

Delivering for the people of
Edinburgh Pentlands



Planning Reform — Gordon Highlights Issues!

RBS Branch Update



Gordon Macdonald proposed comprehensive reform during a debate relating to Scotland's planning system. The Scottish Government intends to improve how planning works and will introduce a new bill in Parliament.

During the debate, Gordon highlighted that in the last decade

the population of Edinburgh has increased by 10% but stated that *"We cannot continue to push Edinburgh's boundaries or we will destroy the very reasons that make Edinburgh an attractive place to live and work"*.

He said that it is necessary to re-use existing brownfield sites first in the city and take measures to reduce land-banking. Constrained sites if used effectively could support as many as 7,000 homes without having to develop a single greenfield area.

Gordon also proposed a general land tax on derelict, vacant, and unused development land in order to support infrastructure and reduce land banking. Planning fees, for large developments, should be increased with some of the additional funding being directed towards community councils so they can develop local plans for inclusion into the LDP.

Developers contribute toward schools, roads, transport, and affordable housing due to the impact of their applications. Gordon suggested that developers should also contribute towards primary health care.

Gordon stated, *"I also requested that where planning applications are rejected, repeat applications should be prevented for up to ten years — too often developers attempt to push through their plans by simply repeating their attempts until they wear down any opposition."*

"Furthermore, if there is no third party right of reply then we should be considering the removal of the right of appeal from all parties as operates in other countries."

Gordon questioned the Minister in the Scottish Parliament regarding Royal Bank of Scotland branch closures. He highlighted that only a few years ago there were six RBS branches used by his constituents, now there are to be none. The nearest branch will be at least two bus journeys away, which will impact on the elderly, the disabled, and constituents who require face-to-face banking.

Gordon called on the minister to agree that, at the very least, large banks such as RBS, that completely withdraw from communities, should extend their mobile branch network to provide a service to those who are unlikely or unable to use online banking.

Paul Wheelhouse, the Scottish Parliament Minister for Business, noted that regulation of banking is reserved to Westminster and that the Scottish Government is prohibited from compelling banks to maintain a branch presence.

However, the minister did agree that there was certainly an onus on banks that have reduced their branch coverage to support mobile services.

Out and About...

Scale Down Cancer Funding Boost for Schools to Close Attainment Gap



Gordon is backing Cancer Research UK's *Scale Down Cancer* campaign to help prevent obesity-related cancers across Scotland.

He helped highlight the urgent need for action on obesity when he attended a campaign event outside the Scottish Parliament on 24 January.

At the event, junk food was removed from a giant set of scales that were weighed down by food items commonly sold as part of supermarket multi-buy offers.

Scotland has one of the heaviest populations in Europe, with two-in-three adults being overweight or obese.

Given that obesity is the single biggest preventable cause of cancer after smoking, the Cancer Research UK campaign asks politicians to support a call to ensure cancer is scaled down to size in Scotland.

A survey commissioned by Cancer Research UK reveals that seven out of ten Scots support a ban on supermarket multi-buy promotions of junk food.

Schools in Edinburgh will benefit from a £7.5 million funding boost as part of the Scottish Government's drive to improve standards in schools. The funding will be from the Scottish Government's new £120 million Pupil Equity Fund.

Most local primaries and secondaries are set to receive additional support. It will be up to teachers and school leaders to decide the best way of using the funding to close the attainment gap in their schools.

Welcoming the announcement, Gordon said, "Every child in Scotland should have the best possible start in life, and it is unacceptable for children from the poorest backgrounds to have their chances limited by circumstances outside their control.

"The SNP in government has made closing the attainment gap our

number one priority, and our new £120 million Pupil Equity Fund is aimed at doing just that.

"This new announcement will let parents, teachers and school leaders in Edinburgh see how much funding they can expect to drive up standards and tackle the inter-generational cycle of deprivation in their school."

Some of the beneficiaries in this constituency are: -

- Broomhouse Primary £127,200
- Canal View Primary £223,200
- Clovenstone Primary £94,800
- Currie Primary £34,800
- Juniper Green Primary £31,200
- Longstone Primary £37,200
- Murrayburn Primary £117,600
- Oxfangs Primary £57,600
- Ratho Primary £15,600
- Sighthill Primary £84,000
- St Joseph's RC Primary £68,400
- Stenhouse Primary £110,400

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Monthly Surgeries — No appointment needed

1st Monday of the month, 6.30pm Wester Hailes Library

2nd Monday of the month, 6.30pm Carrickvale Community Centre

3rd Monday of the month, 6.30pm Currie Library

4th Monday of the month, 6.30pm Oxfangs Library

5th Monday of the month, 6.30pm Ratho Community Centre

NB: NO SURGERIES DURING PUBLIC AND BANK HOLIDAYS

Working for Edinburgh Pentlands