

Out and About



Wester Hailes High School pupils at Traditional Building Skills at Parliament.



Celebrating 20 years of The BIG Project, a local organisation based in Broomhouse.



With organisers and users of the Community Wellbeing Collective at Westside Plaza



At The Plant Shop in Juniper Green as part of the Small Business Saturday initiative.



In Parliament celebrating the 10th anniversary of the founding of Dads Rock.



At the National Robotarium located on Heriot Watt University campus.



Meeting with members of Pentlands Men's Shed.



At Harmeny School in Balerno with RSPB to install new swift nesting boxes.

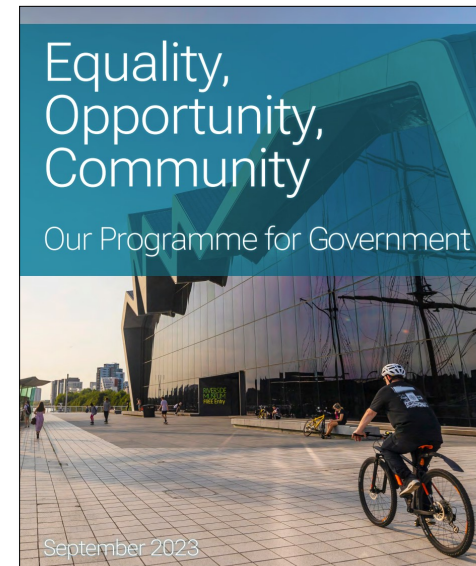


With pupils of Colinton Primary at their tombola stall in Colinton Mains Tesco.



Annual Report 2023/2024

Support During Cost of Living Crisis



The past few years have been incredibly difficult for people across the constituency, from dealing with the global pandemic and its aftermath to struggling to survive the ever-increasing costs of living. I know this from the constituents who have contacted me seeking assistance.

Fortunately, there are measures in place to support people to access benefits from Social Security Scotland, such as the Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods which has over 18,000 Edinburgh families benefitting, to the introduction this year of the Winter Heating Payment of which 20,000 households across the city are currently in receipt.

In addition, I was pleased to hear the Scottish Government announce as part of their Programme for Government further measures to target and reduce poverty including additional funding to ensure all primary school pupils across the city receive a free school meal, a crucial step in eradicating child poverty benefitting hundreds of school pupils across Edinburgh Pentlands.

An issue which has been all too prevalent across the constituency is the recruitment and retention within adult social care and early learning and childcare sectors. The impact this has had on local families and vulnerable people has been extremely challenging. However, I very much welcome the announcement of a pay increase to at least £12 per hour for those working across these sectors which should go some way in addressing the problem and therefore reduce the at times erratic provision for those who rely so heavily on these services.

— Gordon Macdonald MSP

Slashing Train Fares For Passengers



Gordon welcomed news that peak rail fares were scrapped on ScotRail services for six months from October.

Commenting, Gordon said, "Many constituents use the Curriehill, Wester Hailes, Kingsknowe, and the nearby Slateford and Edinburgh Park stations to get to work. This pilot will make travelling more affordable and accessible during the cost of living crisis.

"I am fully committed to promoting sustainable and active travel, and, hopefully, this plan will help reduce road traffic on the Lanark Road and the Calder Road during rush hour."

Free bus travel was recently expanded to include under 22s, and now reducing the cost of peak rail travel will put money straight back into people's pockets.

Need to contact your Constituency MSP?

Email: gordon.macdonald.msp@parliament.scot

Telephone: 0131 443 0595

Letter: 9 Kingsknowe Park, Edinburgh, EH14 2JQ

Web form: www.gordonmacdonaldmsp.info

Home visit: Available for those who cannot travel

Or on social media: -

 @GMacdonaldMSP  gordonmacdonaldsnpm

MSP Advice Surgeries NO APPOINTMENT NECESSARY

- Wester Hailes Library**
1st Friday of month, 10am
- Carrickvale Community Centre**
2nd Friday of month, 10am
- Currie Library**
3rd Friday of month, 10am
- Oxgangs Library**
4th Friday of month, 10am
- Ratho Community Centre**
5th Friday of month, 10am

NO SURGERIES DURING PUBLIC AND BANK HOLIDAYS



Construction of New Currie High Underway

Construction work on the new Currie High School is now underway. The new community school will provide 1,000 student places with teaching blocks, sports and leisure facilities, a swimming pool, and a café.

Gordon said, “It has been four-and-a-half years since the Save Our Schools group successfully campaigned for Balerno, Currie, and Wester Hailes each to have their own high school.

“We were adamant the three high schools, and Woodlands School, should remain open and on their current site. Consequently, the new Currie High School is being built on the open ground of the current school prior to its demolition and conversion into football pitches.”

The new school is being built by Kier to Passivhaus energy performance standards, which will reduce its total energy use by up to 70% — one of the first schools in Scotland to be built to this standard.

The school will cost £65 million and the project is one in the first phase of the Scottish Government’s £2 billion Learning Estate Investment Programme. Overall completion is expected in early 2025.

Thousands in Edinburgh Benefit From Scottish Child Payment



Payments worth nearly £16 million have been made to parents in Edinburgh to reduce poverty as part of the Scottish Child Payment scheme. Now available to all eligible under-16 children, over 165,000 payments up to 1 April 2023 have been made to Edinburgh parents since the scheme’s inception in February 2021, totalling £15,786,915. The full roll-out has been described as a

“watershed moment” in tackling poverty in Scotland. The Scottish Child Payment is unique to Scotland and is projected to lift around 90,000 children out of poverty in 2023/24.

It has been hailed as a “game-changer” by anti-poverty charities and is backed up with £442 million of funding from the Scottish Government in the next financial year.

Commenting, Gordon said, “I am delighted that these new figures show a significant uptake in families being supported by the Scottish Child Payment across Edinburgh — with over 13,000 children benefitting since its inception. The Scottish Child Payment, which is now £25 a week — a 150% increase — is a momentous achievement and is the most ambitious poverty reduction measure in the UK.

“As part of my personal commitment to support measures that reduce poverty in Edinburgh Pentlands, I was pleased to support this policy from its initial development in 2019. Payments like these are now vital as the cost of living crisis continues to deepen and many across the constituency find themselves increasingly struggling to get by.”

Big Noise Wester Hailes at Canal View PS



Gordon has visited Big Noise Wester Hailes at Canal View Primary School on a number of occasions and met with Head of Centre, Stewart Wilson.

Big Noise is a high-quality music education and social change programme, where the symphony orchestra becomes a community which supports children and young people to gain vital life skills such as confidence, resilience, creativity and aspiration.

Gordon noted, “Big Noise Wester Hailes supports participants’ wellbeing and helps them reach their full potential through music.”

Big Noise Wester Hailes began in spring 2022 working in partnership with the Council and with Clovenstone, Canal View, and Sighthill primary schools.



Scottish Apprenticeship Week 2023

Gordon was pleased to support Scottish Apprenticeship Week 2023 with a visit to Aramark at Dregghorn Barracks. Aramark provides food services, facilities, and uniform services to organisations, such as military units, hospitals, and schools.

Gordon said, “Apprenticeship Week shows how apprenticeships can unlock potential in people and businesses. It is a celebration of how apprentices and employers can benefit through work-based learning and highlights how learning providers support apprentices to achieve.”

There were 25,401 Modern Apprenticeship (MA) starts across Scotland in the last financial year, and, as at 30 December 2022, there were 39,794 MAs in training. Around £100 million is invested in apprenticeships training each year.



Oxgangs Insulation Works

Gordon visited the site of recent improvements made by the External Wall Insulation project at Oxgangs, which is being run by Changeworks.

Gordon commented, “There are 145 addresses targeted under the 2023 to 2024 Oxgangs External Wall Insulation (EWI) project. 47 are council properties, and 98 are private. The majority of these are 6-in-a-block flats, one 4-in-a-block, and a few terraced and semi-detached houses. In the past year, 2022 to 2023, 61 council properties and 100 private properties were completed.”



Empty MoD Homes Finally Put to Good Use

After years of calls from Gordon, empty Ministry of Defence homes in Edinburgh are set to be used to help tackle the housing shortage. Gordon has previously raised the issue in the Scottish Parliament and has written to numerous UK Government Defence Secretaries. In 2021, it was revealed that nearly 11,000 MoD homes were empty across the UK, with 900 in Scotland. These homes have been left empty for years instead of being put to good use.

Edinburgh Council will now be able to purchase 23 properties from the Dregghorn MoD Estate with an option to purchase a further 55.

Commenting Gordon said, “I am delighted to see empty MoD homes will now be put to good use and not before time. It was never right that so many homes were left lying empty, which is why I have long been calling for them to be used to help people whose lives would benefit from being housed in the properties.”

However, in an FoI request to Edinburgh Council made by Gordon, it was disclosed that there are currently 224 vacant council houses in the South West Locality alone, of which 118 have been vacant for over 6 months and 117 are awaiting renovation before letting.



New Library and Nursery in Ratho

Gordon visited the site of the new £2.8 million Ratho library and nursery. The new facility is scheduled to open later this year.

Gordon noted, “By combining with the nursery, the library will further enhance its role as a vital community space for Ratho.”