

## HUW MERRIMAN MP NEWSLETTER



Dear Resident,

I hope you are well.

It has been a busy couple of weeks in Parliament with the introduction of new criminal justice legislation, the launch of the Transport Committee's new inquiry into the appraisal and delivery of major infrastructure projects, the Liaison Committee session with the Prime Minister, and the vote to extend the Coronavirus Act until September.

Locally, we've helped a number of constituents with a range of issues, from highly challenging individual cases to explaining recent legislation and voting decisions.

I'd like to take this opportunity to recognise a truly outstanding local woman; May Willis, who celebrated her 111th birthday last week!

I hope you find this newsletter a useful summary of local support, initiatives, COVID-19 updates and my work on your behalf.

Stay well,

Huw

---



## Vaccination Programme

### Local Vaccine Update

In the first 100 days of Sussex's vaccination programme, a remarkable 800,000 jabs were delivered and is on track to have vaccinated a total of 1,000,000 residents by the end of this week.

As of last week, over 60% of adult constituents had received at least their first dose of the vaccine. Notably, our area has the tenth highest number of people vaccinated of any parliamentary constituency in the country!

This outstanding feat has only been possible thanks to the remarkable work of the Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group, the Sussex Community Partnership Trust, and our local NHS vaccination teams and volunteers, some of whom I have had the pleasure of personally thanking.

If you are aged 50 and over, clinically extremely vulnerable, have an underlying health condition, or an unpaid carer, please book your vaccination as soon as possible.

Appointments are available at

vaccination centres, pharmacy-led services and local vaccination services - please arrange your appointment now.

You can book today by calling 119 or visiting the national booking service [here](#).



### **Transport Committee Inquiry into Infrastructure Appraisal and Delivery**

Last week, the Transport Committee held the first evidence session of our new inquiry into the appraisal and delivery of major transport infrastructure.

The aim of this inquiry is to see how we can stretch the £600 billion the Government has committed to infrastructure so that it's better spent and the projects are delivered to time.

This is really important to us locally with much-needed improvements to the A1 and A27 alongside the need to extend HS1 from Ashford to Bexhill and Hastings.

Watch the full evidence session [here](#).

Watch me explain what the inquiry means for East Sussex: [here](#).



### The Right to Protest

The temporary lockdown restrictions meant it was not possible to permit a large vigil in Clapham commemorating Sarah Everard's tragic murder. The restrictions to mass gatherings is in the interest of public health due to the COVID pandemic. The right to hold a vigil and for peaceful mass assembly will return once it lapses.

Separately, the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill going through Parliament contains measures aimed at demonstrations that have limited other important freedoms of members of the public in their ability to access transports, streets and get from home to work or to study.

The legislation by no means seeks to suppress legitimate peaceful protests (as Sarah Everard's vigil would have been considered in non-pandemic times), but rather provide the Police with enhanced powers to ensure protests do not cause disproportionate amounts of disruption to the general public and restrict their rights to work and travel safely. I support these changes.

Watch me explain this a little more [here](#).



## **SAFE SPACES FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE IN LOCAL PHARMACIES**

**Boots in Robertsbridge, Battle, Bexhill,  
Pevensey Bay, Eastbourne and Hastings.**

### **Safe Spaces for Domestic Abuse Victims**

A number of local pharmacies are now providing 'safe spaces' for victims of domestic abuse, where those in need can go and get help and information on their situation.

It's fantastic that many local Boots are taking part in this initiative and I encourage other local pharmacies to get involved in this important scheme.

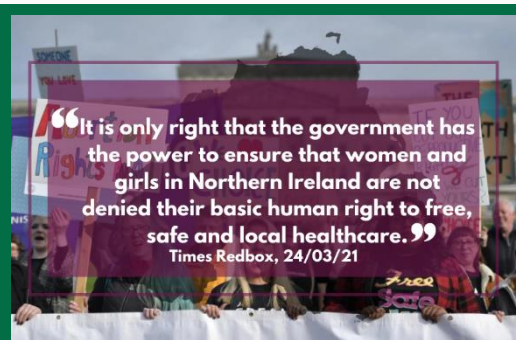
More information on safe space locations and how to become a safe space can be found [here](#).



### **Physical Proceedings for Local Authorities**

Our Parish, Town, District and County Councils have magnificently adapted to the challenges of the pandemic and held their meetings remotely in order to keep the

community served. I'm disappointed that the Government is insisting on Councillors having to physically attend meetings from 7 May. This is way before Parliament returns back to normal. Read the letter I've sent to our local councils and councillors expressing my disappointment. Determined to help reverse this [here](#).



### **Abortion in Northern Ireland**

On Wednesday, I wrote an article for The Times, making clear my support for the Government's steps to deliver on its legal obligation to uphold the rights of women and girls in Northern Ireland and ensure abortion services can be delivered there sustainably in the long term.

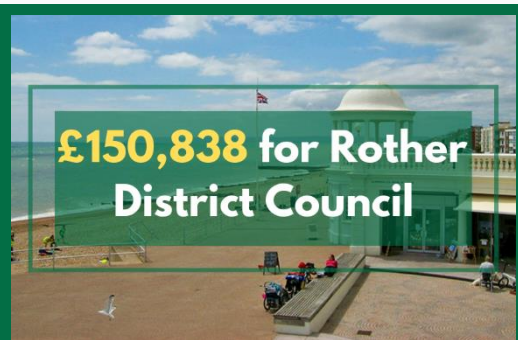
In 2019, an act of Parliament placed a legal duty on the Government to create a new framework to provide lawful access to abortion services in Northern Ireland by 31 March 2020 in the absence of a restored Northern Ireland Executive.

Whilst I understand that this is an extremely personal and emotive subject, having visited Northern Ireland and heard the terrible tales of women and girls seeking these vital services, I am clear that this is an important and necessary step.

Yesterday, I spoke in the House of Commons on this issue and again highlighted that I believe the Government is right to introduce this legislation.

READ: [here](#).

WATCH: [here](#).



### **Support for our High Streets and Seaside Resorts**

I'm very pleased to report that Rother District Council has been allocated £150,838 from the new Welcome Back Fund to support the safe reopening of our high streets and seaside resorts.

This funding will help us boost tourism, improve our green spaces and make it easier for our fantastic hospitality businesses to be enjoyed by everyone by supporting them in operating as takeaways and market stalls alongside setting up new outside spaces for the whole of summer.

More information on the Welcome Back Fund can be found [here](#).





### **Neurodiversity Celebration Week**

Neurodiversity Celebration Week was last week - an important opportunity to recognise that from gold medal winning athletes, to ground-breaking physicists, to actors, to writers, neurodiverse people enrich our society hugely.

At the moment, 2 out of every 5 neurodiverse children in the UK leave secondary education at 16 never having had their learning difficulty identified, and I think we must address this.

So I have I've tabled a Written Question to the Education Secretary asking what steps the Department is, or could, take to help schools in identifying neurodiverse learners and formulate strategies to support their education.

It's really important that neurodiverse learners are identified, so their creativity, innovation, ability to think outside the box, unique insights and perspectives alongside problem-solving skills can flourish with appropriate support from their teachers.

I hope to report back with good news soon!





## Why I voted to extend the Coronavirus Act until September

### Coronavirus Act Extension

Yesterday, Parliament voted to extend the Coronavirus Act for another six months until September.

This will not extend lockdown until September. Most of the rules, such as face coverings in shops, the Rule of 6 and quarantine following international travel, are granted under legislation which existed before the pandemic.

There are some restrictive powers which will continue with this Act (such as public protest and test, trace and isolate rules).

The upside from the extension is that we continue with its support mechanisms which help businesses and families (such as furlough and statutory sick pay). These benefits are designed to last until September hence the powers continue before the proposed end to lockdown in June.

I would rather the restrictive elements of the Act ended when the Prime Minister's roadmap takes us out of lockdown. However, I voted for the extension as I see the benefits in the support and will be keeping the Prime Minister to his own timetable.

You can watch me explain this a little further [here](#).



### Liaison Committee with the PM

This week, the Liaison Committee questioned the Prime Minister and I was pleased to be able to take part due to my role as Chair of the Transport Select Committee.

Following some technical difficulties with my remote participation and a rather frantic dash down the stairs of Portcullis House from my office to the Attlee Suite, I was the only Select Committee Chairman to be able to question the PM in person!

I received clarifications from the Prime Minister that the Global Travel Taskforce will report back on 5 April, and that their recommendations will be made available to the public. This is one week earlier than previously planned, but the PM was firm that international travel would not restart until 17 May at the earliest, in line with the roadmap to unlock.

I also asked the PM to provide an update on our work with international partners, especially those ahead like us in their vaccination programme, to facilitate international travel, and to consider an additional compensation scheme for the transport industry (especially aviation and coaches) should barriers to domestic and international travel continue.

The PM seemed willing to keep open to the idea of additional

compensation and clearly shares my commitment to support the sector by getting everyone moving again.

You can watch the full session [here](#).

**TRANSPORT COMMITTEE REPORT**

# TRAINS FIT FOR THE FUTURE?

**TRANSPORT COMMITTEE REPORT**

## Trains Fit for the Future Report

On Tuesday, the Transport Select Committee published our report 'Trains Fit for the Future'.

Whilst rail is a naturally low-carbon transport mode, trains in Great Britain still mainly rely on diesel despite the fact that alternative, cleaner technologies are available and in use on parts of the network. This includes electric and hydrogen-powered trains.

It is crucial that all parts of our transport network play their role in meeting the net zero by 2050 legally binding target, so in summary, our report called for:

1. A programme of well-funded electrification to be delivered over the next thirty years, starting immediately.
2. Battery and hydrogen technology to play an important role in decarbonising the network.
3. The industry to be subject to

greater cost scrutiny following  
previous electrification  
overspending.

You can read the full report [here](#).



### **Measures to Tackle Knife Crime and Serious Violence**

Last week, I welcomed new  
legislation to clamp down on  
serious violent crime, especially  
knife crime.

I am pleased to see the Serious  
Violence Duty put in law, placing a  
duty for Local Authorities, the  
Police, healthcare organisations  
and more to review the local data  
and produce local strategies to  
clamp down on serious violence at  
a regional level.

WATCH: [here](#).



## Chair of the APPG for the BBC

As Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for the BBC, I hosted a call between parliamentarians and the BBC's new Director-General, Tim Davie CBE.

It was a good opportunity for Tim to update my colleagues about the BBC's recent decision to move 400 jobs outside of London.

I also recently spoke in a Petitions Committee Debate on the BBC Licence Fee, where I sought to set the record straight on some common misconceptions, particularly relating to convictions of those who have not paid the fee.

WATCH: [here](#).

**In the House**

**A welcome return - but tough decisions**

with Hans Mervin  
MP for Bexhill and Hailsham

Opinion

As schools and universities start to welcome the return of children and young people, it is a welcome sight. However, the return of children and young people to school and higher education is not without challenges. The return of children and young people to school and higher education is a welcome sight, but it is also a challenge. The return of children and young people to school and higher education is a welcome sight, but it is also a challenge. The return of children and young people to school and higher education is a welcome sight, but it is also a challenge.

**Bexhill Observer Article**

In my most recent article for the Bexhill Observer, I welcomed children and young people's return to school and higher education.

I also shared my views on the Budget, which saw tough but necessary decisions made to meet the severe financial predicament we find ourselves in due to the pandemic.

READ: [here](#).



### Lockdown Easing from Monday

From Monday, the lockdown restrictions will be slightly eased to reflect the reduced ongoing social contact from the return to school due to the Easter Holiday.

I am pleased that the stay at home rule will end, and that residents will be able to meet people from other households in outdoor public spaces or private gardens whilst adhering to the rule of six or not exceeding two households.

The evidence shows that it is safer for people to meet outdoors than indoors, but social distancing should still be followed when meeting people from other households to ensure we remain on track for the further easing of restrictions planned for 12 April at the earliest.

Additionally, outdoor sports and leisure facilities will be allowed to reopen and organised outdoor sport can restart for both adults and children.

It is welcome that weddings with up to six people present will be allowed once more.

Sports guidance [here](#).

Wedding guidance [here](#).



# Bus Strategy Published

## Bus Strategy

Last Monday, I welcomed the Bus Strategy which the Transport Committee had first called for. Great news that this is being taken forward by the Government with many of our proposals included.

In Parliament, I asked how we can ensure that best practice is experienced across the country and for details of investment for Local Authorities to deliver it.

This national strategy sets out the vision, opportunity and investment to deliver better bus services for passengers across England, through ambitious and far-reaching reform of how services are planned and delivered.

WATCH: [here](#).

Read the Bus Strategy [here](#).





### The Impact of the Pandemic on the Coach Industry

This week the Transport Committee held a one-off session on the impact of the pandemic on the coach sector – a sector which has often been overlooked during the pandemic.

Guy Cordery, from Cordery Coach in Heathfield, has previously explained the lack of support, compounded by the recent grants for school transport going to the Big 5 Bus companies rather than to the coach sector. It's clear that this experience is shared across the country from the response from one of our witnesses.

Watch the full session [here](#).

