

Gordon Macdonald MSP

December 2024 Newsletter



Universal Winter Heating Payment Announced



The Scottish Government will provide universal support through the introduction of Pension Age Winter Heating Payments next year ensuring a payment for every pensioner household in winter 2025-26.

Social Justice Secretary Shirley-Anne Somerville has confirmed that on the roll-out of the new benefit next winter pensioners in receipt of a relevant qualifying benefit, such as Pension Credit, will be receiving Pension Age Winter Heating Payments of £300 or £200, depending on their age. All other pensioner households will receive £100 from next winter, providing them with support.

Ms Somerville said "Ahead of next winter I will bring forward regulations to introduce universal Pension Age Winter Heating Payments in winter 2025-26 for Scottish pensioners.

"This universal benefit – providing much needed support not available anywhere else in the UK – will deliver support for all pensioner households as we had always intended to do before the UK Government decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments cut the funding available to support our new benefit in Scotland this winter by £147 million.

"We will not abandon older people this winter or any winter. We will do our best to make sure no-one has to make a decision between heating and eating, and we will continue to protect pensioners".

Gordon said "I welcome this forward-thinking announcement from the Scottish Government who clearly recognise the impact energy bills are having on pensioners during a cost of living crisis.

"I also would like to take this opportunity to remind pensioners that for this winter to be eligible for Winter Heating Payment Scotland, you **must apply for Pension Credit by December 21, 2024**. You can apply using the [online service](https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim) at www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim if you have already applied for your State Pension. Alternatively to apply by phone call Pension Credit Claim Line on 0800 99 1234, Textphone: 0800 169 0133."

Christmas Card Competition



For the past 11 years Gordon has invited local primary school pupils to take part in his annual Christmas Card competition. He has received some brilliant designs over the years which makes the task of selecting the winners extremely difficult.

The competition provides an opportunity for local children to demonstrate their creativity with the winners having their design printed on Gordon's annual Christmas card.

2024 was no exception to the response from schools and their pupils and the first prize winner was from local primary school Nether Currie with the runners up prizes awarded to pupils from Currie and Canal View Primary School.

Gordon said: "It is with thanks to the schools, staff and pupils that the competition has been, and I hope will continue to be very popular."

Surgery Notice



Wester Hailes Library continues to remain closed whilst essential works are completed.

Please be aware that the next surgery in Wester Hailes will take place on **Friday 6th December** from **10-11am** at:

**The Health Agency
Wester Hailes Healthy Living Centre
30 Harvesters Way
EH14 3JF**



E-Bikes And Scooters

Having been approached by a number of constituents raising their concerns regarding e-bike and e-scooter use on roads and pavements, often whilst committing antisocial behaviour, Gordon took the opportunity to ask a Parliamentary Question on the issue.



On Wednesday 20th November Gordon asked the Scottish Government "what action Police Scotland can take to ensure the safe and legal use of e-bikes and e-scooters". Gordon was informed by the Minister for Victims and Community Safety, Siobhian Brown, that "The Scottish Government recognises the harm endured by communities that is caused by dangerous and antisocial vehicle nuisance. Use of e-scooters on public roads, footpaths and cycle lanes is illegal, and likewise for e-bikes that exceed permitted criteria."

Recognising that registration of such vehicles is reserved to the UK Government, Gordon hopes to see development of initiatives to curb this alarming behaviour and thanks those who brought it to his attention.

Empty Homes Partnership Debate



On Tuesday 19th November Gordon led a Member's Debate to celebrate the work of the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership (SEHP).

The SEHP reported success in bringing almost 11,000 long-term empty properties back into use since its establishment in 2010, with 1,875 long-term empty homes brought back into use in 2023-24 alone. This is a record annual figure for the partnership which has facilitated collaborative work between Shelter Scotland, local authorities and the Scottish Government – with organisations investing £3.7 million in the partnership to date.

Gordon said "I thank all who took part in this important debate. Joint efforts to bring long-term empty properties back into use must continue, with over 46,000 properties reportedly still identified as empty or void across Scotland, including 7,200 in the City of Edinburgh Council area. I call on the UK Government to use its upcoming budget to reverse what I see as harmful cuts to Scotland's capital funding allocation, to enable the Scottish Government to invest further in the provision of warm, affordable housing for all."

Wester Hailes High School Visit

Gordon was pleased to be invited to discuss politics and his work as an MSP with pupils and staff at Wester Hailes High School.

The National Modern Studies class of S4-6 pupils had been looking at the roles and work of MSPs within their constituency and parliament as well as the work of parliamentary committees. Gordon shared some of his experiences of these roles with the enthusiastic pupils and hopes they enjoyed the class as much as he did.



Carers Rights Day



Carers Rights Day took place on Thursday 21 November 2024, with unpaid carers across the country being encouraged to check their eligibility for financial support from Social Security Scotland.

It is estimated that there are around 800,000 unpaid carers, including 30,000 under the age of 18, providing care for a family member, friend or neighbour in Scotland. Research also suggests that many do not see themselves as a carer, meaning they do not take up support they are entitled to.

To find out more about the financial support available for unpaid carers visit mygov.scot/browse/benefits/carers.

New Lottery Funding Launched

The National Lottery Community Fund has launched two new programmes, Community Action and Fairer Life Chances, to help communities tackle poverty, disadvantage, and discrimination.

They will award bigger and longer grants than previous funds giving community groups more security over a longer term, and they will fund organisations of different sizes and levels of experience.

You can access further information on the funds at [Funding programmes | The National Lottery Community Fund](https://www.nationallottery.com/funding-programmes).



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Gordon holds open weekly surgeries for constituents every Friday at 10am.

The locations for these can be found at: <https://www.gordonmacdonaldmsp.info/surgery>

