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The Gazette

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New GP Surgeries: A shot in the arm for Weston



■ John Penrose at Weston Hospital

Weston-super-Mare MP John Penrose is delighted that three years of hard work have paid off and the Government is providing extra funding for two new GP surgeries

Since becoming MP for Weston-super-Mare and the villages in 2005, John Penrose has been making the case to Government Ministers in Westminster that the area needs more GPs, and that our local healthcare funding is £9 million lower than the Government's own figures say it should be.

John said: "It sounds like the Government's finally sat up and listened. They've provided new money to open at least one or maybe even two new surgeries in Weston. While it doesn't wipe out the £9million shortfall, it's a step in the right direction, and one we can build on.

"The new health plans mean that rural GP practices should do well too. GP surgeries will be offered the chance to grow, and to deliver a wider range of medical services in future.

"But there are some legitimate concerns that one of these surgeries, the proposed GP-led Health Centre near the seafront, could be a 'polyclinic' in disguise. The problem with 'polyclinics' is that it would mean the end of the traditional personal relationship between patients and their local GPs. So I'm going to watch developments very closely to make sure that these local plans aren't the thin end of a larger wedge and are beneficial to Weston."

"The weighting's over"

New weight restrictions on long-distance heavy lorries on the A368 will relieve traffic pressure on Banwell, Sandford, Churchill and Langford

The new weight restrictions have been installed between Churchill traffic lights and Burrington Coombe. They should reduce the number of long-distance HGVs cutting through Banwell, Sandford and Churchill, or along Stock Lane through Langford, on their way to Burrington Coombe and the 'Mendip motorway'. HGVs making deliveries to local firms will be exempt from the restrictions.

Mr Penrose, who has been calling for the restrictions since 2003, said: "This is fantastic news. Traffic problems in Banwell and our other local villages have been getting steadily worse for years. Lorries have been driving down country lanes that were simply never designed for them. It only takes one HGV in Banwell's narrows to back the traffic up,

creating enormous queues in both directions. This ban won't solve all our traffic problems, but it's an important step in the right direction."



■ John Penrose surveying traffic in Banwell

John Penrose MP - Working for you all year round

MP accuses Government of failing to tackle Poverty

Weston-super-Mare MP John Penrose has accused the Government of failing to tackle pensioner and child poverty as official figures indicate that they have increased over the last year

In the House of Commons, John Penrose MP invited ministers to Weston-super-Mare to come and see the problems for themselves. The seaside town has some of the most deprived areas in the country and the situation is getting worse.

John said: "We're all suffering from the rising costs of a gallon of petrol, a loaf of bread or a pint of



milk, but the most vulnerable people are being hit the hardest. Pensioners are suffering from inflation which is far higher than the Government's official figures, so their pensions are being stretched further and further to pay for basic costs of living. And a few areas of Weston have children who are growing up in households which are amongst the two percent poorest in Britain, according to the Government's own figures.

"The benefits and tax credits system is so appallingly complex and slow that too many people don't know whether they'll be better off in work or out of it. By the time they've arranged an appointment with an expert to figure it all out, it's too late and the job has been taken by someone else. People haven't got time to become experts about the benefits system. The Government has to make it obvious to everyone that they'll be better off with a job unless they're retired or too ill to work."



In Parliament, John Penrose MP has accused the Government of failing the most vulnerable in Weston-super-Mare and the villages

May Fair on the Green

Weston-super-Mare MP John Penrose was joined by the town crier, 'Pluto' Venn, to open the popular May Fair on the Green in Winscombe



(Photo: Bob Bowen)

The fair, which was held on the Old Station Millennium Green in Winscombe, is an annual event in the village to raise money for the Green's upkeep and maintenance. The event always proves extremely popular, attracting people from far and wide with its fun afternoon of maypole dancing, games and prizes, stalls and rides and even Punch and Judy.

Speaking afterwards, MP John Penrose said: "It's great to see the local community coming together and raising money for the Millennium Green. The area has always been an important part of the village, first as the rail station and now as the village green. It's fantastic that it's still a central part of community life in the village."

Government's Secret Hostel

Local MP John Penrose has discovered that the Government has opened a bail hostel in Weston-super-Mare which houses offenders on early release from prison. In spite of Government assurances, local people have not been consulted

Mr Penrose said: "The Government's got some explaining to do. They've said that the private company in charge of the hostel programme, ClearSprings, had to consult with local residents and authorities before they opened any of these hostels, but no-one



knew anything about it. If local residents had their say it would've been obvious that Weston-super-Mare is the last place that these hostels should go.

"Weston needs this like a hole in the head. The early release criminals in these hostels will include people who've been jailed for anti-social behaviour and drugs crimes. Ever since I was elected we've been closing drugs rehabs and cutting the number of addicts sent to Weston, but now the Government's started sending them back again under a different scheme.

"They created the mess because they haven't built enough prison places to cope with these criminals, so now they're letting them out early and sending them to Weston. They've got to stop treating our town as a dumping ground for other people's problems."

Every week John Penrose MP holds a surgery at different locations around the constituency.

For help, advice or to make an appointment, please contact Grace Roper in John's constituency office on

01934 613841

To find out more about John Penrose's work - visit his website at

www.johnpenrose.co.uk

John Penrose MP - Working for you all year round

MP Welcomes **VIPs** to Westminster

Local MP John Penrose welcomed eleven-year-old Sophie-Louise Andrew of Weston and four of her friends from Uphill Primary School to Westminster for a tour of the Houses of Parliament and tea on the terrace following her fundraising help with Weston Hospicecare in March this year

At the time, ever bubbly Sophie-Louise was nearing the end of a six month course of radio and chemotherapy to blast a malignant brain tumour.

John said: "It was great to see Sophie-Louise again and meet her friends from Uphill School at the House of Commons. Showing real fighting force and spirit, Sophie-Louise's story, and that of her family, is one of incredible bravery and

courage and we were honoured with her help in our Weston Hospicecare fundraising drive. Sophie's great fun and I was delighted that she took me up on my offer to come up to London for the day to thank her for all her help for such a worthy cause."

■ **John with star guests Sophie-Louise, her friends and Nan on the House of Commons Terrace**



Pharmacies taking extra care



■ **John Penrose MP meets pharmacist Jenny Wong, patients Eugene Duffy and Lynfa Colburn, and pharmacy technician Sylvia Clarke at Worle pharmacy**

Weston-super-Mare MP John Penrose met with pharmacists and patients at Lloyds Pharmacy in Worle to learn about the new health services they offer

The new expanded pharmacies don't just dispense prescriptions. They will also check your medication, test your blood glucose and cholesterol levels, check for diabetes and provide emergency contraception. They'll even help people lead healthier lifestyles, including stopping smoking and losing weight.

John Penrose said: "Nowadays community pharmacies do more than simply dispensing medicines; many of them offer health screening, help and support for people with long-term health conditions, and advice on how to live a healthier lifestyle too. Lots of people don't know about these new services which may be available from their local pharmacy, but don't want to go to the trouble of visiting their GP when they aren't feeling ill. For them, it's definitely worth checking what support is available."

MP to take Government on over Severn Tidal Power Study

MP John Penrose is demanding a parliamentary debate after evidence suggests that the Government's Severn Tidal Power Feasibility Study has a built in pro-barrage bias

The feasibility study is supposed to compare all the different ways of harnessing the Severn's power, so a fair and unbiased decision is made. But a new EU law would give the Government extra credit for building a barrage instead of any other projects. That gives them a big incentive to choose a barrage, even if one of the other projects would be better.

John said: "Choosing the best way to harness the Severn's tidal power is an incredibly important decision that has to be taken fairly and without bias. It's Britain's biggest single potential source of renewable energy and we'll be living with the consequences for centuries.

"But I'm afraid the Government is building in bias before they've even finished weighing all the options. Ministers promised they'd give all the different technologies a fair chance, but I can't see how they can say that now. For all our sakes, they have to give each project a fair hearing before they make a decision."



John Penrose MP - Working for you all year round

Post Office closures go ahead...and more could be on the way

Government to look into M5 Junction 21 misery

MP John Penrose has been promised by Transport Secretary of State Ruth Kelly that she will look into the problems of Junction 21 after the Weston-super-Mare MP attacked the Government on its failure to relieve congestion



■ Traffic at Junction 21 is unbearable

In the House of Commons, John Penrose MP told the Government that local residents have been suffering from deadlock and misery at the junction, and the Government needed to fix the problem.

John Penrose said: "At the moment, thousands of residents are suffering every single day with the jams and queues on malfunction junction. 20,000 Westonians commute via car or train to Bristol every single day and the delays and congestion are causing frustration and misery.

"We need to make Weston more sustainable by bringing more jobs to the town before we build any more houses, so fewer people have to commute into Bristol to work every day. We need better trains and buses so commuters have a decent alternative to their cars. And our road network needs serious investment to unblock the jams. I'm delighted that the Government have finally sat up and listened. Now they need to take action to put things right."



■ Local Residents and Councillors joined MP John Penrose marching to save Weston's Post Offices
(Photo: Bob Bowen)

Local MP John Penrose is bitterly disappointed at the Post Office's decision to close six branches in the area, in spite of strong opposition from local residents

Mr Penrose, who organised protest marches in Weston-super-Mare and took the issue directly to Government Ministers in Westminster, said: "I'm extremely disappointed by Post Office Limited's decision to close these branches. Post Offices are the heart of our communities and these closures will be a hammer blow to community life. Many people, especially those who are the most vulnerable in society, will suffer heavily from these cuts.

"Local people made their feelings known in a strong campaign to save the branches. I had over 2,000 people signing petitions and writing letters of support. Many also braved the rain in a protest march over Monks Hill from Kewstoke post office to the nearest alternative branch in Milton Road, Worle.

"But Post Office Limited have ignored the unanimous opinions of local people and have steam-rolled ahead with the closures

anyway. And now it looks like the Government might be coming back for round two with the threatened removal of the Post Office Card Account.

"The Account gives branches vital revenue to help them keep afloat and without it, some branches will make a loss and be vulnerable to the next round of closures. They should either leave the Card Account with the Post Office to preserve vital branches for the future, or find other ways of cutting costs and raising revenues to prevent more closures."

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Here is your chance to tell John Penrose MP what you think about any issue. Please write your comments to John here....(please attach extra sheets of paper if necessary)

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Email address _____

Please return to
John Penrose, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

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John Penrose MP - Working for you all year round