

Caroline Dinenage

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Your local MP reporting back from Westminster



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

After over a year of anticipation, the Olympic Torch was proudly welcomed to Gosport this July. As I joined the exuberant crowds at various points along the route, it was clear the months of planning had paid off. It was a fantastic community event, with the flame's journey on the Gosport ferry proving to be a particular highlight!

Despite the absolutely torrential rain, community spirit had prevailed the day before too, as Bridgemary kicked off the festivities with their celebrated annual carnival. The community all came together – complete with our great samba band - to make this a truly memorable weekend for our area.

There's been great news for local business this month too. I was honoured to join the Vector Aerospace engineers as they celebrated the completion of the 500th Lynx Helicopter overhaul. It's a remarkable achievement for this local employer – and long may their work continue! It's also fantastic to welcome new companies to the ranks - as I did when I visited the thriving Coastal Clinics on South Street. In other great news for our local economy, the 'Bridging the Gap' fund for businesses, which I helped to secure last year in partnership with The News, has been inundated with applications. Round 1 alone, which closed this week, attracted enough bids to spend the £2.1million twice over!

We've also seen some fantastic achievements from a younger generation of Gosport residents. It was a pleasure to visit Crofton Anne Dale Infant School in Stubbington for their Awards Ceremony, where I presented the citizenship certificates. I also received an interesting bundle of post from the children at Brockhurst Infants School, Holbrook Primary School and Brune Park Community College, as they campaign for schools for young people around the world. I passed their letters onto the Prime Minister, who commended their work and concern for others.

As I also continued my support for voluntary organisations this month, I was delighted to visit the flourishing Shore Leave Haslar Project. This excellent scheme helps veterans to recuperate through garden therapy, in the beautiful and serene setting of the old Haslar Hospital gardens. I was also really excited to join the Portsmouth and Gosport Military Wives Choir in the beautiful old chapel at HMS Collingwood as they recorded their second album with Decca Records. Thankfully, these very talented ladies weren't relying on my vocal abilities for the album's success!



Bridgemary gets ready to welcome the Olympic Torch



Discussing the letters from local schools with the PM



With veterans and volunteers at Shore Leave Haslar Project

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



Addressing the Women in Politics event

Another incredible voluntary organisation is National Coastwatch at Fort Blockhouse. I met their team of dedicated volunteers, whose work monitoring the Solent really does save lives. My morning with the South Central Ambulance Service was also very compelling, as I learnt more about their work and plans for the future of ambulance services in the area.

It's been just as busy back up in Westminster, with some crucial debates and announcements this month.

There was some great news, as Sir John Holmes published his interim Military Medals Review. Long-standing readers will know that I've long campaigned for a medal for the Arctic Convoy veterans of WWII, and this independent review has confirmed that their case must be reassessed as a matter of urgency. While there's still a long way to go, this is still a much welcome step forward in our campaign.

Along with many other Conservative MPs, I faced a difficult choice this month, as I voted against the Government on House of Lords reform. While I rebelled with a heavy heart, I don't believe these proposals – set to cost £500million over 5 years – can be justified in tough economic times. The plans would also sweep away Lords with decades of experience in their chosen field, and replace them with totally unaccountable career politicians on single, 15-years terms. I spoke and voted against this ill-conceived Bill, which I believe to be the wrong priority for the Government.

A more pressing issue for many of my constituents is the ongoing failures of the Child Support Agency. I took part in a Westminster Hall debate this month to welcome the proposed reforms, but also to flag up the problem of undeclared income. I was glad that the Minister responded positively to my concerns, as it is ultimately the children who are losing out.

On a lighter note, I was also the guest speaker at an inaugural event for women in politics. With women still making up less than 25% of MPs, it remains an issue very close to my heart, and I hope I managed to encourage at least some of the young women present to give politics a go!

And finally, with the weather conditions coming up trumps, it was time for my charity skydive. It was a nerve-racking but exhilarating experience, and best of all I managed to raise over £1000 for the MS Society. You can still donate to support this great cause here: <http://www.justgiving.com/Caroline-Dinenage>.

Best wishes,

Caroline



Raising money for the MS Society on a charity skydive

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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