

Laurence Robertson MP

Member of parliament for Tewkesbury



MP APPLAUDS DECISION ON BUILDING

Tewkesbury MP Laurence Robertson has welcomed the Secretary of State's decision to reject the appeal by Hitchens to build on land between Innsworth and Longford.

Mr Robertson has long campaigned against this planning application and appeal and has said that it is the right decision.

"I am very pleased indeed by the decision to reject Hitchens's appeal" says Mr Robertson. "I and many others have fought a long campaign to have the appeal turned down and its very good to have won the day.

"The area is Green Belt land and that is what the Secretary of State has focused on. The new government said that it would protect the Green Belt and this decision demonstrates that they meant exactly that.

"It also demonstrates that the government means what it says about decisions being taken locally. This should act as a warning to other developers who think they can just ride roughshod over the views of local people."

Date of Release: 1st July 2010 Time of Release: 10.00am

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MP INVESTIGATES RISE IN ANTIDEPRESSANT PRESCRIBING

Tewkesbury MP Laurence Robertson has expressed concern at the increase in the number of prescriptions being issued to treat depression.

Mr Robertson tabled a Parliamentary Question to ask how many people were being treated for depression. That information is not collected centrally but the Health Minister, Simon Burns, provided Mr Robertson with the numbers of prescription items dispensed.

In 2006-7, a total of 31.3 million items of antidepressants were dispensed in England but this rose to 39.7 million in 2009-10, an increase of 27%. In Gloucestershire, a total of 370,900 were issued in 2006-7 rising to 481,900 in 2009-10, an increase of 30%.

"I have been concerned for a while about the increase in the use of antidepressant tablets and the number of people being prescribed them" says Mr Robertson.

"Although these figures don't tell us how many people are being treated in this way for depression, the increase in the number of prescription items is worrying. I will be looking into why this increase has taken place.

"I don't know if the prescribing policy has changed or if there are more people suffering from depression but I think this needs finding out. The scale of increase over just a four year period has to be of concern.

"I am holding a meeting with the local health chiefs next week in London and this is one of the issues I will raise. I will also seek to raise the matter further with the government."

Date of Release: 13th July 2010

Time of Release: 11.00am

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Laurence Robertson MP asks what the cost of rheumatoid arthritis is in Tewkesbury

30 June 2010 – Local MP Laurence Robertson met members from the National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society (NRAS) to ask how rheumatoid arthritis (RA) affects not just the health of his constituents but the health of the economy.

A recent report from the charity found that the costs to the UK economy of the condition arising from productivity losses total almost £8 billion this is about £12 million per UK Parliamentary constituency. However, spending by NHS Gloucestershire on RA was £11.77 per head of population in 2008/09

RA is a chronic and disabling autoimmune disease, affecting about 690,000 people in the UK. It has no known cause or cure. It remains a major cause of worklessness – almost 30% of people with RA surveyed by NRAS in 2007 gave up work within a year of being diagnosed with the condition.

The Public Accounts Committee report on services for people with rheumatoid arthritis highlighted significant variations in the spending on and quality of services for people with RA and other musculoskeletal conditions across the country. Yet, it also recommended that earlier diagnosis and treatment could not only limit the progression of the disease but also deliver significant savings for the NHS and wider economy.

Laurence Robertson MP commented, *'People with rheumatoid arthritis deserve to receive the care and treatment on the NHS and I commend the work of NRAS in highlighting the variations in spend and in the quality of service across the country. I will be speaking to the local NHS to find out what they are doing to tackle both the health and economic burden of rheumatoid arthritis'*.

Ailsa Bosworth, Chief Executive of NRAS said: *'It is crucial that rheumatoid arthritis patients are diagnosed and treated early. This will not only ensure that patients receive best prognosis and are able to remain active and in work but will also help the NHS realise the savings it needs to make over the next few years by reducing the need for costly interventions and inpatient stays We urge the Government to address the recommendations from the Public Accounts Committee as a priority.'*

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MP WELCOMES DELAY ON INNSWORTH DECISION

Tewkesbury MP Laurence Robertson has welcomed the decision by Communities and Local Government Secretary, Eric Pickles, to delay a decision on an application to build on land West of Innsworth Lane and North of the A40 in Innsworth.

Mr Robertson wrote to Mr Pickles on his appointment and urged him to reject the application by Hitchens as the land is Green Belt. Mr Robertson also asked Mr Pickles about the mechanics of stopping the Regional Spatial Strategy process.

"I wrote to Eric Pickles to highlight the fact that the land in question is Green Belt and suggesting that he takes a closer look at the application, given the enormous opposition there is to it" says Mr Robertson.

"I'm pleased that Eric is now delaying his decision, albeit for a few weeks, so that he consider the matter. It will also give me the opportunity to make further representations to him about the application, which I will certainly do".

Mr Pickles is expected to now take a decision by 30th June.

Date of Release: 2nd June 2010 Time of Release: 12 noon

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MP CALLS FOR LOCAL BENEFITS ASSESSMENTS

Tewkesbury MP Laurence Robertson has raised a question about how benefits claims are assessed in the House of Commons today.

Mr Robertson said that the benefit claims of his Tewkesbury constituents were assessed in Cornwall and it would be better if they were assessed locally.

"The Secretary of State has said that, in the 100 years since their formation, Job Centre and Benefits offices have been modernised" said Mr Robertson. "Yet benefit claimants from Tewkesbury have their claims assessed in Cornwall.

"Wouldn't it be far better for those claims to be assessed locally, preferably on a face to face basis wherever possible? This would ensure greater accuracy and a more personal service."

The Secretary of State, Yvette Cooper, said that people could still call into the JobCentre Plus offices for advice, but Mr Robertson is not satisfied by this response.

"It is my understand that the staff in JobCentre Plus offices give advice on other matters but do not now give advice on claiming benefits. I have had people come to my local office for help when the JobCentre Plus office is just yards away because they were struggling with their claims.

"I make no criticism of Job Centre Plus staff as they are obviously following the rules they are given, but if they do not advise on benefits claims then the answer from the Secretary of State was, in part, misleading. I shall take this up with her again."

Date of Release: 1st February 2010

Time of Release: 3.30pm

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MP QUESTIONS FUTURE OF DSDA

Tewkesbury MP Laurence Robertson has been told by Defence Minister Quentin Davies that "no decisions have been taken to sell the DSDA in whole or in part" in an answer to a question Mr Robertson asked in the House of Commons.

Mr Robertson is concerned about the future of the Ashchurch site following reports that its operations may be moved to Donnington.

"It is the future of this site that I am trying to establish" says Mr Robertson.

"On 25th January, I will be bringing the Shadow Defence Minister, Gerald Howarth MP, to the site and we will be talking to senior officers and union officials about the future of the site.

"My belief is that it would be expensive to move the operation to another site and there would also be the extra costs of training people on the new site to be added. Additionally, quite a bit of money has already been spent on the Ashchurch site recently.

"I am, therefore, doing all I can to protect the future of the Ashchurch site and will continue to press for answers, as well as providing information to the Shadow Defence team, as the decision may well fall to them later in the year."

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Time of Release: 9.00am