

Andrew Turner

Islandwide with your MP

Spring 2006

reports

inside & back page:

- Update on health supplements
- Good news on the buses
- What's up with your water?
- Competition Corner



Better Access needed to Health Care

MP's call on dentists and travel

Keeping a sharp eye on Isle of Wight health services, Andrew Turner has asked questions in the House of Commons arising from the concerns of his constituents.

He quizzed Health Minister Rosie Winterton about the situation on the Island, which has seen NHS dental registrations fall, despite the arrival of 14 new dentists. "In two years time, when the 24,000 people who have asked to register with new dentists have done so, about 50,000 people in my constituency will still not be registered. Is that satisfactory?" he asked.

Ms Winterton replied that she would "explain later how there will be room for extra capacity as the changes bed in."

Andrew is not allowing the matter to rest. "The key problem is that NHS registrations are decreasing because dentists are quitting the NHS as fast as new ones are appointed. The British Dental Association has described their new contract as a shambles, and to complete this very unsatisfactory situation, the Government intends to abolish the registration system, thus making it impossible to get the true picture of what is going on."

But by putting pressure on the NHS and the Island's Primary Care Trust, Andrew has helped to alleviate at least one problem that Island patients faced. It was proposed that patients who had to travel to Southampton for radiotherapy treatment

should have all financial help withdrawn. The cost was put at £90,000, but as a result of Andrew's questions, this figure was proved to be wrong. It was finally estimated at £38,000 - and the council has now agreed to finance these travel expenses, putting £50,000 aside for this in their budget.

However, it is not only patients attending radiotherapy who need to travel to the mainland. Following Government proposals that everyone should have a choice of hospitals, Andrew presented Health Minister Jane Kennedy with the situation on the Island. "How can there be choice for patients on the Isle of Wight if there is no money to help them get to hospitals on the mainland?" he asked. "It is a choice for the rich, but not for the poor."

The minister acknowledged that "the difficulties of transport from the Isle of Wight would need to be taken into account." She added that she was pleased to hear the Island's MP championing the cause of his constituents on low incomes.

Agreement to a unified health service for the Island came after much lobbying and representation at parliamentary level and Andrew gives credit to the Government for recognising the benefits of a unified primary care and health service trust for the Island. "But I am concerned that they still haven't recognised the cost of cross-Solent travel. I will keep pressing to make sure that they do."



Opening Hunnyhill School's new computer suite (picture: Roger G Brown)

Let's value our Volunteers

As Shadow Minister for Charities, Andrew Turner takes a specific interest in voluntary organisations – an area which has a very high profile on the Island.

Attending a meeting of IW Older Voices at the Riverside Centre in Newport, Andrew congratulated officers and members on being "genuine volunteers – people who give their time for nothing."

"But how many volunteers make an organisation voluntary?" he asked. In some charitable organisations, he said, full-time staff had more influence than the volunteers, and in others, there were scarcely any volunteers.

"It's time to value the volunteer more than we do at present," he said.

"Volunteers sometimes need to assert themselves and make sure that it is they, and not their staff, who decide the strategy. They are the ones who bring time, that most important and valuable commodity, to their organisations, and we should stop tying them down with red tape and bureaucracy. They should not be diverted by the Government or anybody else away from the vision of the founding purpose of their work."

The time given by an estimated total of 10-15,000 volunteers on the Island is worth about £4million annually. If you are one of those who contribute to this very significant figure, and would like to share your views or concerns with Andrew, he would be pleased to hear from you.

Andrew Turner is happy to meet individuals or groups to discuss problems and concerns

He holds a weekly advice surgery in Newport on Friday afternoons, or you can arrange a meeting elsewhere. If you need to contact him, you can write to, telephone, or e-mail Andrew Turner MP at:

24 The Mall, Carisbrooke Road, Newport, IW, PO30 1BW Telephone 530808 or House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA. E-mail mail@IslandMP.com

Save our Supplements

Battling on Europe's Vitamin Ban

A determined battle to keep vitamin and mineral supplements on our shop shelves has been actively supported by Andrew Turner.

At the root of the problem is legislation by which the European Commission intends to set restrictive new levels for food supplements, threatening hundreds of safe and popular health products which are currently available in UK shops.

The lobby group Consumers for Health Choice has launched a campaign – Save Our Supplements (vitamins and minerals) - and Andrew has, along with other concerned MPs, put sustained pressure on the Government to find a solution to the serious difficulties that will arise if the new laws are applied in this country.

As a result, a junior health minister, Caroline Flint, has

been instructed by the Prime Minister to resolve the situation, and she has now begun lobbying the Commission on behalf of UK consumers.

Andrew is determined that consumer rights should be protected in an area which gives vital help to millions of people. "I will be doing all that I can to press the Minister to continue lobbying the European Commission and to use every contact with other governments to defend the UK market and consumers' rights."

Chris Whitehouse, strategy director of Consumers for Health Choice and a Totland resident, says that Andrew has been "a real asset to our campaign. He has worked hard to get the message across that consumers will not stand by and allow safe, popular and effective supplements to be banned."

New Bill hits Church Schools and Charities

Andrew Turner has expressed his concern that Church Schools on the Island will be among numerous organisations affected by the forthcoming Charities Bill.

Speaking to IW charity trustees at an event organised by the Rural Community Council, he highlighted the key changes that will be brought about by the bill.

"Church schools will cease to be exempt charities and those with assets over £100,000 will have to register individually with the Charity Commission" he said.

Andrew, who was appointed Shadow Minister for Charities last year, also pointed out that the bill intends to establish the Charity Commission as a non-Ministerial Government Depart. "But we will be asking for it to be accountable to a Commons Select Committee. The bill most notably abolishes the presumption that the relief of poverty, the advancement of religion, and the provision of education are charitable purposes. It also exempts from registration all charities with an income below £10,000, but does not stop them being regulated.

"The greatest concern among charities is that the bill will perpetuate excessive regulation, or even introduce more regulation," he says. "People work for charities because they want to do good, not spend their time complying with ever more complex and capricious regulations."

If you have examples of over-regulation affecting Island charities, please contact Andrew so that these concerns can, if possible, be addressed in the Charities Bill debate.



Above: A winning float at Shanklin Carnival

Right: Opening Ventnor's Crab Fayre

Below: Celebrating Andrew's Re-Election



Presenting Tesco's Computers for Schools

Andrew Turner *reports*

MPs' Victory on Religious Hatred Law

The Religious Hatred Bill was always destined to cause a storm of argument, and Island constituents have shown their feelings on the subject in no uncertain manner.

"Judging by my postbag, this has been one of the most controversial matters I have voted on since I was elected in 2001," says their MP. "I have received over 200 individual letters from constituents on the issues surrounding the bill. It is impossible to satisfy everyone on this subject, but I am, as ever, extremely grateful to all Islanders who have let me have their views."

Andrew took all those views into consideration while the Religious Hatred Bill was debated, and he welcomed the amendments which the Government – after being defeated in both Commons and Lords – eventually accepted.

One of those amendments restricted the offence of incitement to religious hatred to the use of "threatening" rather than the more imprecise "abusive or insulting"

language. The other required that a court conviction should rely on actual intention to cause hatred, and not merely recklessness as to whether or not that was the outcome.

"This is a win for common sense and freedom of expression," said Andrew after the amendments had been passed. "Of course nobody supports incitement to hatred, but religion is a matter of choice and conviction, and religious issues should be open to widespread and robust debate."

"We don't want to see people in this country reluctant to preach the Gospel for fear of complaint or arrest. And we don't want to see outlandish cults claiming the protection of the law against practices which break up families and alienate children from their parents."

Andrew does not see any need for unnecessary legislation that is open to misinterpretation. "We already have laws which deal with harassment, assault and threatening behaviour. We don't have to hand additional rights to potentially dangerous minority groups."



Above: Summer Surgery takes Andrew across the Island – pity about the rain!

Right: Southern Vectis brings in a new timetable from 1st April (picture: Southern Vectis)



Good News on the Beat and on the Buses

There was plenty of good news for Islanders in the latest council budget. Since taking control at County Hall at last year's elections, the new councillors have been determined to keep their promise that council tax rises would not exceed inflation and that they would use your money wisely.

Apart from a rise of just 2.49 per cent in the council tax rate – the lowest since 1993 - two pieces of news were greeted with particular approval. One was the announcement that IW pensioners will have unlimited free travel on all local buses and Island Line trains, while under-19s in full time education will be given a 50p flat rate fare on public transport.

The promise of increased security for Islanders is another piece of good news. The Conservatives have allocated an extra £169,000 to the police authority this year, with nearly 40 extra Police Community Support Officers due on the beat around the Island over the next two years, backing up the regular police presence that will be extended to provide a police officer team for each neighbourhood.



Above: Backing the 'Crazy Duck' appeal

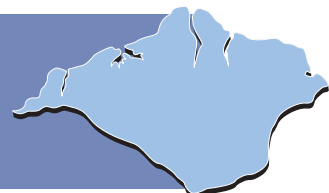
Left: Amy Salter's winning design for Andrew's Christmas Card



Above: With Graham Hicks, who is deaf and blind, before he piloted a hovercraft from Ryde to Southsea for charity.

Left: The Solemnity of Remembrance Day

Islandwide with your MP



Water, water everywhere (but not in your hosepipe)



The paradox of living in an area which is at risk both from flooding and drought has been highlighted in recent weeks by Andrew Turner.

He has raised the concerns of Island residents – most particularly those living in Cowes and in Sandown – with Southern Water and with Andrew Ashcroft, the IW Council's head of planning.

The situation is further aggravated by the threat of extensive new building development on the Island, and Andrew believes that very careful thought should be given to any such schemes.

"I am responding especially to complaints from Cowes residents that flood risks are worsening and that St Mary's Road pumping station simply does not have enough capacity. New developments in Cowes and at Moretonbrook in Sandown have proved to have inadequate drainage, and that has led to flooding."

The problem, he explains, comes about when developers change the natural

landscape. "Soft landscape features, such as grass, trees and shrubs, absorb rainwater. When new buildings take over, this landscape is replaced by houses, pavements, roads, and parking areas – and these simply cannot absorb water. The rain just runs off and creates flooding problems downstream, where sewers cannot cope."

But alongside flood worries, there is also the severe problem of water shortage. "Ironically, the Island is actually not self-sufficient in water. We have to import it to meet our needs. Every new house puts more demands on water resources, and the knock-on adverse effect for the Island's crop and plant business is all too apparent. New housing does not need an extraction licence, but agriculture and horticulture does. Hosepipe bans are just another symptom of the crisis."

But, apart from a more careful look at building development, there is something else which Andrew is keen to promote.

"The recycling of grey – ie, used – water should be mandatory for new housing developments, as should other measures, such as putting in solar panels and better insulation, that will reduce the impact on the environment."



(picture: The Parliamentary Recording Unit)

Competition Corner

Quiz for young Islanders

If you are under 16 and would like some House of Commons souvenirs (edible and otherwise) here is your chance.

Answer the following questions, and if yours is the first correct solution to be drawn from Andrew's hat, you will be presented with a hamper from the House of Commons – the place which one historian described in 1791 as being in a state of 'wise and masterly inactivity', but which, your *MP* assures us, is nowadays the heart of our democracy.

These are the questions:

- 1 Who was the first MP to represent the whole of the Isle of Wight?
- 2 Which Island nightclub is named after a march composed by a man whose real name was Frederick Ricketts?
- 3 What is Big Ben?
- 4 Whose bust appears on a plinth in St James Square, Newport?
- 5 What is Andrew Turner's middle name?
- 6 What was the Black Knight that appeared on High Down?
- 7 At what event last year were there 8,326 feet between Bembridge and Alum Bay?
- 8 What is the Mother of Parliaments?

Send your answers, with your name, age, address and telephone number, to 'Competition Quiz', 24 The Mall, Carisbrooke Road, Newport, PO30 1BW.

Closing date May 2.
Under-16 entries only.

Working for the Wight at Westminster...

It is almost a year since the Island re-elected Andrew Turner as their MP and he has continued to be as busy as ever both on the Island and in the Commons.

His constituents are more likely to meet him on the IW (although he is always happy to see by appointment anyone coming up to Westminster), but they can be confident that when he is in London he is working just as hard as a parliamentarian as he does locally.

The latest statistics from the House of Commons show that in the year 2003-4, the average MP took part in 17 debates.

Andrew made his mark in 53, either delivering speeches or following up the contributions of fellow Members.

His voting record has been similarly impressive. In the same year, the average voting record for all MPs was 64 per cent, while Andrew's was 77 per cent. And he fired off inquiries at Government ministers during departmental question times no fewer than 16 times, against the average MP's score of just nine.

His appointment last summer as Shadow Minister for Charities will ensure that he retains his high profile in the Commons.

Andrew's achievements in his fifth year as the Island's MP

- **£20 million more grant to the Island** – Since Andrew led an all-party delegation to local government Ministers, the IW Council has received £20 million more in support from the Government
- **Saving Pets at Rest** – The threat to popular pet cemetery Pets at Rest in Newport was lifted after Andrew raised the matter of costly new Government regulations at Prime Minister's Questions.
- **New dentists** – Since health minister Rosie Winterton conceded to Andrew that people shouldn't have to cross the Solent for dental care, 14 new NHS dentists have been appointed on the Island.

Andrew Turner reports

