

Sir James Philip Duddridge, KCMG (born 26 August 1971) is a British politician and former banker serving as Minister of State for International Trade. He has served as the Member of Parliament (MP) for Rochford and Southend East since 2005. He is a member of the Conservative Party.



I have been accused of doing this in my own interest, even though I haven't got a dog. I've even been pictured with my dog, much to the surprise of the person who thinks they own the dog! In politics, everybody would like this 'big plan', but actually, politics is about making small judgements and decisions, and also being opportunistic.

"I'd like to move Southend closer to London, which sounds ridiculous, but..."

I met the head of a branded Essex franchise to talk to him about coming to Southend, and every shop would employ 85 people. He also owns another type of retail outlet, and I pointed out a location to him. He said 'who owns it, I'll buy it. They're clearly having problems here and I'm prepared to take it over'. That employs people, so it's actually about getting the small things right. I might end up cutting a ribbon, but then again, I cut the ribbon of Starbucks, and I had absolutely nothing to do with that!

Matthew: While private sector wages increased by 6.9% in 2022, they only increased by 2.7% in the public sector, which pales in comparison to the 10.1% rate of inflation. After the incredible work that both NHS workers and our teachers here at SHSG did during and after the Covid-19 pandemic, how can this be justified?

A: Yesterday, the nurses got offered £1250 cash and a 5% raise in addition to everything else they've been getting, so I think that it's very reasonable. Overall, we need public and private sector pay restraint, but the private sector is more responsive to market changes, which is why we've seen higher wage growth on that side.

Comment from Matthew and Calix: With teachers' unions rejecting the government's new proposals and strike days for passport workers being announced, it's clear that the debate over public sector pay is far from over. Ultimately, it will be up to you to decide who you want to represent you: sixth formers at SHSG will be eligible to vote in the next General Election, and your decision could have long-lasting impacts on the future of both Southend and the UK.

[Form Questions: Getting you thinking...](#)

Mr Duddridge talks about a return to conservative values, including low taxation. Do you think low taxation is important if it comes at the cost of public spending on areas such as the NHS, the police etc?

What do you think about Mr Duddridge's ideas for improving the situation for young people in Southend? Will 'moving Southend closer to London' help? Can you think of any other areas that could be a focus? If you were in Government, what would you do?

Do you think young people are engaging with politics? What could be done to involve young people in political issues more?

WILL SOUTHEND MOVE CLOSER TO LONDON UNDER THE CONSERVATIVES?

On the 17th of March, Genazine had the opportunity to interview Sir James Duddridge, where we discussed everything from public sector pay to his goals for the constituency.

Calix: Do you have any role models or inspirations that led you to politics?

A: I think both of my grandfathers, probably. They had a very strong focus on the community, not politically, but they have influenced me significantly. They both fought in the second world war. One was very involved in the British Legion, cared deeply about veterans' issues, and was always the first to put his hand in his pocket for any charitable cause. He was well respected in his community and led the remembrance parade in his town.

Matthew: What impact do you believe that the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank will have on the British financial sector?

A: Directly, none on the finance sector, although it will have an impact on the tech sector, where they are reliant on this source of funding. What's more worrying is the fragility of some other major international banks, including Credit Suisse and American Express. In the UK, the Chancellor and his team did very well over the weekend: when the markets opened, the British subsidy was being acquired by HSBC.

Calix: What does your schedule look like?

A: It looks completely different depending on what I do, but very broadly, parliament sits Monday-Thursday. Friday tends to be entirely constituency-focussed, and then Saturdays are more sporadic. For example, this Saturday I'm out canvassing, because we have local government elections coming up

I try to keep Sundays free, but inevitably, I get sucked into politics in some form. You get more time away from parliament than you would do in a normal job, perhaps similarly to teachers in the academic year. In your 'free time', you're working in a different way. It's more like having half-Fridays to catch up with everything else.

Matthew: Currently, Labour is 20% ahead of the Conservatives in the polls. What, in your view, should the Prime Minister do to close this gap?

A: Massive question. I think pivoting to conservative values is crucial. The next general election will be won by the conservatives if people think they will be better off under them, so we need to get back to being a low tax, liberal economy. The five big tests that he set up are mixed: some will be relatively easy to achieve, including the goal of halving inflation, which has already been projected to be achieved. The NHS waiting lists will be difficult, but we will make inroads, as will sorting out the immigration issues, which will be a lot harder.

Calix: What are your goals, specifically for young people, in the constituency?

A: I want the constituency to be wealthier, happier, and more balanced. I'd like to move Southend closer to London, which sounds ridiculous, but you can get the transport system to move faster, with trains from Shoebury to Fenchurch Street consistently taking under 95 minutes. I consider Canary Wharf to be a pipeline of money, like the A127, to a degree.

Getting broadband is crucial, city fibre is brilliant. Again, that's a pipeline of money for the constituency. We are perfect for part time workers coming in and out of London. Getting a good work-life balance is also important: being able to walk your dogs on the beaches, for example.