Newsletter from James MacCleary MP for Lewes Constituency

September Newsletters

Week 1

It's been a fantastic week for Newhaven, with the town's brand-new Health Hub officially opening its doors on Thursday. After years of hard work, it was a real privilege to be there to see this major investment in local healthcare become a reality.

Elsewhere, trains are finally running through Lewes again following last month's derailment, while in Westminster a new Prime Minister faced his first questions in Parliament.

Newhaven's new Health Hub opens its doors

It was a very special moment on Thursday to attend the official opening of Newhaven's new Health Hub.

For years, we have been working to deliver better healthcare facilities for Newhaven, and seeing this fantastic new facility finally open its doors is a huge milestone for the town.

The Health Hub is the first facility of its kind in Sussex, bringing primary healthcare services together under one roof in a modern, purpose-built building. It will make it easier for local people to get the care they need closer to home and represents a major investment in Newhaven's future.

Healthcare was one of the main reasons I got involved in politics. I passionately believe that wherever you live or whatever you earn should never determine the quality of care you receive. Everyone should be able to get the help they need, as close to home as possible.

That is why I promised to make improving local healthcare my top priority when I stood to be your MP. Too many people are waiting too long for appointments, travelling too far for treatment or relying on facilities that simply haven't kept pace with the needs of our communities.

This new Hub shows what can be achieved. It has taken years of work and determination from a large number of people and I want to thank everyone who has played a part in making it happen.

After years of campaigning and hard work, Newhaven now has one of the most modern primary healthcare facilities in Sussex. It is a major investment in the town, a fantastic new resource for local people and something the whole community can be proud of.

Trains are running again

It was also very welcome news this week that the railway in Lewes has reopened following last month's derailment.

The disruption over the past few weeks has been significant for people across our area, particularly for people in Landport and those who rely on the railway every day for work, school and appointments. I want to thank passengers for their patience and the teams who have worked so hard to get the railway safely reopened as quickly as possible.

This has been a huge recovery operation. The derailed train had to be removed before engineers could rebuild and stabilise the embankment, replace damaged track and infrastructure, reinstate signalling equipment and carry out extensive testing before trains could safely run again.

I visited the site during the recovery operation and met Rail Minister Lord Hendy, Network Rail, Southern, British Transport Police and those involved in the recovery to discuss what happened and what needs to happen next.

The independent Rail Accident Investigation Branch is continuing its investigation, and it is important that we allow that process to establish exactly what caused the derailment.

Burnham's first questions

This week also marked Andy Burnham's first week in Parliament answering questions as Prime Minister.

I wish the new PM well. There are enormous challenges facing our country and, wherever we can find common ground to improve people's lives, politicians should work constructively together.

But a change at the top cannot simply mean more of the same. From fixing social care and rebuilding our relationship with Europe to tackling the cost of living and restoring trust in our politics, there is an enormous amount of work ahead.

One litmus test of this new government will be on the continuing scandal of sewage pollution in our rivers and seas.

This week, campaigners from Surfers Against Sewage brought a petition signed by hundreds of thousands of people to No. 10, demanding fundamental reform of our water industry.

Here in Sussex, we know the consequences of the current system all too well. From sewage pollution along our coastline to the health of the River Ouse, our communities are paying the price for years of failure. People should not have to put up with sewage being pumped into our rivers and seas while their water bills continue to rise and dividends are paid to investors.

The Liberal Democrats have been calling for fundamental reform of the water industry, including replacing Ofwat with a regulator that actually has the teeth to hold water companies to account and moving water companies towards a mutual model run for the benefit of customers and the environment, rather than shareholders.

I hope this new government listens and will use the opportunity it now has to deliver the change people were promised.

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Week 3

It's been a busy couple of weeks. In this newsletter: the fantastic news on the campaign for access to the breast cancer treatment *Enhertu,* an important vote in Parliament on assisted dying, growing attention around the re-proposed Eton New Town and I also wanted to pay tribute to David Gray, a former Lewes Councillor who recently passed away.

This weekend I'll be heading to Liberal Democrat Conference, where as the party's Defence Spokesperson I'll be making the case for our plans to strengthen Britain's defence and security.

A major breakthrough for breast cancer treatment

I was delighted to receive some genuinely life-changing news this week: *Enhertu* has finally been approved for use on the NHS in England for people with HER2-low metastatic breast cancer.

This is something I have backed campaigners on since becoming MP, pressing for an agreement that would make this treatment available to those who desperately need it.

For thousands of people living with incurable breast cancer, Enhertu could mean precious extra time with their families and loved ones. That is why I have been proud to raise the issue in Parliament and support constituents who have fought incredibly hard to make their voices heard.

This result belongs to everyone who shared their story, signed petitions, campaigned and kept up the pressure on NICE, NHS England and the pharmaceutical companies.

This is a huge step forward and proof of what determined campaigning can achieve.

My vote on assisted dying

One of the most significant votes during the past fortnight was on the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill, which was defeated in the House of Commons by 286 votes to 270.

I voted in favour of the Bill.

Over recent months, I have received a huge amount of correspondence from constituents on both sides of this deeply sensitive debate. Many people shared very personal experiences of the final days of loved ones, and I am extremely grateful to everyone who trusted me with their stories.

After carefully considering the arguments, I remained of the view that terminally ill adults should have greater choice and control at the end of their lives, alongside strong safeguards to protect vulnerable people.

Parliament ultimately reached a different conclusion, and I respect the sincere views held on both sides. Whatever our individual position, I believe we all want people approaching the end of their lives to be treated with dignity, compassion and respect.

The last time this bill was introduced, the debate in parliament was very cordial, based on reasoned debate where everyone's views were genuinely heard and considered. This time was different, with a much more polarised and divisive debate - I think this is a symptom of our increasingly polarised and fractious politics. To get the best outcomes in Westminster, we must do more to create a politics which is coalition building, not tribal and fractious.

This is unlikely to be the last time Parliament considers assisted dying, and I want to thank everyone who took the time to contact me and contribute to this debate.

Standing up against Eton New Town

The proposed Eton New Town has received considerable media attention over the past couple of weeks, and I recently spoke to GB News about why I am opposing the plans.

We desperately need more affordable homes, but new development has to be in the right place and supported by the infrastructure communities need.

Building more than 3,000 homes next to the South Downs would have a significant impact on the surrounding area and raises serious questions about water and sewage capacity, flooding, roads and public transport.

These are already major concerns for communities across our area. Any plans for development on this scale need to address them properly and listen to the people who will be directly affected.

I will continue to make the case for the affordable homes we need, while opposing these proposals.

Remembering David Gray

I want to pay tribute to David Gray, a highly regarded former Liberal Democrat councillor who gave many years of dedicated public service to Lewes, and has recently passed away.

David represented residents on both Lewes District Council and Lewes Town Council, including serving as Chair of the District Council. He worked hard on the practical local issues that mattered to the communities he represented and was a particularly strong advocate for protecting and improving our local environment.

David made a significant contribution to the town over many years, and I know he will be remembered with great affection by those who worked alongside him and the residents he represented.

My thoughts are with David’s family, friends and former colleagues at this sad time.

Best wishes,

James MacCleary
MP for Lewes, Seaford, Newhaven, Polegate and our East Sussex Villages
Liberal Democrats