Newsletter from James MacCleary MP for Lewes Constituency

October Newsletter

A new opportunity to save Lewes Bus Station

I have written alongside Lewes councillors Edwina Livesey, Janet Baah and Kevin West to Cllr Bella Sankey, Chair of the Sussex & Brighton Strategic Authority, urging the authority to explore purchasing Lewes Bus Station and the former bus garage site.

After years of uncertainty and campaigning to protect the site for public use, there is now a real opportunity to secure its future. The site is currently being marketed for £3 million, down from more than £4 million.

This is about much more than Lewes. The bus station is an important transport interchange connecting Brighton & Hove with communities across East Sussex and neighbouring Kent. Routes such as the 28 and 29 provide vital links to work, education and healthcare, particularly for people living in our rural towns and villages.

Bringing the site into public ownership could protect this important transport hub for future generations, while the former bus garage could provide an opportunity for much-needed affordable and social housing.

With the new Strategic Authority taking responsibility for strategic transport, I believe it should seize this opportunity and explore what can be done to secure the site for the future.

If you support our campaign to save Lewes Bus Station, please add your name here.

Backing local businesses at Long Man Brewery

It was great to visit Long Man Brewery in Litlington recently and see how one of our successful local businesses is investing for the future.

I met Director Tom and saw their new canning equipment in action, as well as hearing how investment in modern technology will help the brewery improve efficiency, grow and reach more customers.

We also spoke about some of the significant pressures facing breweries, pubs and the wider hospitality sector, from rising energy and employment costs to the Government's Extended Producer Responsibility scheme for packaging.

I support efforts to improve recycling and make packaging more sustainable, but we need to make sure these changes don't impose unfair or unpredictable costs on businesses already under pressure. My Liberal Democrat colleagues and I have been calling on the Government to review the scheme and listen to the concerns of the industry.

Businesses like Long Man are an important part of our local economy, supporting jobs and tourism as well as contributing to the communities around them. It was encouraging to see a local business continuing to invest and plan for the future and we should all support successful local businesses like this.

Paying tribute to Lewes after the train derailment

I have tabled a motion in Parliament paying tribute to everyone who responded to the train derailment near Lewes on 13 August.

More than 100 passengers had to be evacuated in extremely hot conditions, with British Transport Police, Network Rail, Greater Thameslink Railway, Lewes District Council and the emergency services all involved in the response.

I particularly wanted Parliament to recognise the remarkable response from Landport Community Hub, local residents and businesses across Lewes. People immediately opened their doors and provided water, refreshments, shelter and support to passengers caught up in an incredibly difficult situation.

The motion is a small way of putting on record my thanks to everyone who played their part, and recognising the professionalism, compassion and community spirit shown that day.

Remembering Seaford's history

It was an honour to lay a wreath at the Commonwealth War Graves Memorial in Seaford to mark Black History Month and specifically to remember the contribution of Black servicemen during the First World War.

Seaford has an important connection to this history. The first battalion of the British West Indies Regiment was formed at Seaford North Camp in 1915, with recruits arriving from the commonwealth to support Britain despite the conflict being far from their own shores.

More than 15,000 Black Caribbean volunteers served in the regiment during the First World War. Many trained here in Seaford before serving overseas, and some lost their lives during the conflict.

It was also wonderful to see pupils from Annecy Primary School involved in the commemoration. Ensuring younger generations learn about this history is an important part of recognising the contribution and sacrifice made by those who served.

This Black History Month, we should continue to remember their service and make sure their stories are passed on to future generations.

Could you be a local councillor?

Local elections will be going ahead next May, for local town councils and either the district council or new East Sussex unitary council. We're open to people from across the constituency who might consider standing as a Liberal Democrat candidate.

You don't need years of political experience or to know the ins and outs of local government. Our best councillors are people who care about where they live, listen to their neighbours and want to get things done for their community.

Whether it's campaigning for better roads and public transport, protecting local services, supporting our high streets or standing up for our environment, councillors can make a real difference to the places they represent.

If you've ever thought about standing, even if you're not sure whether it's for you, get in touch. You can reply to this email or read more here.

Best wishes,

James MacCleary
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Liberal Democrats