Ben Dempsey's Monday Mail

East Grinstead, Uckfield & the Villages – 23rd November 2026

This is the first of a series of regular updates from our Lib Dem campaign in East Grinstead, Uckfield and the villages.

I'll share some of the things I've been up to, and also thoughts on issues that have been in the news.

Isfield, Danehill and Chailey

Recently I've been meeting people in Isfield alongside Cllr Christina Coleman. We had a very positive response from residents, especially for Christina's decision to join the Lib Dems from the Green Party. Many people we spoke to agreed with her, that the Green Party has moved away from them and the Lib Dems are a better home for people who care about inclusion as well as strong commitment to protecting our environment.

In Danehill, we visited the Coach and Horses, where Christina is part of the campaign to raise community funds to buy the pub and keep it locally owned. It's a wonderful village pub, and the campaign to raise investment is a great example of people coming together to protect an important part of our community. If you want to invest there's still time, and you can find out more here: Keep Coach & Horses Local — a village pub worth saving, Danehill



In Chailey I went to the drop-in event of Don't Urbanise the Downs, which is attempting to stop the building of a 3,000 house new town on the edge of the East Grinstead & Uckfield constituency. These

proposals have been roundly rejected by the community and the council before, and I strongly support the campaign to oppose them.

We need the right kind of housing in the right places – especially low-cost and social housing with good infrastructure and a sustainable water supply. These proposals would not deliver that, nor protect our environment.

Planning is one of the most significant issues facing communities across our constituency, and I will talk about it a lot more over the coming weeks and months.

A tale of two summits

Beyond our immediate area, I was closely watching two summits taking place last week. The first, between Presidents Trump, Putin and Xi, left me aghast. For Donald Trump to describe Putin his 'friend' was sickening. More broadly, it was a clear indication from Trump of how he sees the world – autocratic leaders making decisions and leaving others out of the picture.

It made it even clearer to me that the UK simply must have a closer relationship with Europe. In a world of large powers like the US and China, we will be safest and most prosperous by working with our European allies.

For that reason, I was pleased to see the UK government make progress at the summit between the UK and EU. The proposed youth mobility scheme is something that Lib Dem MP for Lewes, James MacCleary, proposed with a parliamentary bill earlier this year. It will give young people the ability to live, work and travel across Europe – opening up opportunities for them and strengthening ties with our neighbours. The cutting of some Brexit red tape will also be very welcome for our farmers and producers who export to our biggest market.

But we need to go further. In the first instance we need to rejoin the Single Market fully, and negotiate a new Growth and Defence partnership with the EU. I would like to see us rejoin the EU as soon as practicable.

At the next general election, there will be a clear choice in East Grinstead, Uckfield and the villages – by voting for me people will know they are voting for a closer relationship with Europe, and the extra prosperity and security that brings.