

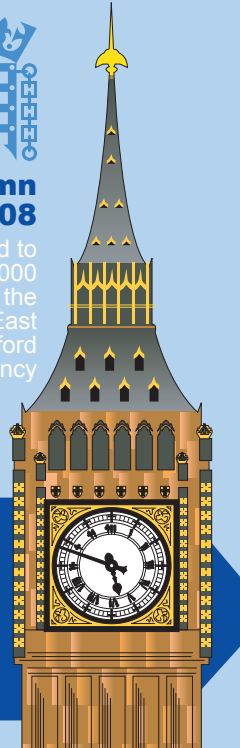


# James Duddridge MP IN TOUCH WITH JAMES



Autumn  
2008

Delivered to  
over 31,000  
residents in the  
Southend East  
and Rochford  
Constituency



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# Post Office saved!



**JAMES Duddridge, MP for Rochford and Southend East, was pleased to join Charlie and Mohinder Bhogal to celebrate the news that the Post Office on Sutton Road had been spared from being closed down as part of an ongoing national programme to reduce the number of post offices.**

James said, "I am overjoyed that the hard work put in by Charlie and Mohinder in running a vital community asset hasn't been ignored. Local people all over Rochford and Southend depend on our local Post Offices, and it is especially a lifeline for elderly residents."

The campaign to save the

Post Office involved a petition with over 1,000 signatures which James presented on the doorstep of Number 10, Downing Street. James also added his name to an Early Day Motion in the House of Commons which urged the Post Office to seek alternatives to the closure of existing branches.

Charlie Bhogal commented, "I want to thank all my customers who have been so supportive, as well as James Duddridge.

"We give a good service for the elderly people who can't easily get into the town centre... It is really fantastic news."

While the future of Sutton Road Post Office is secure for the moment, James is very much aware of the need to remain vigilant. As is evidenced by the sad loss of Post Offices elsewhere, there are no cast iron guarantees.

James reflected, "Whilst it is great news that Sutton Road is going to remain open, my own joy is tempered by the fact that other parts of the local community are losing out through this review. I would say to everyone currently using the Post Office on Sutton Road that they should keep on doing so, and encourage others to make use of it, because at the end of the day these small businesses are a big part of what helps to shape our local communities. They offer people the convenience of being close at hand and also somewhere to meet and interact with each other."

James with Charlie and Mohinder Bhogal celebrating outside the Sutton Road Post Office



James celebrates the handover of the Olympic Torch in Southend



James discussing plans for a new football stadium with Jeremy Hunt (Shadow Minister at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport)

James enjoys a Shoebury fete!

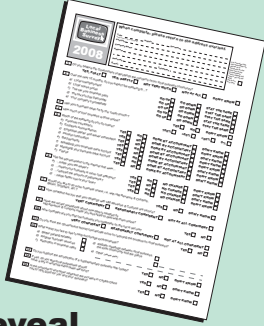


[www.jamesduddridge.com](http://www.jamesduddridge.com)



# Local businesses hit by credit crunch

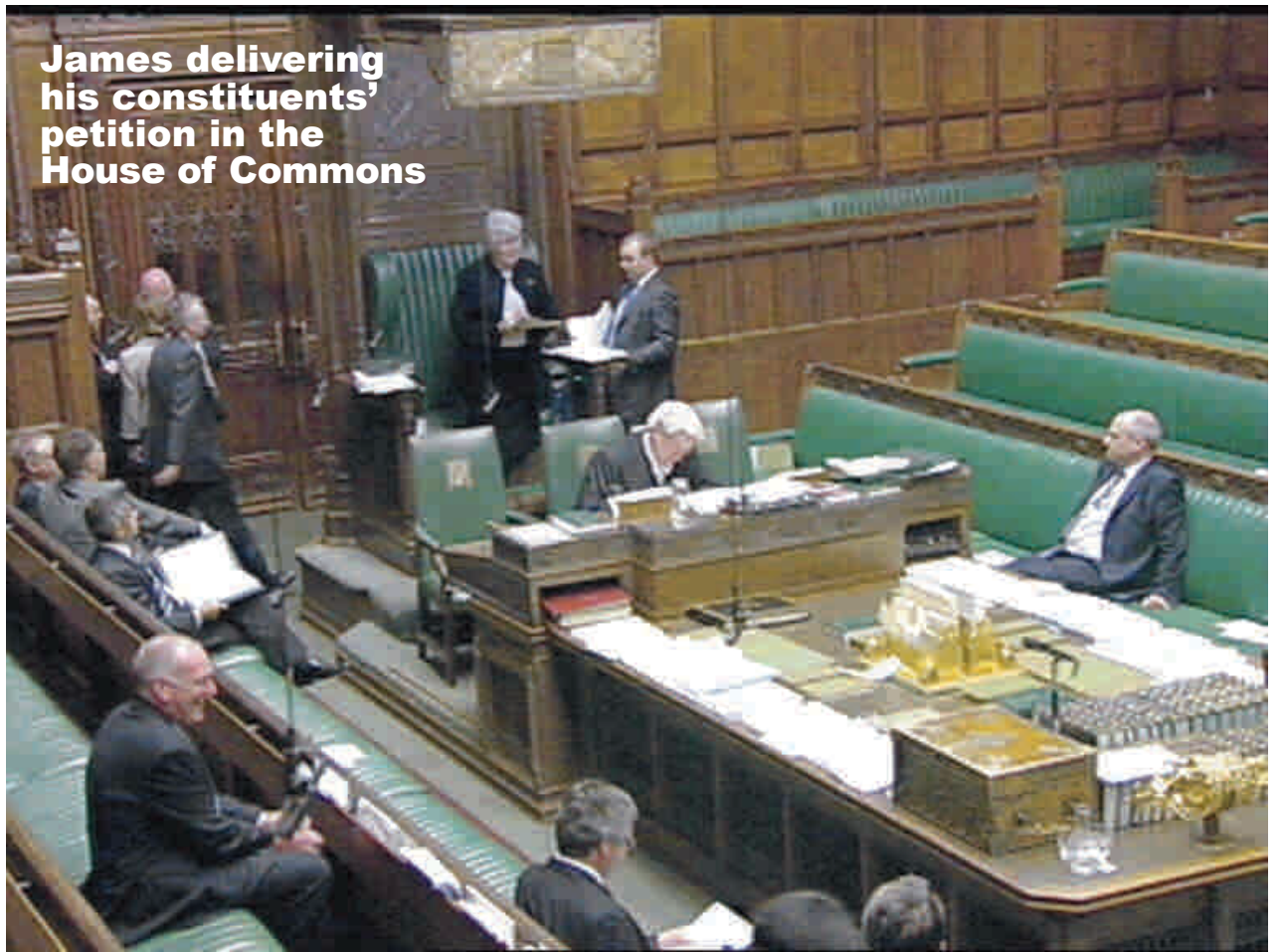
**SCORES of business owners sent in their responses to our last business survey. Now that the results have been collected we can reveal what the mood is amongst the business community within Rochford and Southend East.**



- **61%** of local business owners feel that local unemployment will go up within the next 12 months.
- **59%** told us that their business has been hit by the recent credit crunch.
- **57%** feel that local house prices are going to plummet whilst **78%** are projecting that the taxes their businesses pay will increase.

Commenting on the results James had this to say, "Well firstly, I'm very grateful to all those who took time out of their working day to fill in the questionnaire; without this sort of first hand information it can be hard to form an accurate picture of what current business sentiment is.

"Secondly, it does concern me that there is such widespread pessimism currently being expressed by local businesses, and I worry what the effects of a prolonged economic slow down will do to both these businesses and the local people they employ. As the credit crunch rumbles on I pledge to examine any sensible measure to help sustain the livelihoods of those living in Rochford and Southend East."



**James delivering his constituents' petition in the House of Commons**

# Southend Driving Test Centre to close

**ON 26th August James was informed by the Department for Transport that the Driving Standards Agency had taken the decision to close the driving test centre at Prittlewell Chase in Southend-on-Sea.**

The Driving Standards Agency launched a joint consultation on the proposed closure of the Southend centre and the resulting purchase of a new site in Basildon in February 2008.

## PETITION

By the time the consultation had closed on 9th May 2008, some 3,000 local residents had signed a petition to stop the closure of the local driving test centre. James also held an adjournment debate in the House of Commons on the subject in June along with his colleagues from neighbouring constituencies.

## VOCAL OPPOSITION

Yet, despite the vocal opposition expressed by local residents and James at all levels of Government, the Driving Standards Agency have decided to ignore the concerns surrounding the closure of Southend's test centre. These were numerous, but specifically, that the new centre will mean learner drivers having to travel some ten miles to reach the new centre at Basildon. This breaks the Driving Standards Agency's own code of guidance which

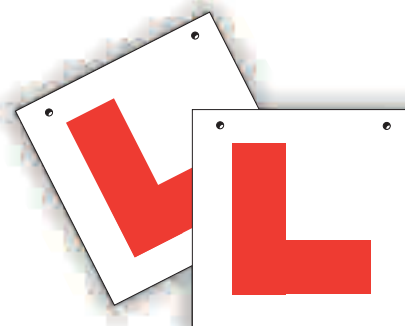
states that towns with a population the size of Southend's should have access to a test centre no further than seven miles away.

James said, "It seems slightly ludicrous that, whilst we're all being told to rein in our use of cars and planes because of the damage they do to the environment, the Driving Standards Agency will now be forcing people to travel even greater distances just to take their driving test. Young drivers often use the roads around test centres to learn how to drive so they are best prepared for their test, the closure of Southend driving test centre will mean that they'll have to make a return journey to Basildon for each driving lesson. Not only is this bad news for local air quality but also for other drivers who already struggle with heavy congestion on the A127."

What makes the closure particularly galling is that, according to documentation filed with Basildon District Council, planning permission for the new test centre in Basildon was sought last December, many weeks before the consultation on the closure of Southend's centre was even due to start.

## SERIOUS QUESTIONS

James commented, "Given this evidence, I'm really left with only one conclusion, and that is the public consultation, so widely touted by the Driving Standards Agency was nothing more than a sham, little more than a patronising show of concern from the Driving Standards Agency who had probably already made up their minds to close our local driving test centre. There are some serious questions to be asked about the consultation and specifically about when the developers were instructed to start building the new centre in Basildon and whether there will now be any changes to the building's design to accommodate the extra demand, given that Southend is to close. My suspicion is that there won't be because the Driving Standards Agency and their contractors have already built the centre with that extra capacity already in mind because they'd decided to close the Southend's driving test centre before the public consultation had finished."







## Sign up to James' monthly eNewsletter!

In addition to providing updates via his website, James also sends out a monthly electronic newsletter. This provides information on what he's been up to, what he is going to be doing and information about events and campaigns in Rochford and Southend East. If you'd like to sign up, or know someone who would then all they need to do is write to [james@jamesduddridge.com](mailto:james@jamesduddridge.com) to be added to the list.



## Voter registration information

Elections are a serious business; those elected carry a heavy responsibility to serve not just those who voted for them, but all those who actually voted. It's so important then that as many people as are eligible ensure they are registered to vote. These days it's a pretty simple business.

If you have access to the internet then the best place to visit is

**[www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk)**

This website is run by the Electoral Commission, the independent public body who are responsible for the administration of elections in the United Kingdom. The site enables you to fill in your details, print off a customised form and will even give you the address to send it to.

Alternatively you can contact Southend Borough Council's own Electoral Helpline on Electoral Helpline on **01702 215116** to speak to someone about any queries you have from postal voting to voter registration.

So if you find yourself with a few minutes spare why not make sure you're on the electoral roll. It's especially important with European Elections coming up in June 2009.

**Make sure your voice is heard, make sure you're registered to vote!**

## RNLI boat naming ceremony



Photograph: Courtesy Mr Sedgewick at RNLI

**The Royal National Lifeboat Institution is a vital organisation that a coastal town such as Southend couldn't do without. Throughout the year members of the RNLI put their lives on the line to save those who find themselves in trouble at sea. James recently attended the naming ceremony for a new vessel and is seen here with Southend West MP, David Amess. Why not check out [www.southendlifeboat.org](http://www.southendlifeboat.org) to see more about the work carried out by the RNLI.**

## Annual Christmas Card Competition gets underway



**James' annual competition to find a winning design for his Christmas card is underway, schools will be notified of the details in the coming weeks, and the youngsters can look forward to getting their designs in before the winning design goes to print!**



# USEFUL CONTACTS

- Southend-on-Sea Borough Council** ☎ 215 000 - [www.southend.gov.uk](http://www.southend.gov.uk)
- Rochford District Council** ☎ 546 366 - [www.rochford.gov.uk](http://www.rochford.gov.uk)
- Local Police** (non-emergency) ☎ 431 212 - [www.essex.police.uk](http://www.essex.police.uk)
- Citizens Advice Bureau** ☎ 610 610 - [www.southendcab.org.uk](http://www.southendcab.org.uk)
- Connexions** (advice for young people) ☎ 464 315 - [www.estconnexions.co.uk](http://www.estconnexions.co.uk)

## The Rochford & Southend East Constituency

CUT OUT & KEEP



### Your local Member of Parliament **James Duddridge MP**

James Duddridge was elected as the Member of Parliament for Rochford and Southend East in May 2005. Before this he had a successful business career as a Company Director and also helped set up a successful market and opinion research firm in 2000. James' experience in the workplace has given him practical understanding of the challenges facing working people. James enjoys a challenge and is relishing his new role of taking up many diverse issues on behalf of his constituents and fighting for improvements in the locality.

James lives in Southend with his wife, Katy, and their two young sons, Tom and Henry as well as their two cats, Boris and Barney. He enjoys cycling and supports Southend United Football Club.



[www.jamesduddridge.com](http://www.jamesduddridge.com)

### Surgeries

If you think that a group or organisation would benefit from a visit from James Duddridge then do get in touch. He would be pleased to hear from you. Surgeries are held weekly. To make an appointment, please call 01702 616135.

### Contact details

James Duddridge MP  
Strand House  
Suite 1  
742 Southchurch Road  
Southend SS1 2PS

[james@jamesduddridge.com](mailto:james@jamesduddridge.com)

01702 616135



Dear Reader,

Since I last wrote to you a lot has changed, as we all know. Having spent the summer working in the constituency, it's now that time of year when I head back into London to make sure that your voice is heard.

Over the summer we've had some good and bad news from the Government, on the plus side the Sutton Road Post Office is still in business, and with local support I hope it stays that way for many years to come. The bad news was that the Department for Transport and the Driving Standards Agency decided to axe our very own Driving Test Centre in Southend. This will mean much longer journeys and increased costs for those wanting to learn to drive. I've written to the Minister and the head of the Driving Standards Agency, and also brought the issue up in the recent debate on the regeneration of Southend.

As well as spending the summer time meeting constituents to hear about their issues, I've also been really pleased to take part in a number of events in Rochford and Southend, including the illuminations for the Southend carnival and a visit to Disability Essex in Rochford.

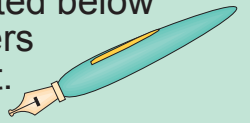
This newsletter can only provide a taster of what has been going on but if you want to keep track of what I'm doing then visit my website [www.jamesduddridge.com](http://www.jamesduddridge.com) - there is also an exciting new design for it which will be in place soon!

Yours,

**James Duddridge MP**

## What others say about James...

MPs don't expect to be thanked for doing their job. However, it is nice when they are. Printed below are sample quotes from residents' letters received by James since his last report.



*"Just wanted to say 'many thanks' for your help concerning my recent parking problem...I wanted to thank you particularly in becoming involved in what appears to be a fairly trivial matter in amongst your hectic work schedule."*

**Mr. R.G.**

**Ms. S.E.**

*"It is very refreshing to see a local MP do so much for the community, in fact with everything that happened to us as a small business last year, we have in fact decided to stay in Southend, it is a good place to be."*

## Get the 'In Touch' in Audio or Braille

**EVERY household in the Rochford and Southend East Parliamentary constituency should be receiving a copy of 'In Touch With James' this month.**

If you would find it useful to receive an audio or Braille version - for yourself or for a friend or relative - then please do let him know.

You can contact James' office on 01702 616 135 or [james@jamesduddridge.com](mailto:james@jamesduddridge.com) to request a copy.

[www.jamesduddridge.com](http://www.jamesduddridge.com)