

01/11/2024

Well, what a week we've had. The Budget announcement is finally here, and while there are a few welcome developments for North Cornwall, it's also clear we have a long way to go. I'm afraid to say that Cornwall seems to have been overlooked once again.

The £1 billion boost for SEND provision itself is absolutely a welcome announcement, and I'm proud of the role we played in pushing for this outcome following our SEND Summit in Bodmin, and subsequent question to the Chancellor on Tuesday. Parents, carers, and teachers all spoke passionately at our gathering, and this funding increase is only the start of the fight to address the fundamental challenges in our SEND system. As your MP, I'll keep advocating for adequate resources and reforms to make sure families in North Cornwall get the support they need.

However, there are many major disappointments in this Budget. For a start, the cuts to the winter fuel allowance will hit our vulnerable pensioners hard, and I'll be pushing back against these reductions that affect those who can least afford it. Meanwhile, the Labour government continues to sidestep the urgent need for social care reform. Social care is a crisis we can no longer ignore; it's clear from countless conversations with families and healthcare providers that the system needs a complete overhaul. We're calling on the government to exempt social care from the employer's National Insurance tax rise and to take serious action to alleviate the growing pressure on our NHS.

Our farmers, too, are facing very tough times, and now with the Labour government's changes to Agricultural Property Relief, family farms are truly under threat. For many of our rural communities, these farms are the backbone of our economy and culture, and it's absolutely unacceptable that they may now face insurmountable inheritance tax bills when passing farms down to the next generation.

This policy poses a serious risk to food security and to Cornwall's agricultural heritage, and I'll be standing firmly alongside our farmers as we fight for fairer treatment.

Transport and infrastructure have also been key topics. This week, I asked for a Commons debate on how National Highways and the Government can work together to ensure critical infrastructure projects like the Plusha graded junction finally get the green light. Safety on our A-roads is non-negotiable, and I'll keep pushing for real progress that reduces accidents and fatalities across North Cornwall.

On a slightly brighter note, it was fantastic to get out and about to meet residents in Bude. Issues such as roadworks, youth services, and the need for more mental health resources for veterans were raised, and I'll be following up with Cormac to discuss adjustments to the roadworks schedule and looking into additional support for our young people and disabled community members.

Thanks again to everyone who has reached out recently, and also to those who attended the SEND summit last weekend. I'm planning to hold a series of these focussing on a variety of pressing issues, and will advertise these as and when we've finalised details.

Ben Maguire

Liberal Democrat MP for North Cornwall

ben.maguire.mp@parliament.uk

—ENDS—