

Livingston's new Labour MP relishes challenge

A new MP who grew up in the shadow of Grangemouth and went on to work for Barack Obama's US campaign has vowed to speak up on the crumbling concrete crisis.

Gregor Poynton is the new MP for Livingston, the first Labour MP to hold the seat for a decade following July's General Election.

Raised in Falkirk, Mr Poynton overturned an almost 15,000 SNP majority held by Hannah Bardell to take the constituency once held by Robin Cook back into the Labour stable. He was elected in an 18.9% swing to Labour with 18,000 votes.

Speaking to the Local Democracy Reporting Service this week the newly-elected MP said his priorities were improving health care facilities and fighting to fix the crumbling concrete crisis, which been acutely felt in West Lothian long before it hit national headlines.

Before entering Parliament, Mr Poynton worked in public relations and campaign management, including working for the campaign team that helped elect Barack Obama.

His early life in Falkirk shaped his political views. His dad worked in a unionised plastics plant in Grangemouth—an experience that deeply influences the new MP's advocacy for workers' rights and secure employment.

He said: "The opportunity to get on is what everyone wants for

their family – I know I want it for my boys. It is the reason I'm in politics and what drives me to make sure no one, anywhere in this country, is held back by their background.

“Young people are struggling to find decent jobs that pay – let alone get a foot on the housing ladder. The costs of childcare are extortionate, keeping the parents – often women – who want to work out of work.

“With the right support from our MP and UK Labour Government there are many opportunities ahead for our local industries, SMEs and workers and I will work with businesses, unions and co-operatives to help make sure that our local people and our towns benefit from them.”

He told the LDRS that he would be speaking out against Scottish Government plans to withdraw funding from a local health centre and also to improve local bus services.

He said: “One of my first actions was to write to Neil Gray, the SNP Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, requesting that he come to East Calder to inform the local community his plan for improving local health service given he's withdrawn the funding for a new health centre.

“Another frequently raised issue is the local bus services. While there has been a notable improvement in reliability with Lothian Country, many areas, such as Stoneyburn, still have only one bus per hour, and some, like Livingston Village, have no service at all. I aim to secure a meeting with the relevant parties soon to discuss how we can enhance these services.

On the issue of homeowners who are facing having to deal with crumbling concrete roofs in their home the MP promised to support the campaign by householders in Craigshill Livingston. “I will meet with the homeowners in Craigshill affected by RAAC to offer my support after their recent debrief with the Housing Minister and West Lothian Council.”

By Stuart Sommerville Local Democracy Reporter