

Gordon Macdonald

Member of the Scottish Parliament
for Edinburgh Pentlands

March
2023



Investing in Communities



1,000s of Energy Vouchers Not Redeemed



Community projects tackling poverty and disadvantage will receive £27 million funding over the next 3 years from the Scottish Government.

Food pantries, which lower food bills, and cost of living advice services are among 100 initiatives developed by local people set to receive grants from the Investing in Communities Fund. The Fund recognises increased pressure on community organisations from the combined effects of Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the cost of living crisis.

Gordon stated, "The Investing in Communities Fund is a multiyear communities fund that is delivered as part of the Empowering Communities Programme. The fund targets our most disadvantaged communities to deliver projects, services and activities that address poverty and disadvantage on their own terms.

"Proposals were submitted from a range of organisations that included projects to improve communication, develop employment opportunities, enhance community wellbeing, reduce social isolation, and support families."

Successful projects in the Pentlands Constituency include: -

- About Youth, Calder Youth Action Project (part of Wester Hailes Together)
- Space @ The Broomhouse Hub, Together We Can
- Whale, The Arts Agency, Creativity, Place and Enterprise in Wester Hailes (part of Wester Hailes Together)

Thousands of households with prepayment meters have not used their rebate vouchers.

Gordon noted, "1-in-5 households in Scotland are on prepayment meters for gas or electricity. Households not on prepayment meters will have £400 automatically taken off their electricity bills in six instalments (or added to their balance); however, those on prepayment need vouchers for the discount."

PayPoint said 79% of customers have redeemed vouchers, but warn there is a 90 day deadline.

Customers should check unopened mail, check with energy suppliers, using contact details found on bills. The team can be contacted on 0808 196 8660 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm), or through www.energyadvice.scot.

ALSO THIS MONTH...

Insulation in Oxgangs



Environmental charity Changeworks, in partnership with Edinburgh Council, is helping homeowners improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

External wall insulation improvements are being made to 166 homes in Oxgangs. Works to over 50 properties have been completed with a hundred others to be completed by Spring.

Gordon commented, "Funding has been provided by the Scottish Government through the Energy Efficient Scotland: Area-based Scheme (EES:ABS). These area-based schemes target fuel-poor areas to provide energy efficiency measures to homes whilst delivering emission savings and reducing fuel poverty".

The schemes in Oxgangs are being delivered at significantly lowered cost — some households even qualify to have the work for free. The EES:ABS scheme, with a total funding of £1.9 million, is open to private householders and mixed tenure blocks have been targeted too, benefitting both social housing tenants and private householders.

New Wester Hailes High



The planning application process for the new Wester Hailes High School is currently underway.

The new building will consolidate the education estate into a modern 4-storey structure with the main catering, sports, and swimming facilities retained in the existing site as a community hub.

Gordon noted, "I and many members of the community campaigned for years for new high schools in Wester Hailes and Currie. Construction for Currie is underway, and I am pleased final plans are being made for Wester Hailes."

The design will also incorporate Passivhaus low energy standards, and the Net Zero Public Buildings Standard for low embodied carbon construction.

Harmeny School Swift Box



Gordon Macdonald visited the Harmeny School in Balerno along with members of the RSPB to install new swift nesting boxes as part of the Edinburgh Swift City project.

Gordon said, "I was pleased to visit the Harmeny School site with the RSPB during National Nest Box Week.

"The RSPB are providing nesting sites to breeding birds, many of which are reportedly in decline and threatened with extinction locally in Scotland and throughout the UK. Nest boxes are of special importance to some species, such as swifts, which traditionally nest in buildings; we are losing many of these sites due to redevelopment and renovation."

Members of the public can use the RSPB Swift Mapper app to record swift nesting sites when the birds return from their migration in May: -

www.swiftmapper.org.uk/app

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Weekly Surgeries

Gordon is now holding open surgeries for constituents to attend every Friday at 10am. The locations for these can be found at: -

<https://www.gordonmacdonaldmsp.info/surgery>

Working for Edinburgh Pentlands