

Summer Newsletter 2021

Dr Neil Hudson MP Penrith and The Border



Welcome to all!

Welcome to the first instalment of my e-newsletter. I plan to issue these quarterly to keep you up to date with all that I have been doing in the constituency and at Westminster.

Newton Rigg College Update



I am sure many of you will have been following developments around the future of Newton Rigg College and I was deeply saddened by the outcome of the Strategic Review earlier this year and Askham Bryan's decision to close the college. The College is so vital to the local economy and to my constituents and those of my neighbouring colleagues.

Myerscough College and Penrith's Ullswater Community College have formed an innovative partnership to maintain some of the vital

educational provision that Newton Rigg College will no longer be able to provide and it is great that Kendal College are also offering some provision. I very much welcome the recent creation of NR Training by Newton Rigg Ltd; I have met with their Directors on several occasions and am excited that their vision of provision of Cumbrian land-based education is coming to fruition. I continue to campaign for a future for Newton Rigg and to lobby at all levels of government and have had many meetings with stakeholders, Ministers, alongside raising the issue directly with the Prime Minister.

My thoughts are with the staff, students and friends of Newton Rigg as we approach the sad formal closure of the College site by Askham Bryan. This month, the Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee (EFRA), on which I sit, received a response to our Newton Rigg Inquiry from the Education Secretary which we were very disappointed with. So, we have written again urgently seeking answers on specific points, for example, asking for clarity on the legality of Askham Bryan's proposed sale of the Newton Rigg assets.

I will continue to fight for our rural sector and for a future for land-based education in Cumbria and I continue to work with stakeholders as we seek for a new Newton Rigg to emerge from this upsetting situation in which we find ourselves. I and my colleagues on our cross-party EFRA Committee are calling for a national support strategy that protects land-based education in Cumbria and the whole country. This pandemic has brought into sharp relief the importance of food security and to achieve this, you need to be able to train up the next generation of farmers and land managers. In July, we have heard the positive news that the Educational Charity, The Ernest Cook Trust, has secured the Low Becks Farm. It is so encouraging that this invaluable Newton Rigg resource will be protected for the young people of Cumbria. I have met with the Trust to discuss their positive vision and am encouraging them to work with local stakeholders working to secure a new future for Newton Rigg.

International Aid



One area where I have been very disappointed with the Government is its decision to reduce our commitment on international aid spending from 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) to 0.5%. On the 13th July the government had an opportunity to reverse their decision but chose not to. Instead they said that we

will only return spending to the previous level when economic conditions allow, with the Chancellor setting out very strict criteria that need to be met for this to become a reality. I joined 24 Conservative colleagues in voting against the Government for the 0.7% to be reinstated by January 2022 but we were unfortunately unsuccessful. I believe it is even more important that when the world is struggling and ravaged by the pandemic, that we keep supporting those who are in need. All over the developing world people rely on UK health, climate-resistance or food-nutrition programmes and we have a moral duty to carry these through and not move the goalposts. Fundamentally this delay in reinstating 0.7% will mean more children going hungry, young boys and girls missing out on a good education and many people will sadly die as they are not able to receive the healthcare and support they need.

Whilst I am extremely disappointed that the government has not changed direction on this, it does not mean that this is the end of the matter. I continue to believe it is the morally right thing to do and, alongside colleagues from across the House, I will pressure the government to honour our commitment to the world's poorest and most vulnerable.

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

As a vet by profession, and the only one in the House of Commons, it is my privilege to serve on the EFRA Select Committee. As mentioned above, the Committee is asking searching questions of Askham Bryan but it has a wide remit to cover issues including animal welfare, flooding, the environment and food supply. There are 13 inquiries currently underway and the Committee also serves a critical purpose in scrutinising DEFRA legislation and holding the government to account.



Animal Welfare

Animal welfare is an issue that I have been campaigning and speaking in Parliament on consistently since I entered Parliament. I have been a strong supporter of new legislation to increase sentences for animal cruelty offences and I am delighted that it will now enter the statute books. We have a duty of care to protect and look after animals with dignity and respect as fully sentient beings. Sadly, animal cruelty exists in society, and has also been linked on occasion with domestic abuse cases.

Your voice in Westminster

I am determined to make sure that the voice of Cumbrians is heard loud and clear in Westminster. I am able to question Ministers on a regular basis on a range of topics important to you.



Mental Health Impacts of Flooding

I raised the issue of flooding with the Prime Minister and particularly the mental health impacts from the devastation it can cause.

The Prime Minister referred to the mental health support that is in place on the NHS and the additional government funding that will improve provision. This will help those who are impacted by the anxiety of flooding risk and the trauma from the flooding itself.

Flooding is a serious concern of many of my constituents and it remains an endemic problem in Penrith and The Border.

Reopening of Gilsland Railway Station

The Rail Minister joined me in welcoming the proposals to re-open Gilsland Railway Station. This is a great project which would improve connectivity in the north of the constituency.

I am really happy to be working with my colleague and neighbour Guy Opperman MP on this important project. If we can re-open the station at Gilsland it will be such an important shot in the arm for our local community.

We are hoping for good news from the Department for Transport on this shortly.

Standing up for Our Farmers

I have repeatedly questioned Trade Ministers about the details of a Free Trade Agreement with Australia. I stressed the importance of our farmers not being undercut by cheaper produce from overseas that does not always meet our high animal welfare and food production standards.

When it comes to safeguards in the deal the Minister said "This will be specified in the Free Trade Agreement, but typically allow either party to temporarily increase tariffs or to suspend liberalisation in the event of an unexpected or unforeseen big substantial increase in imports."

Suffice to say I look forward to reading the small print on any deal that comes forward.

Out and About in the Constituency

One of the most rewarding parts of being your Member of Parliament is going out and meeting business owners and constituents to discuss the issues that matter to them.



Supporting Kirkoswald Village Shop

It was fantastic to see community spirit in action as people from Kirkoswald and the surrounding area secured funding to protect the future of this vital village asset.

This community-based project will allow local people to have ownership of this facility and will not only help to keep this rural village sustainable but will create a vital hub for this community.

Vaccination Centre Visits

It was a pleasure to see the great work being done at the Penrith Hospital and Penrith Auction Mart Vaccination Centres.

I would like to give my sincere thanks to all the staff and volunteers at North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust and the North Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Group for their fantastic efforts with vaccine delivery.

Augill Castle and visit to Alston as Part of English Tourism Week

With Cumbria Tourism's Managing Director, Gill Haigh, I met with local businesses in the Tourism and Hospitality Sectors. A great discussion and a sense of optimism moving forward.

The businesses I spoke to welcomed the government support they have received to date and were also focused on reopening fully later in the year.

I will continue to champion our tourism and hospitality businesses by representing their interests at Westminster and engaging with them locally.

Neil

Dr Neil Hudson MP

Working hard for Penrith and The Border