

Caroline Dinenage

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Your local MP reporting back from Westminster



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

The huge success of the Olympic and Paralympic Games was on everybody's mind when MPs returned to Westminster this month. As we celebrated the spectacular British team's achievements, I called on the new Culture Secretary to support competitive sport in schools, to ensure we deliver an Olympic legacy for the athletes of tomorrow.

Another important issue before Parliament this month was fuel prices. Regular readers will know that I believe we must take action to tackle the high fuel bills that ordinary families face. With the cost being forced up by market manipulation, I supported calls for an investigation into the oil market, though unfortunately wasn't chosen to speak in this very well attended debate! Thankfully I did get to speak up on another pressing subject, when I asked the Chancellor to do more to stop the aggressive tax avoidance and evasion that costs our country billions.

Still up in Westminster, I showed my support for a number of great charities. I donned a rather flamboyant feather boa to promote the work of Breast Cancer Campaign, and teamed up with fellow MPs to take part in (and win!) a quiz in support of school provision in Malawi. Finally, I met the inspirational Alex – a young constituent who received a bone marrow transplant just before Christmas. His parents were guests of honour at the Anthony Nolan reception, and it was a pleasure to be able to thank them for all they've done to help increase donations.

Despite the hectic Parliamentary term, there was too much happening in Gosport to stay away. I was honoured to officially open the new Focus Youth Club in Lee-on-the-Solent. This great new club is the result of a true community effort, with everyone from councillors to students at Bay House pulling together to make it happen. Another new club that's certainly taken off is the Daring 2012 Club, which launched in March for adults with learning difficulties. I popped in for their monthly Monday meeting at the Royal Naval Association clubhouse, and with bingo, karaoke, a hot lunch and a host of other activities, it was certainly the most fun I'd had on a Monday morning for a long time!



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At Marine Concepts with the Secretary of State Eric Pickles

Travelling around the constituency and meeting all these people is definitely a perk of the job. This month, I took this one step further, in launching an advice surgery tour. I held surgeries in Lee-on-the-Solent, Bridgemary and Stubbington, to offer advice, listen to problems or just have a natter with anyone who popped in.

It's clear from talking to so many people that times are still very tough. I was pleased to be able to hold a meeting with the Regional Director of HSBC about what they're doing to help people to access money and get on the housing ladder in these difficult times.

I was also delighted to welcome Eric Pickles to Gosport this month to announce major new Government investment to promote local growth. At a meeting at thriving local company Marine Concepts, the Secretary of State confirmed over £25 million will be invested in infrastructure and a new skills academy on the Daedalus site. This is fantastic news for the local area, which is set to benefit from the creation of almost 1,200 new jobs and top skills training in the future. Investment on this scale also has knock-on effects for the rest of the area, with Hampshire County Council now agreeing to fund £8million worth of improvements to Newgate Lane.

It certainly feels like we're entering a new chapter in the area's development. And of course, there are always new avenues to pursue, as I discussed with the British Marine Federation and VisitEngland on a quick visit to the Southampton Boat Show last week. They agreed that Gosport could be a thriving tourist destination, and I'll meet them soon to discuss turning this into a reality. It's a reality already playing out at the family-run Kingfisher Caravan Park, which I visited this month to see how they're succeeding in the tourist industry.

Businesses like Kingfisher and Marine Concepts flourish because of our beautiful and strategic coastal location. But this brings challenges too, as I recalled at the launch of Hampshire Constabulary's four new boats. While it's something non-coastal areas don't consider, we all know how important it is that the sea surrounding us is kept safe and well policed!

Finally, as all the kids trooped back to school this month, there was a new face at Brune Park Community College. I welcomed new Headteacher Chris Kelly, who arrived after a successful time at Quilley School of Engineering in Eastleigh, to the school. I'm sure he will deliver a bright future for the students at Brune Park.

Best wishes,

Caroline



Visiting the flourishing, family-run Kingfisher Caravan Park

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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