

Caroline Dinenage

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Your local MP reporting back from Westminster



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

With spring officially here, but no sign of the warm weather, I wrapped up and kicked off the month by visiting Lee-on-the-Solent Infant School. I had the pleasure of being given a guided tour by members of the School Council & enjoyed hearing about the issues that mattered the most to them. I also dropped into the Stubblee Hill Children's Centre to meet the staff who provide first-rate Early Years support to those most in need. As a strong supporter of Sure Start Centres, I was keen to hear whether recent changes to the way they are managed had impacted frontline services. I was pleased to learn that nearly £1m has been earmarked by Hampshire County Council for more speech & language therapists for Sure Start and this will help give our young a great start in life.

Up in Westminster, I attended a meeting of regional 6th Form Colleges and met with the Principal of St. Vincent College, Di Lloyd, to learn about the great progress being made at her fantastic college and the exciting plans for the future.

I always enjoy receiving letters from my younger constituents and am very proud of the pupils at Peel Common Junior School who wrote to me so passionately about global poverty issues. I raised their concerns directly with the Development Secretary, Justine Greening MP and she was equally impressed.

Having run a small business & as a parent I know what an impact the high cost of fuel is currently having. I've long supported the FairFuelUK pledge & met with campaigners in London ahead of the Budget to see what more I could do on this issue. Following the Chancellor's announcement, I'm pleased that the Government have scrapped the planned fuel duty rise. This is good news for hard-working local families & businesses, who will each save around £170 per year.

Regular readers will know about my efforts to raise awareness of low levels of adult literacy & numeracy. This month, I teamed up with NIACE and brought together MPs & expert panellists from across the public & private sector to discuss these issues and identify innovative ways to tackle this problem. I will continue to work hard to ensure it stays high on the Government's agenda.

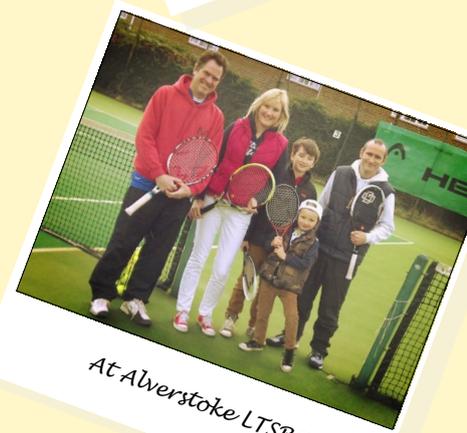
I also lent my support to No Smoking Day, highlighting the benefits quitting can have on your health as well as your bank balance. Continuing the focus on clean living, my children & I channelled our inner McEnroe and headed over to Alverstoke Lawn Tennis and Racquet Club to officially open their resurfaced courts. We're fortunate to have some of the best facilities in Hampshire right on our doorstep and I would encourage people to come down and check out this great Club.



At Lee-on-the-Solent Infant School



With Justine Greening MP



At Alverstoke LTSBC

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With volunteers at Daring 2012

I'm honoured to be patron of the thriving Daring 2012 Club for adults with learning difficulties & joined the group as they celebrated their first birthday. I'm delighted to see how this fantastic group has flourished and so grateful to the amazing volunteers who make it all possible.

I chaired the regular meeting of my Daedalus Strategy Group to ensure the plans for the Solent Enterprise Zone remain firmly on course & also visited the Gosport Oil Fuel Depot to hear about the challenges facing this 100 year old site and the future plans for its regeneration.

Up in Parliament, I took part in a debate on the British retail industry and called upon the Government to provide greater assistance in the form of business rate reductions. I championed the Gosport peninsula as an excellent place to do business, highlighting the growing number of new independent shops that are opening in our area. A prime example is the fantastic Blitz Photography on Stoke Road, where I was put through my paces by Steve Reid and his apprentice Hannah during National Apprenticeship Week.

The transport infrastructure is such a major issue in our area & I've worked hard since my election to raise this with my ministerial colleagues. The Bus Rapid Transit scheme has seen bus use in Gosport increase by around 24%, Gosport has the third highest use of bicycles in the UK, and colleagues on Hampshire County Council recently helped secure £8.5 million for improvements to Newgate Lane, but we all know that more needs to be done. Continuing in my efforts, I brought the Minister for regional transport, Norman Baker MP, to the Gosport peninsula, where I showed him the problems that motorists have to endure on a daily basis and introduced him to hard working local campaigners Debbie Grant & Graham Burgess. We will carry on fighting our corner for further meaningful investment.



Local campaigners meeting with Transport Minister

Always keen to celebrate our local treasures, I visited the Explosion! museum at the iconic Priddy's Hard, in support of English Tourism Week. With a vast array of fascinating exhibits it's easy to see why it remains such a popular attraction. I'm looking forward to their 1940s weekend in May which is always really interesting & great fun.

I'm very proud of our areas rich naval heritage and was honoured to attend the march reaffirming the freedom of Gosport borough for our deserving servicemen at HMS Sultan. I also had the great privilege of attending the Arctic Star award ceremony at 10 Downing Street. After 70 long years, I'm pleased that our brave veterans of the WWII Arctic Convoys, which saw the highest fatality rate of any sea campaign in the War, have finally received recognition for their heroic efforts.



Attending the Arctic Star Ceremony

Finally, I'm delighted that Search & Rescue operations will remain at Lee-on-the-Solent, following the Government's recent announcement. This is a real vote of confidence in our area and means the local knowledge built up over many years will be preserved. I would also like to pay tribute to the hard work and dedication of the Royal Navy & the Royal Air Force for providing this vital life-saving service for over 70 years.

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 and Big Ben 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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