

Newsletter issue 32 May 2011

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FORWARD MIDLOTHIAN DISABLED PEOPLE



Election Special

What will Midlothian's prospective MSP do for disabled people?

Which Candidate's box will you cross?



Colin Beattie
Scottish National Party



Scott Douglas
Scottish Conservative
And Unionist Party



Alan Hay
Independent



Bernard Harkins
Scottish Labour



Ian Younger
Scottish Liberal Democrats

We asked each candidate questions about issues which affect disabled people in Midlothian.

Find out what they each had to say inside.

You will be surprised by some of the responses.

On 18 May Forward MID sent each candidate a letter explaining that Forward MID was a Midlothian wide disability equality forum. The letter continued by listing our Aims and Values along with details of our newsletter and our plan to have an Election Special edition. We then asked each of the candidates a number of questions: here are the questions and the candidate's responses.

The reponses from the candidates

Mr Alan Hay Replies Grey

Mr Colin Beattie replies Blue

Q1. What involvement have you had with disabled people and disabled people's organisations?

Alan Hay: I unfortunately had two members of my family who had Cystic Fibrosis, my young niece passed away three weeks ago at the age of only 21. I have numerous health problems myself and have raised money for both the Cystic Fibrosis trust and the Heart Foundation. I am currently involved in organising a funding concert for a local pensioners group and a school in Kenya that my youngest son visited last year. I was a Development Officer for a Housing Department and was regularly involved giving grant assistance for special adaptations and alterations to suit the needs of individuals.



Colin Beattie: I am a local Councillor in Midlothian and as such I have a great deal to do with disabled constituents and organisations which support them.



Q2. During the last Parliament, what, in your opinion, is the most important thing that has been done to progress the rights of disabled people in Scotland?

Alan Hay: I am sorry that I do not have any spare time to do further research as you can appreciate as an Independent I have to do all the research and administration myself. Therefore all my answers have come from what I know or have experienced. I therefore can only comment on the recent Disability and Equality act which not just protects the disabled person, it also protects their carer/parent etc. The new act covers areas of house purchase or renting, employment and the purchase of goods and services as well as dealing with Private and public bodies.

Colin Beattie: We passed new legislation to ensure that children's special needs are properly assessed in particular to identify dyslexia. Most importantly we protected the Equality Budget for 2011/12 to ensure funding is maintained. We invested in services for deaf Scots and partially sighted Scots to remove barriers to inclusion. We passed legislation to ensure disabled parking places have the force of law.

The Scottish Government, COSLA, NHS and Independent Living in Scotland have signed up to a shared Vision for independent Living in Scotland. It sets out our agreed vision, based on the core principles of choice, control, freedom and dignity, that disabled people across Scotland will have equality of opportunity at home and work, in education and in the social and civic life of the community.

Q3. What will you do to move this vision forward?

Alan Hay: Awareness by the public at large, the challenges that people with less mobility, blindness, learning difficulties, various syndromes, diseases and afflictions have to tackle

day after day. A high profile campaign and educate the public would be a start, by having a national Disability Month whereby intensive TV coverage could highlight the successes of disability achievers. At the same time the public must see it in the raw, the uncomfortable side, and the stress on family carers. My sister spent over 20 years of her life going to and throw to hospitals with her two children, the worry and stress when they are taken into an intensive care unit. In many cases people with disabilities require more money not less. I recently met a blind couple who were telling me the high cost to get their house decorated; obviously there was no way they could tackle DIY. Unfortunately, some people have the attitude that no one in my family is disabled so why should I care about disabled people and indeed many disabled people have to put up with abuse.

Colin Beattie: I will sign up to this vision and work with local organisations in particular to move the agenda forward.

With Midlothian Council recently increasing its community care charges, the reforms to Disability Living Allowance and Incapacity Benefit under way and the threat of reduced services for disabled people becoming a reality.

Q4. What will you do to ensure that all disabled people, received the right level of support?

Alan Hay: It is not unusual for people's disabilities to get progressively worse as they get older. Therefore at least every two years an annual assessment should be carried out for each individual's needs

Colin Beattie: As an MSP I will lobby both the parliament and the local council to take account of the needs of vulnerable and disabled people in Midlothian.

Q5a What do you think is the biggest obstacle, in Midlothian, for disabled people to live ordinary lives?

Alan Hay: Transportation, lack of finance, support and employment.

Colin Beattie: Funding. But equality recognition is still an issue.

Q5b What would you do to remedy this?

Alan Hay: I am currently in discussions with First Bus regarding reinstating bus services to the Western and the ERI. DLA must be increased by at least 5% higher than inflation each year and all people with disabilities should at least have a bus pass as a minimum standard of mobility. Whilst there are specialist organisations that assist disabled people to obtain jobs, the current climate is so restrictive that someone with a degree struggles to find employment. It has been very disappointing to see specialist businesses that employ disabled people in Edinburgh and Aberdeen struggle to exist. Additional grants should be given for community start up businesses bespoke to the needs of disabled employees. Businesses and industry must be encouraged much more to increase the number of staff they employ who has challenges, but with the proper training and encouragement would be an asset to the company.

Colin Beattie: Money will remain tight for several years to come. It will be a question of ensuring that the most vulnerable have their needs met. Priorities will have to be set. As regards equality issues that is longer term education and bringing disabled people recognisably into daily society.

Q6. How will you engage with disabled people and their organisations in Midlothian?

Alan Hay: If elected I will meet regularly with forums representing many disadvantaged groups in the constituency. If I am not elected I will continue working as a volunteer in the community taking up many challenges and being a champion of lost causes. I will never be a career politician, if elected I will only claim half the salary and give the other half to good causes in the constituency. I am standing because I am angry at some politicians showing their greed by claiming excessive expenses while children are languishing in poverty. I am one of the very few people that can honestly say they care as I have never claimed any expenses and I am paying most of my campaign costs myself.

Colin Beattie: Using the knowledge gained as a councillor I will seek to establish an ongoing relationship with organisations supporting disabled people. This has to be a two way street and I equally expect such organisations to establish contact with myself.

Q7. In one sentence, why should disabled people in Midlothian vote for you?

Alan Hay: I am a people person who is not in it for me; I care and want to serve the people in order that the disadvantaged and the vulnerable can live a fulfilled life as a member of society.

Colin Beattie: Quite simply I have a good understanding, from first hand experience, of the issues and obstacles facing disabled people. I will use this as an MSP and continue to develop an ongoing understanding of current concerns and issues.



Questions with covering letter e-mailed to Mr Harkins on 18th April.
Reminder e-mailed on 27th April.
No response received.

Questions with covering letter e-mailed to Mr Douglas on 18th April.
Reminder e-mailed on 27th April.

No response received.



Questions with covering letter e-mailed to Mr Youngar on 18th April.
Reminder e-mailed on 27th April.
No response received.

Loanhead Community Learning Centre The Kabin

The Kabin has awesome potential! and thanks to the backing of some major funding this massive project has become a reality.

Irene Hogg, Centre Manager at LCLC, is absolutely delighted. She said: "LCLC have worked tirelessly over the past 2 years to make this dream become a reality and I would like to say a big thank you to the board and staff for all their support and to our funders who have made the commitment to our vision." The Kabin will be open all year round to the public, fully accessible and adapted to suit all ages. For all your up-to-date information.

What's inside

The Honey Pot cafe will also transform into a training kitchen for kids and adults of all abilities and provide cookery classes for the public at large. It has large fronted windows overlooking the award winning community organic garden and you can enjoy the sights, and surf the net using the Wi-Fi Internet access whilst drinking one of the café's speciality coffees, teas or frothy milk drinks.



Play it Again charity shop will offer voluntary placements to the community, selling products from different parts of the centre as well as recycled and reusable goods. This will be the first recycling/charity shop of its kind in Loanhead.

The Tub is the perfect drop-off community laundry and ironing service. If you're rushed for time or simply fancy a break from household washing, just bring your own clothes, duvets or downies and have them washed and/or ironed at The Kabin.

Oasis sensory room offers 'Holistic' massages which benefit both the mind

and body and can be felt by all ages and backgrounds. This type of therapy can particularly help people deal with emotional problems such as grief and depression. Oasis - another project unique to Loanhead and surrounding areas - will also provide therapy for children with additional needs.

The Hive media project where individuals of any age, gender, race and ability can find freedom to invent, explore and create media of varying formats. Whether it is producing your own music, film or TV (including short animation)... creating a radio station or writing poems and lyrics, The Hive promises to be a unique and inspiring experience.

Arts 'n' Crafts - the community garden located between the The Kabin and LCLC lends itself to many forms of environmental art, such as painted or sculpted furniture, mosaic or painted panels and pebble mosaics. LCLC will work in partnership with other groups to develop and facilitate arts activities

aimed at developing confidence and self esteem.

The 'Green Room' leads into the Loanhead Organic Garden and will be used to support all ages to cultivate plants and vegetables that can be sold or used in the café. This brilliant venture will be unique to Loanhead and surrounding areas in having dedicated space, both indoors and outdoors, for environmental projects -aiming to raise.

For more information please contact Loanhead Community Learning Centre, 5 Mayburn Walk, Loanhead EH20 9AN
Tel: 0131 440 3169
website www.lclc.org.uk/

Independent Living -- A Shared Vision

Amongst the questions we asked our prospective MSP's was: "How will you move this vision [Independent Living] forward?" Below is an abridged version of the vision; the full version can be seen at Independent Living in Scotland's website (see below)

Independent Living – A Shared Vision

This statement is jointly signed by the Scottish Government, COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities) and the Independent Living in Scotland (ILiS) Steering Group. It sets out our agreed vision, based on the core principles of choice, control, freedom and dignity, that disabled people across Scotland will have equality of opportunity at home and work, in education and in the social and civic life of the community.

- It is right for the individual – to be free from prejudice and discrimination; and to participate within society as full and equal citizens;
- It is right for society as a whole – a more equal society will have greater strength and social cohesion; and
- It is right for our economy – the more diverse an economy, the more innovative and high growth it is; and the more successful it will be at attracting talent.

They believe that by working with disabled people, the Scottish Government, local authorities and their community planning partners across Scotland will be better equipped to identify the best approach to achieving agreed outcomes, making the most effective investment of resources and taking account of the priorities and needs of all local communities.

Disabled people in Scotland are stakeholders in this vision.

If you are campaigning, complaining or complementing your local authority or your MSP, the people who provide public services for you, use this Vision to show them what has been agreed.

To find out more about Independent Living and Independent Living in Scotland look at: the ILiS website at www.ilis.co.uk.

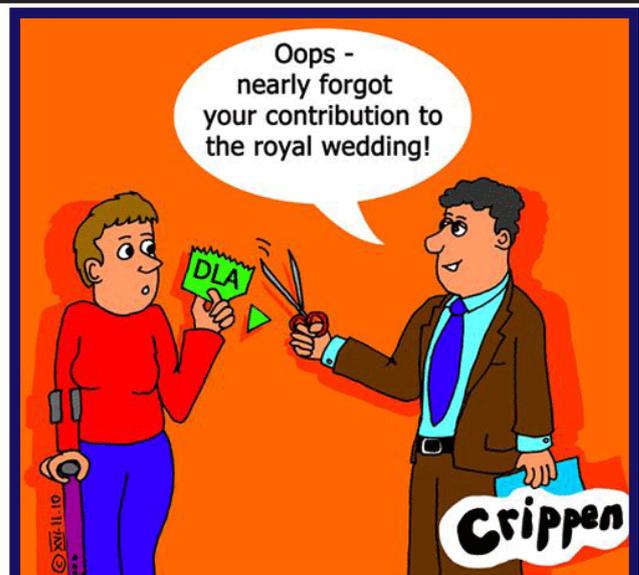
First they came for the communists, and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a communist.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a Jew.

Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak out for me.

Paster Martin Neimoller



Alternative Publications

The editions of the Forward MID newsletters are available in large print or at www.forwardmid.org.uk
For alternative publication please E-mail to eric.johnstone@mvacvs.org.uk or call Eric Johnstone on 0131-663-9471 or write to him at MVA 4-6 White Hart Street, Dalkeith EH22 1AE with your request.