

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 kicked off a busy January by continuing to raise awareness about adult literacy & numeracy issues, and held a meeting with representatives from NIACE to talk about ways of spreading this important message to MPs from across the political spectrum. I also arranged a meeting in Westminster to give Gosport's fantastic Read & Grow charity the chance to discuss innovative ways of tackling the issue of illiteracy within the penal system with Prisons Minister, Jeremy Wright MP. With 48% of the prison population unable to read and write, this is key to improving chances of rehabilitation. I also highlighted the importance of ensuring that Jobcentre staff have the right skills to identify jobseekers with learning problems, in a question in the House of Commons.

As Chair of the APPG for Local Growth, I invited the ever-impressive Lord Heseltine to share his views on the growth agenda and our economic recovery. The event reiterated the importance of our very own Solent Enterprise Zone at Daedalus and rest assured I will continue in my efforts to promote the Gosport peninsula as an excellent place to do business. I also had the pleasure of meeting with the BIS Minister, Michael Fallon MP, to discuss manufacturing and how my Associate Parliamentary Manufacturing Group can help drive this subject forward.

Back in Gosport I attended the packed Business & Employment Fair at Thorngate Hall & was thrilled to see local employers & jobseekers out in such force at this fantastic event, including the new Rowner Tesco store which will be creating 150 new jobs.

I continued to take my advice surgeries out and about, this month visiting St Vincent College & the Discovery Centre to offer help, listen to problems or just have a chat with anyone who popped in. This has already had positive results—in November's surgery, a lot of constituents voiced their concerns at the changes to bus routes & timetables – I arranged an urgent meeting with bosses from First Hampshire Bus Company & am pleased to announce they have reviewed their decision and will reverse some of the alterations in March.

They say good things come to those who wait; this was certainly the case as I was shown around the impressive facilities at the state-of-the-art new Holbrook Leisure Centre. In the first month alone, membership numbers are up nearly tenfold on the old Holbrook at its peak, so it's off to a great start!



Meeting with BIS and Treasury Ministers



At the Business and Employment Fair



Advice Surgery at St Vincent College

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Staying in Gosport, I was really excited to swap my trusty Mini for an enormous building crunching machine as I started demolition work at the currently disused site which will become Fareham Business Park! With less than 1/2 a job per working adult in the Gosport peninsula it's vital to bring these former employment sites back into use so less people have to out commute on our over-congested roads to get to work.



Taking part in demolition work at Fareham Business Park

January is always a popular month to make healthy lifestyle changes, and for a bit of encouragement; I attended the My Weight, My Future event in Westminster & was relieved (and a bit surprised) to receive a clean bill of health! Knowing our own weight & BMI and taking action to reduce it if necessary is a good first step in achieving better health.

I took part in a debate on the Employment of Young People, highlighting the importance of building links between business and students. During Education Questions, I reiterated my support for this issue by praising the work of our local Education Business Partnership, which does an excellent job preparing students for the world of work. I also had the pleasure of welcoming Joseph Delavigne-Ward from Brune Park Community School to Parliament for the final of the 'We Made It' competition to inspire and encourage the innovators, inventors & engineers of the future.



At the Huhtamaki factory

Back in Gosport, I visited global packaging giant & important local employer, Huhtamaki. I saw firsthand the work they do producing a wide-range of paper and plastic products - including an unbelievable 2 billion paper cups a year for a host of high street names.

I continued my efforts in promoting the peninsula's world-class sailing & yachting facilities by visiting the London Boat Show, and had the pleasure of visiting the Hornet Sailing Club in Haslar Creek. As the centre of offshore sailing for the armed forces community, the thriving Hornet Club has a key role to play in raising Gosport's profile in the sailing world & I was delighted to address members at a meeting.

Ending on a celebratory note, massive congratulations to local hero, Alex Thomson, for his magnificent achievement in the Vendée Globe. Alex became the fastest ever Briton to sail around the world in a monohull boat – this is a truly fantastic accomplishment, especially when you consider that fewer people have sailed solo around the world than been to space. Well done Alex!



Alex Thomson finishing the Vendée Globe

Best wishes

Caroline

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 three months in advance to make sure you get a place - the tours are very popular!

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