

James MacCleary MP Newsletter

The last few weeks on my village tour have really highlighted how privileged I am to represent such a brilliant mix of communities, in our beautiful Sussex settings. With Parliament due back this week, I look forward to taking the issues raised with me over the summer recess back into Westminster.

1. **Local Government Reform**
2. **Summer Tour**
3. **Health Survey**
4. **Exceat Bridge Update**
5. **Broadband and Mobile Phone Coverage**
6. **A26 Road Closure**
7. **New Fishing Berths in Newhaven**
8. **South East Water Drought**
9. **Seaford Health Hub Update**
10. **Flags**

1. Local Government Reform (LGR)

LGR has been a big discussion point throughout my summer visits and in my inbox. I wrote to all households within the areas affected by Brighton & Hove City Council's (BHCC) proposals, encouraging residents to take part in both consultations being run on the matter. Both consultations have now closed, and we await the results of them.

BHCC's proposals included 4 options, all four of which expanded the city eastwards with options to absorb Newhaven, Kingston and the villages along the C7. It came as a shock to many that not a single option included westward expansion of the city. I have made my views clear to the leader of BHCC. Lewes District Council, Newhaven Town Council and many of our Parish Councils have opposed these poorly thought out plans.

I will keep residents informed about the next stages of this process and the outcomes of the consultations.

2. Summer Tour

It genuinely has been a lovely few weeks touring the constituency, I have now visited over 20+ villages, meeting with Parish Councillors and hosting resident's Q&A events. Questions have ranged from the national issues like the NHS and the Terminally Ill Adults Bill, to the more local issues of rural broadband or road safety in our villages.

A consistent topic throughout the tour was that road safety in our villages was a number one issue. With drivers regularly driving dangerously fast, I am urging East Sussex County Council to review their approach to allow speed limits to be dropped where villages ask for reductions. Communities should be able to feel safe to walk, cycle or even ride a horse to the village shop without fearing what may be around the bend.

3. Health Survey

Nothing matters more to me than our NHS. It's my top priority. If you wish to have your voice heard on Health in the constituency, please complete my Constituency Health Survey 2025.

Understanding the challenges that face individuals across the constituency goes a long way in helping me to support you. Health is a critical factor in everyone's quality of life, please take a moment of your day to let me know how it affects you.

4. Exceat Bridge Update

East Sussex County Council have advised that they hope to start work on the new bridge in the spring. To do this there are a number of pre-construction works that need to be carried out. These include some vegetation clearance on both sides of the river, and some ground investigation works. The vegetation clearance will entail removing a small number of trees and roadside hedges on the Boathouse land and on the other side of the river at the start of the causeway. The work will take place from the land adjacent to the road, and utilising the existing temporary traffic signals. This work will be done during normal working hours around October or November.

They also need to install half a dozen boreholes to confirm the underlying bedrock, one on the Boathouse land and five on the other side of the river, this will be done from land adjoining the road and not entail any road closures.

There is currently a tender to procure a contractor to construct the new bridge with the aim of awarding the contract by the beginning of December. Once the contractor has been appointed, the County Council will be able to firm up the details of the construction programme.

With regard to the Public Inquiry for the Compulsory Purchase of land needed to build the bridge, we are now awaiting a decision from the Secretary of State, due by or on 2nd October.

5. Broadband and Mobile Coverage

Another theme that emerged throughout my visits in the last few weeks has been residents' poor broadband service and mobile coverage in our region. I have already been writing to Ministers about broadband and the slow rollout of fibre optic to our rural villages. It is holding businesses back, hampering home schooling and leaving our villages behind. I was shocked to hear of the multiple occasions where residents in places like East Dean have been unable to dial 999 in emergencies due to the lack of mobile network coverage. With landline phones in decline, I will be seeking to meet with providers and ministers to lobby for improvements to our networks urgently.

6. A26 Closure

National Highways are closing the A26 on weeknights between 8pm and 6am from the Beddingham roundabout to The Hollow junction for resurfacing works between Monday 8th September and Saturday 25th October.

While I am grateful that these works are taking place, I recently wrote to the Chief Executive National Highways, highlighting my further concerns with this stretch of road and issues that should be rectified during its closure.

Firstly, National Highways should coordinate with Lewes District Council to ensure litter picking can take place. There is too much rubbish currently.

Secondly, as you will have probably noticed, both the signage and bollards on the A26 require immediate attention. I have previously met with National Highways in Parliament to discuss this. Some bollards are completely broken, some are so filthy that they are effectively useless, and some have lost their reflective properties, which is a huge safety concern. These safety and environmental concerns must be addressed during the A26 closure.

7. New Fishing Berths in Newhaven

Work has begun on Stage 21 of the Newhaven Fishing Jetty Replacement project.

Three vessels will be used throughout the project, the Octopus, the Stour, and the Valk. The main work vessel is the Octopus, a jack-up barge with a 150-tonne crawler crane onboard. This provides a stable platform for the crane to remove the old and construct the new structures. It does this using four 38m long spud poles on its corners which can move downwards to the seabed, providing a stable base.

The Stour is a multi-purpose vessel that will carry out the general lifting operations of the project and transporting materials between the West and East Quays. The last vessel is the Valk, a flat top barge that will be used to transport materials to and from the East Quay.

After the demolition of the existing fishing stages, construction will begin for a new steel jetty with an access walkway, and a pontoon system on the end connected by a gangway. There will be two small cranes mounted on the end of the jetty which will assist fishermen unloading their cargo.

This new structure has been carefully designed to provide a safer, more efficient, and more accessible working environment for local fishermen. The combination of a sturdy steel jetty, modern unloading cranes, and a floating pontoon system will significantly improve daily operations and vessel access.

I hope the upgraded facility will serve the Newhaven Fishing Industry well for many decades to come.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the project, please don't hesitate to get in touch with Emma Saunders who oversees their Stakeholder Engagement by email at emma.saunders@eiffage.com

8. South East Water Drought

Following an exceptionally dry spring and summer, South East Water is applying for a Drought Permit under section 79A of the Water Resources Act 1991. This legal measure, issued by the Environment Agency, allows temporary changes to water abstraction licences during drought conditions. If granted, the permit will enable them to reduce the flow from Ardingly Reservoir into the River Ouse and begin refilling the reservoir earlier than the usual 1st of November start date - critical steps to secure drinking water supplies while minimising environmental impact.

Despite some rainfall in July, water levels in Ardingly and Arlington reservoirs remain alarmingly low with levels not seen since the 2022 drought. With the region experiencing its fourth heatwave and continued below-average rainfall, they have been urging all customers to reduce their mains water usage where possible. Surface reservoirs, which supplement groundwater sources during peak demand, are under strain due to reduced river flows, making proactive water management more urgent than ever.

You can read more about the hosepipe ban [here](#).

Recently we have experienced a series of burst pipes across the constituency at a time of water scarcity. I am meeting the CEO of South East Water in the coming weeks and will raise these concerns with him directly.

9. Seaford Health Hub Update

The Health Hub in Seaford is a key priority of mine. We now have the NHS agreed that delivering a new hub is needed and the site at Dane Road identified, now the key is to unlock the funding. I have also recently met with both GP surgeries in Seaford and am soon to meet with the Town Council and other stakeholders.

We have been making great progress on the other health hubs for our area, with Newhaven on track for delivery in 2026, and strides forwards being taken for Polegate and Willingdon's. I will make sure Seaford does not get left behind.

Best wishes,

James MacCleary
MP for Lewes Constituency
Liberal Democrats