January: a month of New Years resolutions and planning, setting the benchmark for the rest of the year, and it is safe to say the Scottish Parliament did just that. Here is a snapshot of some of my activities last month.

Three important pieces of legislation were passed. The ban on electric dog shock collars, and the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act and the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act.

Stage 2 of the Budget bill was also passed after Finance Secretary Derek Mackay MSP struck a deal with the Scottish Greens which will see local government receive an additional £159.5m for 2018/19. The bill was also supported by two Lib Dem MSPs.

In my constituency, Ronnie Cowan MP and I met with Inverclyde’s new Police Scotland Chief Inspector Hazel Scott and Chief Inspector Gordon Crossan.
My work as a member of the Culture, Tourism, Europe & External Relations Committee (CTEERC) saw me visit BBC Scotland’s Pacific Quay studios this month to learn more about Scotland’s screen sector.

In the Parliament I sponsored VisitScotland’s Year of Young People 2018 event which was attended by Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism, and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop MSP. This was a great opportunity to celebrate our young people and I was delighted that the Glasgow Philharmonia were able to attend and perform.

I also met with Chris, a Development Officer at REACT Basketball, to discuss the charity’s work in Inverclyde.

It can be hard to make ends meet in January after the festive season, so I re-visited Financial Fitness to hear about their work in Inverclyde. They provide a free, independent and impartial welfare, benefit and money advice service which I encourage my constituents to use.

I also visited Inverclyde’s Centre for Independent Living (ICIL) for an update on their work locally.

I was also fortunate enough to attend a few Burns Suppers.

At Holyrood, I piped at the Annual Consular Corps’ Burns Supper which was hosted by the Presiding Officer, as well as at the Scottish Parliament Burns Club Friends & Family Burns Supper.

In Inverclyde I attended a Burns Celebration at Merino Court in Greenock. I have one more to attend in February.