



Lisa Forbes MP for Peterborough

Parliamentary Report September 2019



My priorities for Peterborough are education, better public services and safer communities

While Parliament has been in recess, I have been able to spend more time in Peterborough talking to my constituents and listening to your concerns. With an office now established in the constituency, my team and I have been hard at work providing assistance and advice and preparing to take the issues you have raised with me back to Parliament. Now Parliament has returned after the Supreme Court ruling, I have been representing those in Peterborough who have lost their jobs in the Thomas Cook collapse while engaging with schools, charities and organisations in the constituency about how we can solve the problems our city faces.

Thomas Cook

Over the last couple of weeks, the news of the Thomas Cook collapse has dominated the headlines locally. Peterborough has been the home to this iconic British business for decades and my thoughts are with the 1,000 employees and their families who are facing grave uncertainty in the months ahead. Employees from their Peterborough HQ contacted me to ask why the government is standing idly by. I agree with them. I believe the government had a responsibility to employees here in Peterborough to help stabilise the situation in the short-term and give Thomas Cook the breathing space it needed to continue operating. In Parliament, I asked what support the Transport Secretary can give to my constituents who lost their jobs, have mortgages and bills to pay, and families to support. I am, together with the council, attempting to quickly organise a jobs fair, where we bring local businesses together to provide alternative employment to those affected.

Back in Parliament after Supreme Court ruling

The Supreme Court has ruled against Boris Johnson's prorogation of Parliament and that his advice to the Queen was unlawful and void. This illustrates that Johnson's power grab against parliamentary democracy was simply about avoiding scrutiny. His motives were improper but it is fantastic news that he has been defeated.

As I have said before, you simply cannot trust a word that Boris Johnson says. Parliament is no longer suspended, and democracy will not be bypassed. Johnson's government must be held to account in the coming weeks. Last week, I returned to Parliament when it opened to do the job that I was elected to do.

Education cuts

I have been inundated with emails from parents who are concerned about the cuts schools are having to make, and whether these will impact on their children's opportunities and grades. The majority of schools in Peterborough are not set to benefit from Johnson's so-called 'investment' in our education system. That is why this month, I visited Ravensthorpe Primary to discuss the impact the cuts are having on schools here in Peterborough. A report by the Education Policy Institute found that on average, pupils on free school meals in Peterborough leave school two years behind their peers. But families in Peterborough didn't need a report to tell them what they already know. This is one of the most damning disadvantage gaps in the country, with only four other local authorities reporting this chasm in attainment

For the last nine years, school budgets have been decimated in pursuit of cost-cutting. They're being forced to lay off staff and find as many savings as they can at a time when we should be investing in our schools and young people to ensure they have the best start in life. Education is an investment in our children and the future of this country and until we take the funding crisis in education seriously, schools, teachers, parents, and pupils will continue to suffer. I am of the belief that every child in Peterborough has huge, unlocked potential. It is a damning state of affairs when this is being stifled by reckless Tory cuts.



lisa.forbes.mp@parliament.uk



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House of Commons London, SW1A 0AA



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Top Policy Issues

Many of my constituents have written to me this month about the policy issues that matter to them. The top three concerns raised were –

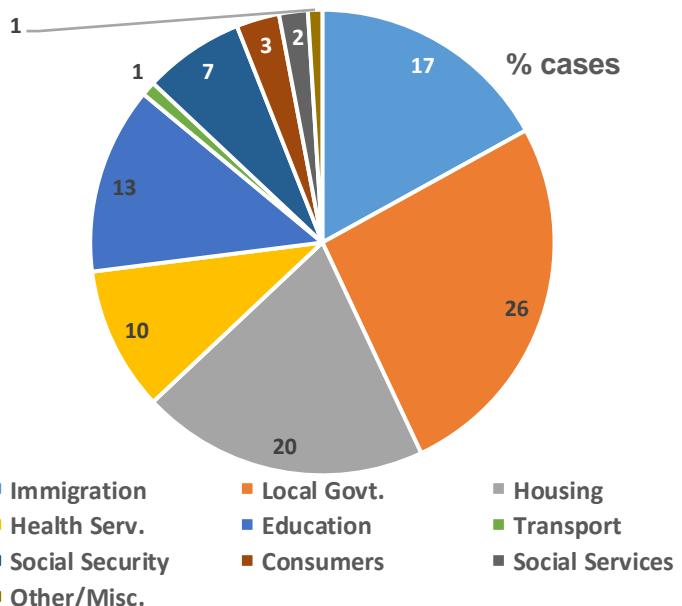
Johnson's prorogation – Boris Johnson's attempts to run down the clock by proroguing Parliament were met with disdain in constituent letters. I am glad to be back in Parliament and scrutinising the government agenda in spite of his blatant power-grab.

Kashmir – Many constituents are incredibly concerned about the welfare of their friends and family in Kashmir amidst a security crackdown and human rights abuses. We must push for diplomatic dialogue and political solutions with UN involvement.

Saving free TV licences for over-75s – Through cuts to the BBC, the Tories have taken away the free TV licence for the over-75s and have broken a manifesto promise from 2017 in the process. I will continue to fight for those most vulnerable and isolated in our society.

Casework

As my office continues to evolve I have been able to respond much more quickly and effectively to requests for assistance from my constituents.



Improving Peterborough's digital infrastructure

It was great to meet the team at CityFibre and the workers who are rolling out full-fibre broadband in the city.

The UK is massively behind on full-fibre broadband coverage and investment in digital infrastructure, but Peterborough has the potential to be a trailblazer by being one of the first cities in the country to have full-fibre capability.

While I have received correspondence from constituents concerned about the inconvenience of the building works, CityFibre have assured me that they are reaching out to communities where work is taking place and doing their best to avoid disruption.

As well as giving everyone in the city full-fibre capability, this innovation and investment presents an opportunity for Peterborough to become a digital hub that can attract more start-ups and businesses to call the city their home.



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