

Happy New Year to all Star readers. I hope you had a restful Christmas.

Of course, many people have been working over the festive period. NHS and social care staff, council frontline workers, shopworkers, the police, taxi drivers, bus drivers, firefighters, delivery drivers and more – we thank you all!

One particular essential service has been making the headlines in recent weeks, and its current state should be a cause of concern for us all. Our magnificent NHS is by many accounts collapsing in front of our eyes.

Day after day, stories appear of system failures, from inhumane conditions in A&E with patients lying on trolleys or even on floors as they wait hours to see a doctor, to unacceptable ambulance waiting and handover times.

It's been reported this week that delays in emergency care are causing up to 500 avoidable deaths every single week.

If what's happening to the NHS doesn't make you angry I don't know what will.

These are catastrophic system failures and the blame lies with this government.

In 2010, under a Labour government, the NHS was the envy of the world and public satisfaction in Britain with the service was at an all time high.

From the moment the coalition government took office in May 2010 and began a totally unnecessary and politically-motivated restructure of the NHS, it's been a different story.

The fact that nurses have now been forced to take strike action should be a permanent and irredeemable stain on the character and record of every Conservative MP.

NHS staff have my total support and admiration.

The Tories are either totally incompetent, or they're deliberately trying to crash the system. Let's be honest, with this lot it could be either. In either case, we should be wary of moves to introduce an insurance-based system which is already backed by a range of Tories and the likes of Farage.

70 years ago, the Labour MP and NHS founder Aneurin Bevan wrote: "No society can legitimately call itself civilised if a sick person is denied medical aid because of a lack of means".

The NHS was an accomplishment which some have always resented, and we need to fight to protect it from them again and again, for as long as it takes.

Here's to a better year for all of us – and for our public services.