

# Ruth's Rushcliffe Round-up



February 2023

## Ukraine: One year on

This month marked one year since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. A time to reflect on the courage of the Ukrainian people and their leader, President Zelenskyy. To remember all the innocent lives lost and to think of the Ukrainian heroes, fighting not only for their freedom but for the victory of freedom and democracy over tyranny.

Earlier this month, Parliament was honoured by a visit from President Zelenskyy. The President addressed a packed Westminster Hall of MPs, Lords, and Parliament staff. It was a very moving experience to be a part of. The video below covers some of the highlights of his speech as well as what the UK has been doing to support Ukraine over the last year.

Click the image below to watch:

# Ukraine One Year On



The Prime Minister hosted President Zelenskyy for a bilateral meeting during his visit. They discussed the need to accelerate Ukraine's counter-offensive capabilities, backed by support from the UK and other allies. That means providing the kind of advanced capabilities that the UK has announced, such as new plans to expand training for the Ukrainian armed forces to cover fighter jet training, as part of long-term investment in their military.

In Rushcliffe, we have the incredible resource of the Defence National Rehabilitation Centre (DNRC). The expertise built up at the DNRC would be a great asset to share with our allies. I asked defence ministers in Parliament how this might be achieved, which you can watch [here](#).

To mark the 1-year anniversary, the Prime Minister reiterated our support for Ukraine by making the case to other G7 countries for longer ranged weapons to be supplied to Ukraine's armed forces, which would help protect critical civilian infrastructure and preserve the front line defences.

In addition, new sanctions on Russia's war machine have also been announced, including a ban on export of every item Ukraine has found Russia using on the battlefield to date. In addition to sanctions freezing £275 billion of Russian assets, new sanctions will target 34 executives connected to Russia's 2 largest defence companies, 6 Russian entities involved in the manufacture or repair of military equipment for Russia's armed forces, including aviation and navy, and 5 senior Iranian executives in Qods Aviation Industry, the company manufacturing the drones used against Ukraine.

## **The Windsor Framework: Fixing the problems in the Northern Ireland protocol**

This month, the Prime Minister met with the President of the European Commission to make changes to the Northern Ireland Protocol through the Windsor Framework.

This will resolve many of the trade frictions facing businesses in Northern Ireland and those in other parts of Great Britain wanting to trade there.

It introduces a new green lane for goods moving between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, meaning traders moving goods destined for Northern Ireland will be freed from unnecessary paperwork, checks and duties, using only ordinary commercial information rather than burdensome customs bureaucracy or complex certification requirements for agrifood. In addition, all requirements have been scrapped for trade from Northern Ireland to Great Britain on a permanent basis, including the requirement for export declarations.

This new Framework will also protect Northern Ireland's place as an integral part of the UK. For example, critical VAT and excise changes will apply to the whole of the UK. This means that zero-rates of VAT on energy saving materials like solar panels and alcohol duty reforms will now apply in Northern Ireland.

Finally, this Framework safeguards the sovereignty of Northern Ireland in the UK. A new Stormont Brake means the democratically elected Northern Ireland Assembly can oppose new EU goods rules that would have a significant impact on everyday life in Northern Ireland and if they are not supported by both communities in Northern Ireland, leaving the UK Government and UK courts to decide on and interpret new rules.

## Campaign win: Cuts to West Bridgford Fire Service

As many of you know I have worked with s firefighters in Rushcliffe, Councillor Jonathan Wheeler, other colleagues on the County Council to fight the cuts proposed by the Labour controlled Nottinghamshire Fire Authority, which would have seen the removal of all night-time cover from West Bridgford Fire Station. I am pleased to say that these cuts have now been cancelled.

Like [78% of residents](#), I disagreed with the proposal and was concerned that these major changes would have left Rushcliffe as the only borough in Nottinghamshire without a full time fire station in it.

I met with the Fire Minister to raise our concerns directly and set out the case to keep nighttime cover at West Bridgford Fire Station. I also raised this with the Minister in Parliament when I explained that these cuts were proposed despite the fact that they would not save any money and that West Bridgford has higher nighttime callout rates than other stations in the county. You can watch that video [here](#).

I have always been sceptical of the reasoning behind the Fire Authority's proposals, as reductions in settlement agreements from the central government do not explain this as some authorities have managed to increase their firefighter presence since 2015.

Thankfully, after the Government provided Nottinghamshire's Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) with a 5.7% funding increase in the 2023/24 Local Government Settlement (a Core Spending Power increase of up to £2.62 million), and a significant backlash from all of us who were campaigning against the cuts, the Fire Authority had no choice but to cancel the proposed service reductions.

NFRS is funded with taxpayers' money and I will be watching closely to ensure that constituents are getting value for money from this funding increase. I am concerned that whilst many other fire authorities have largely maintained or increased their number of firefighters since 2015, Nottinghamshire has considerably reduced its frontline. Figures show a stark contrast between Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire for example. Both authorities have similar levels of spending power but Nottinghamshire has lost 21% of its full-time firefighters, while Derbyshire has increased theirs by 2%.

We were reminded just how important our fire service is this month after fires in Gotham, Radcliffe on Trent and Saxondale this month.

I went to see the damage to Gotham Memorial Hall myself. The hall was engulfed by a fire which badly damaged the library and GP surgery that were also based in the building. Thankfully, no one was injured and the village archive was also saved. The crew from West Bridgford station were first on the scene here.



I know how central the Hall is to the community in Gotham and I've used it for public meetings myself. I went to see the damage in person, and met with the Chair of the Parish Council, Gill May, who is coordinating efforts to make sure residents can access their GP and get prescriptions.

## **Cheaper HRT for women experiencing menopause**

You may remember that a little while ago, I joined MPs from all parties when we came together to champion the #MenopauseRevolution campaign, led by Carolyn Harris MP and campaigners such as Davina McCall.

One of our key asks was to have the cost of Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) reduced.

I am pleased to tell you that the Government has done exactly that, slashing the price of HRT so women who struggle with the symptoms of menopause will save hundreds of pounds.

With the new prescription pre-payment system, HRT will cost less than £20 per year, meaning that more women can access these drugs on top of the 400,000 women who already rely on them.

You can read more about it [here](#).

This builds on the government's Women's Health Strategy which committed to prioritise and personalise menopause care. Other reforms include the appointment of a Menopause Employment Champion in the Department of Work (DWP) and Pensions and a National Menopause Care Improvement Plan.



## Supporting survivors of domestic abuse

We have taken another step forward in our fight against domestic abuse.

Under new rules, coercive behaviour will now be put on par with physical violence, meaning those jailed for 12 months or more for coercive control will be placed on the Violent and Sex Offender Register.

In addition, the worst offenders will be electronically tagged and prevented from going within a certain distance of a victim's home, and made to attend behaviour change programmes.

The Government will also require police forces to treat violence against women and girls as a national threat, as set out in a new strategic policing requirement published today. This means tackling these crimes will be as important as tackling threats like terrorism, serious and organised crime and child sexual abuse.

I attended a roundtable with the Prime Minister's team at 10 Downing Street, to discuss these announcements and what else can be done to protect women and girls. I raised the need to move quickly to tackle new types of offences, such as spiking with a needle.

## Improving Healthcare Services

I met with Anthony May, the Chief Executive of Nottinghamshire University Hospitals (NUH), and his wider leadership team last month. We discussed some of their recruitment successes and how they are using the £4.1 million of new funding announced in January to help free up hospital beds so people can be admitted more quickly from A&E to wards and reduce pressure on emergency departments, while also speeding up ambulance handovers.

There has also been progress on the new elective surgery hub that I campaigned for. It will help tackle the elective surgery backlog by adding 24 more beds as well as three new operating theatres, to support them at the QMC. We are expecting these changes to create space for an additional 1,670 elective surgical cases each year and the Trust is aiming for the theatres to be ready by the end of this year.

Another item on the agenda was the plans for a civilian National Rehabilitation Centre in Rushcliffe. I mentioned earlier the state of the art Defence National Rehabilitation Centre at Stanford Hall which does a fantastic job in helping members of our armed forces recover after injuries. Plans are now underway to build a sister centre, the National Rehabilitation Centre, to treat civilians on the same site. I have been making sure Ministers know how special the DNRC is and how great a civilian equivalent would be for people in Rushcliffe and beyond. I will continue to support the bid at every turn.

## **Making sure the planning system work for Rushcliffe**

Many of you will have received a leaflet or letter from me over the past year asking for your views on the planning reforms set out in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. The majority of you said that you think that Rushcliffe has had to build far more than our fair share of new houses compared to other areas and that this has had a negative impact on local infrastructure, such as increased traffic and flooding and trouble accessing many services.

These extra houses were forced on Rushcliffe by a planning rule called the "Duty to Cooperate" which will be abolished by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, but has meant that we have had to build houses that should have been built by neighbouring local authorities.

The Government is working to improve the planning system and whilst a Member of Parliament has no control over individual planning applications, I know how important this issue is to people in Rushcliffe, so I wanted to make our views heard at both local and national level. That is why I worked with colleagues on Rushcliffe Borough Council to respond to public consultations on both the Greater Nottinghamshire Strategic Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework to call for changes to the planning system that will give people more of a say on how development happens in their area, that the local character is protected, and that development should take place on brownfield rather than greenfield sites wherever possible. Some more specific changes that I suggested included greater protections for greenfield land that is not in the greenbelt and that previous over-delivery on house building targets (like we have seen in Rushcliffe) are taken into account when new advisory targets are set, therefore lowering the number of new houses we would be expected to build.

## **Celebrating Green Heroes in Parliament**

It was a privilege to host the Green Heart Hero Awards in Parliament this month. Organised by the climate coalition, the Awards recognise people, politicians, organisations, businesses and others who have gone the extra mile to help create a greener future. I presented the Inspiring Locally Elected Leader Award, which celebrates locally elected leaders who are delivering inspirational work to tackle climate change.

Many of you will know that I have campaigned on climate issues since I was at school and continue to do so in Parliament so it is really special to be able to recognise others who do so much to help us reach a greener future.

It was a special night for Rushcliffe, as local climate change champion Aleesha Gadhia was presented with the Future Leaders award, in recognition of her work locally and for campaigning for greater protections for the rainforest as the Cool Earth Campaign's first-ever mini ambassador. The impact that she has already had at such a young age is really inspiring. Well done Aleesha and congratulations!!!!

## **Better transport for Rushcliffe**

Since the pandemic, bus passenger numbers have been declining. This has unfortunately led to some bus services having to cut down their timetables.

As part of a programme to increase the usage of public transport and make it more convenient for people to take the bus, the Government has announced £155 million in support for bus operators and passengers. This includes an extension to the £2 bus fare cap for 3 months until the end of June 2023 to maintain services and make travel more affordable.

This also includes a package of £80 million, to extend the deadline of the bus Recovery Grant from April 1 to June 30 2023. These grants are for public bus operators running commercial or community bus services, The grant can be applied for [here](#).

Nottinghamshire County Council is responsible for public transport in Rushcliffe and has done a lot to fill the gap led by commercial services being withdrawn. As many of you will know, I have recently been working with County Councillor Matt Barney, to save the Sutton Bonington leg of the Trentbarton Skylink Nottingham bus route. Together, we are pushing for the continuation of this service or the provision of a credible alternative. Nottinghamshire County Council agreed to intervene with a funding package to keep the service running till April and I understand they are still reviewing their services in the County. You can help support this by signing the petition below before March 6 to save the skylink bus service [here](#).

## Helping with the cost of living: £400 Energy Bill Discount for those who don't get it automatically

This month, the application webform for a £400 Energy Bill Discount for those who can't receive it automatically went live.

If you live in any of the following homes, you will be eligible for a £400 Energy Bill Discount:

- a residential park home on a boat on a permanent residential mooring on a permanent Gypsy and Traveller site part of a heat network without an electricity metre
- in social or private rented accommodation which has a business energy connection or a communal electricity supply off the mains electricity or gas grid
- in a care home or assisted living facility and you pay for some or all of your care
- in a separate domestic home within a non-domestic property (such as a farmhouse or a flat above a shop)

You can apply or learn more [here](#).

## Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: the future of the UK's industrial economy and net-zero

This month, the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) Select Committee heard evidence from a panel of experts on environmental statistics, economic innovation, and climate change on the UK's productivity and how we can boost this while also reaching net-zero and levelling-up across the country.

I asked how digital skills play a role in this and what could be done to improve upskilling in the workforce. For example, our transition to a green economy will create new green jobs that will require new skills. As our green transition is happening in the digital age, it is paramount that workforces have the digital skills to address the growing need for digital, green jobs.

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

## Supporting Farmers in Rushcliffe

We have many fantastic farmers in Rushcliffe who work tirelessly to produce high quality nutritious food while protecting the beautiful British countryside. I meet with them regularly to discuss agricultural policy..

This month, the Government announced £168 million of financial support for farmers, supporting sustainable productivity, improving animal health and welfare, and enhancing our environment whilst growing our economy.

These could include grants for robotic technology to support with harvesting, handling equipment and cow mattresses to help prevent lameness in dairy cattle, sensors on tractors to measure the levels of nutrients in soils, or improvements to slurry storage - to further the efforts of farmers aiming to minimise their fertiliser use, and in turn reduce water and air pollution.

You can learn more about this [here](#).

The government is also working to address the shortage of certain fruits and vegetables after abnormal weather conditions in Spain and Morocco disrupted our supply chain. Farming and Food Minister, Mark Spencer, met with supermarket heads this week to discuss a deal that could see more of this food produced locally in the UK to cover the current demand.

## How the UK is responding to the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria

It was awful to see the images coming out of Turkey and Syria this month. As the death toll rose, we saw thousands of people left homeless and without basic necessities.

The UK acted immediately to support those affected, providing:

A team of 77 search and rescue experts with specialist equipment, and 4 rescue dogs to Turkey

A British team of emergency medics to Turkey, and offering a world-class team of medics with surgical capability and equipment

Additional life-saving items to Turkey and Syria, including thousands of tents and blankets to help people keep sheltered and warm in the freezing conditions

An additional £880,000 to the White Helmets to aid their major search and rescue operation in north-west Syria

If you would like to help, you can donate to Disasters Emergency Committee joint Turkey-Syria earthquake appeal to support British aid organisations [here](#). Money can be transferred quickly to areas where it is needed, and used to buy what is most needed. The government has matched the first £5 million of public donations.

## Joining the Whips' Office

On a personal note, I have joined the Whips' Office this month as an Assistant Government Whip. Whips are responsible for managing the Government's business in Parliament and steering Government Bills through the different Parliamentary stages.

The job involves making regular contact with backbench MPs to make sure I am passing on their thoughts and feedback to the Chief Whip and Prime Minister. I have also been assigned to the Department of Work and Pensions, so my work in the Whips' Office will centre on helping DWP legislation move through the House of Commons.

This means that you will hear less of me on TV in the chamber as whips are not allowed to speak in Parliament but I will be continuing to raise the issues that are important to us in Rushcliffe with ministers.

We have made some great progress locally, addressing issues such as



flooding, supporting survivors of domestic abuse, increasing police numbers and securing more funding for schools and the NHS. It is a privilege to work with local campaigners to increase access to defibrillators and with many constituents who have provided their views on the planning reforms currently going through parliament.

There is more work to do and I look forward to continuing this.

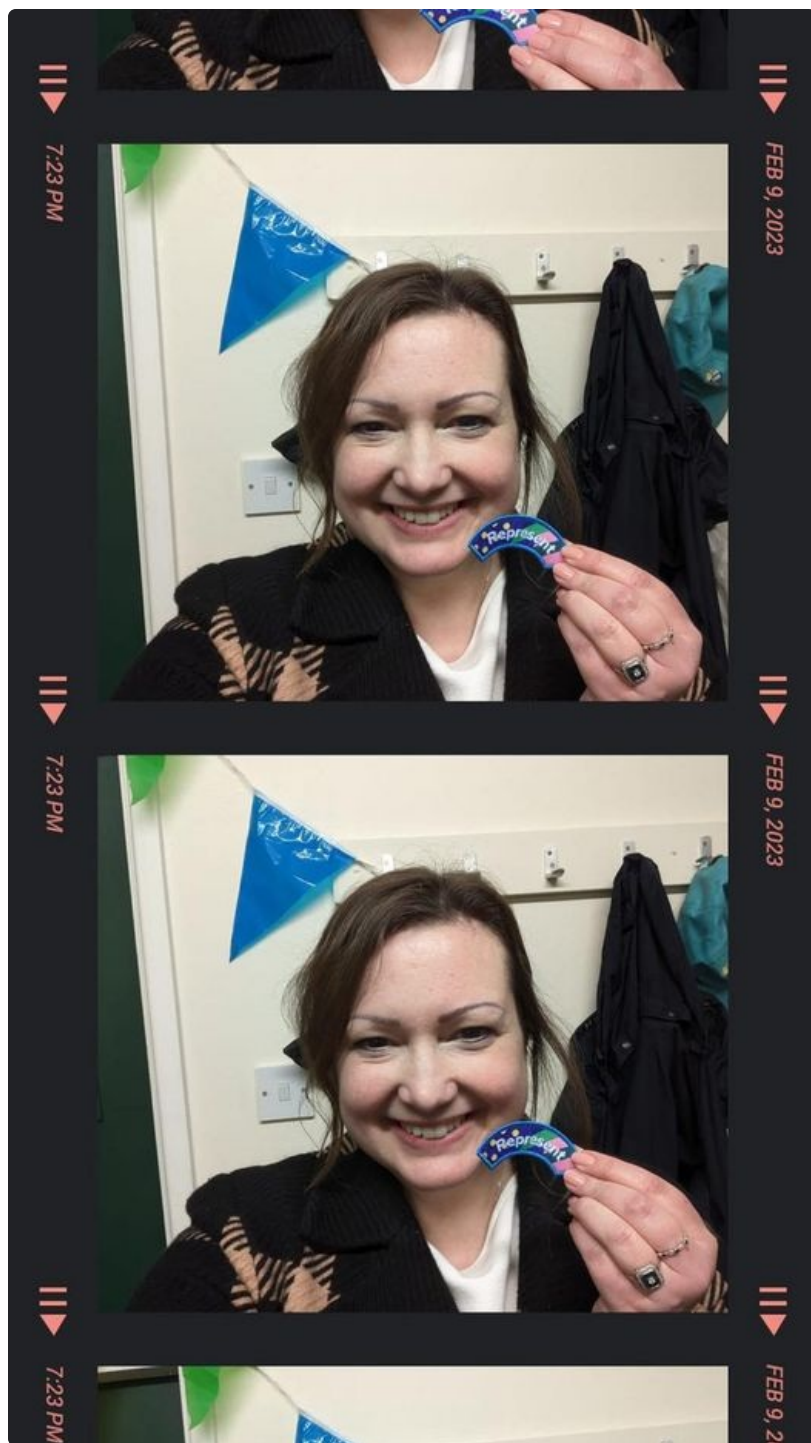


## Out and About

I had my regular meeting with the Neighbourhood Policing Inspector for Rushcliffe, Rob Lawton, to discuss crime issues and how his Force is protecting our communities. Specifically, we discussed anti-social behaviour in our towns and villages and rural crime. These meetings also give me the opportunity to raise specific cases constituents have raised with me.

I welcomed Rizwana, Syed, Mariam, and Abdullah from Rushcliffe to Parliament this month! They got to see Prime Minister's Questions and have a tour of the Palace of Westminster. If you would like a tour of Parliament, please do email me at [ruth.edwards.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:ruth.edwards.mp@parliament.uk).

It was wonderful to visit the Ruddington Beavers to join them to earn my 'Represent' badge the other week. We talked about what MPs do and how everyone can make their voices heard in Parliament. They also introduced me to the wonder that is Elephant Football!



Thank you so much to everyone who came to talk to me at my public street surgeries In West Bridgford and Ruddington this month! It was good to hear from shoppers in Asda about their main concerns and to discuss some of the work I am doing locally to help address them. At Ruddington Village Market, along with local Councillors Matt Barney, Gary Dickman, and Reg Adair, I shared a stall with the Parish Council to hear what residents needed my help with. Again, thank you to everyone that came to speak to me. I will be holding these surgeries across Rushcliffe so if there is an issue that you need help with or you just fancy a chat, please do stop and say hello.



This month, I was delighted to meet with Sean Burleigh and others from the Aid Alliance to discuss the role the UK is playing in helping to stop the hunger crisis in east Africa. As we know, drought and Putin's illegal war in Ukraine has worsened the humanitarian crisis in the Horn of Africa, sending millions into food insecurity. We discussed UK aid, such as the £156 million in humanitarian support for the crises across East Africa, and the impact it is having on the ground.

I was pleased to join Cllr. Neil Clarke, the Mayor of Rushcliffe, Tina Combellack and residents in Hickling for the Hickling Village Breakfast this month. As always there was a delicious spread and we had a wonderful morning catching up with people. Thanks very much to Carol, Ivor, Tina and Neil for inviting me and to the Hickling breakfast team!



This month we celebrated National Apprenticeship Week, which gives us an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of apprentices and apprenticeship schemes around the UK. I met with the Secretary of State for Education Gillian Keegan to discuss how schemes are taking shape across Rushcliffe and how they're working to connect individuals with local businesses.

It was wonderful to meet with The Great British Spring Clean in Parliament recently! I'm looking forward to seeing all the events taking place in Rushcliffe this year and taking part in a few myself!



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