



SUMMER 2019



## LOCAL EMPLOYERS PAYING REAL LIVING WAGE

During the summer recess I spent a lot of time visiting charities and businesses in Edinburgh Eastern paying their staff the real living wage - which is at least £9 per hour and been independently calculated on what a person and their family needs to live on. This included a visit to the most recently accredited living wage employer in my constituency, Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home, who signed up to the scheme in June this year. I was delighted to congratulate the Home on paying their staff the living wage and to learn more about their work in welcoming lost or abandoned dogs and cats from across Edinburgh and the Lothians. Learn more about Living Wage Scotland, which is funded by the Scottish Government, here: [www.scottishlivingwage.org](http://www.scottishlivingwage.org)



As the Scottish Parliament 'Species Champion' for the Ash Tree, I met with the Scottish Woodland Trust to raise awareness of ash dieback and what we can do to prevent the decline of these beautiful trees, including in my constituency.



I was taken on a tour of Burdiehouse Burn Valley Park by the Friends of BBVP to hear about issues affecting the park as well as upcoming projects involving the local community. Give them a follow on Twitter at: @FBBVP



I was delighted to host a special reception at the Scottish Parliament to congratulate my constituent, Cole McKay, on being named The Speaker newspaper's Young Person of the Year. Well done, Cole!

## Would you like my advice or support?

Email [ash.denham.msp@parliament.scot](mailto:ash.denham.msp@parliament.scot) or phone 0131 659 4707. You can also attend one of my regular surgeries (details on the last page of this update).

### Edinburgh School Uniform bank visit



I was pleased to visit the Edinburgh School Uniform Bank in Balerno, who provide school uniforms to families in the capital, including my Edinburgh Eastern constituency, experiencing financial hardship.

This is a charity I have supported since my election and my constituency office is a registered donation drop off point - I am always amazed at the generosity of people who donate to this incredible cause which simply allows children living in poverty to go to school dressed like everyone else and not made to feel different or excluded. If you'd like to donate clothes or money to this cause please visit [www.edinburghuniform.wordpress.com](http://www.edinburghuniform.wordpress.com)

### Fringe should benefit all parts of Edinburgh

Ahead of this year's Fringe I met with the world-famous festival's Chief Executive, Shona McCarthy (pictured), to learn about the efforts undertaken to ensure young people and low-income families from Edinburgh Eastern are given the opportunity to see and be inspired by some of the world's best performers during the Fringe. Only two Fringe events took place in my Edinburgh Eastern constituency during this summer's festival, so over the coming weeks I will engage with potential venues and businesses in the area about the possibility of hosting more shows in future years.



## Backing Age Scotland's campaign and petition to keep TV licences free for all over 75s in Scotland



I was delighted to visit Age Scotland to hear about some of the issues affecting older people in both my Edinburgh Eastern constituency and across Scotland. I'm supporting their campaign to keep TV licences free for all over 75s. We know that many people in this age group suffer from social isolation and loneliness and that a TV can give them comfort and keep them connected to what's going on in the world. It's vital that we keep TV licences free for over-75s as the cost of buying a TV licence could be a real barrier to many people.

Age Scotland also deliver a fantastic service in making older people aware of all the benefits they are entitled to - a third of older people who qualify for Pension Credit due to low income haven't applied for it and so I would encourage constituents to call the charity's helpline.



### Visit to Fresh Start homeless charity

I was delighted to meet with Bidy Kelly at Fresh Start, an Edinburgh-based charity helping people who have become homeless establish themselves in their new home. Although based in Pilton, Fresh Start works with my constituents in the Edinburgh Eastern constituency, and I look forward to working with the charity in those parts of the city. Learn more about their work at [www.freshstartweb.org.uk](http://www.freshstartweb.org.uk)



### Supporting Gilmerton artist ahead of Fringe

Ruth Addinall is a gifted painter and sculptor from the Gilmerton area, and her art display at her Ravenscroft Studio was one of only two Fringe events taking place in the Edinburgh Eastern constituency. I really enjoyed visiting her pre-Fringe display at Duddingston Gardens (pictured) to help promote a local artist and her incredible work. Visit her website at [www.ruthaddinall.co.uk](http://www.ruthaddinall.co.uk) or follow her Facebook!

## Duddington Gardens in bloom



Duddington Kirk & Gardens is a truly beautiful and iconic part of east Edinburgh, and I was delighted to be taken on a full tour of the Gardens by project worker Lizz Spence and volunteers. It was inspiring to hear about the work of volunteers to make the Gardens as stunning as they are, an activity which bring a great number of mental health and social benefits to the volunteers involved. I also visited the lovely Garden Room, which is open for tea and cake Wed-Sun between 1pm-4pm.

## I'm backing Fidra's Great Nurdle Hunt!



Small plastic pellets the size of lentils, called 'nurdles', are polluting our coastline and harming our marine animals and seabirds. It's why I'm backing Fidra's, a local environmental charity, campaign for people to take part in the Great Nurdle Hunt. This is a campaign which encourages local people to take action by organising beach cleans and documenting their findings for the charity. I'm pictured at Portobello Beach with Project Officer, Jasper Hamlet.

## Erskine House for veterans visit



I visited residents and staff at Erskine House in Gilmerton, a purpose-built veterans' care home providing nursing and dementia care, both long term and respite, for 72 residents. The charity have been caring for veterans since 1916 and across Scotland care for nearly 1,000 residents each year. Thank you to management for giving me a tour of their fantastic facility. If you would like to learn more about their work please visit their website at [erskine.org.uk](http://erskine.org.uk).

## Taken on a tour of iconic Holyrood Park



Arthur's Seat, Salisbury Crags and the beautiful Holyrood Park attract hundreds of thousands of visitors every year. It's also a listed (scheduled) ancient monument and a property in care. It's why I wanted to learn more about the work undertaken by Historic Environment Scotland to preserve elements of the park. I was also pleased to hear about their engagement with local schools, allowing them to understand the significance and importance of these stunning landmarks.



## WithYOU charity visit

The WithYOU charity, a Living Wage employer situated just off Niddrie Mains Road, is one which provides positive, life changing support, delivered by inspiring, professional staff, to people from the local area. They provide support for a number of different groups, including services for autism, homelessness, learning disabilities, mental health, older people and young people.

## Oor Wullie statues raise money for kids

The Oor Wullie BIG Bucket Trail has been a huge success with 200 of the sculptures across Scotland - including 60 in Edinburgh - has raised vital funds to support the life-changing work of Scotland's children's hospitals, such as the Edinburgh Children's Hospice Charity, Glasgow's Children's Hospital Charity and the Archie Foundation. Well done to everyone involved! I'm pictured below next to the statue outside the Scottish Parliament.



## Dancing with Dixie Saltires!

I had a great time taking part in the Dixie Saltires' line-dancing class in Lochend! This is a great way for older people and people of all ages to come together to socialise and be active. This is an hourly class held every Monday at the Restalrig Lochend Community Hub at 11.30am. Phone 0131 554 0422.



## New book shop on Portobello High Street

I was delighted to visit the new Portobello Bookshop on the high street just after it had opened its doors for the first time to customers. It's great to see new businesses open in the area - this provides local employment opportunities and is another reason for visitors to come to this part of the capital. I wish the owner Jack Clark and his staff all the best with the shop and look forward to my next visit!



## Council's Gracemount regeneration proposals



Edinburgh City Council are gathering information on how services in the areas of Gracemount, Burdiehouse and Southhouse are delivered and how existing buildings are being used. As part of this the council have engaged with hundreds of people in those areas, including exhibitions, drop in sessions, and an online survey. Learn more on their website at: <https://bit.ly/2kf7Ud6>



## Local drop in services crucial to constituents

During the summer I made 29 visits to local charities, community groups and businesses, including vital drop in services, Health Opportunities Team (HOT) and The Listening Space (part of the Health In Mind charity). HOT are a Living Wage employer and offer a support service to young people aged between 12-25 years old on all health issues, including mental and sexual health. The Listening Space sees volunteers give up their time every Wednesday at Gilmerton Community Centre to offer a compassionate and non-judgemental ear to those from the local community who may be suffering from a mental health issue or going through a challenging time.



## A day spent visiting a number of activity sessions at Craigmillar's Thistle Foundation charity



The Thistle Foundation has been at the heart of Craigmillar since it was established 75 years ago as a veterans charity helping those returning from the Second World War with disabilities. After that they reached out to all disabled people whether they were a veteran or not, and then extended their support to people with long term health conditions as well. It's a charity I've visited many times in the past but this summer I went a long for a full day of activities to see first hand the wonderful support they provide to their service users. I started the day by taking part in their indoor curling session, then got involved in a Tai Chi class before visiting Thistle's on-site and very popular Men's Shed, similar to others across the country.



## Ash Denham MSP secures meeting with Lothian Buses to see reinstatement of Lochend service



A number of constituents have contacted me in recent weeks to express their frustrations that the route of the number 15 service bus they rely on to travel into the city centre has been altered meaning many have to walk further to access a bus into the city centre. Many of my constituents who use this service are elderly and may have disabilities which prevent them from walking a longer distance to reach the next bus stop. Walking a longer distance will also be particularly difficult in bad weather or in the winter months. I have written to Lothian Buses regarding this issue and am pleased to have secured a meeting with the company's management next month to look at ways for either the route to be reinstated or for a compromise to be reached. Please get in touch with my office if there is anything you would like me to raise at this meeting.

## Taking part in July's Valley Park litter pick event

I was thrilled to take part in July's Valley Park Litter Pick event in the Gracemount area. This was one of a number of family-orientated events organised in partnership between Out & About, Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust, NHS Lothian, City of Edinburgh Council Scottish Natural Heritage and Edinburgh Community Food. I've taken part in numerous litter picks in the area since my election as the Edinburgh Eastern MSP and it's always inspiring to see the community come together to keep the area tidy.



# Lochend Secret Garden enables local people to grow their own fruit and vegetables



A great way to end the summer recess was to pay a visit to the Lochend Secret Garden - also known as the Lochend Community Growing Project - which enables local people to grow their own fruit and vegetables. I've visited the Garden in the past and I was blown away at the progress they have made. The project aims to promote growing your own produce, having a healthier diet, exercise and improving mental health. I was delighted to see the pathways have been recently upgraded to provide easier access to the raised beds for wheelchair users. If you're interested in getting involved please email [lochendsecretgarden@gmail.com](mailto:lochendsecretgarden@gmail.com)

## Niddrie's Debra-Ann Dancers a hit in Canada!

I was delighted to meet Debra-Ann and her incredible Highland dancers while practicing at the Jack Kane Centre. I visited the session to congratulate the girls on their fundraising dance across the Forth Road Bridge, which was to help pay for flights and accommodation to take part in the Highland dancing Scot Dance Canada Championships event in New Brunswick, Canada. Well done to Debra-ann and the girls, you're all doing your community so proud!



## 12 advice surgeries held across constituency in summer

During the summer recess I held 12 advice surgeries across the constituency. Below are the details of my upcoming surgeries if you would like to attend:

**SECOND FRIDAY OF EACH MONTH**

12pm @ constituency office, SPACE business park, 11 Harewood Road, Craigmillar;

2pm @ Gilmerton Library

**LAST MONDAY OF EACH MONTH**

12pm @ Restalrig Lochend Community Centre;

3pm @ constituency office, Craigmillar;

5.45pm @ Portobello Library