



Ben's Weekly Update

Some brilliant news to report on this week!

2023 will be a year of delivery for our levelling-up agenda across Mansfield.

Having spent the last year bidding for levelling-up funds for Mansfield, and with the East Midlands typically the most underfunded region in the country, it's going to be great to finally have spades in the ground and regeneration coming our way!

On Wednesday it was announced that Mansfield is going to benefit from £20 million worth of levelling-up investment from the government! This is really big news!! Take a look below to find out more!



£20 MILLION in levelling-up funding for Mansfield!

I am absolutely over the moon after consistently banging on

Minister's doors to ensure Mansfield gets its fair share of funding. Brilliant stuff and evidence that we're a priority for Government and its levelling up agenda.

This money will turn the vacant Beales building in the town centre - one of the largest and most prominent empty buildings - back in to a vibrant heart for the town, with public services, education and business space. Between this project, the private sector investment at the old bus station and the new green space going in near the market place, it will revitalise and open up Stockwell Gate as well as attracting more visitors to the town centre to access the multi-agency services it will offer. .

Alongside existing new investment like the old bus station (now restaurants) and the former gala bingo site (now a hotel), and current ongoing work like the new green spaces in and around the market place, this plan will bring the largest vacant building in town back to life, bring people in to the town centre, and reinvigorate what has been a very tired area of town around Stockwell Gate.

Contrary to some of the commentary, it's not for "a new Council building". The Mansfield Connect project will bring all sorts of agencies together, including MDC, NCC, DWP, education, business and more. It will actually reduce the number of Council buildings overall, as well as bringing visitors in to town... Visitors who can in turn then support the shops, and help us to make a case to attract further leisure, service and retail investment.

Later this year we'll also see improvements to town centre parking, among other investments as the Towns Fund money announced in 2021 becomes reality.

Good news! I'll keep fighting for our area!

[Watch my video on this here!](#)

[Watch the government's response!](#)

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Meeting with the Chancellor and funding for the East Midlands

I always enjoy bringing Mansfield's priorities right to the heart of central government.

As such it was a real pleasure to meet the Chancellor this week and put my views and those of my constituents to him directly.

One of the key topics of conversation was national funding formulas and how these impact our region. The current formulas as they stand mean the East Midlands is the most underfunded region across a number of services, from local government to police. It was good to put this point across and discuss potential changes to these formulas moving forward.

I was also part of a panel discussion at the Institute for Government's annual conference this week, where we discussed devolution and how that presents the best opportunity to bring better, more targeted funding to parts of the East Midlands, [you can watch this event in full here](#).

When it comes to getting more investment in the right places, both major parties are clear that you can't tackle local issues or understand every local community from behind a desk in Whitehall, and that's why our East Midlands devolution plans are so important - it gives us more of the funding and the levers currently based in London, for us to use those to support our local priorities rather than generic national ones.



Re-selected for the next General Election!

An absolute honour to have been reselected by the Ashfield and Mansfield Conservatives Federation last Saturday to be the Conservative candidate for the next General Election.

I'm grateful to the committee for their continued faith and confidence in me - pictured here with Chairman Nigel Moxon and Cllr Andre Camilleri - our Mayoral Candidate for Mansfield 2023.

In the meeting I spoke about the great progress we've made since 2017. Mansfield has been front and centre of so much of Britain's politics in that time, and on the map in a way that hadn't happened before.

We've seen major progress, in particular on education as Mansfield has become a university town, offering opportunities in HE to local young people for the first time at NTU's Mansfield campus, whilst our college has gone from being in dire straits to now really driving a positive change for the town.

We're beginning to see some of the new funding we've secured take shape too, with our £76m Severn Trent project, new hotels and restaurants on formerly derelict sites, and this year Towns Fund plans like improving car parking, a new Warsop Sports Centre and more will get going too.

I want to see these projects through, and to continue to support Mansfield residents, having helped thousands of local people with their personal cases and challenges over that time.

Again, I'm really grateful to my Conservative colleagues for their continued support to do that.



First look: New community diagnostic centre for Mansfield

Due to open next year next to Mansfield Community Hospital, as a result of a £350m Government investment in 40 centres around the country.

It will be a one stop shop for checks, scans and tests and will help to reduce delays.

A public engagement event about the plans is planned for Mansfield Community Hospital's main reception on Thursday, January 26, from 11am-7pm.

[Find out more](#)



Meeting with Highways to talk potholes and road repairs

Lots of interest in Highways and road damage at the minute,

understandably as the RAC have said we've had the worst possible mix of freezing conditions and rain over the last three or four weeks in terms of causing road damage.

Sadly we've gone from really positive stats and feedback prior to Christmas, to obviously now this significant weather damage and playing catch up to some extent to keep on top of it. More damage obviously then means more emergency repairs, and round and round we go.

So I've been at the Highways Depot on Friday talking to the District Manager for Mansfield about current planned works, and about how they're managing this challenge. Highways Inspectors are being diverted on to tackling reported damage and making things safe where there are safety concerns. Some areas are then being scheduled in for higher quality repairs, including sections of Peafield Lane which are due to be completed in a week or so. These kinds of repairs have to be scheduled ahead because they require more staff, kit and traffic management, ie getting the temporary lights out to close a section of road.

I know residents are getting frustrated at the increase in emergency repairs at the minute, which is something that we'd actually reduced by more than 60% before Christmas, in line with our changes in the recent Highways review we conducted. We also put an extra £15m in to the budget through that review.

Obviously with the damage that's occurred and our legal duty to make things safe very quickly, there often isn't time to plan in higher quality work without leaving unsafe holes in roads - as I said it often needs to be planned in due to a need for certain equipment or road closures etc - so there has to be a significant effort to make things safe in the short term and fill holes, even if it's not the perfect, high quality work we want to see long term.

I know it's frustrating to see, but we have a legal duty to make things safe and limited resources to do that. Once we've got beyond this poor weather ripping chunks out of things we'll get back on with the long term, higher quality works. As the RAC have said, this is a national issue with the worst possible weather conditions in recent weeks, and prior to that bad weather our Review and the improvements we've made were actually getting national recognition as good work, and we'd seen a huge fall in complaints from residents. If anyone knows how to turn the rain and frost off, I'd love to hear it! It's frustrating for us as Councillors just as it is for residents.

There are five planned 'hot box' repairs, ie higher quality hot materials in larger patches, in my Mansfield North division this quarter, which you could extrapolate out to something like 25 across Mansfield District, and some 150+ across the county. That's on top of resurfacing work (schedule on NCC website), obviously lots of emergency repairs atm, but also things like gully cleaning, tree pollarding, streetlight repairs and maintenance etc so, these are busy guys and there's a lot happening.

[Watch a video on this here](#)



Visiting 'Your Space' Gym

I've been to see Tom and Tom, the Manager and Area Manager at Your Space on Portland Street, to congratulate them on their recent award. They won the Leisure Trust Gym of the Year at the 2022 National Fitness Awards.

Since Covid, membership has more than doubled and there's been some fab investment here in the pool, the gym and other parts of the offer. It was great to see the place so busy, and so many residents there actually for social and 'wellbeing' reasons as well as fitness.

Lord knows I need to get back in to the habit of some exercise in 2023, so I'll be back in here I think! I used to be fit once!!

Thanks both for showing me around and congratulations again to all the staff at Your Space Mansfield on their award

[Find out more here](#)

Sustainable public services

“To make services sustainable for the long run, you have to make long term changes, tackling the root causes of why people end up relying on care services.

We need to change what we deliver, to do more in communities to help families early on when problems emerge, instead of just picking up the pieces when everything goes wrong.

However, if we're constantly battling to fund basic things each year, we're not going to have the capacity to make those changes.

That's why we've taken a sensible, long term approach to our services; delivering improvement in key areas instead of cuts, and getting out of areas where we don't need to be, like reducing our office buildings from 17 down to 9 so far.”

Ben Bradley MP
serving Mansfield & Warsop

NHS pressures and funding

We all know about the huge pressures the NHS is under currently. We are experiencing an exponential growth in demand for health and care services and this is coupled with delays in discharging people.

As a local authority leader, I know how important the social care aspect of this is, and there's been a huge national focus on it. However, only about 10-15% of discharges are people leaving hospital and going into social care, the rest are largely people like me who go back home.

The fact these discharges are also being delayed speaks to a much wider systemic issue within the NHS which needs solving, sorting out these processes, alongside a more joined up approach between social care and the NHS. If we want to protect our NHS and care services for the future we have to sort these processes out.

[I spoke about this here](#)

“I have campaigned for a long time for the reopening of school sports facilities, with 45% of facilities at state-funded schools having no public access at evenings or weekends.

If these facilities were to be opened up for use by the community at large, we could see an explosion in levels of physical activity across the country and meet the government’s goal of doubling the number of community sports facilities.

We have many such facilities in and around Mansfield and Warsop which, if opened, would greatly support local clubs such as North Notts Hockey Club.”



Ben Bradley MP
serving Mansfield & Warsop



Campaigning for more sports facilities

Earlier last week I spoke in a debate on sport in schools and communities. A great opportunity to raise my ongoing campaign to re-open school sports facilities and raise some other really important issues.

[Watch here](#)



Grassroots sport in communities

Last week in the Commons I raised the importance, and the great potential of grassroots sport in communities, to improve health and wellbeing, and particularly to help our young people to develop and grow. It’s something I always feel is a missed opportunity, and undervalued in our national conversation about things like health

inequalities or mental health.

[Read more here](#)



Shared Prosperity Fund for Mansfield

Applications are now open for the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Mansfield has been awarded £3m for the fund, which is to support projects, groups and individuals who are making a big difference to our community.

[Get more details here](#)

MINIMUM SERVICE LEVELS BILL



- ▶ **New laws** will allow us to set minimum levels of service which must be met during strikes to ensure the safety of the public
- ▶ **The bill** will apply to crucial public services such as rail, ambulances, fire services, education and health
- ▶ **Legislation** brings the UK in line with other developed countries such as France and Spain



Your Priorities
are
our Priorities

Minimum service levels

Important to know that this kind of legislation already exists in Italy, in France, in Spain and other countries. Despite that, they have more days of strikes than we do. It doesn't aim to remove anyone's right to strike, and that hasn't been the impact in any of those countries. France are famous for their strike action, despite already having minimum service levels in place.

What this does is ensure that, in the event that proper safety measures can't be agreed by normal negotiations, that employers in key services can ensure a minimum level of service still exists. That means, for example, ensuring that people will still have access to key emergency services, even if negotiations about arrangements for that can't be concluded.

The Public Order Bill

“Having the right to protest is a fundamental principle of our democracy, but it isn’t right if protests conducted by a small minority end up negatively impacting the lives of the public who are trying to go about their daily lives.

We need to strike a healthy balance as there is a big difference between a protest and criminal activism.

I welcome Government’s decision to give our officers more clarity over when they should step in, and I am sure this will be welcomed by my constituents across Mansfield and Warsop.”



Ben Bradley MP
serving Mansfield & Warsop

[Read more about this here](#)

Support with
energy bills
this winter

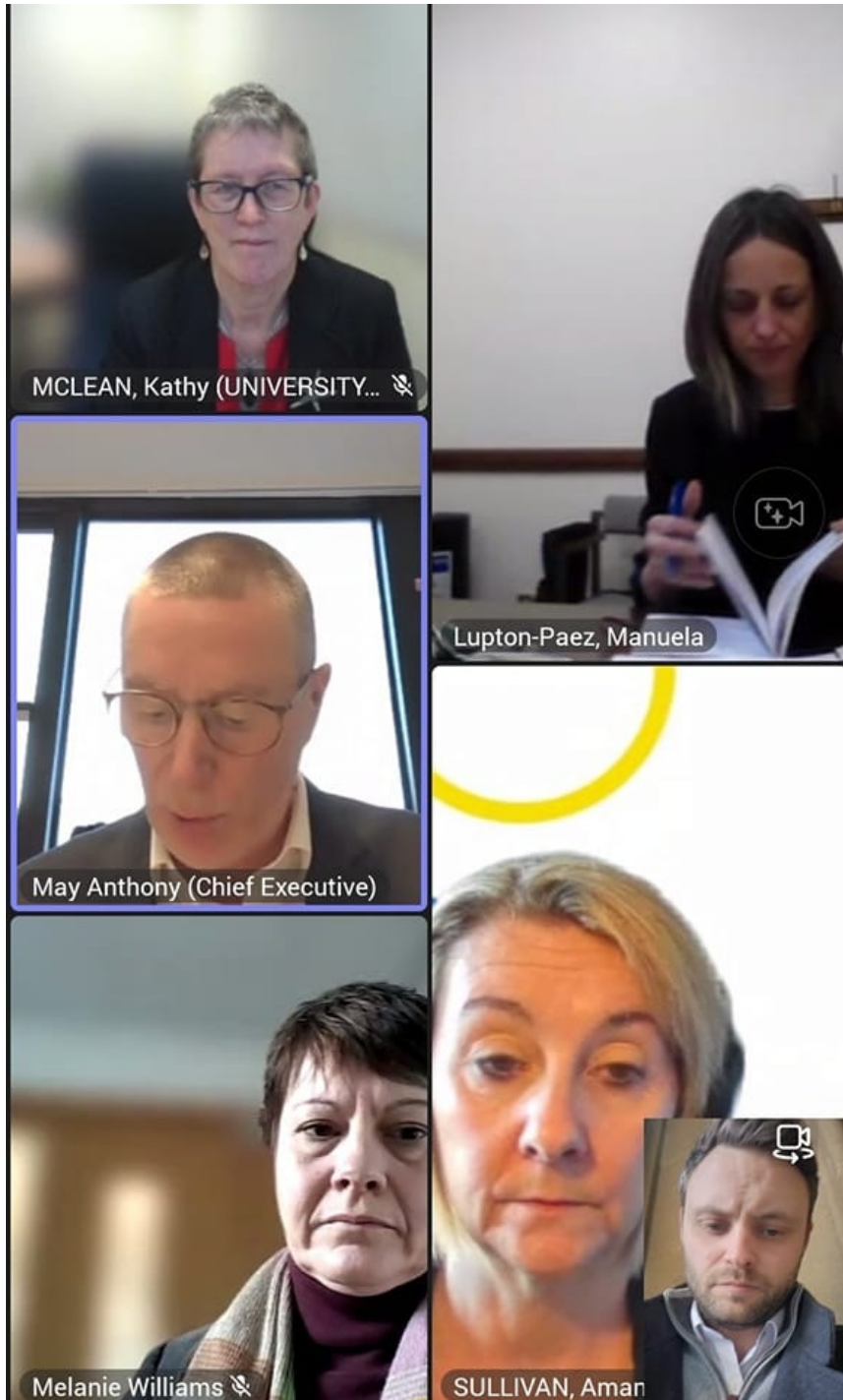


Energy Bills Discount Scheme

Last week I was pleased to welcome Government's new Energy Bills Discount scheme, which will mean all eligible UK businesses and other non-domestic energy users will receive a discount on high energy bills until 31 March 2024.

The new scheme strikes a balance between supporting businesses over the next 12 months and limiting taxpayer’s exposure to volatile energy markets, with a cap set at £5.5 billion. More information below

[I talk more about this here...](#)



Arranging for Notts healthcare bosses to meet the Minister for Social Care

This week I've been able to organise for local health and care bosses to meet with the Social Care Minister Helen Whately, and discuss what is needed to tackle the problems in workforce capacity and patient flows through the hospital.

Grateful to colleagues from the County Council, NUH and the Integrated Care System for coming to feed in to the Department for Health.



Nottinghamshire has received an additional £4m from the Government's hospital discharge fund, to help us tackle the issues causing delayed discharge, and to free up that capacity in health and care. Positive support for what is a complex issue, and local partners across health and care a working together on solutions.



Visit to Mansfield Woodhouse Heritage Link

I've been to visit Mansfield Woodhouse Heritage Link to find out more

about their mosaic project, where they aim to recreate this piece in the photo. It's all part of the 300th birthday of Major Hayman Rooke, who was a local author, astronomer and all sorts of other things, and who discovered the original mosaic in the late 17th century. He's also the reason that the Major Oak has its title (it was the Queen Oak prior to that) because of his extensive writings about Sherwood Forest. He lived in Woodhouse Place just off the A60 and is actually buried at St Edmunds.

As you can see, I've had a history lesson!

Anyway, it was fascinating to hear all these stories, as well as some of the other projects like sourcing and sharing all of the stories of the men Woodhouse lost during the World Wars, with more and more detail and photos appearing on the walls of Mansfield Woodhouse Library.

They're a fab group of volunteers, whipped in to shape by Joyce as ever, and I'm really grateful for all the work they're doing to fundraise, explore our heritage and also to draw the community in to it. With that in mind I was pleased to be able to contribute £400 to the mosaic project from my Councillors Divisional Fund.

It's also fab to see the library flourishing with such a range of community engagement and services. As part of our Nottinghamshire County Council plan I want to enhance and offer more for our communities through the library network, and Woodhouse is a great example.

[Find out more here](#)



Premier League fan-led review

This week I met with representatives from the Premier League to talk about upcoming proposals from the Fan-led Review, as we're expecting to see Government's initial plans later this month.

Important that any proposals strike the right balance, and offer certainty for the game and financial security, without being overly burdensome for clubs.



Supporting Andre for Mayor of Mansfield

I've been out and about this week starting to put this man's message through your doors, because County Cllr Andre Camilleri, is the Conservative candidate to be the next Mayor of Mansfield.

He's also making a clear commitment that if he's the next Mayor, as well as his plans for the town which will be coming through your letterbox soon, he'll also be the last Mansfield Mayor. If Andre is elected, he'll set the ball rolling to scrap the job altogether.

Every other District in Notts manages with a Council Leader instead of a Mayor, and the cost of that Leader role is less than half what the Mayor is paid. Unlike the big, high profile regional Mayors who have billions of extra money to spend in their areas, Mansfield's Mayor gets no extra powers or funds. So to be honest, I agree with Andre! You may as well have a Leader instead and spend that money you'd save on better services!

What do you think? Agree?

If you're a constituent, you can vote in my poll on my Facebook group [here](#).

And finally, this week's column! ↓

Click below to read...

'We need to make public services sustainable for the future'



That's all for this week!

Thanks for reading and I hope you have a great weekend!

Ben

Follow me on social media



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