

New MP aims to deliver for those who 'lent' their vote

Edinburgh East and Musselburgh's new MP says 'around 10,000 conversations' he had with constituents during his campaign will shape his agenda for the next five years.

It's been just two weeks since Chris Murray overturned the SNP's 10,000 vote-majority to become the first Labour MP to represent the area in almost 10 years.

But already his attention is turning to the next general election – and how he can keep the many who “lent me their vote” on side by delivering for them.

“Maybe they were thinking of voting Green, or they actually support independence or they've traditionally voted Tory, and different people for different reasons decided they could trust me and the Labour Party this time. So in five years' time I want to be able to go back to people who lent me their votes under contract and say I've fulfilled the terms on which you did that for me,” he told the Local Democracy Reporting Service.

“The huge value of a year's campaigning is we spoke to 17,000 people in total and I think personally I got 10,000 of those.

“It was a real opportunity to have in-depth conversations with people about what they care about, what they want, and what their fears and hopes are.

“I really want to say to people I’m thinking about those conversations a lot – and I’m really clear with myself that I’m going to keep doing that.”

Many of these doorstep chats, he said, focused on one of three things: cost of living, the NHS and climate change.

“People who are struggling at the moment are finding it very very difficult – but even middle class communities are saying they have huge challenges paying their mortgages,” he said.

While acknowledging health issues are devolved to Holyrood, he said it was vital MPs are “strong advocates for the local community”. Among the issues he plans to try and tackle are better GP services in Musselburgh and funding to replace the outdated Edinburgh Eye Pavilion.

He added: “Climate change was brought up so much by people on the doorstep and there’s a real understanding in this community. I don’t think every MP had this experience across the UK but I certainly did – people want to see action.”

As the son of former Shadow Scottish Secretary Margaret Curran, and a former assistant to Labour’s Harriet Harman, Murray is no stranger to politics; however this is his first rodeo in elected office.

And one of the key challenges will be ensuring everyone in the constituency, which stretches from Lothian Road and the Old Town all the way to Portobello – and now part of Musselburgh following the latest boundary changes – is represented equally.

He described it as the “best part of the world” with “all the raw materials” to drive economic growth – Labour’s number one priority in government.

“Whether it’s universities and the skills sector or financial services, technology, the green transition, energy and even

things like video games – we're really well placed on all of them.

"The challenge is can we build enough houses to support the population growth, can we manage the cultural, historical, hospitality backbone of the economy, will local people still enjoy and profit from that?

"Get that right and the prize is huge. But get it wrong and a lot of people's lives will be as good as they could be.

"The variable is the policy choices the government makes, and I've actually been really frustrated as someone living in Edinburgh that I don't think anybody's been thinking about those questions in any kind of depth in the Scottish or UK Governments.

"But now we've got an opportunity."

By Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter