





# Chris Stephens MP

## GLASGOW SOUTH WEST

# UK Government Attacks on Scottish Democracy

This month, we have again seen a full-frontal attack on Scottish democracy by the UK Government.

Last year, we had the denial of democracy and the UK Government blocking the Scottish Government's to deliver it's manifesto commitment to hold an independence referendum.

Now we have an order under section 35 of the Scotland Act to veto the gender recognition reforms passed by the Scottish Parliament.

This decision by the UK Government should worry anyone who supports Scotland's right to decide on devolved matters, regardless of their opinions about these reforms.

With its flimsy reasoning, this veto puts us on a slippery slope and puts devolution at risk of further blatant attacks when the UK Government deem it appropriate.

Devolution was secured nearly a quarter of a century ago, in 1997, with the overwhelming support of the people of Scotland.

It made the Scottish Parliament,

elected by and responsible to the people of Scotland, responsible for making laws on all devolved competencies.

The agreement, where some policy areas remained shared and reserved, was to allow the UK Government to legislate on matters reserved, not to allow them to run roughshod over policies they disagree with on areas devolved to Scotland.

And, for the last twenty-five years, that is what has happened.

Never before has any UK Government decided to use a section 35 order - let alone to abuse that power to block legislation that clearly has no impact on equality laws UK-wide - a view shared by Tory Equality Select Committee Chair.

As Labour's Welsh First Minister Mark Drakeford said, "it sets a dangerous precedent".

I understand that strong views on both sides exist. Many constituents have shared them with me.

But, no matter your view, we must all recognise the Gender Recognition Reform Bill was extensively scrutinised and passed

by a considerable majority with votes from MSPs from all parties in Holyrood.

Compare that to the democracy on show at Westminster, where you had a Scottish Secretary deliver a statement without sharing reasoning with MPs and could not answer basic questions about his reasons for section 35.

The bill progressed through the Scottish Parliament, and at every stage, the UK Government was kept informed by the Scottish Government. At no stage did Westminster ask for any changes, raise concerns during the consultation or passage stages of the bill.

Bluntly, the UK Government was silent until the bill was due for royal assent and then unilaterally vetoed it, disrespecting Scotland's Parliament, its voters and the MSPs who have been part of its scrutiny, consideration and passing.

The UK government must rethink this damaging course of action, revoke its section 35 order and give the Scottish Parliament its right and proper place.



## Constituency Work in January



**CASES OPENED 364**



**EMAILS RECEIVED 1,097**



**CASES CLOSED 374**



**EMAILS SENT 972**



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## GLASGOW SOUTH WEST

### Fuel poverty bites

If you have been listening to my [podcast](#) you will have heard me often speak about my worries surrounding the rapidly escalating costs of fuel. Last week this came into sharp focus after being contacted by a constituent. This constituent was on a prepay meter and had no more money to top up.

Sadly, this is not an isolated experience for my office. Every week we see constituents broken and desperate who merely want to both feed their families and heat their homes.

The Government constantly falsely trumpets how generous it is in support those in desperate circumstances, but it is far from the reality of what is being felt on the ground.

To be fair, there are [several schemes](#) available; however, with Energy being reserved for Westminster, it was not long before the failings of the central £400 scheme showed themselves. I am already aware of several constituents on prepay meters which have no idea if they have received the [payment of £66 pcm](#).

Usually, my fantastic Office team can resolve this issue with a phone call to the respective Energy Provider. But unfortunately, this support is ending in March, and we have only been able to help those aware of the scheme or who have realised they are still waiting to receive it.

I dread to think of how many vulnerable people are missing out as they didn't know about the support or, in the words of one of our constituents, "didn't want to make a fuss".

There is also the confusing jumble of other payments, with a range of qualifiers to get the support.

Much is made of the complexity of the UK Tax system (the same tax system that those with more money than sense, like Nadhim Zahawi,

can easily exploit). Yet for us, mere mortals navigating the various assistance packages can baffle people into giving up claiming what they are entitled to.

Those of you on a prepay meter are [penalised](#) for simply being on a prepayment meter. Large companies hedge against rising costs by buying in bulk and in advance. But you cannot.

People on prepayment meters are giving money to support these mega corporations before receiving the service. This is a terrible exploitation of those least able to pay.

Many of my constituents also pay off excess bills via their prepay key. Why do they have debt in the first place? Simply, they were already in fuel poverty. The [figures from 2019](#) show that over a quarter of Glasgow South West's constituents were in fuel poverty.

There are many definitions of fuel poverty, but an easy method to assess it is by calculating if you spend 10% of your income (before costs) on fuel. Right now, a few of you realise you are considered to be in fuel poverty. But, unfortunately, these figures will only increase.

Yes. Working people are now in fuel poverty. What a damning indictment of the low-wage economy and a Tory Government forcing wages down, so the rich get richer.

But what of Russia's invasion of Ukraine? Surely, we must stop grumbling as Putin has caused a post-Covid crisis in fuel costs? Or so that is what UK Government like to focus the blame on.

Erm, no. Please do not stop grumbling because this blame shifting is simply that, blame shifting.

The UK was [only getting 4%](#) of its energy mix from Russia in the way of Gas. Here is an excellent website from the Scottish Government about [Scotland's Power needs](#). Wholesale [Gas](#)

[prices have tumbled](#) to their lowest since May last year.

Scottish consumers are now paying the price for decades of the UK's failed energy policies.

As a nation we are energy rich, but for far too many of my constituents, a many thousands others across Scotland, they are suffering fuel poverty and the biggest reason is being in this Union of unequal's.

Scottish consumers we know are paying the highest standing charges in the UK and our renewable industries paying the highest grid connections in Europe. This is a country where Scotland's North Sea has the potential to become the cheap green-energy hub of Europe and where over 75% of nations electricity needs are being met by renewable energy.

We merely need to look at our neighbours in Denmark, Norway and Ireland, who are not forecast to go into recession but to grow over the next few years – while energy-rich Scotland is once again paying the price of being in the Union and being part of the only nation in the G7 set to go into recession.

I hope I have shown that we should not be paying a fortune for our power. Instead, we are being crippled by ludicrous mismanagement of the economy by the Tories.

As for my constituents? I am happy to report that on this occasion we were able to help, albeit a short time fix, by helping to secure a fuel voucher. But, that is not always the case and its heart-breaking to witness the desperation in people in Glasgow to not spend yet another night without electricity.

For anyone to go without an essential requirement for life in the 21st century in a country laden with resources is intolerable.

Scotland must break free from Westminster and build a system that looks after those in need.

## ChrisCast – Weekly Politics & Local News from a Glasgow MP

ChrisCast is our weekly podcast from Chris Stephens MP. What do you want to know about the work of an MP? Do you have a Community project you would like mentioned? You can send me your suggestions [alastair.shaw@parliament.uk](mailto:alastair.shaw@parliament.uk)

 [chrisstephens.scot/podcast/](http://chrisstephens.scot/podcast/)



Working hard for everyone in Glasgow South West

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## GLASGOW SOUTH WEST

### SPOTLIGHT ON LOCAL ORGANISATIONS



# TEA in the POT

## Women's Support Service

Each newsletter I shall be highlighting one of the fantastic organisations in Glasgow South West, we are fortunate that I have a lot of options to choose from.

For my inaugural article, I have selected the brilliant 'Tea in the Pot'. They do amazing work in Govan and have a wonderful team of women running the organisation, providing great support for women throughout the area.

Tea in the Pot is a Drop-in & Support Service for women, run by women, for women. Based in the Pearce Institute they have created a safe relaxing atmosphere where women can meet up with old friends and make new friends. A drop-in is available each week, where all women can pop in for a cuppa and a chat in a lovely, safe, friendly, women-only space. This service assists women who are coping with difficulties, feel

under stress, have health issues, or simply feel isolated with no one to talk to. They are providing life-changing services for women of Govan.

Successful and well-attended free events are organised throughout the year. This has included activities such as yoga & chair yoga, dancing, workshops and a whole lot more, you can follow them on [facebook](#) to keep up to date on any up-and-coming events.

In 2017 I tabled an early-day motion for Tea in the pot: ***This House congratulates the Tea in the Pot Drop-in and support service based in Govan for its ongoing work to support women to become actively engaged in the community and to enable women to identify and value their skills, experiences and talents, and to feel empowered and confident to share these with others; notes this work despite their lack of core funding***

***and supports their ongoing campaign for resources; further notes the service provides a safe and relaxing atmosphere where women can meet up with old friends and make new friends and assists women who may be coping with difficulties, or who feel under stress, have health issues of simply feel isolated; and applauds the work of the support service in supporting and empowering the WASPI women in the community which is valuable and necessary and continues to support their work in defeating isolation.***

#### Contact Details:

Message them on [Facebook](#) for a fast response. Tel 0141-425-1709 or email [teainthepot@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:teainthepot@yahoo.co.uk) They are open two days per week on **Mondays and Fridays from 9.30am - 2.00pm** and are based in the Pearce Institute, 840 Govan Road, Glasgow G51 3UU.



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## GLASGOW SOUTH WEST

### Food Support – Glasgow South West



**Important - The foodbank works using a voucher referral system. In order to get help from the foodbank, you will need a voucher issued by local agencies, including my office at 1612-1614 Paisley Road West, Glasgow G52 3QN.**

#### Ibrox

Ibrox Parish Church  
Clifford Street  
Glasgow  
G51 1QL  
Mon 12:00 - 14:00

#### Penilee

Our Lady & St George Church  
50 Sandwood Road  
G52 2QE  
Tue 10:30 - 12:30

#### Mosspark

Mosspark Baptist Church  
155 Corckerhill Road  
Glasgow, G52 1PG  
Wed 12:00 - 14:00

#### Cardonald

Hillington Park Church  
24 Berryknowes Rd  
G52 2UD  
Fri 10:00 - 12:45

#### Linthouse

Linthouse Housing Association  
1 Cressy Street  
Glasgow, G51 4RB  
Tue 14:00 - 16:00

#### Good Food Scotland

**Nutritious low cost food and support to local people.**

#### Linthouse

Linthouse Housing Association  
1 Cressy Street, Glasgow G51 4RB  
Thur 10:00 - 13:00

#### Threehills

415 Nitshill Road (Entrance at the side of the block of high rise flats.)  
Tue 10:30 - 13:00  
Wednesday 10:30 - 13:00

#### Kennishead

60 Kennishead Ave,  
Glasgow G46 8RN  
Tuesday 10:00 - 13:00  
Friday 10:00 - 13:00



### Crookston Community Group

Monday to Friday 10am till 3 pm

48 & 56 Beltrees Road, Crookston  
www.ccg.scot 0141 882 4333

#### Govan

The Pearce Institute, 840-860 Govan Road, entrance at the war memorial side.

Wednesday 10.30 to 15:00  
Thursday 10.30 to 15:00



#### Pollok Pantry

Located at  
25-27 Brockburn Road, G53 5BG.

Monday, Tuesday and Thursdays  
10 am - 3 pm, Saturday 10 am - 2 pm

### Get help with the cost of living

If you don't have enough money to live on, you might be able to get to afford essentials like bills and food. This includes the Scottish Welfare Fund and cost of living payments.

You should check if you can claim benefits - you might be able to do this even if you have a job.





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## GLASGOW SOUTH WEST



### Monthly Advice Surgeries

If you have a problem or require advice please contact my office to book an appointment at the surgery at the time and location which suits you best.

If you require help or advice out with surgery times please contact my office on **0141 883 0875** or email **chris.stephens.mp@parliament.uk** and we can arrange an appointment within the constituency office with one of my casework team.

To book an appointment call  
**0141 883 0875** or email  
**chris.stephens.mp@parliament.uk**

### Constituency Office

1612-1614 Paisley Road West  
Glasgow G52 3QN  
Open: Mon, Tues & Thur, Fri 9.30am-5pm  
CLOSED Wednesday and weekends

### First Thursday of the month

12.30 pm - 50p Church, Priesthill Rd G53 6QL

### First Friday of the month

6.30 pm - Sainsbury's, 10 Darnley Mains Rd,  
Glasgow G53 7RH

### First Saturday of the month

10 am - Cardonald Library,  
1113 Mossspark Drive G52 3BU

### Second Friday of the month

11 am - Pearce Institute,  
840-860 Govan Road G51 3UU

1 pm - Crookston Community Group,  
56 Beltrees Road G53 5TF

### Third Saturday of the month

10 am - Ibrox Library, 1 Midlock Street G51 1SL

12 noon - The Wedge,  
1066 Barrhead Road G53 5AB

### Fourth Friday of the month

12 noon - Corkerhill Community Hub  
11 Corkerhill Place G52 1RD

2 pm - Riverside Hall,  
29-31 Clydebrae Street G51 2AJ

### Fourth Saturday of the month

12 noon - Tesco, Silverburn,  
751 Barrhead Rd, Glasgow G53 6AG