Welcome to an action-packed newsletter for a September that saw Gosport make national headlines over the Government's short-lived plan to land illegal migrants at Fort Blockhouse. Spoiler alert! Working in lockstep with Gosport Council Leader, Cllr Zoe Huggins, and Police and Crime Commissioner, Donna Jones, we finally persuaded the Home Office of the madness of docking a rubber dinghy on that narrow peninsula with such inadequate access roads and huge public opposition.

The warning signs came earlier in the month when a packed mega-dinghy from Normandy was disembarked at Eastney amid chaos. The next day I challenged the Home Office Minister directly in Parliament on whether they were predicting more crossings and followed it up with a letter to the Home Secretary which you can read here.

Ten days later, I met the Home Office Minister for Border Security and Asylum, Anna Turley, to make the case that Gosport was not a suitable place to disembark migrants. And, in the wake of the operation, which finally saw boats diverted from Gosport and taken direct to Dover, I wrote again to the Home Secretary with ten clear questions. You can read it here.

The Haslar Immigration Removal Centre development is totally unrelated to Fort Blockhouse. The IRC will be for men detained under immigration powers, such as foreign national offenders, awaiting repatriation. However, the two sites do share a responsible Minister, Anna Turley, so I also met her at the start of September to explain how appalling the Home Office had been at communicating with local residents impacted by the current construction work. I asked for the Minister or a Home Office official to attend a residents' meeting I'd organised this month. Sadly, my plea fell on deaf ears, but as a result the Home Office has now written to residents living near the site with updated information and a dedicated point of contact. You can see the most recent factsheet on my website here.

Shortly after the residents' meeting, we also heard the good news that the planning application for Phase 2 of the IRC would be submitted to a Public Inquiry. This was largely thanks to the strong local response to the consultation exercise (see my letter here). You can find out more, including how to give evidence, here. Meanwhile, I popped up on GB News to discuss the plans, which you can watch here. The inquiry takes place from 17 to 20 November.

In other news this month:

I told the Government it needed to walk the walk as well as talk the talk when it comes to funding school sports and sports facilities. You can watch my contribution here. This is important locally because Gosport scores poorly on obesity levels. I was interviewed by YouTuber and TV Gladiator Matt Mosia about this here. The positive news is that Gosport Leisure Centre is seeing a record number of new members at the moment, up from 2,200 to 3,600 in just 18 months. I joined them for National Fitness Day to learn the secret of their success, and I think it's time for Gosport Borough Council and Places Leisure to sign off a much-needed expansion of facilities, including the long-awaited new padel tennis courts.

Back in Parliament, I brought to Ministers' attention constituent Harmony Hayman's petition against the lack of protection for victims of repeat violent offenders. As the Government pushes on with its early release scheme, many women are scared

that their abusers will repeat their crimes. You can watch the Minister's response here.

I voiced my concerns about the growing scandal surrounding the Civil Service Pension Scheme. In a debate in Parliament, I questioned whether the administrator, Capita, should continue to be allowed to bid for Government contracts here.

The Government made a dramatic U-turn over its plans to abolish Councils like Gosport Borough Council, and I pointed out to Angela Rayner in the House of Commons that her statement was not only confusing but also created uncertainty for Councils like ours here.

I responded to the Government's plans to build protections for children into devices by questioning the capacity of the online safety regulator, Ofcom, here.

I also highlighted the significant contribution of major events to our country's soft power abroad and told Ministers that a lack of attention had seen our global reputation slip. You can read my speech here.

I spoke out about the urgent need for a funeral regulator in the Health Bill here. We are still waiting for a meaningful response from the Government to tighten regulation of the sector in the wake of the dreadful actions of Elkin and Bell funeral directors in Gosport and Robert Bush in Hull. Last month I coordinated a cross-Party letter to the Health Secretary calling for the urgent regulation of funeral directors with 50 signatures from across the House of Commons. You can read it here.

I spoke at the launch of a new mindfulness app called Teacher Restore by local entrepreneur Darshana Qureshi, designed to support teachers and education professionals. You can read about that here or explore the app here.

I met Ian Millen, CEO of Veterans Outreach Support (VOS), and John Scivier, Chair of Trustees, to discuss the Government's VALOUR programme, which brings together veteran support services. VOS is leading the programme for the Solent region. Gosport is home to the highest proportion of veterans in the country, so this service is vital here. You can find out more about the support VOS offers at vosuk.org.

I was honoured to be invited to present an award at the Armed Forces Community Awards in Westminster. Hearing some of the inspiring stories of service, dedication and support from across the country reminded me of the remarkable community of service personnel, veterans and forces families we have here in the Gosport constituency.

I visited the historic Rum Store at Victoria Quay to see the progress on this exciting redevelopment, which kicked off in 2023 as part of the previous Conservative Government's £18 million Levelling Up fund investment to regenerate and reconnect our historic waterfront. That investment, alongside match-funding from UK Docks, is now helping to transform this incredible historic building and create new space for businesses, jobs and leisure in Gosport.

I attended a sell-out second instalment of TEDx Gosport. Organiser Annelies James put on a fabulous event that gives local people the opportunity to share ideas, experiences and life lessons on everything from health to creativity.

I got my first taste of "pickle-mania" by picking up a racket at the new courts at Privett Park. Pickleball is one of the fastest-growing sports in the UK, and with demand outstripping supply, two additional courts have been delivered with funding from the Council, helping to increase capacity so even more local people can get involved, and the free introductory sessions can restart. Contact ian@ipkingsbury.co.uk if you want to give it a go.

I popped to Fort Gilkicker to get an update on the progress at that ambitious re-development project. The first few apartments in this historic fort are expected to be ready early in the New Year. You can see what they will look like here.

I met some excellent groups from across Gosport, Lee-on-the-Solent, Stubbington, and Hill Head this month too.

At the Friends of the Royal Navy Submarine Museum AGM, I heard about work to upkeep and preserve the many documents and artefacts associated with the museum. Our naval heritage is deep in our local DNA, with Gosport the home of military submarine innovation. You can find out more about what the Friends do here.

As part of the annual Gosport Heritage Open Days, I took the opportunity to visit the old Civil Defence Control Centre just off The Avenue. The Open Days are now a national event but started right here in Gosport and simply could not function without an army of volunteers every year. You can keep an eye on next year's programme here.

I paid a remarkable visit to Thorngate Hall to see the 92-year-old organ which lives there and meet the charming gentlemen from the Gosport and District Organ Club who meet every second Wednesday afternoon to maintain it.

Another Gosport success story is Hopscotch Day Nurseries. Founded by Freya Derrick MBE in 2005, the business opened its very first nursery right here in Gosport and, more than 20 years later, has grown to run nurseries across our region, employing over 350 staff. I joined the whole team at their staff conference to celebrate their ongoing success.

I visited Gregson Bakery's new shop in Bridgemary, a perfect place for a lunch stop!

The Pride in Place programme is progressing well, with numerous engagement sessions held with local people. The Neighbourhood Board, which I sit on, will continue to meet and develop a 10-year business plan for Rowner with local residents firmly in the driving seat on the projects they want to see.

In a meeting with Southern Water I raised concerns gathered from a recent residents' survey, including odours, sewage outflows, and surging bills. I will be sharing their responses with constituents.

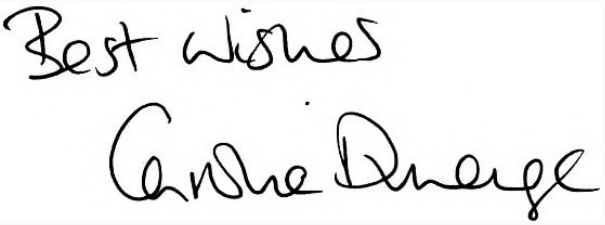
I've also been busy letterwriting again this month!

- I wrote to the CEO of Evri again about poor customer service. You can read it here.
- I wrote to the Armed Forces Minister about Armed Forces Pension Scheme overpayments, which you can read here.
- The Chancellor received a letter from me requesting a VAT cut for some of our best-loved high street businesses - salons and hairdressers. You can read that here.
- I signed a Conservative letter asking for a review of the way farming subsidies are paid to farmers, who have already been through enough under this Labour Government without facing more administrative hoops. Have a read of that here.
- I signed an important letter to the Prime Minister after the Government failed to publish guidance on how the NHS, social care providers, housing providers, and education providers could meet the needs of people with Down syndrome. You can read that here.

As Party Conference season draws to a close, I'll be off to Birmingham at the weekend with Conservative colleagues. Among the policies already announced are increases to defence spending, attracting more tourist money to the UK by scrapping tax-free shopping - something I have been calling for - and ending the ban on new oil and gas licences. Read more at https://www.conservatives.com/our-plan-for-britain.

If you have any questions about these or any other local or national political issues, I am returning to Facebook for a live Q&A with Cllrs Zoe Huggins and Lesley Meenaghan on 1 October. You can register to join us here.

That's it for September! As ever, my team and I are here for any questions, thoughts or concerns you may have. Please do get in touch via caroline.dinenage.mp@parliament.uk.



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