

Caroline Dinenage

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



With parliament in recess, I've had a busy August taking advantage of the opportunity to spend a month getting out and about across Gosport, Stubbington, Lee-on-the-Solent and Hill Head.

We saw the long awaited and highly anticipated arrival of HMS Queen Elizabeth into Portsmouth Harbour. The 65,000-tonne carrier represents the next generation of our nation's great naval heritage, and witnessing its arrival is something I will never forget. As we know that over £1 billion will be brought to the local economy over next 50 years due to carrier support industry, the arrival really is great news for our area. I was thrilled to see so many local people up at the crack of dawn to welcome her home, with the best views from Gosport!

Sticking with a naval theme, I was honoured to visit the USS George H.W. Bush Strike Group, along with other Portsmouth Harbour MPs. It was great to meet some of the 60 strong Royal Navy UK Carrier Strike Team who've been embedded on the US aircraft carrier in recent weeks, preparing for the arrival of our own Queen Elizabeth Carrier to Portsmouth. US Navy support has been invaluable as the UK relearns the art of big deck operations and generates a comprehensive UK Carrier Strike Group. The take-off and landing by 'cats and traps' was quite an experience!

I also welcomed the Defence Minister, the Rt Hon Tobias Ellwood, to some of our most important MoD sites. We were joined by representatives from the Defence Infrastructure Organisation for tours of HMS Sultan, Fort Blockhouse and MoD retained land at Royal Clarence Yard. The visit provided a valuable opportunity to demonstrate to the Minister how important this area is to the Armed Forces, and particularly the Royal Navy, in the wake of the MoD's ['A Better Defence Estate'](#) strategy, which recommends the disposal of 91 sites across the country, including HMS Sultan and Fort Blockhouse. I am keen to see sites such as Fort Blockhouse released by the MoD in a way that maximises local economic benefits. However, I'm certain that disposal of HMS Sultan would be detrimental to Gosport, the Royal Navy and the MoD, and having successfully fought its closure back in 2010, am determined to do so again.

It was a pleasure to attend the first day of the 10th annual Gosport Summer Passport Scheme, which is now a mainstay of the school holidays. Run by Gosport Community Safety Partnership, it encourages young people to get out of the house during the school break, whilst trying new activities and meeting lots of different people. I also attended the grand opening of the fantastic new 'Bap & Burrito Bar' on Stoke Road, run by local entrepreneur Sarah Gunby.



Welcoming HMS Queen Elizabeth to her Portsmouth home



Visiting the USS George H.W. Bush Strike Group



With Defence Minister Tobias Ellwood and Council Leader Mark Hook

On the glorious bank holiday Monday I had the pleasure of opening Stubbington's annual Summer Fayre and Donkey Derby and presenting the prizes to the brave young jockeys at the end - it turns out that donkeys are quite tricky to ride!

Some talented musicians took the stage at Foxfest, at the Fox Tavern, which raised much-needed funds for the Rhys Daniels Trust. The Trust provides 'home from home' style facilities close to specialist children's hospitals throughout the UK.

In a rather surreal turn of events I joined Spider-Man and Gosport's own Norman Wisdom, Glenn Ford, at the T7 Unisex Hair Salon at St Vincent College, as local residents Pete, Brendan and Lisa 'Braved the Shave' and had their heads shaved for Macmillan Cancer Support. I had great fun wielding the clippers, and was thrilled to support such a fantastic cause.



Enjoying the first day of Gosport's Summer Passport Scheme



At Stubbington's Summer Fayre and Donkey Derby

The recently published CQC report on Queen Alexandra Hospital made for painful reading. QA has clearly fallen short in a number of important areas, and this will understandably be of great concern to local people. I spoke with Mark Cubbon, the Chief Executive of Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust, to seek assurances that swift, strategic action would be taken to deliver the necessary improvements. A number of changes to senior personnel have already been made to provide improved strategic oversight, and an improvement plan, charting the hospital's progress, will be made publicly available online. I will continue to work closely with the Trust to ensure local people receive the high-quality care they need.

August is always a nervous time for teenagers awaiting their GCSE, A-Level and General Vocational results. I am thrilled that for the third year running students and staff at St Vincent College celebrated their best A-level and General Vocational results ever. Bay House Sixth Form also experienced a record year, with 90% of A-levels

graded at A*-C. I was particularly encouraged to learn that around 50% of Bay House students will be the first in their family to go to university. This chimes with national statistics demonstrating that young people from a wide range of backgrounds are increasingly able to enjoy the benefits of a university education. In 2016, 19.5% of university students were from disadvantaged background, compared with just 11.2% in 2006.

The latest employment figures provided more good news, showing that employment is at a record high, whilst unemployment is at its lowest level for over 40 years. More than 3 million people are in work compared with 2010, and employment is up by 125,000 over the past three months alone. In the Gosport constituency, unemployment has fallen by 50% in the last 7 years.

To ensure that local businesses have access to the widest possible talent pool, I signed up to the Disability Confident Summer Challenge. This encourages employers to join the Disability Confident Scheme, which supports employers in making their workplaces more inclusive. For more information about getting involved please contact my office, or click [here](#).

Summer may be drawing to a close but we have plenty still to look forward to. Booking is now open for Gosport Heritage Open days – and places are filling up fast! Events provide a really terrific insight into our area's rich cultural and military history – to learn more and reserve your place click [here](#).



A motley crew of barbers as local resident Brendan Braves the Shave!

Best wishes

Caroline

GET IN TOUCH

Please feel free to contact me on any issue, or to find out when my next surgery is. I'm always happy to arrange tours of the Palace of Westminster for my constituents. Please contact my office at least three months in advance to make sure you get a place - the tours are very popular!

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