

ICOD - Link-Ability

Inverclyde Council On Disability

Issue 5

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CHOICE

NOT

COMPULSION



WELFARE REFORM & PENSIONS BILL - ALARM OVER CUTS AND COMPULSION

“The new regime will be far tougher than people thought...We will end the something for nothing approach that has characterised the past.” (Alistair Darling, Secretary of State for Social Security, 10.2.99)

Parliament is now considering the Welfare Reform and Pensions Bill, which *Link-Ability* previously reported on in Issue 4 (January 1999). On March 30 1999 representatives of the Inverclyde Council on Disability went down to London to take part in a Parliamentary Lobby protesting against the Bill which sets out a series of far reaching changes to pension and social security benefits. Some measures of the Bill are to be welcomed – such as the extension of the Mobility Component in Disability Living Allowance to 3 and 4 year olds and an increase in the lump sum bereavement payments. Others restrict or even abolish existing benefits and will hit some of the most vulnerable in society.

Link-Ability opposes the Welfare Reform and Pension Bill for the following reason:

■ ***It brings in the New Deal and the ‘Single Gateway’ to work.***

This compels everyone of ‘working age’ who claims money to live on - single mothers, unemployed people, people with disabilities – to attend an interview “to discuss the options for work”. Only ‘terminally ill’ people will be exempt! The New Deal will not take into account choice, type of work, wages, hours, conditions etc.

Neither will it acknowledge the unwaged workload of people with disabilities: looking after ourselves, coping with discrimination, living in an inaccessible

world on a low income and those who are also caring for children or others. As well as this *Link-Ability* wants the ‘All Work Test’ which is widely regarded as being too severe, scrapped. A disabled woman whose arm broke during the test was told by junior Social Security Minister Hugh Bailey, that she must undergo the test again – “it is the law”.

■ ***Restricts access to Incapacity Benefit.***

The Bill will mean that some disabled people who can now claim Incapacity Benefit would not be able to do so in the future. The Bill will restrict the National Insurance criteria for Incapacity Benefit – it will not be possible to claim unless you have made contributions in the last

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Welfare Reform & Pensions Bill

(Continued from Page 1.)

2 years, even if you have made 20 years of contributions at some time before that. This also means that it will be risky for someone to try other work (especially part time or temporary work) after having to give up their job due to ill-health because delaying a claim might well mean they lose it. In other words this change will effectively become a disincentive to work.

■ **Abolishes Severe Disablement Allowance.**

The Bill abolishes Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA) for everyone of 25 and over. SDA is the 'fall back' benefit for people with too few contributions to qualify for Incapacity Benefit. Because of the changes to the National Insurance criteria, for some there will be no means tested benefit to claim if they are unable to work. This will particularly effect low paid and part-time workers.

■ **Adds to cuts faced by single mothers.**

Those with disabilities and those mothers of children with disabilities will be greatly affected by the abolition of lone parent benefit and £20 penalty deduction from Income Support for non-co-operation with the Child Support Agency.

■ **Means Testing Benefits.**

The Bill also introduces means testing to Incapacity Benefit, a taxable contributory benefit. Disabled people claiming Incapacity Benefit who also have occupational or private pensions will lose 50p of benefit for every £1 after the first £50 of pension – this is greater than the marginal rate of Income Tax on the highest earners. This means that people with incomes from pensions as low as £2600 per year will start to lose benefit and by £9,360 per year they will have lost all benefit.

Further measures within the Bill include:

■ **Changing entitlement to Attendance Allowance and ending life awards for both it and Disability Living Allowance.**

■ **Abolishing Widow's Pension for over 45s' without dependant**

children.

■ **Making repeated interviews compulsory for lone parents and disabled people as a condition to receiving benefit.**

Adequate levels of disability benefits guarantee an income for disabled people who cannot, or who face barriers to employment. They also ensure equality with non-disabled people. The Prime Minister talked recently of ending the 'something for nothing' mentality and Mr Darling insists that no one has an unqualified right to benefit. But it is insulting to men and woman who are presently disabled or become disabled to accuse them of wanting something for nothing. Working people who lose their jobs through whatever circumstances have usually paid taxes and National Insurance for years. They are asking for what is theirs by right. They have paid for it, and should not be made to feel guilty about living on benefit. If the Government is serious about its Welfare To Work campaign, it must understand that by reducing disability benefits they will then undermine disabled people's independence. *Link-Ability* believes that reforming the Welfare state is necessary. However, cutting benefits because the Government believes disabled people are 'workshy' is not modern, effective or humane.

(The Logo on the front of this edition of *Link-Ability* appears courtesy of the British Council of Disabled People. *Link-Ability* acknowledges due thanks to the BCDP for their generosity.)

CH4 Disability Times

Disability Times is a weekly teletext magazine covering current issues affecting disabled people. It is part of a national group who produce a weekly newspaper on a subscription basis. (£12 for individuals, £20 for organisations and £3 if you are for disabled.) For more information call Disability Times on 0181 566 1208 or see them on CH4 Teletext page 686.

Respite Care

Network

In Inverclyde

A new development within Inverclyde is an initiative from the Council's Social Work Services, which brings together different groups in the area to discuss Respite Services. Representation comes from Carers organisations, users of the community, Care service providers, the voluntary sector and Inverclyde Council's Social Work department.

The Network, which meets in the Fitzgerald Centre on a monthly basis, is currently holding a series of planning sessions over the next few weeks. The aim of these sessions is to find out about existing services, where the gaps are, access to and eligibility for available services; and how much choice people have in the type of service they receive. A spokesperson for the Network said, "This will be an opportunity to bring people together to review and influence the way in which Respite Care is developed within Inverclyde, now and in the future."

If you would like to find out more about the Respite Care Network, then contact Maureen Hamill on 01475 714087.

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Greenock and Port Glasgow earned world-wide fame for the great sailing ships built here in the last century. Today Tall Ships are still being built, but they no longer carry tea, wool, coal and iron, but crews of young people from all nations and walks of life.

Designed to promote international understanding, the International Sail Training Association organises the Cutty Sark Tall Ships Race each year. The event which is named after the most famous of the 'tea clippers' – 'The Cutty Sark', attracts sailing ships from all over the world crewed by young men and woman who not only learn seamanship but how to live together under sometimes difficult and dangerous circumstances. From Friday 30 July to Monday 2 August around 100 Tall Ship will be docked in Greenock, at the Ocean Terminal, Customhouse Quay, East India Harbour and Victoria Harbour. The ships will range from giant four masted windjammers, to small-restored Cornish Fishing ketches.

A galaxy of events are planned for the 4 days that the ships will be docked and Community Arts who are undertaking to organise Inverclyde's end of the event, are looking to involve as many of the local population as possible - in order to make the visit to the Cutty Sark Tall Ships the biggest, most exciting community celebration to be held in Scotland in 1999.

Community Arts are particularly keen to involve dance groups of all kinds from

Highland Dancing to Salsa and bands from Brass to Pipe bands, pop or percussion, to take part in the opening parade, or 'strut their stuff' on the street, in the Carnival, or on the entertainment stages.

If you as an individual, or as a group would like to become involved then you can contact Community Arts at the Greenock Tall Ships 1999 Ltd, Royal Bank House, Cartsdyke Avenue, Cartsburn East, Greenock or by telephoning 01475 551256. Alternatively you can visit the Arts Team at 'Ship Shapes' the new information and arts workshops in Cathcart Street (the old Kwik Safe shop) which is open from Wednesday to Saturday 10.00am to 5.30pm, where they will be providing information and workshops in making things and other useful skills. Members of the arts team will also be available to come and work with your group or to help you make images or costumes for the parade or carnival.

Manufacturer's



Stay with



Motability Scheme

The threatened departure of three major car manufacturer's from the Motability Scheme has been averted.

As reported in the last issue of *Link-Ability*, Ford, Peugeot and Rover were still to agree to revised conditions with Motability Finance Limited (MFL) – which would see the manufacturers lose their role in the selling of leased vehicles.

They have now agreed to the revised conditions and Motability commented that they are delighted that the negotiations between MFL and Ford, Rover and Peugeot have come to successful conclusion.

Summary of Events

- ☀ Cuahtemoc – from Mexico - whose participation can be characterised by the fact that they are best known for not taking part in Tall Ships Races that are held in the Northern Hemisphere.
- ☀ Beating the Retreat by the Combined Bands of Her Majesty's Services.
- ☀ A programme of street theatre and events throughout the Tall Ships site and on the four entertainment stages each and every day.
- ☀ A Grand Welcoming Parade headed by Father Neptune and Mother Clyde plus big images, bands, dancers, stilt walkers, clowns and many other strange and fantastic creatures.
- ☀ "A Tale O' The Bank" a community pageant play written by local author Danny McCahon - (The Bill, Taggart) and featuring a cast of over 50 playing on 4 stages for 2 performances on the Saturday and Sunday.
- ☀ A grand carnival night on Sunday followed by a fantastic fire show and firework display.
- ☀ A 'Farewell to the Cutty Sark Tall Ships'.

HOLIDAYS

Travel Services

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Chalfont Line Holidays

With Chalfont Lines' unique 3 tier care options, we have escorted holidays to: Devon, Ireland, Butlins, Scotland, Switzerland, Valkenburg, The Dutch Bulb fields, Malaysia, Orlando and many more.

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For further details contact Chalfont Line Holidays, 4 Medway Parade, Perivale, Middlesex UB6 8HR – specifying whether you would like an Escorted Holidays Brochure or an Accessible Villas Brochure (or both!), or telephone 0181 9973799.

Cruising

Cruise-Ability

Discover the delights of accessible cruising.

Destinations include: Caribbean, Mediterranean, Panama Canal, Alaska, Scandinavia, Round the World.

Telephone (01452) 740082.

United Kingdom

Cambridge

A Holiday in Cambridge - for Disabled People and their Carers.

This summer, Bridget Hostel can offer 7 study bedrooms, 3 bathroom and a large kitchen/common room. All rooms are fully accessible.

Bridget's is ideally situated five minutes from the historic city centre.

For further details, call Jenny Sandland, Care Manager of Bridget's Trust on: 01223 354312.

Poole

Holidays or short breaks at the Barn or Gateway Cottage.

The Barn: fully accessible, flexible accommodation for up to 9 guests. Full board and Care staff available.

Gateway Cottage: self contained and offering self catering accommodation for up to 7 people. Fully accessible ground floor, living room, kitchen, large bathroom, 1 double and 1 single bedroom. Upstairs, 2 twin rooms plus bathroom.

Both set within 350 acres of beautiful and natural landscape looking towards

the shores of Poole Harbour.

Within easy reach of Wareham, Bournemouth and the Isle of Purbeck.

For full details: Holton Lee (DN/MA), Freepost (BH1679), Poole, Dorset BH16 6JN. Tel/Fax: (01202) 631063.

Arran

Magnificent location, peace, comfort, good food – all you could wish for in a guest house, but with many extras for those special holiday needs.

Fully accessible accommodation with a wide range of equipment and services. Holidays tailored to suit individual needs. You can enjoy a holiday on Arran whatever your level of activity and it's nearer than you think!

For a brochure and full details contact Graham and Barbara Williams, Strathwillan House, Brodick, Isle of Arran KA27 8BQ. Tel: 01770 302331.

Scottish Borders

Eldon Holiday Cottages situated in Melrose.

5 category 1 self catering holiday cottages in magnificent setting overlooking Tweed Valley. 2 cottages have overhead hoists.

Scottish Tourist Board 4 stars.

For colour brochure contact: Jill Hart, Dingleton Mains, Melrose TD6 9HS. Telephone 01896 823258.

As the holiday season gets into full swing, Link-Ability will continue to look at what's on offer for disabled holidaymakers, the rest of the UK and abroad, but please remember that we are not in a position of recommending any of the following holidays and all readers are advised to check beforehand with the relevant agencies.

HOLIDAYS

Wales

Holiday Cottage in South West Wales.

Swyn y Gwynt (Sound of the Wind). 5 Dragon WTB rating. Grade 1 access rating.

Built specifically for people with disabilities. Suit up to 4 people including 2 wheelchair users. Great views, good touring centre, easy parking. Reasonable inclusive rates. Telephone Griew on 01267 237261.

Portugal

Algarve

Luxury Villa in Caroeiro.

Special facilities for disabled. Gardens +Pool.

Telephone (01452) 371328.

France

Brittany

Cottage to let. Fully accessible.

Good access to beaches.

Sleeps up to 6.

Details: C. Hodgson.
Tel: (01924) 454300.

Spain

Cost Del Sol

Ground floor apartment with private garden and large patio in Belnalmadena.

Consisting of 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms,

(1 en-suite with wheel in shower). Sleeps 6.

Also equipped with large lounge/diner, fitted kitchen, satellite TV, communal pool, tennis courts. All fully accessible.

Near to bars, restaurants and beach, 25 minutes from the airport.

For further details telephone 0181 992 6520.

Florida

Gulf Coast

Spacious 3 bedroom, 3 bathroom, wheelchair adapted lakeside villa on Florida's sunshine coast of Port Richey.

Wheel in shower, heated pool with hoist, large living room, family room, kitchen, laundry room, Cable TV, telephone, microwave and gas barbecue all available.

Sleeps 8. Level access throughout.

Brochure from Kevin Murtagh, Glencairn, Little Bounds Close, Southborough, Kent TN4 0RS or telephone 01892 528866.

Hawaii

Fully accessible beachfront condo on the beautiful island of Maui. 2 bedrooms.

Telephone Accessible Holidays Abroad on 01452 740820.

Kenya

Bush Trucker Tours

Safari company, established in 1980,

now offering safaris to all disabled people including wheelchair users.

Organises photo safaris, adventure tours, car hire, hotels and lodge bookings.

Contact, Bush Tucker Tours, PO Box 24879, Nairobi, Kenya.

Scandinavia

Euro Booking Service Ltd

Arranges trips all around Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Finland for groups of disabled people.

The hotels provide rooms which are specially adapted. The coaches have a lift and a toilet which is suitable for disabled people.

Group transport is provided to/from accommodations and help is given with luggage.

The company can arrange the trip as a whole or just parts which are suitable to your needs.

For further details contact Euro Bookings Ltd, Radhusgt, 17 N-0158 Oslo, Norway.

Canada

Vacation Canada

Operates a wide range of holidays to Canada, including specialist coach tours designed for wheelchair users.

Flights to Canada are direct from Glasgow as well as from Manchester and London Heathrow.

For further details contact Vacation Canada, Cambridge House, 8 Cambridge Street, Glasgow G2 3DZ.

LEAD Inverclyde



Come & See Our Abilities - Not Our Disabilities

In Issue 3 of *Link-Ability* (October 1998) we ran a feature on LEAD Scotland a voluntary organisation which exists to empower and enable physically disabled and/or sensory impaired adults in Scotland to access education, training and lifelong learning opportunities.

We also reported that LEAD was seeking funding to introduce a local organiser into Inverclyde. This funding has now been successfully achieved and John Moody has now been appointed as the Local Organiser for the area.

John's remit will be to offer a range of services designed to help disabled people access learning opportunities. These services will be offered to disabled adults between the ages of 25 and retirement age.

However this will not exclude other disabled adults, and LEAD Inverclyde will also help to provide guidance and advice and, if necessary referral to other appropriate organisations, if they are unable to help.

Initially guidance will be provided on appropriate learning opportunities in the student's home. John will use his knowledge of local training provisions and appropriate Open Learning materials to advise the student on a course of study.

In conjunction with LEAD the student will evolve a Student Action Plan, which will set out the individuals long and short-term goals. This plan will then be reviewed on a monthly basis and amended as appropriate. John will also liaise with training providers to ensure that the course is delivered effectively and will advocate on behalf of the student

if necessary.

In addition to this process of supported learning a volunteer tutor will be introduced, where appropriate, to provide vital "hands on" learning support.

John says of LEAD volunteers "They can often provide valuable encouragement and help build the confidence of the individual student. Also I am only part time (25 hours per week), so volunteers will also be able to assist with other LEAD activities such as designing posters and information material and distributing materials to library's etc. And in return for helping us, volunteers will receive valuable and practical training which will aid in the development of skills which may help them both socially and vocationally."

There will also be a number of computer kits (computer, printer and software) which will be available for lending to students for a specified period of time. LEAD's IT Support Officer, based in Glasgow, will also be available to provide a Helpdesk to students, volunteers and staff should they need it. Now you now what LEAD is you can contact John at Glenburn Resource Centre, Inverkip Road, Greenock PA16 ODG. Tel: 01475 637303.

(LEAD also provides advice and guidance to disabled adults through a national freephone Helpline (0800 100 900). This offers information on learning opportunities throughout Scotland. The Helpline is open to disabled adults and their Carers, as well as voluntary and statutory organisations.)

Enclosed with this edition of *Link-Ability*, you will find a copy of the new price list for Parklea Association Branching Out Limited, and you may well be wondering who and what Parklea Association are?

Parklea Association was set up early in 1996 as a horticulture venture, primarily to provide training (SVQ's) and recreation activities for people with learning disabilities, in the hope that it would lead to employment opportunities. Recently Parklea received an award from the Post Office to go toward the construction of the Gazebo. As well as this they have also become an approved centre, which can deliver City & Guilds Level II training, and in recognition of both of these achievements Scottish Action visited the site to see for themselves the advances which the project has made. The feature which was screened on April 13th highlighted all of the activities that the project have undertaken over the last 3 years including the greenhouse, which is now completely built, the barbecue and picnic area and the exhibition garden which is still under construction.

Kevin Shackell, Project Co-ordinator for Parklea spoke to *Link-Ability* and commented, "We are very grateful to the Post Office for their generous award. It now brings our fund for the building of the Gazebo up to £1,100. We have also been successful in recycling part of the Gourock Post Office of which some of the stone will go in the Gazebo area."

However, one thing Parklea are short of at the moment is visitors. You can visit the site between 10.00am and 4.00pm, Monday to Friday. Snacks plus tea and coffee are available during the summer season and if you have any ideas or suggestions to enhance the building of the exhibition garden then the Parklea team will be there for you to have a chat with. Further information on the project can be obtained by contacting Kevin on 01475 744516 or at Parklea Association Branching Out Ltd, Parklea Playing Fields, Greenock Road, Port Glasgow.

MCT Update



As reported in the last edition of *Link-Ability*, Matilda Care Transport (MCT) was experiencing some difficulties with 2 vehicles within their fleet. This problem has now been resolved and MCT are now operating at full strength.

However, MCT have advised *Link-Ability* that if you wish to use any of their vehicles after 5.00pm, you should pre-book your journey – there are no guarantees that a driver will be available to take you if you take the chance and don't book. MCT can be contacted on 01475 787777. Alternatively you can call Inverclyde Specialist Taxi Service on 0410 436629.

Three Year Delay



- to Introduce Rail Wheelchair Ramps

Inverclyde Council on Disability achieved national press coverage within the Glasgow Herald and Evening Times Newspapers recently when our ongoing campaign for 'Accessible Transport For All' was highlighted after we discovered that ramps bought to give wheelchair users access to trains have still not been introduced – 3 years after they were purchased.

The equipment acquired at a cost of £15,000 in 1996 as part of a joint initiative between ScotRail and Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority has only recently been put through fresh safety testing.

Together with Renfrewshire Councillor Brian Lawson, who is also a member of Scottish Passenger Transport Executive, we hit out at the delay saying that it was "totally unacceptable". Mr Lawson has also written to Dr Malcolm Reid, Director General of SPT Executive demanding to know the current position and when it is envisaged the equipment will be brought into use.

He commented, "I understand that staff training may be required, but just how long does it take to train someone to use a ramp? There are serious concerns that they really don't want to bother about as it may slow the trains down by 30 seconds or so and disrupts timetables."

Secretary of Inverclyde Council on Disability, Jim MacLeod – who was initially asked by ScotRail to test the ramps told *Link-Ability* that he is appalled that "perfectly good equipment" which would enhance the lives of a lot of people has so far been lying unused. "This is not on. The vast majority of these ramps have lain stored away in a cupboard at Glasgow Central Station since they were purchased."

A ScotRail spokesman conceded that it would appear to have taken "an inordinately long time" to get the scheme moving but explained that results of early testing – although initially promising, had subsequently highlighted technical difficulties.

A full assessment was finally carried out

by ScotRail on the Airdrie-Helensborough route five months ago and it was found that as they were not securely fixed, slippage "could result in accidents". The spokesman added "A full risk assessment was then required and suitable modifications attended to. Now we have the final modifications back and we are planning with staff training to put them back into use on the same route during the summer timetable period starting in May.

Inverclyde Council on Disability will continue to pursue the matter until full use is made of the ramps. It seems perfectly clear that now and for the past three years that ScotRail have purely been dragging their feet over the implementation of the ramps. It also seems that they have forgotten that in October 1999 Part 3 of the Disability Discrimination Act – Access to Goods and Services, which requires service providers to ensure that they are not operating in a manner that could exclude a disabled person, comes into force.

"Count Us In..."

Seven of Scotland's largest disability organisations launched a national Disability Agenda for the new Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh recently calling for the Parliament to use its tax varying powers to expand health and social care provisions.

The Disability Agenda, which uses the slogan 'Count Us In' - is backed by Capability Scotland, Disability Scotland, ENABLE, RNIB Scotland, RNID Scotland, Sense Scotland and SAMH (Scottish Association for Mental Health).

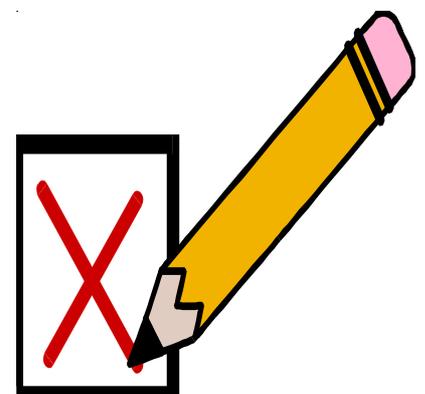
It outlines the actions the consortium of charities believes the Scottish Parliament needs to take to include over 800,000 disabled citizens in Scottish life – within health and social care, housing, transport and education.

The Charities involved in the Disability Agenda for Scotland have highlighted 4 key recommendations, which they are calling for the Parliament to introduce in its first year of operation.

- ◆ The creation of a Minister for Disabled People.
- ◆ The setting up and funding of a national travel concession scheme for all disabled people.
- ◆ A minimum paid short break/ respite of 4 weeks per year for every disabled person and their Carer who wishes to take this up.
- ◆ A new piece of legislation – 'The Incapable Adults Act' - which aims to give a clear legal framework for regulating the affairs of people who lack the capacity to make decisions in their own interest.

Bob Benson of Disability Scotland, on behalf of the consortium said, "The politicians say that they want this Parliament to be different and to serve everyone. We are hopeful that this is the case and that's why for the first time ever our group have come together to outline our areas of shared concerns."

"This Agenda is about practical and realistic change which this Parliament could make to the lives of thousands of disabled people, their families and their Carers. So our message is 'Count Us In' because we will be fighting hard for all these changes from now on."



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Room 14 - Units 48-50
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Industrial Estate
Port Glasgow - PA14 5XS**

Tel/Fax: 01475 742 999

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Introducing himself this issue is a man who describes himself as 'a messy Morton supporter'.

*To everyone else he is **JIM MACLEOD**, Secretary of the Inverclyde Council on Disability.*

Where were you born?

Johnstone - Thornhill.

Tell us your star sign please?

Cancer - sign of the crab!.

What is your favourite food?

Chicken.

And to drink?

Glavya Whisky Liqueur.

Who is your preferred news reader?

Kirsty Wark.

What is your favourite TV programme?

Question Time.

What is your favourite type of music?

Varied - no particular favourite.

If going abroad, where is your preferred location?

Geneva - fabulous place.

Which historical character would you most like to meet?

William Wallace – for obvious reasons. (Again - we had this in the last 'In Profile' - Votes will now be taken as to whether this answer should be banned.)

What is your favourite animal?

Dog.

If you were stranded on a desert island, what would you most like to have with you?

Hmm, loaded question this one. Better say my girlfriend because she reads this from cover to cover.

Do you have any secret ambitions?

To be Prime Minister for Scotland. (Hands up who knew that one was coming?!)

And finally, what is your philosophy on life?

To see social and economic justice for people and a sense of fair play in society.

IN PROFILE