

# John Barrett

MP for Edinburgh West



Annual Report, 2003



John Barrett MP

Dear Resident,

In this, my second annual report since my election as your local Member of Parliament, I hope to once again give you a flavour of what I have been doing on your behalf in the last 12 months.

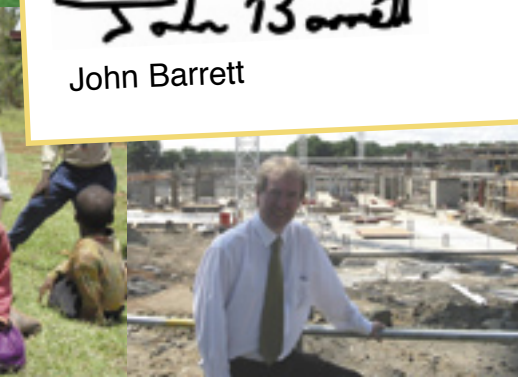
This time last year, I talked about the terrible terrorist attacks of September 11th and the resulting military action that took place in Afghanistan. This year, the attention of Parliament and the country was once again drawn overseas to the recent crisis in Iraq. I was fortunate enough to make contributions in three parliamentary debates and represent the views of my constituents on the issue. My work on the International Development Select Committee allowed me to investigate fully the humanitarian response, work which continues to keep me and my Westminster office busy.

Closer to home, my top priority in the constituency is to represent all the residents of Edinburgh West, both in the constituency and at Westminster, and my post-bag over the last year has resulted in several hundred individual cases being raised on a wide variety of issues, ranging from the threat to Post Offices, Tax Credits and Immigration, to proposed changes in Pension Credits later in the year, which will affect many pensioners in the constituency.

I have always tried to make myself as accessible as possible to my constituents and keep people up to date with my work. I hope this annual report will help achieve these aims, as part of my year round work on your behalf.

With best wishes

John Barrett



# Representing you at Westminster

Last year, my work in Parliament prompted the Edinburgh Evening News to name me “**Lothian’s busiest backbencher**”. Twelve months on, I was pleased to see that once again, I was among the

top ten most active Scottish MPs and 1st among all Lothian MPs in terms of parliamentary contributions. I will continue to work hard in the House of Commons to fight for local interests and make

sure the concerns of Edinburgh West are heard loud and clear.

If there is any issue you believe I should be working on, please contact me with details.

## Asking questions, raising issues, speaking out...

Over the past 12 months, I have:

- Asked over 350 parliamentary questions on topics ranging from transport and the environment to foreign affairs, the economy and tackling pensioner poverty.
- Tabled 14 motions to parliament on global and local issues such as the war in Iraq, preventing the spread



of HIV-aids, protecting the Forth Rail Bridge and tackling the misuse of fireworks. I have supported over 560 backbench motions since the beginning of the parliamentary session last October.

- Spoken in debates on such issues as the future of post offices, military action in Iraq, the new Tax Credits. I was also pleased to initiate two debates in Parliament, one on the future of the manufacturing sector in Scotland following a series of local company cut-backs and a further debate on stamp duty and the negative impact it is having, especially on first time house buyers.

## Opening up Parliament...

One of the best parts of being a Member of Parliament is welcoming constituents to Westminster. I have been particularly pleased to welcome groups from the Royal High School, Gylemuir Primary and Craig-mount High School. I have also visited a number of schools throughout West Edinburgh to help teach children about the important work of parliament.



## Helping to build a better world...

I have continued my work as a member of the powerful House of Commons Select Committee on International Development which has held investigations into the humanitarian situation in Iraq, the food crisis in Southern Africa and the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

I was also appointed by Charles Kennedy as a Shadow International Development Minister which has

helped me to raise the awareness of developing countries through Parliament and the media.

As part of my responsibilities, I visited Malawi last October to see first hand the impact which food shortages were having on the country and travelled to New York to meet with United Nations officials over the future of Iraq. I was also pleased to join Oxfam on a special visit to Ethiopia to learn

more about the negative impact which European trade rules are having on the ability of African countries to increase their export market.





# Working in the Community

I have continued to keep in touch with over 300 local organisations in West Edinburgh to ensure they too have their voices heard.

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



## Taking action on local concerns...

With concerns over the possible closure of some local Post Offices, I presented a petition to 10 Downing Street with over 8,000 signatures on it calling for the protection of this vital local service.

I also met Government Ministers regarding proposals for an asylum seekers Accommodation Centre at Turnhouse.

Many local residents contacted me regarding the misuse of fireworks and I have actively supported legislation that will restrict the time of year and the time of day fireworks can be set off. This legislation has successfully passed through the House of Commons.



With Margaret Smith MSP delivering petition to 10 Downing Street

## Supporting local events...

I have been delighted to support a number of local Fairs and Gala Days including ones at Drum Brae and Clermiston, Kirkliston, Ratho and Davidson's Mains.

In November I attended a number of Remembrance Day Services and over the Christmas period I supported fundraising fairs in Cramond Kirk and Craigmoynton as well as a number of over events for other voluntary and charitable organisations.

I have also been pleased to be able to support a number of Church fundraisers such as St

Anne's and St Ninian's Churches and am keen to hear from representatives of all faiths about issues that concern them.

As a member of Edinburgh Zoo I supported their appeal for the new rhino enclosure and at a visit to the Royal Highland Show I met with farmers and members of the agricultural community to hear more about the important part they play in the rural parts of the constituency.

I am also able to help publicise local community events through my website and if you would like your event supported in this way please contact my office.

I have also launched a competition to raise awareness of the environment to young people.



## Supporting the voluntary sector...

I have had meetings with a number of voluntary organisations during the year including the Scottish Council on Deafness.

In January my wife and I survived for a week on a Red Cross food parcel to highlight their Food Crisis in Africa appeal.

I took part in the race against Third World debt and supported the campaign for more resources for the High Blood Pressure Foundation.



# Helping constituents

As well as regular surgeries and newsletters to keep in touch with local residents I have now started "street surgeries" in the constituency where I regularly visit residents at home. I will continue these throughout the year and will always be available for any constituent who wishes to get in touch. Matters I can assist with are those



reserved to Westminster, which include:

- The Economy and Taxation
- Benefits, Pensions and Social Security
- European and Foreign Affairs
- Defence
- Immigration and Asylum
- Energy Policy
- Air and Rail Safety
- Employment Legislation
- Constitutional Matters

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 and provide answers to frequently asked questions I set up a website containing a wide range of news, information, contact details and about the work of your MP. Many constituents have visited the site over the last year. You can see the site by visiting [www.johnbarrettmp.com](http://www.johnbarrettmp.com).



## Surgeries

I hold regular surgeries by appointment in my constituency office (Fridays from 4pm and Mondays at 9am) and on the first Saturday of the month in Kirkliston (Primary School 9.30am), South Queensferry (Rosebery Hall 10.45am) and Muirhouse (Craigroyston Community Education Centre 12 noon), helping hundreds of constituents with individual problems.

Appointments (to avoid long waiting times) for my surgeries can be made by phoning 0131 339 0339.

I also arrange home visits for those with mobility problems.

## Pensioners

If you would like updates on proposed changes which may affect your pension, please contact me at my constituency office.

## Contact details

**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