Whisky Academy and met some of the students who had come from around the world to take part in her week-long, intensive whisky course.

I then headed to Port Ellen to meet the South Islay Development, to hear about their exciting and ambitious plans to redevelop and build new community facilities in the town. A visit to Islay wouldn't be complete without a visit to a distillery and I was pleased to accept a visit from Peter Nelson and Colin Gordon at Ardbeg to come in and see what they were doing and to hear about their future plans.

But Islay isn't just whisky and when you see a building with ISLAY RUM emblazoned on the side, you just have to stop and go in. And I'm very pleased that I did ...

because I got to meet Ben Inglis, the brains behind this new enterprise, producing quality white rum... and I can indeed testify to its quality!

From Rum it was back to whisky and a meeting with Scott McLennan at the site of the proposed new Ili distillery near Port Charlotte before meeting up with local Cllr Dougie McFadzean back in Bowmore.

It really was great to be back on Islay.



In Westminster



SNP Spokesperson for International Human Rights

My number one priority at Westminster is looking after the interests of the people of Argyll & Bute. On top of that however, I am also the SNP's Cabinet Office spokesperson and lead for the party on International Human Rights & Conflict Resolution.

In that Human Rights role, I get to hear and meet with some of the world's most oppressed people; survivors of genocide, minority groups being oppressed by their own governments and small religious sects being targeted for not following the majority religion. I also get to hear from women and girls who have been kidnapped and trafficked into sexual slavery and from political dissidents fleeing oppressive regimes and who face execution should they ever return home.

A large part of the job I do at parliament is to be a voice for those who otherwise would have no one to speak for them, and to shine a light on their suffering, sadly all too often at the hands of regimes which the UK government regards as friends and allies.

Hearing about the plight of the Yazidis, the Uyghur, or the Rohingya people, or meeting with indigenous people whose rainforest home has been bulldozed by an international mining conglomerate or parents whose children have been kidnapped by people traffickers, is harrowing but I am hugely privileged to be able to do this job and my motto is, if I can make even the slightest difference to someone's life, somewhere, it will all have been worth it.

You can see what I have been up to in Parliament [here](#).

Need my help? Get in touch

Email: brendan.ohara.mp@parliament.uk

Telephone: 01436 - 670 - 587

**Write to me at:
Brendan O'Hara MP
8A Colquhoun Square
Helensburgh
G84 8AD**

**One of my friendly team will be able to handle
any urgent queries, 9-5, Mon-Fri.**