



What an amazing year it has been! Thanks to the support I have received from many people in becoming the MP for Thirsk and Malton, I feel I have already managed to get fully involved in the issues that impact our daily lives in North Yorkshire. In Parliament there are matters of both international and national importance to debate and decide upon but I and my team are very focused on those things closer to home that are vital to maintaining and improving our work, home and leisure times.

Foreign Affairs


Thank you to those who responded to my questionnaire about military action in Syria. The increase in terrorist activity across the world from Islamic State is frightening. However the long day and evening in the House of Commons showed how open, frank, democratic debate is something we must be proud of. Wouldn't it be great if all countries and their people had the same political freedom? After careful consideration and in respect to the feeling of the constituents I stand by the Government's decision to act and I hope that a more peaceful and safer new year can be achieved through the combined work of the international community. The refugee crisis means many will be displaced from their homes this Christmas. The goodwill extended by European nations to those fleeing in fear will hopefully lead to positive and fair results for residents and migrants alike.

Energy

Keeping in contact with constituents, whether by questionnaires, newsletters, post or email, is vital for me to do my job properly. It is right that I get as clear a picture as possible of local feeling on big issues, for example the future of our energy sources. Fracking continues to be a headline and I believe that step-by-step the right decisions are being made. I welcomed the recent announcement from the Environment Agency on protection for our most sensitive areas and continue to attend meetings with all interested parties. Development of additional domestic sources of energy is vital for our residential and business needs and national security. I am interested in all the new ideas that are coming forward and am very supportive of renewable and green energy production.

Education

It is amazing what can be achieved when opinions are gathered and action is taken to make positive change. I was pleased to be part of a large group of MPs who handed in petitions to the House of Commons to get fairer funding for schools. Some local authorities have been receiving up to 50% more per pupil per year, which could mean a difference of many hundreds of thousands of pounds for the annual budget of each school. The Government has now accepted that funding for schools in rural areas has been unfair for many years and changes are being made. I would like to thank the head teachers, parents and members of the public who supported our efforts. Our schools need support to continue their great work. I have attended a number of primary and



secondary schools over the last seven months and saw a great example of a classroom full of engaged and eager pupils recently at Thirsk Community Primary School. I really enjoyed my tour of the classrooms and especially the workshop with the year 6 pupils. Their knowledge about the British political system was impressive. It is always refreshing and enlightening to meet young people and I am passionate about the future prospects and wellbeing of our children and grandchildren. The world is changing and we need to be at the forefront of education and innovation.

Broadband

Our greatest source of knowledge is now the internet. Schools, businesses and homes need reliable access to information and swift communication to develop and grow. I am pushing for faster and more reliable broadband services and wider reach across the county. To this end, I have had meetings with Ed Vaizey the Minister of State for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries, Moorsweb, BT and other communications experts both locally and nationally to find solutions. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you hear of, or experience, any specific problems.


Food & Farming

Farmers increasingly have to use the internet as part of their job. This has caused some strain as systems fail to work as planned or the rural location causes problems. It is a concern that has been expressed at several of the meetings I have had with North Yorkshire growers and producers. The Single Farm Payment scheme is an example of an issue that I have tried to highlight to colleagues and I hope our farmers are now receiving expected payments. I was delighted to welcome the Chairman of the EFRA Committee, Neil Parish MP, to Easingwold to meet local farmers. It was an informative debate and I am pleased at the links being forged between local farmers and myself. It was also great to accompany Mr. Parish to see the developments planned at a nearby dairy farm. I hope there will be more positive news for the dairy industry and I support those who are looking at ways to secure the future of British milk. I have also spoken at an NFU meeting in Kirkbymoorside about the best way forward in agriculture and what Government, supermarkets and shoppers can do to help. All producers need to get a fair price for their produce at the farmgate. I plan to meet Moors farmers again soon who, due to their location, have very specific challenges.

Food and Drink is a big part of Christmas. Local farmers rear some of the finest animals and the meat I saw processed at Karro in Norton was of impressive quality. Getting these products to the shops and into stores is another important issue to look at. Yorkshire pork is delicious and already enjoyed in America for example. McCains use locally grown potatoes and export internationally too. Improvement to the A64 can only help not just get tourists to our lovely countryside but to bring some of that countryside to the rest of the UK and across the world. A good transport system is essential, both road and rail.

Housing

I am in regular contact with communities and district councils regarding plans to expand the number of homes and the impact that might have on local services.



Consideration has to be given to the environment and we need to be mindful of the importance of location of developments. The recent floods in Cumbria show us what devastating effect water can have, not just on a property, but on people's lives when possessions and memories are soaked. We need to look at more ways to stem the tide when bad weather hits. The opening of the Slow the Flow project at Pickering is a great example of what can be achieved.

I am on the Select Committee for Communities and Local Government and on the Bill Committee for Housing & Planning so hopefully some of my past experience will have been put to good use.

A Fairer Society

I am Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Poverty and hosted the Living Wage Foundation 'The Living Wage Marketplace' in Parliament. The aim was to promote the Living Wage and encourage more employers to make a commitment to their employees and to celebrate the 2000 British employers, including 28 of the country's biggest companies, who are now accredited Living Wage employers.

NHS

With winter upon us comes pressure on our healthcare services. We have to be able to access the help we need as close to home as possible, especially in such a large and rural constituency as ours. Our community hospitals in Malton, Easingwold and Thirsk are vital in this regard. I hope the beds in the ward at the Lambert Hospital, Thirsk will soon be reopened and I will not rest until services are restored.

The work of medical staff is admirable and needs to be supported. Their sole remit is to help others and we need their skills. I met a young man from the constituency recently who hopes to study medicine; I hope that I can do something to make sure aspiring doctors, like him, have a great system to work with in the future.

Local Charities and Good Causes

I have learnt more about the role of charities in healthcare. It is such a privilege to meet those people who dedicate their time to raise awareness and funds. I have worn pink in Parliament to support Breast Cancer (perhaps not my best colour!) and attended meetings and events in London and in North Yorkshire hosted by Age UK, Scope, Martin House, and Diabetes UK. I am so pleased that in being an MP I can help in some way with the work of these charities. A lovely event was opening the NSPCC Christmas Fair at Castle Howard. It started off the festive season well and it was heart-warming to see the huge support given by organisers and local people. The Pride of Malton & Norton Awards also showed the incredible selflessness and generosity of so many people.

Local Economy

Our local business should be supported and celebrated, not just at Christmas, but all year round. The Great British High Street award given to Helmsley was the well-deserved result of a lot of hard work with people pulling together and it showcases the best that local businesses can offer.

The Small Business Saturday campaign aims to highlight the importance of smaller retailers and producers to our economy. I met with traders in Easingwold on the day to hear their views. Shopping locally can only boost our region and there are so many fabulous products made locally to buy, as I sampled on a tour of The Great Yorkshire Brewery at Cropton (a bit of early Yuletide cheer!).

Transport

What encouraging news we had last week that a new Northern service will be introduced between York, Malton and Scarborough from April 1st 2016. It will provide an hourly service (14 trains per day), in addition to the current TransPennine Express hourly service, therefore moving to a half-hourly service.

In addition to this, new secure cycle parking spaces will be installed at Malton, Northallerton and Thirsk stations.

Devolution

We love our bikes in Yorkshire as the success of the Tour de France proved. It is fabulous that the Tour de Yorkshire will be passing through the constituency again in 2016. The Tour de France showed what we can achieve when Yorkshire comes together and I think that is an indication of how Devolution could benefit us. I am for a Great Yorkshire bid, one that combines the best of this fantastic and diverse region and gives us a strong voice at the negotiating table in Whitehall. I have been sending out letters to as many businesses in the constituency as possible to encourage people to get involved. I believe that working in harmony with the rest of Yorkshire could propel the region onwards and upwards, hopefully with more ease than the cyclists who will have to climb up Sutton Bank!

And finally...

Looking forward to a bright future I wish you all the very best. I hope all your wishes are granted and promise to do whatever I can to help. May you have a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year and from myself and the team, "Merry Christmas!"

Kevin Hollinrake MP

