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Middle Street Resource Centre/ Wind Turbine application at Giltbrook/ Open cast debate in Parliament/ Nuthall Post Office/ Beeston BID/ Speeches on prisoner voting, and legal aid in Parliament/ Mayor's Charity Ball

February 23rd, 2011

Hello again,

I believe I have some good news about the future of the Middle Street Resource Centre in Beeston (see below). If it is right then I think it is proof that a reasoned and strong campaign can be successful, especially when it genuinely involves people of all and no political persuasions. Rather like the protest against the Government's consultation document on Forests. I am very pleased the document has been withdrawn and thank you to everyone who emailed me and played such a part in bringing about a change of mind. I had raised the matter with both the Secretary of State, Caroline Spelman and the Prime Minister, though he certainly needed no persuading. I thought it was both refreshing and courageous to hear Mrs Spelman admit in Parliament, that she and her team had made a mistake and she was sorry.

I have spent a lot of time in the chamber, in the last few week, and have spoken in a number of debates. You may not always agree with what I say but hope you will agree that Broxtowe does, at last, have a voice in Parliament. Hansard records everything that is said in Parliament and if you click on [this link](#) you will see the list of debates in which I've spoken or have made what is called an "intervention".

Middle Street Resource Centre

I am told that users of Middle Street can expect some very good news in March. Nottinghamshire County Council are in the final stages of approving plans, not just to keep the Resource Centre open but to spend more money on this excellent facility for people with mental health problems. If this is right then the decision will be a tribute to everyone at Middle Street who has campaigned to make sure it remained open. It's been a pleasure to assist the campaign (check out my letter as part of the public consultation on my web site www.anna4broxtowe.com) . I look forward to continuing to work with the users at Middle Street who are wonderful bunch of people who more than deserve our respect and support.

Giltbrook/Awsorth Wind Turbine

I attended a public meeting in Awsworth to discuss the application by Severn Trent to erect a single wind turbine between the village and Giltbrook. The meeting had been called by Awsworth Parish Council who, like Greasley Parish, have made their objections known to Broxtowe Borough Council who will consider the application.

I am not opposed to wind turbines in principle, indeed I take the view they can make an important contribution to our efforts to reduce our carbon emissions and increase our use of sustainable energy. I think it is wise for MP's to keep out of local planning decisions unless they are for significantly large schemes (see my comments on open cast mining below). However, I certainly share the concern about the height of this proposed wind turbine which would make it one of the tallest in Britain and means it would be highly visible to a significant number of people. I would urge people, of whatever opinion, who live in the area to make their views known to Broxtowe Borough Council – I am assured they will still take submissions. Please write to Mr M Bassett, Broxtowe Borough Council, Foster Avenue, Beeston , NG9 1AB. You should quote reference 10/00717/FUL.

Councillors are of course in the ridiculous position of disqualifying themselves from a planning decision if they have an opinion on it before the decision is taken! I was therefore surprised that the Labour Councillor for Kimberley has come out in support of the application.

Open cast mining at Cossall and Trowell

Parliament debated open cast mining and shortly afterwards I met with Parish, Borough and County Councillors to discuss the proposed application from UKCoal for an opencast mine between Cossall and Trowell. I had spoken in the debate ([click here and then go to Planning \(Opencast Mining Separation Zones\) Bill](#)) which was a Private Members Bill to introduce a 500 metre “buffer zone” between any open cast site and residential property. Both Scotland and Wales have the benefit of these zones and I think English communities need similar protection. The Bill was proposed by North West Leicestershire MP, Andrew Bridgen who has an application in his constituency. There was support for the Bill from both sides of the chamber but unfortunately the Government is not in favour. We “talked out” the Bill so it will return in October. Meanwhile, and at my suggestion, we are going to form an all party group on opencast and together will lobby ministers to help us achieve the “buffer zone” . It may be that the best course to try and protect villages like Trowell and Cossall (and our precious green belt) from opencast is to strengthen the planning arm of local authorities – after all the Coalition is meant to be all in favour of more localism!

I was a bit harsh on the Minister, Andrew Stunnell, but I did get a sort of acceptance to an invitation to visit the site between Cossall and Trowell ; County Councillor and fellow Lib Dem, Ken Rigby is going to follow it up with a formal invite.

Nuthall Post Office

As locals will know, the post master of Nuthall Post Office has, sadly, died and the Post Office is temporarily closed. There has been speculation about the future of the Post Office and I have contacted Royal Mail about what happens next. It may be a good idea to install a temporary post master/mistress until a permanent one comes forward; I will, of course,

keep you informed.

Beeston BID problems

I have been happy to give my support to the Beeston BID (Business Improvement District) which was started last October. The idea is that local businesses come together, raise a levy and use that money to invest in their area for everyone's benefit. The scheme is run by local businesses and the levy was agreed after a ballot of businesses in a defined part of Beeston. Broxtowe Borough Council has started to collect the money, which is then handed over directly to BID. Unfortunately, a rather serious problem seems to be emerging. I have had complaints that some businesses were not consulted and therefore unaware of the ballot. Even more disturbing, the local Scout Group has been asked to cough up £180 a year. As you can imagine I am taking this up with the Borough Council. In the meantime I would be grateful for any other business to contact me if they were not consulted.

Yes Minister?

I arranged a meeting with Nick Hurd MP the Minister for Civil Society and Broxtowe's Citizens Advice Bureau and Midland Womens Aid (who run the refuge in the constituency). He looked a tad surprised to face, not quite a monstrous regiment, but certainly a group of pretty determined middle aged women! The aim was to make him aware of the effect of proposed cuts in funding for both groups and their view (which appears justified) of the flaws in the application process for transitional funding (the Government has set aside £100 million for charities and voluntary groups who have had reductions in their public funding). I thought it was a very good meeting – with a free exchange of opinions. I just hope we get the right result – namely genuine access to these funds to enable excellent organisations to carry on their invaluable service to society.

Prisoner Voting

I was back in the Chamber following the meeting with Nick Hurd to speak in the prisoner voting debate You can read my contribution [by clicking here](#) and like the majority of MP's was subject to a strict time limit of five minutes, which is frankly not a long time to develop an argument!

I decided not to support the motion but to abstain. Please email me if you would like a detailed explanation as to why, but in short, although I do not believe prisoners should be able to vote, it doesn't much trouble me if someone who is in custody for six months retains the right. That's why I believe anyone sentenced to prison from the crown court should not be able to vote. I do think the European Court of Human Rights has strayed a long way from its original principles and is long overdue an MOT! But equally we are bound by International law and cannot pick and chose which judgements we obey and which ones we flout.

Respecting the privacy of arrested people

It was a good, long debate on my Private Members Bill ([click here and then click on Anonymity of Arrested Persons](#)), but lacking in support from either the Opposition or the Government it was sadly doomed. On the positive side it received some good publicity, including support from The Independent and I got a gentle ride from John Humphreys on

the Today programme. I do believe the argument was won and the Attorney General will now review the Contempt of Court Act to see how we can make sure, that what happened to the first man to be arrested in Bristol in connection with the murder of Joanna Yeates, never happens again.

Legal Aid debate

I spoke in the debate on the future of Legal Aid ([Legal Aid debate](#)) in Parliament and in particular expressed my concerns that Legal Aid would not be available for certain family and housing cases. I specifically raised examples sent to me by local solicitors and former colleagues at the bar. I continue to lobby Ministers on a private level about the very real need to make sure we continue to have fair access to justice and we do not penalise the most vulnerable in society, as we make the cuts in public expenditure that are necessary to restore the country's finances.

And finally – have a ball on Saturday 12th March.

The annual Mayors Charity Ball is at East Midlands Conference Centre on Saturday 12th March. Tickets are £30.00 for a three course dinner with dancing to the Beeston Big Band. This year's Mayor has chosen to support two charities; The Parish Pantry, Beeston which provides support for homeless and vulnerable adults. I know this charity and it does excellent work. I don't know the St George's Mother and Child Hospital, Umunumo, Nigeria but have no doubt it is equally worthy of support. I will be attending the ball and hope to see you there – let me know if you would like a ticket or two.

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