Newsletter from James MacCleary MP for Lewes Constituency

November 2026 Newsletter

It's been a busy time the last few weeks and I've got some good wins to share! After years of promises, Seaford is finally making progress towards a new health centre on Dane Road. The new council boundaries confirm our past win which means Newhaven, Ouse Valley and Falmer will stay out of an expanded Brighton & Hove. Thank you to everyone who helped us win that campaign.

In the budget I'm particularly pleased that self-employed fathers will now be included in paternity leave. Luke Taylor MP and I raised this in Parliament two years ago just after I was elected, so it's great to see the Government finally act. As a dad, I know how much those first weeks together matter. I wish there were more to celebrate in the Budget for Sussex, though, as I will explain further below.

It was also a pleasure to meet the volunteers at Newhaven's RNLI station recently. They give up their time to save lives at sea, often in dangerous conditions, and deserve our backing. Please support our local crew if you can.

An update on our reservoirs

After such a prolonged dry spell, the recent rain has been a welcome relief. The downward trend in our reservoir levels has begun to turn around which is great news, but recovery is slow and we are still a long way from being out of the woods.

I have met with the Government to discuss the severe drought affecting parts of the constituency and the particularly concerning situation at Ardingly Reservoir. The rain has helped, but it will take sustained rainfall to replenish our water supplies as even with constant rain the ground takes time to saturate.

South East Water's recent figures for November put Ardingly at just 19.1% full. This remains a worrying level, particularly as we look ahead to the need to rebuild reserves before next summer.

I'll keep pressing for action to protect supplies now and make our water infrastructure more resilient for the future. Residents need confidence that the system can cope with longer dry periods, rather than facing the same uncertainty whenever we have a hot summer.

If interested, you can follow the latest levels at Arlington and Ardingly on South East Water's website.

A gaping hole in the budget

I think it's important that we welcome good news regardless of political party affiliation, which is why I was happy to mention the great win on paternity pay earlier in this newsletter. However it's also now become a running theme that this government has once again failed to deliver serious investment in our area. The Chancellor has promised growth in every postcode, but people in Sussex could be forgiven for wondering when that promise will reach us.

The South East is simply treated as an extension of London. Investment in the capital makes the wider picture look healthier than the reality for communities here, where poor transport connections and ageing infrastructure hold back residents and businesses.

London receives the highest public transport investment per person in the country. The South East receives the lowest of any English region, at 11% below the national average.

The A259 is a clear local example. It is the main coastal road serving Seaford, Newhaven and Seven Sisters, yet more than 19,000 vehicles travel along South Way in Newhaven every day, putting enormous pressure on local neighbourhoods and businesses.

A study recommended upgrades, including safety improvements at Bishopstone Road. East Sussex County Council submitted its business case to the Government, but progress has stalled.

I have asked the Minister to commit the funding needed to get these improvements moving, and to press the Reform administration at the County Council to deliver immediate improvements, including at Bishopstone Road.

Our coastal communities cannot keep being overlooked. If the Government is serious about growth, it needs to invest in the roads, public transport and infrastructure that allow places like ours to thrive. I'll keep making that case in Parliament.

Lewes Bonfire

Bonfire was amazing this year. My whole family loved it: the torchlit processions, costumes, music and fireworks always make it an extraordinary spectacle, but what always stands out to me is the pride and community spirit behind it all.

Bonfire is such an important part of Lewes' identity. The evening is the result of months of preparation by people who give their time because they care about the town and its traditions.

A huge thank you to all our Bonfire Societies and volunteers for the work that goes into making it fun, safe and, for so much of the celebration, free to enjoy. Thank you too to the stewards, emergency services, police, council staff and transport operators who help make an event on this scale possible.

There were Sewage, Infantino and Farage all made appearances in the parade, and our new PM was lucky enough to appear a couple times in effigy form! I didn't get great pictures of them all but if you're interested please check out social media I'm sure you'll find some great images.

I also want to recognise the people who get to work cleaning up afterwards. Once the crowds have gone home, there is still an enormous job to do to get the streets ready for the town to get

back to normal. That work deserves just as much appreciation and often goes unseen and unappreciated.

Remembering those who served

Tomorrow is Remembrance Sunday, when communities across the country will come together to honour those who gave their lives protecting our country from tyranny and fascism.

This week I helped sell poppies at Westminster tube station in support of the Royal British Legion, and placed a Remembrance cross in the Speaker's Garden in Parliament on behalf of the people of Lewes constituency.

Remembrance is a moment to reflect on the sacrifices made by so many, and on the responsibility we have to support those who serve today.

Thank you to everyone organising local services, selling poppies and helping ensure that these acts of remembrance continue from one generation to the next. We will remember them.

Best wishes,

James MacCleary
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Liberal Democrats