

# Report From Westminster Parliamentary Group

## Patrick Grady MP, Chief Whip

When we gathered last year in Aberdeen, the House of Commons was in turmoil and the General Election which we all sensed was imminent finally took place on 12th December. The Party achieved our second-best Westminster election result, gaining twelve seats on the night. We were sorely disappointed to lose Stephen Gethins from the Group, but have warmly welcomed new and returning colleagues, and were joined by Neale Hanvey at the end of May 2020. Margaret Ferrier was suspended from membership of the Group on 1st October.

Like society as a whole, the UK Parliament has been affected by the coronavirus pandemic and the majority of SNP MPs have been participating virtually in House business and voting by proxy. A small number of our MPs travel to London as needed to take part in substantive debates, as the Tory Government is refusing to allow virtual participation in these. We are continuing to call for full virtual participation in parliament and remote voting as practiced in the devolved legislatures and (ironically) the House of Lords. Our staff teams continue to work from home in line with UK and Scottish Government guidance, and our MPs are available in virtual and telephone surgeries for any constituents needing advice and support.

Holding the Tories to account for their handling of the pandemic has of course been a top priority, and we continue to press the UK Government for better engagement with Holyrood and the other devolved administration, and for better and fairer financial support for the NHS and for individuals and businesses affected by the pandemic.

Brexit remains a significant threat to Scotland's prosperity. In our Opposition Day debate in July, we pushed for an extension to the transition period, with the Labour Party bravely abstaining in the resulting vote. We are continuing to hold the Conservatives to account on the hostile immigration environment, on the botched roll-out of Universal Credit and a wide range of other reserved matters. Pete Wishart presented a Private Member's Bill calling for the appointment of the Prime Minister to be approved by Parliament, Tommy Sheppard presented a Bill calling for reform of the Misuse of Drugs Act to allow for the introduction of Safe Consumption Rooms, Gavin Newlands presented his 'Fire and Rehire' Bill to prevent such behaviour by companies like British Airways, and Dr Philippa Whitford presented a Bill to protect whistleblowers in the NHS and other settings.

Our thanks as always to our dedicated team of staff at Westminster and in our constituencies, all of whom have worked under significant pressure over the last twelve months. Our thanks also to the team at SNP HQ and to the countless volunteers across the country who helped us to victory in our third General Election in five years. It's a bit of an SNP cliché to say the next Westminster election will be the last, but we are looking forward to helping our Holyrood colleagues and candidates achieve the win in May next year that really will start the countdown on our time left as Members of the UK Parliament, as Scotland looks forward to independence.

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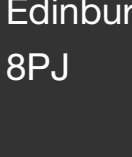
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