



John Barrett MP's Monthly Update

April 2009

March has been another busy month both at Westminster and in the constituency. This is not designed to be an exhaustive list of my work, but should give you an idea of what I have been involved in this month.

Inquiry into the War in Iraq

The decision to invade Iraq was the biggest foreign policy mistake this Government has made. It has cost the lives of 179 British soldiers and tens of thousands of Iraqi civilians. Despite this, the Government are still delaying an inquiry into the decisions that led us into the War. I recently tabled a motion in Westminster calling for an immediate inquiry and spoke in a special commons debate on the subject. It is vital that we learn the lessons from Iraq and avoid repeating the mistakes of the past.

You can read my speech [here](#) or read details of my Early Day Motion [here](#).

I have also written a more recent article on this issue which you can read [here](#).

Campaign Success for the Blind

After a long campaign, the Government have finally accepted a landmark change to the law that will benefit over 40,000 registered blind people across the country. Until now, those with severe sight loss did not receive the higher rate of mobility allowance unless they were also deaf. I have argued for the change over a number of years and was delighted that the Government have finally seen sense on this issue. The change will amount to around an extra £30 a week to help with travel and other mobility costs. For more information read my [press article](#).



Promoting Tourism in Edinburgh

Last week was National Tourism Week and I was in Edinburgh calling for more help from the Government to promote tourist attractions in the west side of the city. Here in Edinburgh West we have Edinburgh Zoo, Murrayfield Stadium and the Edinburgh International Climbing Arena at Ratho – these are top level tourist attractions that we need to do a better job of shouting about.

I recently visited Murrayfield Rugby Stadium to meet with SRU's Director of Communications and Public Affairs, Dominic McKay, Edinburgh Rugby's Chief Executive, Nic Cartwright (*below left*) and Scotland prop Alan Jacobsen (*below right*) to hear what more could be done to raise Scottish rugby's profile and attract more tourists to the city. [Click here](#) to find out more.





Visiting Local Schools

One of the most rewarding parts of my job is visiting local school and listening to the views of the younger generation. I addressed a Modern Studies Revision day where I spoke with pupils from the Royal High School, Forrester High, Tynecastle and St Augustine's. The questions and the standard of debate were more than a match for Westminster. I also visited Craigoyston Primary to see their Eco Garden (*below*). To read more about these visits be sure to visit my [blog](#).



MP's expenses

There has been a lot of attention on MPs expenses in the news in recent days and there is no doubt that some MPs have brought the system into disrepute. The system itself is a shambles and is in dire need of reform. I have always published details of my expenses on my website and am always happy to answer any queries constituents may have. A run-down of my latest expenses can be found on my [website](#).

Action on the economy

Reviving the economy is now the number one priority at Westminster with the country in a recession and unemployment passing 2 million. I have been arguing for the ineffective VAT cut to be scrapped and for the £12bn to be spent creating new jobs, boosting our housing stock and rail network, and to kick start a green economy to tackle climate change.

New Role at Westminster

During the last year I have been assisting our International Development spokesman, Michael Moore, and have stepped in where required to cover debates on this subject. This month I was asked if I would officially become the Shadow Minister for International Development again, while continuing with my role as a spokesman on disability issues. I was delighted to accept. At a time when we are experiencing recession at home, as we tighten our belts, it is essential that we never forget the real hunger and poverty elsewhere in the world and that this world recession will literally be a matter of life and death for some.

DVD Piracy campaign

At Westminster I have been campaigning for tougher laws on copyright theft to stave off major job losses in the UK Film Industry. I recently secured a parliamentary debate where I pressed the Government Minister to look again at the law as the current system is not working while the proceeds from illegal DVD sales often help fund organised crime. For more information, read ['Barrett calls for a change in film piracy legislation'](#)

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If you would like to know more about what I have been doing at Westminster and in the constituency visit my [website](#)