

HUW MERRIMAN MP NEWSLETTER



Dear Resident,

Welcome to my latest newsletter which rounds up local news from my summer visits and the first week back in Parliament following the Summer Recess which was an action-packed week of policy announcements, inquiries and more.

At the beginning of summer, I contacted all parish councils in the Bexhill and Battle constituency to see if they would like me to visit them to discuss issues which are important to their area and parishioners.

I still have more to visit but I was pleased to have the opportunity to be able to hold face to face meetings in the constituency once more. Below I have short summaries of the issues discussed with each parish. I have a long list of issues which I will be taking forward for each parish council which will keep me and my team busy. We are very lucky to have such dedicated parish councillors working for our local communities in Bexhill and Battle.

I hope you find this newsletter a useful summary of my work on your behalf.

Yours sincerely,

Huw



Vaccination Programme

Local Vaccine Update

Latest figures show that in East Sussex more than 8 out of 10 of all adults have now had both vaccinations.

The data shows that 80.6% of all over 18s have had one dose and 86.4% have had both vaccinations.

16 and 17 year olds are entitled to one vaccine, and anyone aged 17 and three quarters can have both doses.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency has now confirmed that both Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines can be used as safe and effective booster doses.



Rises in National Insurance

Rises in National Insurance

I am sorry that we have had to raise National Insurance. The money raised, almost £12 billion per year, will first go to the NHS to fund the backlog from post-COVID pressures and then go to improve Social Care. I fully appreciate the pressure this will add to hard-pressed taxpayers but I speak to those who work in the local NHS and Social Care and these extraordinary times need extra funding to help the most vulnerable.

I am also sorry that this breaches a manifesto pledge and wish my own party would recognise that no-one can predict the future. As my speech shows, I have concerns and would like to see more radical Social Care reform, where all of us

It will now be for the JVIC to advise on whether booster jabs will be given and if so, which vaccines should be used.

pay in. I am also reminded that, back in 2002, Tony Blair increased National Insurance to put more money into the NHS so it is not without precedent.

Watch and read my speech [here](#).



State Pension Increases

Pensions

State Pension Increases

Given the number of pensioners, the suspension for this year of the pension 'triple lock', announced this week, will be of interest, The triple lock rule usually means that state pensions increase each year in line with whichever of the following is the highest – average earnings increases, inflation (measured by CPI) or 2.5%.

The end of furlough has meant that many workers have gone from 80% of their wage to their previous annual wage. Clearly this is not a wage rise. Yet, for the triple lock calculation, it would have shown an average earning increase of 8%. I haven't spoken to any pensioners who felt that they should receive an 8% increase in pensions when their children and grandchildren have either lost their jobs or had their pay frozen. Pensions will now go up by the



Transport Questions: Barriers to International Travel

Transport Questions: Barriers to International Travel

In this week's Transport Questions, I asked the Transport Secretary whether barriers to international travel will be reduced to make up the shortfall left by the end of furlough.

I was grateful for the Transport Secretary's assurances that upcoming G7 transport meetings will be used to form an international approach for affordable double jabbed international travel.

Watch and read [here](#).

greater of 2.5% or inflation (being the cost of living element). It is likely that the inflation rate will be the measure to calculate the increase given it has been running at 4%. Given the state of the country, most public sector workers will not receive a pay increase at all and those who pay National Insurance will be paying a higher rate for the NHS and Social Care, that is a fair compromise for this extraordinary year, I am sorry that there is not more money to pass on.



Migrant Boat Crossings

I share concerns that there are still too many inflatable boats crossing the Channel. Those who try to make this dangerous trip in the desperate hope of a new life are at high risk of drowning. It also puts extreme pressure on local services.

This week, I will be meeting Priti Patel, the Home Secretary, to discuss the situation and to press for more action and resources. This is a challenge across the East Sussex coastline so I will be inviting my neighbouring MPs to join me. I



Coastal Safety Inquiry

This week, the Transport Committee held a one-off inquiry into the safe use of jet skis and coastal motorised personal watercraft following concerns from across the East Sussex coast about the dangers to swimmers and other seafarers from these vehicles.

The Transport Select Committee evidence session heard from a variety of witnesses from industry, the police, local government, and the Maritime Minister and examined the effects of jet ski use, whether current regulations offer sufficient protections, and the likely impacts of the Government's preferred option of reform.

On the day before the inquiry took evidence, the Government responded by launching a consultation to regulate and clamp down on the dangerous driving of jet skis. The consultation proposes making recreational and personal watercraft, such as jet skis and speedboats, subject to the same safety obligations that exist for the operators of ships. Proposals also

will add my voice for more to be done and report back.



Climate Assembly Event

This week I spoke at the Climate Assembly's event in Parliament to mark the one-year anniversary of their report into how we can meet our net zero by 2050 target.

I outlined how a central theme of the Transport Select Committee's recent work into electric vehicles and road pricing, decarbonising our rail network, and making public transport a more attractive consumer choice asks the question 'what does this policy or innovation do to help us to deliver net zero?'



include giving enforcement authorities an additional power of prosecution to be used in cases of deliberate or negligent misuse.

This would result in tougher sentences for those found to be driving dangerously. Residents have until 1 November to have their say in the consultation.

Have your say in the consultation [here](#).

Watch our session [here](#).



New Aviation Inquiry

The Transport Committee has launched yet another inquiry on international travel, and we will shortly be hearing from the chief executives of leading airlines and airports as to why they are doing less than 20% of the business they were doing in usual times while mainland Europe is now up to about 70%.

This inquiry will be examining airlines' and airports' recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.

Parliament Week

From 1-7 November, UK Parliament Week gives you, your school and your groups an opportunity to learn about how our democracy works and how to make an impact.

You can book your free activities and sessions [here](#) or email any questions to engage@parliament.uk.

The sessions will also examine the effects of the Government's policy on international travel, including the system for international travel and travel requirements such as PCR testing.

The inquiry will begin with a scene-setting evidence session on September 21 with airports and airlines who have argued that the uncertainty over the 'traffic light system' and how country classifications are made is depressing demand for international travel. Representatives from Heathrow, Gatwick, British Airways and easyJet will attend.

Find out more and have your say [here](#).



Observer Article

In my most recent article for the Bexhill Observer, I touched on the recent policy announcements around health and social care alongside state pension increases. I also discussed my constituency visits over Summer Recess.

Read [here](#).



Afghanistan

In my Observer article of 27 September, I discussed the situation of the withdrawal of our troops from Afghanistan and our



Brightling

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The first of my parish council meetings was in the rural parish of Brightling and our meeting was held outside overlooking the beautiful AONB. We discussed the challenges of planning and home building in the parish and their concerns over the government's proposed planning reforms. Being in the AONB, the parish council are keen to ensure it is protected from development but there is also a balance to be achieved to ensure that the next generation have a real opportunity to live in the village where they grew up and are not priced out as many are currently. Broadband is still patchy in this parish and the parish council will be looking to the government's Broadband Voucher scheme to complete the missing gaps and get better coverage for all. This will require take up from across the parish and I will be ready to support them on this when the time comes. Speeding and noisy motorbikes are also concerns for the village. They cannot set up a Community Speedwatch scheme as the national speed limit applies to the village and there has to be a

obligations to those whose lives are now at risk.

Read [here](#)



Have Your Say on Making Outdoor Measures for High Streets Permanent

Over the pandemic, temporary relaxed planning reforms have boosted our high streets by allowing hospitality businesses, markets and historic visitor attractions to make use of outdoor space more easily.

The Government is consulting on making these reforms permanent. If you have views you would like to share then the consultation is now open until November 14.

Find out more and have your say [here](#).

30mph or 40mph zone in place for Speedwatch. I will be taking this up with ESCC Highways and the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership.



Burwash

Burwash Parish councillors were keen to discuss the bio-diversity net gain clause in the Environment Bill. The aim of this clause is to ensure that where there is development, environmental mitigation takes place to ensure no overall loss of bio-diversity. The council are concerned that developers may find loopholes in this policy and it could be detrimental to places located in the High Weald AONB. I shall be looking into this further and reporting back to them. This led into a discussion on planning and development in Burwash which is expected to provide 52 new homes in Rother's Local Plan, this is a challenging target for the village. Again, speeding and road safety are issues which the parish is concerned about and we discussed the effectiveness of a 20mph



Battle

I met with parish and district councillors along with the local police, guides and brownies. It was really good to hear from the younger generation about how these past 18 months of covid has been for them and to talk to them about issues which are important to them. Battle Town Council has made some huge improvements to the recreation ground including a BMX track, MUGA court, new play areas and footpaths. It is a great community asset and they now plan to improve the sports pavilion which has certainly seen better days. I was privileged to be asked to present the brownies and guides with their silver awards which are really great achievements. Battle also have plans for a safe and sustainable cycling and walking route from the Abbey to Claverham School which I fully support. We discussed speeding, road safety, housing and planning and GP access for Netherfield residents. Finally, the council are keen to restore the skate ramp outside the fire station which has been closed due to safety issues. I

speed limit for the village, community speedwatch and traffic monitoring. Burwash has adopted a Quiet Lanes policy to maintain the character of minor rural roads by containing traffic growth. They aim to designate lanes within the village to safeguard residents, cyclists and pedestrians. They have a plan to create a safe route for walking/cycling to Etchingam station, I think this is an excellent idea which has my full support.

have promised to look into some of these issues for them.



Peamarsh

Peamarsh

Travelling to the eastern part of the constituency, I met with Peamarsh parish council. We began our discussions by talking about housing and planning. The village has begun work on a Village Development Plan. So far, the strong message from residents is that they want homes for local people. This sentiment is echoed by all the parishes I have met so far. By this, they mean homes that local families can afford. They also want to ensure that their utility infrastructure can support new homes and that there is a cohesive



Hurst Green

Hurst Green

Unsurprisingly, much of our discussion focussed on the A21.

Year on year, this village community has been promised road safety measures which don't get delivered. We have now secured £18m of funding to improve the safety of the A21 between Flimwell and Hastings and I am determined that the village sees some tangible improvements. Highways England have contacted the parish council to arrange a meeting to discuss their priorities and I will be taking an active role in ensuring they are implemented. Pollution and speeding in the village must to be addressed. On other matters, we discussed parking enforcement and the poor bus service for the village. I urged the parish council to take part in ESCC's current Bus Improvement Strategy consultation – more information on this below. Finally, I was pleased to hear that Hurst Green has

plan in place to avoid overloading waste water systems, deal with surface water drainage and ensure robust power supply. These are very valid points relating to development which I will be taking up with providers of these services.

On the issue of housing development we discussed the village development boundary and lack of services for the village – it does not have a GP or dentist but the Post Office, Pharmacy, garage and shop are all located at Jempsons supermarket which is outside the village development boundary. We also discussed access to public transport (or lack of) and speeding in the village which is a constant concern.

started the Neighbourhood Plan process which means they can have a greater influence on where homes are built in their village.



Whatlington

We began our meeting talking about local secondary school choices and free school transport. We then moved onto proposed planning reforms and rights to object. Smaller parishes like Whatlington find that the Neighbourhood Plan process too costly and time consuming so they



Northiam

I met members of Northiam parish council to specifically discuss a housing development site in their village which has been bought by Optivo, the social housing organisation. Like all the parish councils I have met over the summer, their residents want to ensure that any new affordable homes are available for local families. Northiam has also bought a vacant site in the village to build homes for local people to make sure this happens so they have an added interest in any new homes which come forward. I am working with the parish council to get the answers they need on the new housing scheme. This will include meeting with the Housing Minister, Rother District Council and with Optivo. I am firmly of the view that we need more social and affordable housing but this should be to house families within the

raised their concerns with me about proposed planning reforms, protection of AONB and the right to object. The village suffers from the A21 volume of traffic and needs safer pedestrian routes, road junctions and to reduce speeding.

Highways England are now engaging with the parish council on proposals to improve the road safety using the £18m A21 road safety improvement funding. Our discussions also touched on the Gatwick airport stacks, broadband and 4G, litter on the A21, housing of Afghan refugees and water supply infrastructure.

district and not segregated away from houses sold on the open market. Mixed developments give aspiration to everyone.

NFU Meeting



NFU Meeting

This summer was a really good opportunity for me to meet with local farmers and officers of the National Farmers Union. We met at the Ashby's farm in Peasmarsh for a discussion on a wide range of farming and food issues. One area we discussed in detail is the potential impact on British farming of the government's new international trade agreements with countries like Australia who are large exporters of beef and lamb. Whilst caps on duty free imports will be in place, we also need to ensure that the customer is able to make an informed choice when buying food in our supermarkets and be confident of its origin. 50% of the food we consume in the UK is not bought from supermarkets – it is already processed in the form of ready-made meals, eating out and takeaways – are consumers also as

Rural Roads Meeting



Rural Roads Public Meeting

Next Friday 17 September, I will be chairing a roads and road safety meeting for the parishes of Pevensy, Wartling, Herstmonceux Westham, Hooe and Ninfield. We will have representatives and elected councillors from East Sussex Highways, Sussex Road Safety Partnership, Sussex Police, Community Speedwatch, Highways England and Wealden

Street Scene. If you live in one of these parishes and you have any road related concerns, please do come along. The event is being held at The Reid Hall in Boreham Street. Doors open at 1.30pm for coffee and the meeting will start promptly at 2pm.

Find a meeting invite [here](#).

clear about where the food they are eating in those meals comes from? Some restaurants are clear about their food provenance, others less so. For customers, the origin of their food may just be an economic choice or they may have a preference on buying local, it helps to make this choice when the origin is clear. We also discussed how the government can best support our farmers to export and gain new markets for our high quality produce under the new trade deals. The NFU gave me plenty of food for thought on this issue (excuse the pun) and I will ensure that the views of our local farmers are represented in Parliament.

Other issues which came up are how planning rules can be a barrier to farm development as well as protecting the countryside which our farmers steward for us and the huge decline in small abattoirs who have a significant role to play in support the UK's diversity of farming systems and food production.



Local Bus Consultation

Do you use local buses or would you use them if they were more frequent, reliable, cheaper, connected better to other places including railway stations, started earlier or finished later? If so, please do have your say in this consultation from East Sussex County Council on their Bus Services Improvement Plan which could get major investment to shape the future of local bus services.

Take part in the consultation [here](#)



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