



Anna Lo MBE MLA

CONSTITUENCY REPORT

Autumn 2009

This publication is also available online in digital PDF format at www.annalo.org

Dear Constituent,

Welcome to the third edition of my Constituency Newsletter which aims to summarise for you the major work I have carried out on your behalf in the last year.

I wish to thank many of you in your unfailing support for my stance on various issues such as community relations and development, gender equality, discrimination, education and housing. I was particularly touched by your messages of good will after receiving threats in relation to the recent racist attacks.

It has been enormously rewarding and exciting for me to have been approached by so many residents, groups and organisations to participate in their events or to assist them in their endeavours. Whether it is support for funding, lobbying government or a personal matter, I am happy to have been able to contribute and help.

My Constituency Office is there for you to seek assistance on problems ranging from planning, housing, immigration, anti-social behaviour, and benefits to specific local issues. Having handled a large volume of cases in the last year, I am delighted to report that a great deal of them have had a positive outcome.

As your elected representative, I wish to stress that I work for you and aim to be as accessible to you as possible, either through my website, constituency or Stormont office, email, telephone, post or fax. Do not hesitate to contact me if I can assist you in any way, or if you simply wish to share a concern or comment.

Yours sincerely

Your chance to reshape the planning system



Anna alerted residents to the forthcoming proposed planning reform at the AGM of the Deramore Residents Association in April when she outlined to them the main points of the draft document. She followed this up in May asking the then Minister of the Environment at Question Time in the Assembly to elaborate on planning enforcement and called

on him to publish the proposals without delay. The long-awaited consultation paper was issued in July and Anna urges all her constituents who have concerns over the planning system to give the Department of Environment their considered response before the deadline on 2nd October 2009. For a copy of the consultation paper and to have your say email planningreform@doeni.gov.uk

This comprehensive reform of the planning system encompasses the development plan process, development control, planning policy, enforcement and criminalization as well as Third Party Appeals.

Planning has been a major heartache for many residents in South Belfast and it is important that your voice is being heard in this consultation process. Any residents' groups or individuals who wish to receive assistance in formulating their response to the proposed reform are welcome to contact Anna's Constituency Office.



Contact Anna Lo



South Belfast Constituency Office
88 University Street,
Belfast BT7 1HE
Open: Mon-Fri 9am to 5pm

Telephone: 028 9033 0811
or 028 9052 1560

Fax: 028 9033 3147

Email: anna.lo@niassembly.gov.uk

Web: www.annalo.org



Northern Ireland Assembly

Since her election in March 2007 Anna has tabled:

86 Oral Questions
118 Written Questions
27 Motions

Voted 97 times

Spoken in 47 Assembly Debates

Commented on a range of draft legislation passing through the assembly at various stages

Assisted in over 400 Constituency cases

Anna is also a member of:

Committee for Social Development
Committee for Employment and Learning

All Party Groups
on
Ethnic Minorities,
International Development
and the Community & Voluntary Sector

Assembly Roadshow



Anna Lo joined a panel of fellow MLAs for the Assembly Roadshow, held in the Baby Grand on 7th April 2009. The series of road shows, hosted by the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, provided an opportunity for the public to come face to face with their local Assembly representatives. Anna was the only female MLA and representative from the South Belfast Constituency to participate in the series. Speaking after the event Anna said: "I wholeheartedly welcome this roadshow and the pro-active approach in reaching out to the public and I am very pleased to have been able to take part."

Anna Lo's Committee Work

Committees play an important role in advising and assisting the departmental Minister(s) on matters within his or her responsibility. The Committees also undertake a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role with respect to the departments and play a key role in the consideration and development of legislation.



The Committee for Employment and Learning; during the year many issues have been considered relating to further and higher education, training and employment, tuition fees, FE lecturers' pay disputes and the proposed merger of Queen's University and Stranmillis College. It has produced a number of reports namely the Review of Workplace Disputes Resolution, Inquiry into the Way Forward for Apprenticeships, Review of Teacher Training and Training for Success, all of which can be viewed from the Assembly website. In her committee role, Anna visited a number of training organizations and colleges to gain first hand knowledge of the experiences of tutors, students and trainees.

The Committee for Social Development; Through the committee Anna has dealt with various matters from the department's sizable portfolio, including social housing, social security, urban and neighbourhood renewal as well as community and voluntary sector development. It has produced reports on Town Centre Regeneration, the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and the Administration of Disability Living Allowance. The Committee was actively involved in the scrutiny of the Charities Bill at the committee stage and a large number of proposed statutory rules. It will continue to play its role in considering the forthcoming Bills on Housing (Amendment), Liquor Licensing and the Registration of Clubs and Welfare Reform.

Introducing www.annalo.org



Anna Lo welcomed guests to her Constituency Office in January 2009 for the launch of her new website www.annalo.org. Speaking on the day, Anna Lo said; "This site will allow people

to see the work I am doing around the constituency and within the Assembly. People can also contact me through the site in relation to constituency matters they may need help with."

Proposed Landlord Regulations - A Strategy for the Private Rented Sector

Anna Lo has welcomed the publication of the consultation document aiming to overhaul the private rented housing sector in Northern Ireland.

The key proposals include a central scheme for tenants' deposits; a government deposit guarantee for vulnerable people who cannot afford them, an independent body to manage disputes; new fitness standards, much greater awareness of the rights of tenants and the responsibilities of landlords and longer periods of notice to quit for long term tenants.

Anna Lo says: "I am very pleased to see these proposals and I hope they will be implemented. It's high time we tightened up the rental sector here and brought regulations into the 21st century. These plans, if implemented, will help protect tenants against any unscrupulous landlord. New regulations would also hopefully ensure that all properties are maintained to a high standard."

Anna advocated in a recent Assembly debate for a mandatory landlord registration and was also recently invited to speak at the NI Landlord's Association, where she discussed the importance of standards and regulations in the private rental sector.

Promoting International Trade & Investment

A passionate ambassador for Northern Ireland, Anna has been working to endorse international trade for the province with Invest NI and the British Council. Anna recently met with a trade delegation from China to promote global commerce, and has been working hard to promote Northern Ireland as a leading destination for Further and Higher Education.

Supporting Gender Equality



Anna Lo MLA is a keen advocate of gender equality. Having supported the launch of the Women's Information Group's new premises, she hosted and chaired a discussion event at Stormont in association with Women in Business and Invest NI in December 2008. Focusing on the key issues affecting women in business, the debate touched upon small and local enterprises, as well as business start up initiatives. In 2009 Anna co-sponsored the launch of 'Gender Focus', a new e-bulletin publication from the Women's Resource and Development Agency. She also praised the ongoing success of the Women's Leadership Initiative, a programme developed by the Chief Executive's Forum for senior level executives in the Public Sector. Furthermore Anna continues to support the work of the Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation, and the Family Planning Association.

Promoting Age Awareness



Having contributed to the Engage with Age Assembly event in January 2009, Anna held a special constituency surgery on 27th March 2009 to highlight the important role of older people in our community. Speaking afterwards Anna said; "As a public representative it is of paramount importance to me to engage with everyone across

the community. This surgery was designed to enable older people to voice their opinions and seek assistance on a wide range of issues." Anna went on to host NICVA's Older People's Parliament at Stormont in May 2009, where she proposed the debate "This Assembly believes that older people can play a key role in creating a shared and better future."

Combating Discrimination



The recent months have seen a highly publicized spate of attacks and threats upon minority communities, causing a great deal of fear for both local and migrant residents in South Belfast.

Following her condemnation of the attacks Anna Lo put a number of questions to the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister calling for the long awaited 'Cohesion, Sharing and Integration' Strategy to be published.

Speaking in the Assembly Anna Lo said; "I urge the Minister to publish the draft Cohesion, Sharing and Integration strategy as soon as possible to assure the entire community that the Assembly is serious about addressing sectarianism and racism." Anna has frequently raised the issue of combating discrimination in all its forms and continues to lend her support to the development and protection of Human Rights and community relations, at home and further afield.

Most recently Anna marked the 20th Anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Massacre with Amnesty International and has supported initiatives for Migrant Workers in Northern Ireland, Fair Trade and UNESCO at Stormont. Anna also spoke at the British-Irish Association Conference in Oxford, where she closed the event emphasizing the need for strong and productive cross border relationships.



Supporting Local Schools



Education is high on Anna's list of priorities and she has been busy supporting local schools in South Belfast this year. Anna has visited with a number of schools including, Belvoir Primary, Cranmore Integrated Primary, Fane Street Primary, An Droichead Irish Language School, Botanic Primary, and Methodist College.

Anna was invited to launch a school conference on climate change, organized by Hunterhouse College and held at Fleming Fulton school.

Anna has paid tribute to the staff, pupils and supporters of Newtownbreda Primary School, as it closed its doors this summer for the last time after more than 70 years service to the community in Newtownbreda.

Anna has been working to accelerate the proposed development of the Lagan College school buildings and brought the matter to the Minister for Education in Stormont in May 2009.

Working With Residents

Anna has developed strong links with a large number of community and residents' groups across South Belfast. Having assisted on many issues with these groups, Anna is a firm favourite as key speaker at resident's association meetings and AGMs.

This year Anna has attended with the Ulidia Residents's Group, Holylands PACT Forum, Queens Neighbourhood Forum, Deramore Residents, Lower Malone Residents, Lisburn Road Residents, Lower Woodstock Community Association, Ballynafeigh Community Development Association and the Greater Village Regeneration Trust.

Contact Anna

South Belfast Constituency Office
88 University Street,
Belfast BT7 1HE
Open: Mon-Fri 9am to 5pm

Constituency Officer:
Catherine Curran
Telephone: 028 9033 0811
Fax: 028 9033 3147
Email: catherine.curran@niassembly.gov.uk
Web: www.annalo.org



Ormeau: Anna attended Ormeau Library for the launch of Learn Direct's initiative to introduce new users, young and old, to internet and computer skills.

Neighbourhood Focus

The Holylands: Organised by the Minister for Employment and Learning, the Holylands Stakeholder's Forum met to discuss the events of St. Patrick's Day 2009, and a range of other issues related to the area. The multi-agency forum debated the ongoing problems of the Holylands area and as a result a report has been produced by the department, identifying the key areas for action and improvement.

Finaghy: Anna Lo has been supportive of the work of the South Belfast Area Project, having worked to introduce a number of road safety measures to the area and lobby for further funding.

The Markets: Anna has been working with community representatives in the Markets area to improve local amenities, most recently having participated in a feasibility study for the area.



Belvoir: Anna visited with a group of residents and senior citizens in the Belvoir area to discuss a range of issues and concerns.



The Village: Anna has spoken on the Village Urban Renewal Area in the NI Assembly. More recently Anna attended the opening of the Richview Regeneration Centre and lobbied for renovation works at Nubia Youth Centre.



Lisburn Road: Anna invited the Minister for Social Development, Margaret Ritchie to meet with her and residents from the Lisburn Road area to discuss a number of issues including alley gates, anti-social behaviour, housing and regeneration for the area.



Donegall Road: Anna was invited to unveil the Beyond Borders Mural in the Donegall Road area of South Belfast.