

James MacCleary – August 2026 Newsletter

Last week was another busy week on my summer village tour, with visits across the constituency and conversations about everything from water shortages and rural transport to planning and local services. I've also been trying to get to the bottom of the mystery of Plumpton's disappearing post box and speaking out following deeply disturbing allegations surrounding the army training college for teenagers in Harrogate.

Summer tour

The second week of my summer tour has reinforced just how many challenges our rural communities are facing.

Wherever I've gone, residents have raised concerns about water shortages, sewage infrastructure and whether our systems are fit for the future as we face a changing climate. Rural transport remains a major issue too, with many villages worried about unreliable train services, poor bus connections and dangerous roads.

Road safety has been a recurring theme, from speeding in Upper Dicker and dangerous parking in Glynde to concerns about motorbike noise around East Dean and road rage linked to the disruption at Exceat. Residents have also spoken about the pressures that new housing developments place on local infrastructure, and concerns that villages could lose their voice under the new unitary council arrangements.

I've taken away a long list of actions, including pressing GTR over train services at Glynde and Berwick, following up with ministers on road safety concerns, and raising residents' concerns about planning, healthcare and infrastructure with the relevant authorities.

One of the best parts of the tour is hearing directly from people about the issues affecting their communities. Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to come along and speak with me.

As before, for security reasons I'm unable to publish the dates and times of future visits online. If you'd like to know when I'll be visiting your village, please contact your parish council.

Plumpton's disappearing post box

I thought I'd include this story to show an example of some of the bizarre and frustrating things I encounter as your MP.

During my visit to Plumpton last week, I went to visit the post box which I'd been told had been replaced with a shiny new solar-powered parcel box.

But when I went to inspect it myself, the old box was still very much out of action and sealed shut - with no new solar powered unit in sight. Now after getting in touch with them, Royal Mail appears to be claiming that the post box doesn't exist at all.

I can confirm that it does in fact exist. [Here's me next to it.](#)

So now we're back to square one, and instead of Plumpton having a functioning post box here, we have to now prove it exists at all.

Jokes aside, rural communities deserve reliable postal services, not disappearing post boxes, mixed messages and broken promises. I'll keep pressing Royal Mail for answers and, more importantly, a real functioning post box.

Army college allegations

Last week the BBC reported allegations of rape, sexual assault and harassment at the Army Foundation College in Harrogate, where recruits join at just seventeen years old.

The allegations are horrific. There can be no place for abuse, discrimination or a culture of silence in our armed forces, least of all in an institution responsible for training teenagers.

Every woman serving our country deserves to feel safe and respected. That's why I've called for the Ministry of Defence to launch a full independent inquiry into the culture and safeguarding practices at the college, and to ensure that serious cases are handled by civilian courts. Talk of opening a second site in the South East can't go further until we're confident people won't suffer the same way they did in Harrogate.

The armed forces perform an extraordinary service for our country, but that service depends on trust and accountability. Those who have spoken out deserve to be heard, and the Government must act decisively to ensure these failures are never repeated.

Best wishes, James MacCleary.

MP for Lewes, Seaford, Newhaven, Polegate, Willingdon and our surrounding East Sussex villages.