

Subject July Newsletter
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July Newsletter

Dear resident,

Please find below my monthly update on my activities in both the National Assembly and Montgomeryshire. It's difficult to mention all the groups I have met with recently, but it was a delight to meet with Guilsfield Primary School in the Senedd and I also attended The Motor Neurone Disease Association fundraiser event in Newtown last week.

It was also good to discuss police matters this week with Superintendent Jon Cummins, who is the Dyfed Powys Police BCU Commander for Powys. We were able to discuss a number of serious issues which have occurred in the constituency and related matters.

As always, if you feel that I can help in any way, please don't hesitate to contact me at russell.george@assembly.wales or on 01686 610887.

Best regards,



Russell George
National Assembly Member for Montgomeryshire

Changes to Health Services in Shropshire

Last November, the NHS Future Fit Programme Board recommended that the preferred option for consultation should be for the Emergency Centre and Women & Children's Centre to be based in Shrewsbury.

However, the Joint Committee of the Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) did not endorse this recommendation, with six Shropshire members voting for and six Telford & Wrekin members voting against, resulting in deadlock.

Further work was then commissioned which was tasked with changing the terms of reference of the Joint Committee so that a deadlock vote was less likely; an independent review of the decision-making process that led to last year's recommendation; and an additional Integrated Impact Assessment specifically in relation to the Women and Children's Services.

So, there still have to be at least two 'reviews', a public consultation, agreement by the CCGs and agreement from the UK Government to invest the £200 million needed to fund the project.

Both Glyn Davies MP and I have a long held view that reforming the area's emergency services is long overdue. Glyn has also written to the Shrewsbury and Telford NHS Trust asking that a target date be set for every stage left in the process with an aim for a final decision to be made before the end of 2017.

There will be another debate still to come so it will be important that the people of mid Wales are ready to make their views heard.

Health matters each side of the border

Last week, I also chaired a meeting of AMs which focussed on healthcare arrangements between England and Wales. We in Montgomeryshire access so many health services from England. The meeting heard from the Welsh NHS Confederation on the need to ensure that any divergent policies must be implemented in a way which accommodates the continuing flow of patients across the Wales-England border to ensure that patients receive coordinated treatment where it is most clinically appropriate.

We also heard from Community Pharmacy Wales on the differing rules which are causing issues for those who access services provided by pharmacies along the border between Wales and England such as different rules surrounding electronic prescriptions, discharge medicines and different pharmacist accreditation arrangements.

Newtown Bypass

I have been made aware of some innovative ideas which have been suggested by residents to mark the opening of the Newtown bypass. I think it would be a fantastic idea to hold a charity event, such as a run along the Newtown Bypass before it opens to the public.

I have raised the idea with the Welsh Government who seem to be on board and I hope the contractor will also see it as a good opportunity to eventually mark the completion of the project and declare it open while raising money for local good causes. I look forward to taking part in any event myself alongside other residents to christen the opening of the Newtown Bypass, which is a hugely important project for the Newtown and the wider Mid Wales region.

The development of the bypass could also encourage other local walking, running and cycle routes to be established in the area so that Newtown becomes an Active Travel Town so I see this idea as a good opportunity to promote physical activity too. I recently raised the ambition to develop an Active Travel network for pedestrians and cyclists in Newtown with the First Minister after Powys County Council were unsuccessful in their bid for funding.

The ambition is to see an improvement in the walking and cycling links between the railway station, town centre and the bus station as well as links between schools and colleges, housing areas in Newtown and the retail estates towards the east of the town. I was pleased to hear the First Minister confirm that he will look at allocating some in-year funds to the Powys active travel bid for Newtown and I will keep up the pressure on the Welsh Government to ensure that this ambitious project is afforded the necessary funding which will mean that this project becomes a reality.

Earlier this week I met up with Alun Griffiths contractors where I was able to view progress on the bypass. I also discussed security issues along the route, a number of road closures that have and need to take place, and other concerns about traffic delays whilst work is ongoing.

Marie Curie - Blooming Great Tea Party

I was pleased to join Marie Curie staff to support the "Blooming Great Tea Party" which ran from 23rd - 25th June and saw people from across Montgomeryshire get together with friends, family or colleagues to host a tea party, bake sale or special tea break to raise funds for Marie Curie.

In Montgomeryshire, Marie Curie has around eight nurses providing care and support, typically between 10pm and 7am. The work which Marie Curie Nurses carry out to care for and support people living with a terminal illness is truly outstanding.

For my part, I have pledged to help ensure that any constituents who have a terminal illness know what services and benefits they are entitled to; and to work with local NHS services to improve access to and quality of palliative care for those who need it.

Direct Rail Services to Birmingham

The Welsh Government has provided reassurance over the timetabling of services and direct rail services to Birmingham as part of the next Wales and Borders Rail Franchise which comes into force in October 2018.

I questioned the Welsh Government in this area last month, and I was pleased that the Government confirmed that direct services to Birmingham would be a condition of the new franchise and that the current service frequency would be maintained especially as concerns had been raised by groups representing passengers about the possibility of splitting the current Aberystwyth to Birmingham International service, with trains on the Cambrian line terminating in Shrewsbury rather than Birmingham International, as they do now.

This would have inconvenienced a large number of passengers and would have had a negative impact on the Mid Wales economy so I am pleased that the Welsh Government has made this commitment to retain direct services between Birmingham and Aberystwyth.

Superfast Broadband

While the Superfast Cymru project has undoubtedly improved the availability of fibre broadband across Wales, the project is also still plagued with communications issues, which see residents being told one month that they'll have access to fibre broadband by a certain date, only to be told a few weeks later that they won't receive it at all. This is unacceptable and I have sought assurances from the Welsh Government that the successor scheme, which is due to begin in January 2018, has a contractual obligation built into it that will see an improvement in public communications.

I would like to encourage you to view the interactive map of those premises which will be included as part of the successor scheme and take part in the public consultation which closes on 13th July to ensure that all premises which should be included, are included in the new scheme so that nobody in Montgomeryshire misses out unnecessarily.

The interactive map is available here - <http://lle.gov.wales/map/ngaomr2017>

and the public consultation is available by following this link to the Welsh Government website:

<https://consultations.gov.wales/consultations/next-generation-access-broadband>

I will also be holding a Broadband Summit on 17th July in Newtown at which the Welsh Government Minister responsible for the Superfast Cymru programme, Julie James AM, and BT will provide a specific update for community leaders on progress in rolling out fibre broadband in Montgomeryshire and the next steps to improve connectivity to those who are yet to receive an upgrade. I will provide an update on the outcome of this meeting in my next newsletter.

Advice Surgeries

I will be at the following events. Please do contact me by phone on 01686 610887 or by email: russell.george@assembly.wales if you would like to meet with me.

- Machynlleth Carnival – Saturday 22 July
- Dolfor Show – Saturday 5 August
- Trefeglwys Show – Saturday 5 August
- Llanfyllin Show – Saturday 12 August
- Llangurig Show – Saturday 12 August

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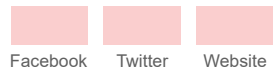
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