



Ben's Weekly Update

Loads of topics to cover this week in the run up to Christmas...

Lots going on this week, and plenty to read about!

Firstly, some fantastic news came out on Friday. The government has announced funding to renovate or rebuild 239 more schools in England, with 3 of them being in Mansfield! Take a look below!

In other news, it was a pleasure to go to number 10 on Tuesday morning for a breakfast meeting with the PM, following that the government made some big announcements on channel crossings and illegal migration which have my full support and a bit more detail on that is in this update.

On Thursday in Bellamy I held a public meeting where MDC, Notts Police and other stakeholders were present to listen to resident's concerns. Lots to take away for all involved and I've managed to pick up a few bits of casework to look into also.

Volunteers have been delivering my newsletter all over Mansfield the last few months, we're finally almost done in time for Christmas! If you're one of the few still waiting in anticipation for it to land on your doormat then don't worry! You can read it right here at the bottom of this newsletter!

In my column this week, I welcomed the opening of the first new coal mine in the UK for decades. This is a crucial decision especially with energy insecurity as a result of the conflict in Ukraine, but it's certainly not a step back from our path towards green energy, as the announcement this week on Nuclear Fusion proves just that!

Loads more stuff for your weekend reading below including some heartwarming festive visits around the constituency!.. and in case you missed it last week, I was interviewed for a Podcast... If you're interested, have a listen below.

['State of Mind Podcast' clip](#)

Ways to keep in touch

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BREAKING NEWS!



THREE Mansfield schools to be rebuilt!

Fabulous news to end the week! **Meden School, Garibaldi College and All Saints' Catholic Academy** will all benefit from major rebuilding works! Amazing for the schools, for Mansfield and for thousands of local kids!

Over recent years I've visited Meden, All Saints and Garibaldi schools to speak to teachers and students, and to tour their school sites. At all three schools their biggest ask was for funding to support rebuilding of various classrooms and facilities on the site, and I've been pleased to support their bids and projects submitted in to the DfE.

It's WONDERFUL news that today its been announced that ALL THREE will be part of the next phase of the school rebuilding programme. The programme will put major investment in to 500 of our 32,000 schools nationally, so it's brilliant that we've got three of them right here know Mansfield, Forest Town and Warsop.

Looking forward to finding out more about plans, and to be able to visit some amazing new facilities - coming soon!

[Watch my response to this here](#)

[Read more on this here](#)

Meeting with the PM on illegal migration.

On Tuesday morning I headed to Downing Street for a breakfast meeting with the PM.

I joined colleagues who like me



lobbied hard for a solution to the illegal migration problem.

I'm pleased that Rishi and Suella share the same view and commitment to tackling this, and that this week they've announced practical steps to improve things.

[Read about the plan here](#)

Of course there have been plans before and we've not had the right outcomes, so I'll keep on the case and keep lobbying Government until we're seeing hotels being emptied and flights heading to Rwanda! Actions need to follow the words!

It's positive to hear that new legislation will mean that if you arrive illegally then you'll never be able to stay, and also reassuring to sit down this morning with both PM and Home Sec and hear them both on the same page and working together.



[Watch a clip from the Home Secretary here](#)

I'll be posting a recap video this weekend on my work in Parliament on this, so stay tuned!



HUGELY grateful for your support!

Three years ago this week, we fought an election and retained Mansfield for the first time ever. Along the way we managed to secure the biggest increase in votes of any MP, anywhere in the UK.

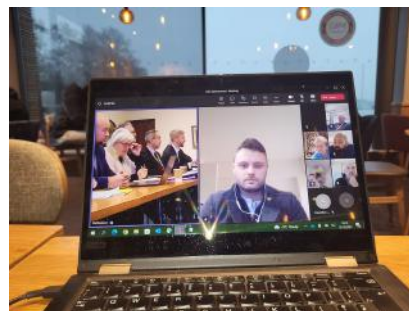
Mansfield went from an historic Labour stronghold, to a 16.3k Conservative majority.

Three years on, I'm still eternally grateful for the opportunity, still working every day to deliver for local people, and determined to win it again in 2024.

Behind the scenes glamour!

It made a nice change to start my week from Mansfield instead of London this week!

My first stop was this cafe, early doors, for a County Council meeting before then going on to open a new business!



WATCH: Taking a stand: 'Unconscious Bias training'

Really pleased I took a stand on unconscious bias training!

After speaking out against it, a Government review found that the training has NO evidenced benefit. In fact, it was found to actually have some pretty negative consequences for diversity and fairness. A real triumph when it got scrapped across the Civil Service.

Despite the flack I receive when sticking my head above the parapet, it's definitely worth it when we get outcomes like this. At some point everyone realises I am talking sense!

[Watch how it all unfolded here](#)



Devolution deal pushes on!

Brilliant to have something new to talk about every week with our Devolution Deal!..

Continued meetings with stakeholders across our area about our devolution plans and consultation, ensuring that we get the maximum possible benefit on skills, innovation, for business, for transport and infrastructure and other opportunities from our new Combined Authority.

This week the Levelling Up Bill passed it's final Commons stages, and will head off for further scrutiny in the Lords. That's the legislation that will allow us to create our new Authority, which can bring a better, coherent strategy on some of those big priorities, as well as billions of extra cash to the East Mids. Progress!



My thoughts on MDC's Council Tax announcement...

Last week, Mansfield District Council announced they were proposing to freeze council tax for the next financial year despite rising costs to all services caused by inflation.

Every council in the country, Nottinghamshire County Council included, is having to work with these increased costs and still deliver on crucial services. I'm pleased by how we've managed to control costs in the face of challenges this year, but the reality is the same services budgeted for this year are going to cost a lot more next year, the question is how do we deal with this responsibly?

It's worth pointing out that this proposal by MDC's Labour administration isn't all it seems. Yes, they might freeze Council Tax, but they still have to find that £1.8m from somewhere! So, where?

In reality, rather than using Council Tax which is theoretically paid based on your wealth, where the richer you are the more you pay and the poorest are protected by discounts and lower rates, MDC will raise the money through raising the cost of their services, disproportionately used by the poorest. They'll also raise things like social rents - possibly by up to 7% - which increases costs only for the poorest. They're choosing to put Mansfield's poorest people in the firing line in order to grab a headline about tax freezes.

There's lots of scrutiny to come of this decision ahead of it being formalised in May, but if they're deliberately choosing to hit poorer people in order to make some political point about Council Tax, then that absolutely needs to be called out and highlighted for what it is - pure politics at the expense of those who can least afford it!

They have a legal duty to find £1.8m, and they have to decide where it comes from. Cuts, tax rises, rising costs... at the minute their decisions will hit the poorest hardest! I don't want to raise taxes, nobody does, but surely there are better options that choosing plans that will disproportionately hit poorer people?



Nottinghamshire County Council

So far this year, **89%** of people aged over 65 who have been discharged from hospital into our **reablement** services are still living in their own home after three months

The budget survey is now open until 2 January, so have your say today on how together we can best rise to the challenge.

RISING
TO THE CHALLENGE | supporting independence, building resilience

Notts County Council budget survey 2022

Meanwhile, we're setting a budget at NCC too. In order to help reduce costs and provide the best service we are helping older people to be more independent.

Our re-ablement service supports people returning home from hospital, meaning they don't have to stay in hospital or go into care, but instead can enjoy living independently in their own home. By supporting these kinds of services we can make our whole system more sustainable for the long term.

Your opinion matters, help us to best set a budget that meets your needs by filling out the survey:

[Have your say here](#)



10,000 followers on TikTok - thank-you!

How long until I qualify as an influencer? 😊

[Join the fun here!](#)

PUBLIC MEETING BELLAMY

Thursday 15th December
6:30pm to 7:45pm
location to be confirmed

Thursday's public meeting in Bellamy

On Thursday I was at the Bellamy Estate, at Trowell Court, where I've organised a public meeting for residents to raise queries with me, and with representatives from Mansfield Council, the County Council and the Police.

A really helpful conversation, with some actions to take away. Really grateful to the Officers who gave up their evening, and to those residents who came along. More here

[Watch my video on this here](#)



'REASONED' conference speech

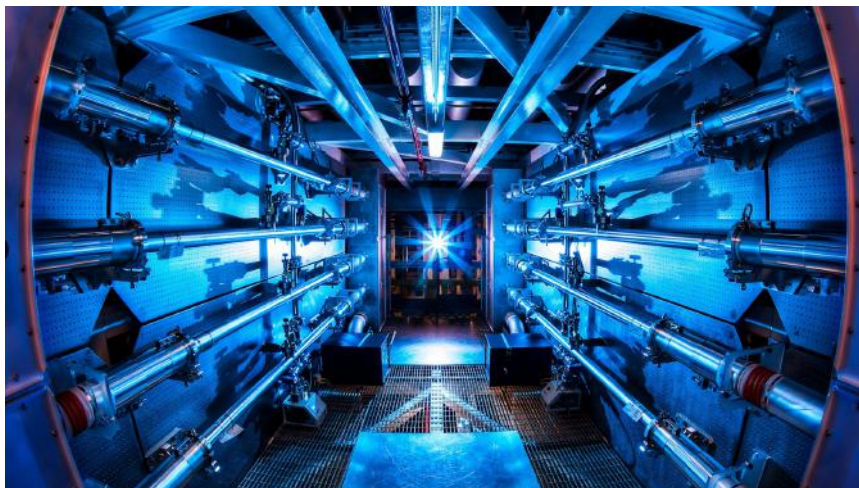
I spoke recently at the Reasoned Student Conference, about all sorts of issues related to my constituency, and to other 'Red Wall' communities that voted Conservative at the last election.

One of those issues is tackling illegal migration - an election promise from 2019! Here's the section of my speech on the unfairness of small boats, the impact of our communities and services, and the need to keep that promise.

Looking forward to hearing the PM's statement today announcing new measures to tackle this, but I'll only be satisfied when we're seeing hotels being returned to normal use, and deportation flights taking people home!

You can watch the full speech on YouTube by following the link below to my Facebook!

[Watch a short clip first here!](#)



STEP Fusion moves closer to reality!

This is really exciting news, given that we recently secured the **£20bn funding for the first prototype fusion power plant right here in North Notts**. Last year in the UK, this science was able to produce energy that powered machines for the first time, and now in the states it has - again for the first time - been able to achieve a net gain in energy production (ie what came out was more than what went in to create it).

That's another really positive step forward and shows that the theory and the principles of our power station plan can work. The next step - which will happen in North Notts - is the planning and building of a

site that can do this on a commercial and financially viable scale. That's massive, and is the step that will allow this science to provide clean power to the whole UK and the world.

A long way to go, but another breakthrough that adds confidence and credibility to these big investment and clean energy plans on our doorstep!

[Read more here](#)



HM Government

GOVERNMENT DELIVERS ON PLEDGE FOR
£50 MILLION

MOTOR NEURONE DISEASE RESEARCH FUNDING

TO HELP FIND A **CURE** AND **NEW TREATMENTS**.



Cost of living community grant

Voluntary organisations and community groups helping Nottinghamshire residents can now apply for two new Local Community Fund (LCF) cost of living grants.

£450,000 in total has been set aside for the 17-month scheme. The first grant available is for groups helping those who are struggling to buy nutritious food to help improve health and well-being.

The second grant is aimed at groups who need a contribution towards their own rising energy bills to help keep their welcoming and warm centres and halls open across the county.

Groups can now apply for up to £5,000 from both grant funds from today (Wednesday 7 December) with applications closing on Sunday 29 January 2023.

[Find out more here](#)



Regency Source education

A pleasure to meet Helen and the team at Regency Source education on Monday where they've been cutting the ribbon on their new training centre.

Lots to celebrate; both the investment and expansion of a local business, and also the increasing opportunity to support people in to the work place through training and qualifications.

Congratulations on the big new step and the new centre. I hope it all goes well for you, and of course for the learners!!

[Watch a video on this here](#)



Dementia Cafe Christmas party!

I've been to Focus Point Vale Road for the Dementia Cafe Christmas

Party. Had a lovely time, bit of cake, bit of singing... avoided the dancing! Fab to see everyone having such a great time and to wish everyone very merry Christmas!

Big, big thank you to Charlene and the gang who make it all happen. The Dementia Cafe means an awful lot to a lot of people.

[Watch a short TikTok on this here](#)



Here's a picture of me looking jolly!



Fab way to spread Christmas cheer!

A really uplifting article here about Stags players who delivered loads of toys to poorly children at King's Mill hospital this week!..

[Read more here!](#)

Newsletter recap!

A team of volunteers have been working to get my recent newsletter through every door in Mansfield. We're nearly done, but in case you're yet to receive it, here's a preview below! ↪



1

Boosting jobs and skills for the future

I'm working with education providers and businesses to make sure that there is a clear route into rewarding careers for young people in Mansfield, and that we are attracting new, well paid jobs to our area.



2

Town Centre regeneration

I have a new plan for our town centre, which aims to attract public and private sector investment. From refurbishing Beales and bringing it back to use for public services, to new 'pocket parks' in the market square, we want a safe, attractive town centre with a new offer to attract customers.

3

Improving transport infrastructure

I'm working to improve and add new transport links, including bids for new rail connections such as the Maid Marian and Robin Hood lines, that could eventually secure a direct Mansfield - Leicester - London rail service. Rolling out new electric buses and 'on demand' bus services to help improve those links, and road investments like our £25m+ A614 upgrades starting this year.

4

Securing funding for key priorities

'Levelling Up' means getting our fair share of investment I'm driving major, multi-billion pound plans to attract new powers and funds to our area, so that we can have the same opportunities as other places. If we get our East Midlands devolution deal sorted this year, it will boost our area by billions of pounds over the years ahead.

5

A better plan for homelessness

The numbers of rough sleepers in Mansfield has been falling, and through Covid the 'Everyone In' programme was incredibly successful at housing vulnerable people. I've raised tens of thousands for local support services and am seeking new powers and funds from Government to tackle this.

6

Rebuilding after the pandemic

COVID 19 has presented our country with huge challenges and change. Habits have changed, working practices, people's priorities are all affected. That means our services need to adapt, and I'll help make this happen.

Working for you!

There's loads going off in and around Mansfield, and I've been working on a number of key priorities to boost our skills and employment, bring investment to the area, support our young people and much more...

I've been working with young people, youth groups and national policy makers to help improve services.

I'm passionate about supporting young people, and one of my major projects currently is pulling together a partnership and a bid for new youth facilities in Mansfield. I want to provide new support and services to those who most need it - watch this space!



Visiting West Notts College's Public Services students to hear their views.



For the first time we have a great team of local Conservative Councillors working for you...

I've been working with our excellent new team of Conservative County Councillors, to make a difference in our area.

Since the 2021 elections, when Conservatives went from no Councillors at all to winning 65% of the seats in Mansfield (thank you!) it's been great to have a team of hardworking local Councillors to support our communities and fight with me for our area.

We're bringing in hundreds of millions of investment to support our communities, and boost our infrastructure.

It's brilliant to see Mansfield increasingly popular with those who want invest their money, whether its new jobs and businesses, housing or other infrastructure. The Lindhurst Project is a £250m injection in to our local economy that will provide homes and jobs, as well as a school. We've also had over £30m private sector investment in our town centre.



Opening the new Lindhurst Spine Road that unlocks a £250m investment in Mansfield



We're at the forefront of new, digital technology that can improve public services.

I'm pushing for our area to lead the way on new innovation and better public services.

We're using every bit of our digital and technology expertise to boost services. We've now got autonomous robots managing our natural environment, we've got unique augmented reality tourism experiences attracting money to the area, and we're looking at how this kind of tech can help us with things like social care or attracting new businesses.

I've been visiting and supporting local schools, securing new funding and improving outcomes.

Across Mansfield we're building new primary schools, and school outcomes continue to improve thanks to the hard work of so many dedicated local teachers. I visit and work with schools all the time to help with funding, policy change, with their school work, or meeting School Councils to talk about their priorities.



Visiting Cosmo and Peeyanah at Newlands School to present their 'Card for the Queen' awards



Levelling Up: Skills

Our unique local partnership between Nottingham Trent University and West Notts College is building new career pathways straight in to work. It means people can learn and qualify here, then stay and work here instead of leaving Mansfield.



Levelling Up: Jobs

There are over 1000 more people in work in Mansfield in the last year. Exciting new projects nearby such as huge commercial developments at Toton or our bid for new Nuclear Fusion research funding will create well paid, highly skilled roles.



Levelling Up: Town Centre

Over £30m of town centre private sector investment is already visible, with a new hotel, and new food outlets replacing old derelict buildings. There are further plans to turn empty properties in to new residential space too.



Levelling Up: Services

Our next Levelling Up Fund Bid will revitalise Stockwell Gate by turning the empty Beales building in to a new hub for public services, as well as business and community space. Better services, and huge investment in the town centre!



Levelling Up: Warsop

The new Warsop Health and Leisure hub is now confirmed and going ahead, with investment to replace the old sports centre, which was closed by the District Council a few years ago. Its great to see new businesses in the high street too!



Levelling Up: Environment

Our unique £76m project to go from 'grey to green' starts this year, with over 15,000 individual projects to break up the concrete with new green spaces. It's to prevent flooding, but will also make our area greener and more attractive.

This week's column ↓

Click to read...

"Opening a new coal mine improves our self-reliance when imports are uncertain, as we continue to work towards net zero."



That's all for this week! This may well be the last full newsletter this side of Christmas, so thanks for reading and I hope you and your family have a wonderful Christmas and New Year!

Ben

Follow me on social media



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