

Caroline Dinenage

November 2012

Your local MP reporting back from Westminster

Issue 23



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

November literally kicked off with a bang as my children & I joined the crowds who braved the mud to enjoy the annual fireworks and hair-raising fairground rides at HMS Sultan. Given the fact that Gosport is home to the Explosion! Museum only the strongest of displays would suffice here and the spectators that turned out were certainly not disappointed.

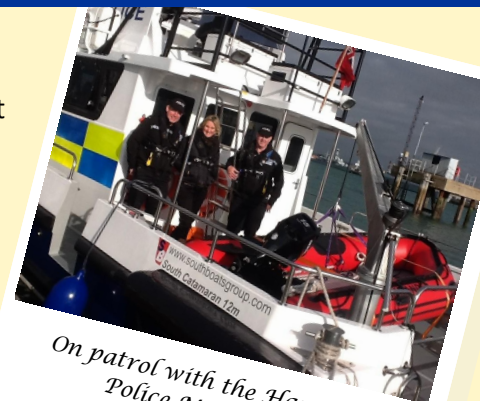
Throughout the year I've developed a strong interest in the issue of adult literacy and was shocked to learn that poor literacy affects one in six people nationally. Determined to do something about this problem, I met with the inspirational Libby Ainley, co-author of the fantastic 'Yes We Can Read' teaching aid. I also raised the issue of adult literacy in the Commons, during Questions to the Leader of the House, calling for a debate to be held about this important subject.

Back on the Gosport peninsula, I joined the Hampshire Police Marine Unit on one of their coastal patrols. After spending a few hours aboard their impressive new craft - 'Commander', I was relieved to make it back to dry land in one piece, with a renewed respect for the important job the Marine Unit do to keep our busy coastline, and all who enjoy it, as safe as possible.

With over 20 miles of stunning waterfront, three deep water marinas and direct access to the Solent, Gosport peninsula has all the ingredients necessary to make it the south's premier marine and sailing destination. I feel strongly that we should be maximising our local expertise in this sector to drive economic growth. With this in mind, this month I met with the British Marine Federation, Visit England, the LEP and Berkley Homes, I also organised a 'Sailing Scene' meeting in the superb setting of G's restaurant in Royal Clarence Marina. This brought together representatives from over 50 of the peninsula's top marine organisations including Selden Masts, Alex Thomson Racing & Clipper Ventures to discuss ideas to raise the profile of our world-class sailing infrastructure; I hope this will pave the way for more investment in our area.

Continuing the nautical theme, I had a useful meeting with Sir Alan Massey and his staff at the Maritime Coastguard Agency HQ and visited their new Maritime Operations Centre in Titchfield, this state of the art facility will provide more resilient co-ordination for the Coastguard network and create 96 new jobs.

Back in Westminster, I was delighted to be elected as Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Local Growth on the back of my work with the Solent Enterprise Zone at Daedalus. I also attended my first meeting as a member of the Business, Innovation and Skills Select Committee.



On patrol with the Hampshire Police Marine Unit



Addressing Sailing Scene meeting at Clarence Marina



Meeting Sir Alan Massey at MCA HQ

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Testing out the latest technology at QinetiQ

On a more sombre note, I had the honour of attending the Gosport Civic Remembrance Service, laying a wreath to honour all those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in service of our country.

Having visited the QinetiQ site at Haslar a couple of times before, I was keen to accept an invitation to their HQ in Farnborough. There I saw firsthand the ground-breaking work taking place and discussed the value of science and technology investment to defence markets.

Regular readers will know that I have visited all the schools in the

constituency at least once since becoming an

MP and I love welcoming them up to Westminster. So I was thrilled

when a group of politics students from Bay House School came on a tour of Parliament. Quizzing me on everything from the voting age to barbers chair tax; the lively Q and A session was more akin to Paxman than Parliament!

Back in Westminster, I spoke in a debate about the tragic case of Katrice Lee, who went missing over 30 years ago, raising concerns at the flaws made in the initial investigation. I was pleased to secure a pledge from the Defence Minister, Mark Francois, to meet with me and the Lee family at Royal Military Police HQ to address our concerns. Following the debate, there has been coverage on the Crimewatch programme and we took Katrice's case straight to the Prime Minister's door when I joined her family & friends to march on Downing Street to hand in a petition.



Handing in petition with Katrice Lee's family at 10 Downing Street

My support for voluntary organisations continued this month when I attended the Gosport Voluntary Action conference for local volunteers, meeting the unsung heroes that do such valuable work in our local community. I also spent a fascinating morning with the Probation Service, learning about the U-Turn Project for ex-offenders as well as the mentoring programme for military veterans.

With winter well and truly here, I attended the Parliamentary launch of the Home Heat Helpline (0800 33 66 99), a free service that provides help with energy bills, free grants for insulation & new boilers and money off bills. I also kept up my commitment to take my advice surgeries out and about, visiting the Nimrod Centre in Rowner and Elson Library this month. Many of the concerns raised by constituents involved recent changes to bus routes & timetables, so I arranged an urgent meeting with bosses from First Hampshire Bus Company to discuss our concerns. I am pleased to say that they agreed to review the new bus routes if enough people write to them, so I would encourage anyone adversely affected by the changes to contact them, any reviews will come into force by the spring.

I finished the month by visiting the Commodore Mansergh and his team at HMS Collingwood. Taking a look around this fantastic training facility and meeting the newest batch of naval warfare and weapons engineering trainees, reminded me how important this site is, not only for our Armed forces, but for our local economy too.

Best wishes,

Caroline

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 three months in advance to make sure you get a place - the tours are very popular!

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