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ANNA SOUBRY MP
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NEWSLETTER



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www.annasoubry.org.uk

"she has a record of unusually free speech" Simon Carr, The Independent
"the beating heart of the parliamentary Tory party" Quentin Letts, The Daily Mail

Hello again,

I know it's only been a few days since my last email newsletter but I just wanted to share some thoughts on a number of political issues. All comments and responses are of course welcome.

As ever,

Anna

How to implement the principles of Leveson

I know there is considerable concern about tomorrow's (Monday) debate about how the findings and recommendations of the Leveson Inquiry into our press, can be best implemented. I have had a number of emails from constituents courtesy of the Hacked Off web site and some of a more personal nature.

For my part I believe it is a tricky balance to strike between the need to protect the rights of people against the intolerable excesses of the media, which have been exposed by the Leveson Inquiry (notably what happened to decent, good people like the McCanns and Dowler family) and the freedom of our press from state control. I think we also need to remind ourselves that we live in the age of the Internet!

I agree with much of today's Observer editorial which can be read by clicking [here](#). It strikes me there is, in reality, little that separates the Prime Minister's view (which I share) and the combined view of the Labour and Lib Dems

All three parties agree on a Royal Charter to establish a robust complaint procedures with real "teeth". The Observer (and of course this is a paper that is not known for it's

pro Tory views!) has another good item identifying the areas of dispute. I recommend a read by clicking [here](#) .

I am reliably informed that there is a good chance some agreement may yet be reached and I very much hope so.

HS2

I am meeting the Railways Minister Simon Burns MP later this week, to discuss HS2 and how it will affect Broxtowe. As you will know the plan is for the East Midlands Hub to be based at Toton Sidings. The line then goes up to Sheffield via Strelley Village, slicing through Nuthall.

The potential is hugely exciting bringing real opportunity for growth to Broxtowe, Nottingham and indeed Derby and to improve our infrastructure. But it is a long way off and is also controversial with huge implications for the Green Belt land at Toton, and with considerable disadvantages for those whose homes are on or near the planned route. These are all matters I will raise with Simon and many come from the letter I have sent to his boss, the Secretary of State Patrick McLoughlin. I will post the letter on my web site tomorrow.

If you have an interest in HS2 please check out an admittedly lengthy but nonetheless informative document on the scheme and the plans for Toton and the route through Broxtowe by clicking [here](#)

Ending cheap booze

You may have read last week that the Government is taking a long hard look at the minimum unit pricing of alcohol. Scotland has led the way with an MUP of 50p, however their plans face a rather large obstacle in the form of legal action from the Scottish Whisky Association. The Home Office did a huge consultation for a similar scheme in the rest of the UK with an MUP of 45p.

I was originally not convinced by MUP as my fear was that it would hit responsible moderate drinkers on lower incomes. A good example is a couple on a modest pension who buy a couple of bottles of wine to enjoy over a week. The minimum price for a bottle would be between £4.10 to £4.30. However, I then met a group of liver doctors and specialists who left me in no doubt that on health grounds MUP is a good idea. This is a really difficult area of policy and last week I heard Labour's Jack Straw (former Home Secretary) speak passionately in favour of MUP to reduce drunkenness and Labour's Ben Bradshaw (former Health Minister) speak equally passionately against it! I use two Labour MP's because it is silly for people to claim some Government "split"; this is not a party political issue and we need to engage in a grown up debate on a difficult subject.

I will await the result of the public consultation – I get the Health argument you can be sure. It is worth remembering MUP is no silver bullet; but stopping the sale of very

cheap beer would make a difference on both health and crime and disorder grounds, so perhaps we will see some announcements on duty in Wednesdays budget.

However, at the end of the day we are each of us responsible for the amount of alcohol we drink. Liver disease and alcohol related illnesses cost in human terms and cost the NHS billions of pounds a year so complacency is not an option.

The so called “bedroom tax”

This is not a tax; a tax is when you earn money and the Government takes some of it away. I think it’s also important to understand from the outset that Housing Benefit costs tax payers £23 billion a year – having gone up 50% in real terms in the last decade.

For a number of years now people who received Housing Benefit and rented in the private sector could not get that benefit if they had a spare room. The Government has extended those rules into the public housing sector – to cover Council and social housing. But it’s important to add that the changes will not affect pensioners, families with severely disabled children, foster parents and service personnel. We’ve put £50 million aside so they can keep a spare room if they need it.

The problem the changes will help solve is this; in the UK we have 1.8 million people on waiting lists, many of them families and we have 250,000 people living in overcrowded accommodation. But at the same time we have people living in Council or Housing Association homes, who receive Housing Benefit who have one or more spare bedrooms mainly because their children have grown up and left home. It’s been calculated we have about a million spare bedrooms.

So it seems only fair that there shouldn’t be a different set of benefit rules for people living in Council and Housing Association houses to people living in privately rented accommodation.

Of course it is difficult for someone who has lived in their home for many years to down size – but many people, as they get older move to a smaller more convenient home. Broxtowe Borough Council is offering up to £1,000 to help people move and I think many people appreciate it’s only fair to give family sized houses to families.

However, I have written to Broxtowe Borough Council to ask them how the changes are affecting people in the constituency. If the £50 million fund is not working I want to know and I also want to know if there is a shortage of one bed roomed homes or any other difficulties in implementing the scheme in the constituency. But overall I think these changes are fair and right.

The “38 Degrees” campaign group

Some constituents are signed up to “38 degrees” an internet campaigning group. Assurances from 38 degrees to some of their supporters have not assured me that they are independent and non party political. Despite repeated statements from

Conservative MP's, the Prime Minister and Health Ministers that the Government has no plans or intentions to privatise the NHS and that we believe in an NHS paid for by general taxation, free at the point of delivery and based on need not the ability to pay, they continue to assert the opposite. Based on my experience of this organisation they deliberately mislead and scaremonger good, well intentioned people who care about the NHS.

and finally...

Please call the office if you would like to make an appointment for my regular surgeries. I am in Nuthall next Saturday with surgeries in Stapleford, Chilwell and Beeston in the next few weeks.

Contact Anna Soubry MP

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