

# **New Year message from the Scottish Secretary of State**

## **A message for everyone living in Scotland from Alister Jack, the Scottish Secretary of State.**

Mr Jack said: “This past year is one we will never forget – the year the UK came together to mourn the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

“For those special, almost unreal days in September, the UK paused to remember her long reign and her remarkable life – a life devoted to service to her country.

“I was honoured to play a small part in the ceremonies to mark her passing in both Edinburgh and London. And I was so proud to see the scenes that unfolded during the official period of mourning.

“People from all walks of life, from all corners of the land, were united – in sadness, of course, but also in admiration, respect and gratitude for The Queen’s life.

“We witnessed history and we saw the United Kingdom at its very best.

“The Queen’s death followed an uplifting Platinum Jubilee programme of events celebrating her 70 years on the throne.

“I know, as the year ends, people across Scotland will join me in reflecting on her life, in once again saying thank you and in wishing our new King, Charles III, a long, happy and successful reign.

“I was delighted when His Majesty and The Queen Consort, in what was their first official duty, travelled to Fife to confer city status upon our ancient capital of Dunfermline.

“Accompanying them that day, I could see how much it meant to the people of Dunfermline, and caught a glimpse too of a new style of monarchy, fashioned very much in their own image.

“King Charles III and The Queen Consort will be crowned next May. We can look forward to a very special day that I am sure will again bring the whole country together.

“Another thing which brought people together this year was fantastic sport.

“Who can forget Perthshire’s Eve Muirhead leading her curling team to Olympic gold in February in Beijing? And Neil Simpson and his brother and guide Andrew topping the Paralympics podium in Alpine skiing?

“Later in the year the Birmingham Commonwealth Games kept us thrilled and inspired in equal measure, and I was lucky enough to be able to cheer on Team Scotland – who came away with a grand total of 51 medals.

“These shared moments feel especially important during difficult times.

“Like the rest of the world, the UK continues to face real challenges.

“The UK Government’s response to the Covid 19 pandemic saved lives and livelihoods, with a rapid vaccination roll-out and support for employees and businesses that helped keep hundreds of thousands of Scots in a job.

“But the costs continue to be felt. Essential public services still need our support.

“Putin’s illegal war in Ukraine also continues to take its

terrible toll.

“We should be immensely proud of the humanitarian and military support we have provided to Ukraine as that country stands up to Putin’s Russia.

“That support will not cease. But we must recognise Putin’s aggression has sparked an energy crisis which has sent prices spiralling, compounding other cost-of-living pressures.

“Even with the UK Government’s multi-billion pound package of help for families and businesses with energy bills, we know times are hard.

“As we move into a new year, we must follow the course we set ourselves some time ago.

“We must continue to invest, here in Scotland and across the whole UK, in initiatives that will make a difference to communities and help grow our economy.

“With a new Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, and a new Chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, at the helm, we will achieve the sustainable economic growth we need.

“Here that means rolling out our £1.5 billion city and growth deals programme across the whole of the country. In the coming weeks and months we will announce two Freeports in Scotland, in an exciting joint initiative with the Scottish Government. The second round of the Levelling Up Fund will support more projects in Scotland and we will work directly with local councils to provide cash from the new UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

“That’s in addition to the work we are doing to support our energy sector – making us less reliant on imports – and to help Scottish firms break into new export markets.

“We will also continue to build warships on the Clyde and at Rosyth, equipping our Navy, keeping us safe, filling Scottish

yards' order books, and securing thousands of high quality jobs in Scotland.

“Serious times demand serious plans.

“The need for Scotland’s two governments to work together on shared challenges and real priorities has never been more pressing.

“There is much to be done, but by working together we can ensure that Scotland, as part of a strong United Kingdom, has a bright future.”



Alister Jack MP PHOTO Chris Watt



A proclamation was read by The Lord Lyon King of Arms Joseph Morrow at the Mercat Cross. Alister Jack, Scottish Secretary of State is seen here with the leader of the Scottish Conservatives, Douglas Ross MP, MSP. PHOTO '2022 The Edinburgh Reporter