

John Barrett

MP for Edinburgh West



Annual Report, 2002



John Barrett MP

Dear Resident,

It is just over one year since the people of West Edinburgh elected me their new Member of Parliament. As I campaigned for your support, I pledged to produce an annual report and I hope this, my first report, will give you a flavour of what I have been doing over the last 12 months on your behalf.

It has indeed been a busy year. After only three months as an MP, the terrible and tragic events of September 11th in the USA shocked and changed the world. I attended two emergency recalls of Parliament following the attacks and was glad to contribute to the debates. Combined with the continuing crisis in the Middle East, these horrifying events should remind us of the importance of peace and democracy, regardless of party political persuasion.

Closer to home, the year brought new challenges to West Edinburgh as well. September 11th raised questions over air safety, something I take seriously with Edinburgh airport in the heart of my constituency. A series of local job losses were nothing short of tragic for those affected. More recently, the decision of the Home Office to consider RAF Turnhouse for an asylum seeker accommodation centre provoked a range of responses and continues to dominate my postbag.

I do hope this annual report will give you a small taste for what I have been doing as your MP. I have tried to make myself as accessible as possible to constituents and if I can be of any assistance to you, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

With best wishes

John Barrett



Working in Westminster

Over the last year, I have tried to ensure West Edinburgh has the strongest voice in the House of Commons. During the parliamentary term, I work in London from Monday

evening to Thursday evening. I was delighted that my work at Westminster prompted the local Evening News to name me “**Lothian’s busiest back-bencher**”.



Asking questions, raising issues, speaking out...

I have asked over 200 written and oral parliamentary questions, including questions to Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. I have pressed the Transport Secretary to carry out Lord Cullen’s recommendations on rail safety and called on the Work & Pensions Secretary for an increase in the state pension.



Speaking in a Westminster debate

I have tabled 18 parliamentary motions to try and raise the awareness of a number of key issues including the job losses at NEC and Grampian Foods, better regulation of fireworks to protect humans and animals, supporting free personal care for the elderly in Scotland and promoting renewable energy in place of nuclear power.

I have made many speeches at Westminster. I used my maiden speech to highlight the particular concerns and problems of West Edinburgh and have made other speeches on debt relief, tackling age discrimination and improving school transport.

Opening up Parliament...

I have been particularly pleased to welcome constituents from across West Edinburgh to Westminster and provide tours of the House of Commons. I have greeted several parties from local schools and have sent parliament education packs to every school in the constituency.



Visiting Downing Street with Edinburgh school children

Standing up for the developing world...

In February I was appointed to the House of Commons Select Committee on International Development. The plight of those in the third world was one of the first issues which got me involved in politics and I am delighted to be in a position to scrutinize the work of Government in their provision of aid to war-torn countries, promoting economic development and relieving the debt owed from the world’s poorest nations.

I attend weekly Committee meetings and have already had an opportunity to quiz the Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, International Development Secretary Clare Short and Chancellor Gordon Brown.

I have also served on a standing committee dealing with European directives as well as the committee for the in-depth scrutiny of the proposed Bill to

ban tobacco advertising, which will save an estimated 3,000 lives every year, if passed.



Working in the Community

I have kept in contact with over 280 local organisations in West Edinburgh through regular correspondence to ensure that they too are represented and have their voices heard.

If you are involved in a group or organisation I have not yet contacted, please write to me at the constituency office with your details.



Taking action on local concerns...

With concern over the proposed asylum centre at RAF Turnhouse and wider concerns over air safety, I visited Edinburgh Airport twice to check standards in security.

Crime remains a major issue in West Edinburgh and I have

kept in regular contact with local police, holding meetings with the Chief Constable. I also spent an evening on patrol with the police to look at some of the specific problems and incidents they have to deal with locally, especially anti-social behaviour by young people.



South Queensferry Beach Clean-up

Supporting local events...

Within the constituency I was delighted to be able to attend a number of events including Galas at Clermiston, Davidson's Mains, Drumbrae, Ratho and Kirkliston as well as the Corstorphine Fair.

In November I attended the Remembrance Day services at the Old Parish Church in Corstorphine and at the Ratho Station War Memorial. In the



Presenting prizes at Davidson's Mains Children's Gala

same month I supported fundraising events at Dalmeny Primary School, Corstorphine Hospital and Edinburgh Zoo.

Over the Christmas period, I attended fundraising fairs at Cramond Kirk, Fox Covert Primary School and East Craigs Primary School and was delighted to attend the Corstorphine Community Christmas events.

In the same month I took part in the World Aids Day March, which highlighted this disease and its affects on society. I visited South Queensferry on New Years Day for the famous Loonie Dook but didn't have the nerve to join the many locals who jumped into the Forth!

Supporting the voluntary sector...

The importance of the voluntary sector in the constituency was shown through a number of visits including one to Pilton Citizens Advice Bureau where I was shown the valuable work that is carried out.

In April, I also helped in the South Queensferry and Cramond Beach Clean-ups and volunteered at the Trefoil Centre.



Volunteering at the Trefoil Centre

Helping constituents

My first and foremost concern is to help and represent the people of West Edinburgh. I have employed a full time member of staff to assist me in dealing with constituents' problems, questions and queries.



In my first year, over 300 constituents approached me to discuss a range of issues. As an MP dealing with reserved

issues, the most common subjects people approached me with were:

- Immigration and asylum;
- Child Support Agency;
- Benefits and pensions;
- Foreign affairs and overseas aid;
- Environment and nuclear energy;
- Animal welfare;
- Defence & arms trade; and
- Human Rights.

Since the setting up of the Scottish Parliament, many issues are now devolved to Holyrood. I have worked closely with Margaret Smith MSP to provide constituents with an integrated team service.



With Margaret Smith MSP

As a result, issues like health, education, crime, housing and transport, which fall under the responsibility of the Scottish Parliament, are best dealt with by Margaret. You can contact her on 0131 348 5786 or write to Margaret Smith MSP, Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP.

Website

In order to keep constituents as up to date as possible with my work and provide answers to frequently asked questions, I have set up a new website. The site contains up-to-date news, useful contact details and a section for you to register your views. You can see the site by visiting www.johnbarrettmp.com.



Surgeries

I have held over 40 surgeries in my constituency office and in Muirhouse, South Queensferry and Kirkliston, helping hundreds of constituents with their individual problems.

Appointments for my weekly surgery at Drum Brae Avenue or for the monthly surgeries in Muirhouse, Kirkliston or Queensferry can be made by phoning 0131 339 0339.

Getting in touch

If you have a problem you need help with, a question to ask or an issue which concerns you, please contact me.

I cannot promise to solve every problem raised but I will do my best to help.

Write: John Barrett MP
Constituency Office
11 Drum Brae Ave
EDINBURGH
EH12 8TE

Tel: 0131 339 0339

Fax: 0131 476 7101

Email: johnbarrettmp@parliament.uk