

9th March 2007

Soames Joins New All-Party Group on Rural Services

Nicholas Soames MP, is a founder member of a new, cross-Party Parliamentary Group on rural services.

The All Party Group on Rural Services is an initiative of over 70 members of both Houses of Parliament looking to raise the political profile of key rural services issues, such as post offices, village schools and community hospitals.

At its first meeting the Group identified a series of issues it wished to address as part of its work programme. These include:-

- the funding formulae used by government to allocate money for rural services and the additional cost of providing services in the countryside
- fuel poverty
- banks and banking services
- transport and access to services, road-pricing
- health service provision, including specialist services
- fire and emergency services in remote areas
- policing the countryside
- affordable housing

The Group will, as a first step, inquire into and produce a report on the future of rural post offices, to include positive recommendations for their future role.

Commenting on the formation of the Group, Nicholas said; "I am delighted to lend my support to the All Party Group on Rural Services. It will provide a strong basis upon which to campaign on issues affecting the villages and rural communities of Mid Sussex. The Group comes at a crucial time for the countryside, with hot topics, such as the future of post offices, rural schools and hospitals and transport all high on the agenda.

“We will not be a talking shop, but a Group with a clear commitment to produce recommendations on the issues that count in rural communities. I look forward to working with my colleagues on all sides of both Houses to secure a better deal for the countryside and for the people of Mid Sussex.”