

Westminster Report

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CHRISTOPHER FRASER

'Most vulnerable hit by economic slowdown'



CHRISTOPHER FRASER MP
SPEAKING OUT...

Christopher Fraser has been holding the Government to account on its dismal record on fuel poverty. The Government has a statutory duty to eradicate fuel poverty for vulnerable households by 2010 and it will almost certainly fail. In South West Norfolk, at least 50% of households have no access to mains gas. The cost of heating oil has doubled over the last year and unlike gas and electricity users, heating oil consumers have no social tariffs available to them. It is little wonder that people are struggling to keep afloat.

"Fuel poverty MUST be addressed by Government" says local MP

Christopher says: "I recently secured a Parliamentary debate on fuel poverty. The Minister told me the Government has poured billions into tackling this issue - why then, are an estimated 4.5 million people still in fuel poverty? Many constituents have told me that Winter Fuel Payments do not cover the extra costs pensioners now face and Warm Front, the main Government-led programme to beat fuel poverty, is just not adequate. The Government needs to treat the issue of fuel poverty with the gravity it deserves. More must be done."



■ Christopher Fraser supporting a rally of local people who have lost pensions

Our local MP, Christopher Fraser, has spoken out about his concerns for vulnerable groups, families and small businesses during the current economic crisis.

"The effects of the credit crunch now extend far beyond the City. This financial crisis will have an impact on any one of us simply trying to make ends meet - including pensioners, homeowners and those trying to keep their business afloat. I know pensioners and those on fixed incomes especially fear the onset of winter and the agonising choice between heating one's home properly and buying food to eat. I welcome the Government's decision to raise the deposit guarantee to £50,000 - this will help people regain confidence in the security of their savings."

Commenting on the Government's multi-billion pound rescue package for banks in trouble, Christopher says:

"Taxpayers' money should, above all, be used to help ordinary families and local businesses weather the storm of this economic downturn - not to fund bonuses for bankers. I have called on the banking industry to do what it can to help sensible, responsible businesses and mortgage holders at this very difficult time.

I am also calling for decisive action to help Equitable Life policyholders and depositors who are struggling in the midst of this crisis. The Parliamentary Ombudsman's report highlights regulatory failings, including those when the Government had responsibility for the company. Those who lost out should be compensated."



MP LEADS BUSINESS BOOST FOR NORFOLK

Christopher Fraser has joined Breckland Council to celebrate securing the final funding for the development of the Thetford Enterprise Park project. Speaking about the Park, Christopher remarked:

"When we only seem to be hearing bad news in terms of the economy, it was fantastic to be there in support of a project that will boost the local economy and attract new businesses to this part of East Anglia."

Plans now in place

There are plans in place for the 44-acre business park on the edge of Thetford to provide up to 1,000 jobs and offer high-quality infrastructure for small and large businesses.

Plans are also in place for a new commercial park at Snetterton and an Engineering Centre at Hethel.

"This is great news for the area", Christopher says. "More often than not, businesses succeed despite, and not because of, the red tape and regulations put in place to help them. I hope that the TEP project, and the developments at Snetterton and Hethel, will go on to prove what can be achieved when things go right. Of course, linked to all of this is the need for the Government to back projects such as those at Thetford, Snetterton and Hethel by providing the necessary infrastructure and tools with which they can prosper - this includes dualling the A11!"



■ Christopher Fraser meets Breckland Council to discuss the TEP Project

FRASER PRESSURES GOVERNMENT ON MOTORING COSTS



People in Norfolk are dealt a double blow when it comes to petrol and diesel costs. We must contend with rocketing energy prices and, as a result of essential amenities and services disappearing from our rural communities, are forced to use the car in order to meet our everyday needs. Petrol and diesel prices at the pump are sky-high and these trips are extremely expensive.

"The Government has a lot to answer for," Christopher says. "Before tax, Britain's diesel and petrol prices are amongst the lowest in Europe. But we pay the highest tax. Over 60 per cent of the pump price is taken by the Treasury in fuel duty and VAT. Although the price of fuel has come down recently, it is still disproportionately expensive for those people least able to afford it."

Christopher Fraser has called for the protection of our rural services in Norfolk

The Government is presiding over the closure of our post offices, pubs, shops and local banks. Now our GP surgeries are under threat as well. All this at a time when our rural economy and farming need as much support as possible.

"The recent post office consultation resulted in the closure of all but one of the post offices under threat in the constituency" Christopher says. "This decision has devastated sub postmasters and their customers who fought hard to retain them. Despite compelling evidence about housing development, local public transport services and the needs of the most vulnerable, well-used and viable branches have closed. On top of this, increased taxes on alcohol have had a crippling effect on traditional pubs, which are already struggling due to the rising cost of living. My message is - use your local pub or you may lose it."



Supporting the Post Office, Opposing branch closures



Supporting Proud of Pubs Week

Christopher is also hugely concerned about the future of dispensing services at GP surgeries in light of the Government's Pharmacy White Paper - which proposes changing the distance requirements for the establishment of any dispensing practices.



Our MP's Mobile Office visiting our villages

GOVERNMENT MUST ACT NOW... says Christopher Fraser MP

...on Flood Defences in The Fens

Christopher Fraser MP has been calling on the Government to address the issue of flood defences in the Fens before the onset of winter. Welney and surrounding villages frequently suffer the effects of heavy flooding of the Ouse Washes and the Wash Road.

Christopher Fraser says, "As winter approaches, many of those living in and around Welney will be dreading a repeat of the flooding that has blighted the local community for too long. When the A1101 Wash Road floods each year, hundreds of people in the area are forced to take long detours simply to reach their homes or go to and from work. Businesses are also hit hard by lack of trade as a result of restricted access.

The Government talks tough on coastal flooding, but inland flooding has been a persistent problem in the fenland area of my constituency, ironically as a result

of effective flood alleviation measures further upstream. Last year, the community endured heavy flooding for over 100 days. This is simply not acceptable. Work is being carried out on Denver sluice, but many of those affected believe the only viable solution would be to raise the road.

I will continue to push the Government, the Environment Agency and Norfolk County Council to work together to find a long-term, sustainable solution to this problem, which currently causes such inconvenience to local residents."



Christopher visits flooded areas within the constituency

SWAFFHAM COMMUNITY HOSPITAL SAVED!

Christopher Fraser has worked alongside Swaffham Community Hospital's League of Friends, local councillors and others in the fight to retain intermediate care services in the town.

Speaking about the campaign, he says: "I am delighted that, together, we won a reprieve for Swaffham Community Hospital. I would like to thank all those who supported our campaign, and pay tribute to the dedication and hard work of all the staff working at the hospital."



Whilst the proposal for a new, larger community hospital has been rejected, Christopher has been assured that the existing building, with its 18 beds, will be retained. NHS Norfolk, formerly Norfolk PCT, has pledged that a review of intermediate care services in the west of Norfolk will be undertaken by the end of this year to ensure that the needs of the local community are being met.

Christopher says: "I will be monitoring the situation carefully over the coming months."



...on A11 upgrade project

Since Christopher Fraser's election as MP for South West Norfolk, he has been calling for the A11 between the Fiveways roundabout and Thetford to be dualled. He has warmly welcomed the announcement by the Transport Secretary that the planned start date for dualing the road has been brought forward to 2010, with the road due to open early in 2013.

In advance of that announcement, Christopher secured a meeting with the former Transport Minister. He pressed the case for the upgrade project and as a result, the Minister agreed to instruct the Highways Agency to start statutory preparation work for the scheme. Christopher also recently delivered a petition from the community in Norfolk to the Department for Transport.

Christopher says: "The delegation from Norfolk that I took to meet the Minister were key to achieving this result and we were delighted the Minister finally saw sense. Now that the East of England's Regional Planning Panel

has prioritised the upgrade, and the Government has finally assured us that the project will be brought forward, I will continue to press the Government to ensure that this timetable is met. It is up to them to recognise the strength of local feeling and see through their commitment to the people of Norfolk.

Dualing the A11 will allow Norfolk, and East Anglia as a whole, to fulfil its true economic potential. An estimated £135 million will be generated from productivity of local firms and over £500 million from the time savings of road users. I will be meeting the Transport Secretary to discuss next steps at the earliest opportunity."



Checking out the A11 problem first hand



Signing a petition calling for A11 upgrade

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

Local people will be aware that the Boundary Committee for England is carrying out a review regarding change to our local government structures in Norfolk. Residents have been invited to comment on proposals for a single unitary council covering the whole of Norfolk and also Lowestoft. There are two other options - one unitary authority covering Norfolk, Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft with a

second unitary authority for the rest of the county, and a unitary authority for a 'greater Norwich' with the remainder of Norfolk covered by another unitary area. Christopher says: "I have always maintained this is an unnecessary, Government-imposed review. Any changes would divert time and resources away from frontline public services. These plans would not only take local government further away from the people it represents, but would be costly for Council Tax payers who are already struggling with the rising cost of living.

We are going through a period of economic instability and two of Norfolk's local authorities have money tied up in Icelandic banks. In light of this, councils are rightly concerned that any reorganisation would put an excessive and unnecessary strain on their budgets. Ministers should reconsider the need for changes to our local government structures and give councils the certainty they are looking for.

Constituents tell me they would prefer Norfolk to retain the status quo, coupled with improvement to the two-tier system. Any final proposals should be put to a referendum so local people can have their say."

More details on the proposals can be found at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.



Talking to the media in Thetford

Christopher at work in the community



Meeting young people



Campaigning for road safety



Being updated by our emergency services



Standing up for local industry



Presenting community awards



Chairing a public meeting in support of our post offices



Out and about with our Police Force



Meeting young families



With our Armed Services



Addressing a school group

Christopher Fraser MP - Working for you all year round

Christopher Fraser MP - Working for you all year round

TAKING LOCAL ISSUES TO PARLIAMENT

Christopher has been making sure that local concerns have been well represented at Westminster. Whether the problem is one that concerns all his constituents, such as rural transport in Norfolk, or just a single individual, Christopher Fraser is determined to do all he can to highlight the issue - a selection of which are listed below



- Rural transport
- The cost of living
- Effect of economic crisis on vulnerable groups
- Fuel poverty
- Raves and unlicensed music events
- Police funding
- Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service
- Nitrate Vulnerable Zones
- Availability of pesticides
- GM Foods
- The EU Treaty
- Rural crime
- Pharmacy White Paper
- Burden of regulation on small businesses
- Special Educational Needs provision
- Road pricing
- Road safety of foreign lorries
- Climate change
- Rural poverty
- Biofuels
- The 2012 Olympics
- NHS Dentistry
- Tour intervals for members of the Armed Forces
- Community hospital services
- Local Government Reorganisation
- GP contracts and accessibility for patients
- Flood defences in Norfolk
- Adult Education
- Dualling of the A11 and A47
- Prostate cancer
- Help for low income families
- The future of rural post offices
- Red diesel
- Home Information Packs
- Post Office Card Account
- Funding for the NHS
- Speed of traffic through villages
- Single Farm Payments
- Apprenticeships and vocational training
- Road safety
- Prison overcrowding
- Damage to church buildings by bats

CHAMPIONING CHARITIES



If you have a charity event you would like Christopher to support, please get in touch. See contact numbers below...

WELCOMING CONSTITUENTS TO WESTMINSTER



Christopher Fraser arranges regular tours of Westminster for constituents, primary and secondary schools and community groups such as the Royal British Legion, the WI, Churches Together and other voluntary groups. Please contact him if you would like to visit Parliament - See 'Contact Numbers' alongside.

Your MP: WHAT THE NEWSPAPERS SAY...

'FLOOD DEFENCES FOR FENS ARE VITAL' - MP

FRASER SPEAKS OUT ON NORFOLK ROADS INFRASTRUCTURE

MP WANTS MORE DONE FOR LOW INCOME FAMILIES

FRASER: GOVERNMENT MUST INVEST IN CARE SERVICES FOR ELDERLY

FRASER: KEY SPONSOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS BILL

LOCAL MP CALLS FOR A FAIR DEAL FOR FARMERS

MP WORKS WITH LOCAL COMMUNITY TO SAVE SWAFFHAM HOSPITAL

MP - 'SAVE OUR LOCAL POST OFFICES'

MP SPEAKS OUT FOR NORFOLK DENTISTS

FRASER HITS OUT AT GOVERNMENT FUEL POVERTY RECORD

Christopher Fraser MP

If you need help or advice, or if you are a member of a group or organisation that would like to invite me to an event, I would be pleased to hear from you.

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Christopher Fraser MP - Working for you all year round