

Caroline Dinenage

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Your local MP reporting back from Westminster



MP for Gosport, Lee-on-the-Solent, Stubbington and Hill Head

I hope you all had a fantastic time at the Diamond Jubilee celebrations, in spite of the bad weather!

I certainly enjoyed the local events, including a service of thanksgiving in Stubbington and the brilliant JubiLee-on-the-Solent party. And with the arrival of the Olympic Torch just weeks away, the fun is set to continue – so keep your fingers crossed for Team GB gold medals!

There was more great news for Gosport this month, as I teamed up with the Portsmouth News to launch the 'Bridging the Gap' fund for both new start-ups and small businesses. It's amazing that this 'mad idea' I dreamt up last year has become a reality - and will now deliver £2.1 million in grants across Gosport, Havant and Portsmouth. It's all about supporting a culture of entrepreneurship in our area, and so I'd encourage anyone with a great idea for starting or growing their own business to think about applying. All the information you'll need is at www.solentlep.org.uk/regional_growth_fund

It certainly feels like we're entering a new chapter in the area's regeneration. I joined DCLG Minister Andrew Stunell as he toured the Rowner Development, and shared his admiration for how the area's been transformed.

It's a picture that's mirrored nationally, with the Government succeeding in cutting the inherited deficit by a remarkable 25% over the past two years. But cutting the deficit isn't our only priority. After signing up to the FairFuel Pledge, I was also delighted by the Government's decision to scrap Labour's planned 3p rise in duty – a sure sign that we're on the side of hard-pressed families and businesses.

Of course, challenges do remain. I was shocked to learn that students in colleges like St Vincent's don't receive the free schools meals that their counterparts in school sixth-forms do. I participated in a debate in Westminster to call on the Government to treat these students fairly. In Education Questions, I also urged Ministers to ensure that young people know about the vocational opportunities open to them. Back in Gosport, I faced a grilling from the Year 7 students at Bay House School, just after they fought their very own 'elections' for a class project.

My support for education and training stretches beyond the classroom. I've delivered on my commitment to apprenticeships by appointing 19 year-old Gosport girl Jourdan as my very first apprentice. She's already working hard in my constituency office while studying for an NVQ in Business Administration.



At the launch of the 'Bridging the Gap' fund with FSB and LEP reps



With my new apprentice Jourdan

For the latest news visit www.caroline4gosport.co.uk



With Scout leaders at my 2nd annual Volunteers' Reception

Back in Westminster, it was time for one of the highlights of my year – the 2nd annual Volunteers' Reception. This is when I invite representatives from some of the fantastic voluntary groups and charities in the constituency to an event in Parliament. It's my way of thanking them for their dedication to our local community.

Every year I learn more about the amazing voluntary work going on under our noses. This month alone I visited the hugely valuable Portsmouth Area Rape Crisis Service, helped to launch the Safer Places Gosport scheme for adults with learning difficulties and revisited Gosport Voluntary Action for an update. They're all incredible local resources, and I think it's important to thank all volunteers for what they do.

I was also struck by the sacrifice that many people make for others at the Parliamentary Carers' Reception. Carers really are the unsung heroes of our society, and I was glad to be able to express my gratitude for their work. To support another cause close to my heart, I took part in Macmillan's Westminster Tug-of-War. Although the female MPs faced defeat at the hands of the Macmillan nurses, the £100,000 raised for charity made the embarrassment worthwhile!

Another very worthy organisation is Seafarers' UK, which gives £2.5 million every year to seafarers' charities. Yet sadly, the importance of the sea isn't recognised, with a survey last year seeing 25% of children identify Captain Jack Sparrow as Britain's most famous sea-goer! I hosted a reception in Parliament to promote Seafarers Awareness Week.

My support for our Navy also continues. I held a fascinating briefing on Mine Counter Measures to alert MPs to the challenges the Royal Navy currently faces. Sadly my team have also had to work closely with the RN, Military Police, MOD and FCO Ministers this month to ensure they're

doing all they can to find Gosport sailor Timothy MacColl, who's gone missing in Dubai.

Finally, it was an honour to attend the Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast with Father John Draper of St Mary's, Rowner, and a meeting with the Dalai Lama.

July is set to be another month of celebrations in Gosport, as we look forward to the Rowner Carnival, the Bridgemaury Carnival and of course the Olympic Torch relay. I hope to see you on the Torch route on the 15th July!

Best wishes,

Caroline



The female MPs' team at the Macmillan Tug-of-War



Supporting Seafarers Awareness Week with the Chairman of Seafarers' UK

GET IN TOUCH

Please feel free to contact me on any issue, or to find out when my next surgery is. It is also possible to come up to Parliament to have an official tour. I'm always happy to arrange tours of the Palace of Westminster and Big Ben for my constituents. Just please contact my office to book at least two months in advance to make sure you get a place - the tours are very popular!

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