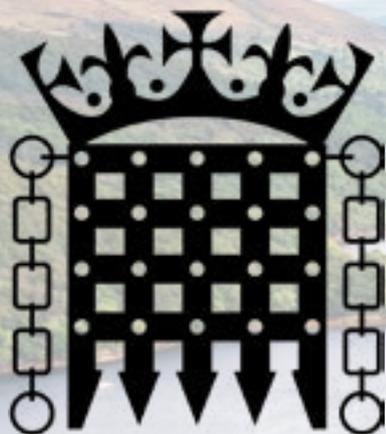


Brendan O'Hara MP

Argyll & Bute - January 2023 Newsletter



Update

I would like to take this opportunity to wish every one of you all the very best for 2023. I hope you found time to relax and enjoy the Christmas holidays with friends and family. I would like to say a sincere thank you to those of you who found time to support or visit those people in our community who find this time of year particularly difficult.

We know that 2023 will bring with it a whole new set of challenges with households here in Argyll & Bute facing unprecedentedly high energy bills, skyrocketing food prices and soaring mortgage repayments. It is a really worrying time for everyone but please be aware, there are some excellent organisations working in every corner of this constituency who are available to help.

I encourage everyone therefore to seek help as soon as a problem arises, and do not wait until it is too late before asking

for assistance. There is a list of support organisations at the end of this newsletter.

I would like to send my very best wishes to the thousands of volunteers we are fortunate to have here in Argyll & Bute. Without them and their selfless work, our communities would be hugely diminished.

All too often their work goes unnoticed and therefore unappreciated, so on behalf of all of us, I'd like to say thank you and wish a Happy New Year to Argyll & Bute's army of volunteers.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brendan O'Hara'.

IN THE CONSTITUENCY



Supporting striking postal workers

On a bitterly cold, sub-zero morning in December, I was proud to join our postal workers outside Helensburgh's Sorting Office to show my support for their industrial action and their campaign for better pay and working conditions.

Our postal workers, who worked throughout the pandemic and who provided a lifeline service, particularly to folk in rural and isolated communities, deserve a better deal than on offer from Royal Mail.

We in Argyll & Bute know from experience that once a service is taken away, it rarely if ever returns. In the past few years, we have seen post offices and bank branches closing at an alarming rate, making it increasingly difficult to conduct business, access cash and have the level of service other parts of the country take for granted. I think it's fair to say therefore that if the postal workers lose this fight, we will all lose out, and if the the jobs are axed, we'll see the Royal Mail's Universal Service Obligation disappear very quickly thereafter.

"Local communities need local shops"... that was the message I sent to the CEO of Morrison's following their decision to close the only shop in the Churchill Estate in Helensburgh in early January.

Just before Christmas I joined with local people to collect names on a petition calling on Morrison's to suspend the closure in order to allow the community time to find a different buyer and explore other options which will keep their shop open. As well as writing to Morrisons bosses I have been in touch with the MoD pointing out that so many service personnel and their families in the Churchill estate rely on this store every day.



IN THE CONSTITUENCY

Meeting with NFUS Committee

Last year, just ahead of the publishing of the UK government's Retained EU Law Bill, I met with the Argyll & Bute executive of the NFUS, to discuss the implications of this truly awful piece of legislation on our agricultural sector here in the rural west highlands.



Upcoming Advice Surgeries



Need my help?

If you need my help but cannot attend the above advice surgeries, then please contact me using the below information. Me and my excellent team will be able to support you or point you in the right direction for support.

You can book an advice surgery by emailing me at brendan.ohara.mp or by calling my office on **01436 670587**

LOCATION	DATE	TIME
Loch Fyne Hotel, Inveraray	Friday 13th January	2-3pm
Venue to be announced, Oban	Friday 27th January	2-3pm

Local advice and support contacts

Citizens Advice Bureau Lochgilphead: 01546 605550
Allenergy: 01631 565183
Argyll & Bute Council Homelessness Team: 0345 056 5457
Argyll Community Housing Association: 0800 028 2755
Carr Gomm: 0300 666 3030
Local and minor roads or lighting defects: 0800 373 635
Oban Foodbank (New Hope Kitchen): 01631 565730
Kintyre Foodbank: 01586 552005
Bute Oasis Foodbank: 01700 502272
Helensburgh Foodbank (The Red Cross Hall): 07970 547580
Dunoon Foodbank: 07776 015956
Mid-Argyll Foodbank (Moving On): 01546 603269

Need my help? Get in touch

Email: brendan.ohara.mp@parliament.uk

Telephone: 01436 - 670 - 587

OR follow me on my social media platforms:

FACEBOOK

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THEY WORK FOR YOU

IN WESTMINSTER

Human Rights Spokesperson work

Tackling genocide

In my role as SNP Spokesperson for International Human Rights, I was honoured to host the Ukrainian Ambassador to the UK, Vadym Pristaiko, as well as two female survivors of the Yazidi genocide at Westminster to launch a year-long series of events examining how governments across the world have completely failed to act in accordance with their legal obligations under the 1948 Genocide Convention.

Last month, along with a number of parliamentary colleagues including Baroness Helena Kennedy KC, Tommy Shepperd MP, and Lord David Alton, I launched the All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Law, Justice and Accountability, which will ...

... bring together legal and academic expertise from across the world to highlight the failings in the UK Government's genocide prevention strategy.



Standing up for persecuted minorities



Through this year, I have met with survivors and representatives of several ethnic and religious minorities that continue to face severe persecution. Invariably the treatment of women and girls in these conflicts is truly horrific, and the account given by women survivors from Tigrayan community at an event I chaired at Westminster last month, about their treatment at the hands of both Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers was absolutely harrowing.

Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict was the theme of a recent UK Government conference during which I organised a session for woman and girls from Iraq and Syria to tell delegates of the extreme persecution they faced following the arrival of Daesh/ISIS in their communities.

IN WESTMINSTER

Recent news & events

Arguably, the most important piece of legislation to come through Westminster in the last couple of years is the Retained EU Law Bill. This Bill is the biggest attack on the Devolution Settlement we have ever witnessed and will give primacy to UK law in a whole raft of areas which hitherto have been wholly devolved.

In my role as Cabinet Office spokesperson, I have led our opposition to this bill which, among other things could well be the death-knell for Scottish agriculture.

We opposed the Bill at Second Reading and myself and my friend Peter Grant MP, working very closely with Scottish Government colleagues put down more than 60 amendments as the Bill went through its committee stage.



Our new Westminster leader Stephen Flynn MP has reshuffled his front bench and although sad to leave the excitement the Cabinet Office behind, I am delighted to have been asked to remain on our front bench as Spokesperson on International Development.



This role means that working with our Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Drew Hendry MP, I will be holding the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to account for their overseas aid spending, which has been continually cut back to unprecedented levels since 2020.

As SNP Cabinet Office Spokesperson, I have been leading the charge against the UK Government's VIP Lane for the politically

connected in the procurement of PPE during the Covid-19 pandemic. It turns out that while nurses and doctors were fighting the pandemic protected by bin-bags, the Tories were handing out £ billions to their pals and their party colleagues. It is an absolute disgrace but I'm certain there is an awful lot more to come out about the Tories' and this "cash for cronies" scandal, and what we have seen so far is just the tip of the iceberg.

Press Release: Cronyism 'rife' in Tory Government, says Brendan O'Hara MP, as Baroness Mone makes £29 million from dodgy PPE contracts

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I was proud to support Cancer Research UK in their campaign to fund research into non-smoking related lung cancer. This is a matter very close to me personally and you can read the full National Article by clicking [here](#)