



Rory Hamilton MSYP

March 2022 update

Hello,

It has been a busy month since my previous update.

I started March by meeting with our local MSP, Rachel Hamilton, where I asked her questions about feasibility for implementing a district heating system in order to improve the sustainability of the Scottish Borders, as well as alleviate the soaring cost of living for young people. I also asked what her thoughts were about the provision of green jobs, skills, and opportunities for young people in our area. I was pleased to hear that she has been working on a rural skills plan, and I look forward to seeing a draft copy of this.

Following this, I attended the Scottish Youth Parliament Gathering on the 5th March. This was where all the MSYPs came together (virtually) for the first time to vote on and consider the responses from their constituents as to what the campaigning priorities of the Parliament should be for the coming term. From a list of ten policy options, the following were chosen: the climate emergency, drugs as a public health issue, educational attainment and the right to food. I was pleased to see the climate emergency chosen as there is quite clearly

an urgent need to tackle this, and this was reflected in the views of my own constituents. Similarly, educational attainment and the right to food both play an important role. However, I was disappointed that the policy conveners did not choose to include mental health as an issue on the initial shortlist of ten areas. After a late drop-out, I was also asked to speak briefly at the event to represent your views, in which I communicated the specific challenges faced by young people in the Scottish Borders.

Later in the week, I, along with Ally Turnbull MSYP for Midlothian and Tweeddale,



attended an in-person pop-up event hosted by SYP in Livingston, where we got to meet some MSYPs in person, learn more about SYP policymaking, and engage in a bit of discussion and debate. It was fantastic to meet our fellow MSYPs in person, and I really look forward to more in-person events as this was great fun.

On the 17th of March, as part of the organising team, I was delighted to attend and represent your views at the Greener Berwickshire Conference held at Ayton Castle. The event was a fantastic success and really proved the power of community organising around a particular issue.

We had Councillor Sandy Aitchison from Scottish



Borders Council speak on the council's plan for sustainable development, Paul Minto from Green Power International on Community Energy Ownership, former MSP Paul Wheelhouse, now at South of Scotland Enterprise, speak on a 'Roadmap to Net Zero' in the Borders, as well as Charles Fisher from Driven By Electric speak on the transition to electric cars.

The event also brought together other stakeholders, decision-



makers, and members of the Greener Berwickshire alliance. It presented an excellent opportunity for local groups to hold SBC to account and drive conversations about sustainability in our area. I hope and am ambitious that this won't be the last Greener Berwickshire event, and I see plenty of potential for a more open forum which can involve the wider public and especially our young people. It also acts as a great platform from which a resource database with regional opportunities can be stored so people are aware of and can access information about supporting local sustainability efforts and join local groups.

Finally, the elections for subject committee conveners were held in the last week. I was standing to be convener of the Transport, Environment and Rural Affairs committee with a bold plan for radical policymaking. However, I was not successful, and I wish Fraser Adams MSYP the greatest success in leading the committee, and Cameron Greer MSYP as his depute. I very much hope to contribute and drive forward the committee's work and look forward to working together in the future.

In the next month I will be working on some of my key election priorities, as well as attending TERA committee meetings. I am already in discussion with Fridays for Future and Central Borders Extinction Rebellion about how we can improve opportunities and awareness for climate activism in the Borders. I am also hoping to discuss the White Ribbon Status campaign <https://www.whiteribbon.org.uk/> which seeks to raise awareness about domestic and gender-based violence. I am interested in how we can better tackle this issue through early education in schools. Finally, I am hoping to engage in conversations with schools about holding in-person surgeries with covid restrictions relaxing. This will help with my aim to improve the careers guidance and pathways for young people into work and opportunities after school.

We are also looking to organise a Borders Youth Conference in August and are seeking responses to our consultation. This will be an opportunity for young people in the Borders to come together and discuss and debate their issues in a public forum. It is hoped that this will be a way for SBC to take our issues more seriously, as well as connecting young people in the area to local opportunities and highlight the fantastic work already happening across the area. You can submit your feedback here: <https://forms.office.com/r/QDJCmYf0Y>

As ever, please get in touch with me with your concerns, issues and I will work to see them resolved. Follow me on social media @Rory4ERB, or send me an email at rory.hamilton.msyp@sypmail.org.uk