

# CAROLINE DINENAGE MP

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR GOSPORT

## NEWSLETTER

September 2023

ISSUE: 146



The first few weeks of September are always a frenzy of activity, as a new term kicks off again in Parliament, along with a mad rush to get everything done ....before it all stops again for the Conference season.



Back home in the Gosport Constituency, it's been equally busy. The month started with the impressive spectacle of the [Clipper Race](#) departing Portsmouth Harbour. The Gosport-based company, led by local hero Sir Robin Knox-Johnston, takes place once every couple of years and sees novice sailors competing in a yacht race over 40,000 nautical miles and 6

continents- it's certainly not for the faint-hearted! The boats and crew were readied for their adventures at their Gosport home in Premier Marina, before setting off from Gunwharf (where, as ever, some of the best views were from the Gosport waterside!) for the race start. We wish all the skippers and their crew fair winds and safe voyage.

A charming new retail addition to Lee-on-the-Solent High Street this month, My First Steps, who sell high quality baby clothes, toys and gifts. It was a treat to be invited to cut the ribbon to officially open the shop - and be among their first customers!



We celebrated another milestone, with the 10th anniversary party of the Gosport [Men's Shed](#). I feel so lucky to have attended that very first meeting a decade ago and it has been a joy to see how the group has grown to one of the biggest in the UK, and become such a well loved part of our community since then. Thank you to Chairman, Harry, for presenting me with my

own 'mini-shed' which will sit proudly in my Westminster office as a fond reminder of home.

Regular readers will know that I have been pushing for improvements in the way we detect, treat & care for children with cancer since the death of my young constituent, Sophie Fairall, two years ago. September is not only the anniversary of Sophie's

passing, it's also Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, an opportunity to continue the call for action.

During Prime Minister's Questions I [asked the Prime Minister](#) to say when a Childhood Cancer Action Plan will be published. I also [spoke on GB News](#) and [BBC Radio Solent](#) alongside Charlotte, Sophie's inspirational mum, to highlight the urgency of the campaign.

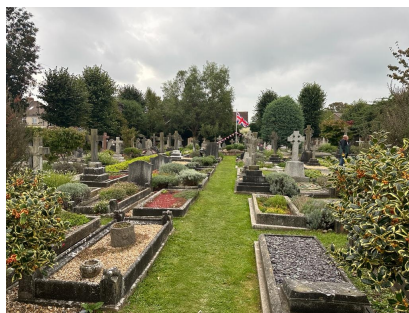
I continue to be concerned about the loss of bank branches across Gosport, Lee on the Solent and Stubbington. I know that lots of us use online banking these days, but face to face services are still vital for many local people. This month I met with the organisation, LINK, to ask what could be done to improve services and prevent further closures. They have agreed to look into the provision in Stubbington and Lee on the Solent, who are now without a bank branch at all. I also wrote to the Community Cash Advisory Panel, regarding the reduced opening hours of our Gosport High Street branches. And to the Minister, to seek assurances that remaining local banking will be protected. I have made a video to explain the actions I'm taking, which you can see [here](#).



This month I also visited the lovely team at the Nationwide branch on the High Street. A quarter of Gosport residents has a relationship with Nationwide, so their commitment to stay in the High Street was welcomed. I also wrote to the other bank branches in the constituency and I'm pleased to say that Halifax,

HSBC, Lloyds & Santander also confirmed their branches would remain open.

It was good to meet the staff at Blossom Health's open day. Blossom Health is the new provider at Bury Road Surgery, which was threatened with closure earlier this year. I pushed hard to keep this local health provider and I'm so pleased that a resolution has been found that allows the surgery to remain open and accept new patients.



One of my highlights of the local calendar every year has to be the [Heritage Open Days](#). This year was no different. I particularly enjoyed a fascinating heritage tour of St Mark's Graveyard in Alverstoke - with an intriguing history including links as diverse as Admiral Nelson and Blakes Brewery! Next years dates have already been confirmed for 6-15 September.

This year the Stoke Road Festival was timed to perfectly complement the Heritage Open Days events and was a huge success. Stoke Road's eclectic collection of independent traders were joined by live music, entertainers and food stalls- everybody seemed to be in great spirits and having lots of fun.



I met Watson Property, who have bought the commercial units at



Royal Clarence Yard. For well over a decade, Berkeley Homes have promised investment in the retail, hospitality and entertainment at the site, yet despite pressure from me and many others, this has never transpired. This sale heralds a promising development, Watson have exciting plans to bring new amenities and drive footfall in this particularly enchanting part of our town.

In Hamble Road Court, I invited Hyde Housing bosses to join me and meet with residents, so they could raise any concerns directly with the housing association. We will be doing the same in the Gosport tower blocks in the months ahead.



On Gosport High Street, I opened the [Whitehead-Ross Education](#) offices. They offer long-term unemployed people the opportunity to learn new skills, and guidance to help them back into work as part of the Department of Work & Pensions Restart Scheme.

Popping over the harbour, I attended the launch of a [replica Coastal Motor Boat 4 \(CMB4\)](#), built painstakingly by volunteers over 7 years. Known as the 'Spitfire of the Seas', they were built locally in the Camper & Nicholson boatyard in Gosport. It is now available for public viewing at Boathouse 4 at the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard.



I also attended a briefing with the Police & Crime Commissioner, Home Secretary, Chief Constable for Hampshire & Isle of Wight and other Hampshire MPs for an update on the new command structure of policing in Hampshire, neighbourhood policing and the reopening of police front counters. Hoping for some positive news on reopening of Gosport Police Station shortly!

Back in Westminster, I joined my constituency neighbour, Penny Mordaunt, to welcome her plans to build 3 vessels as national flagships. They would be utilised for roles such as disaster relief and research, ocean clean up, operations to combat illegal migration, hospital and medical training capability, secure communication and accommodation, with no burden to the tax payer!



This month is World Alzheimer's Month, and I met with [Alzheimer's Research UK](#) to discuss the importance of research and how we can drive up participation. As a Dementia Research Champion, with family experience of the illness, this is an issue close to my heart. You can participate in finding a cure for dementia, even if you don't have the condition yourself.

On the theme of World Alzheimer's Month, I also took the opportunity

to welcome the new [£1m Brain Health Fund](#), introduced by the Professional Footballers' Association and the Premier League. Research shows that footballers are at 3.5x greater risk of developing Alzheimer's than the average population.

We all know how important extra-curricular activities are for the development of young people. That is why I was disturbed to hear that Girlguiding have planned to sell their 5 Training Activity Centres, including one in Hampshire. This will significantly limit the ability for Girlguiding groups to access outdoor adventure activities and development opportunities. I [hosted a debate](#) for myself and fellow MPs to raise their objections and highlight to Girlguiding just how important these facilities are. Although the Government have no power over the charity regarding these decisions, the Minister committed to raise concerns with them and the Charity Commission.

I've chaired Culture, Media & Sport Committee sessions this month on [creator remuneration](#), [women's sport](#), [gambling regulation](#) & measures that the British Museum and other DCMS supported institutions are doing to [protect their collections](#).

I also took part in an interesting session of the Women & Equalities Committee on sexism and inequality in sport. You can watch a clip of this session [here](#).

At long last, the [Online Safety Bill returned to the Commons](#). As a former Minister responsible for drafting this huge and complex legislation for nearly two years, I welcomed several Lords' amendments. These will help to strengthen the ground-breaking work, particularly on violence against women and girls, protection of children, animal welfare, and changes to the categorisation of harm. I'm delighted that it's now moving for Royal Assent- the final hurdle.



I enjoyed some of the last of the summer sun- on what turned out to be the hottest day of the year- at the Goodwood Revival festival. Thoroughly enjoyed all the vintage glamour.

I took part in a piece with House Magazine about Women Select Committee Chairs. While the number of Committee Chairs has never been higher, 14 out of 37 being women, this [really interesting article](#)

highlights the progress, and work to be done, to improve gender representation.

I attended a Suicide Prevention briefing in Parliament, where I was so pleased to catch up with Alice Hendy from Stubbington. Alice founded the award winning organisation R;pple upon the death of her brother. [R;pple Suicide Prevention](#) intercepts harmful searches relating to suicide content, and signposts where to get support.

Good progress on the economy this month. [Inflation is now at 6.3%](#), helping with the cost of living. The Bank of England decided not to raise interest rates this month too- good news for borrowers. This shows there is confidence back in the UK market, and that the government's plan is working.

ONS figures also showed that Britain's economic performance over the pandemic was better than originally thought, with [growth being the third best](#) in the G7. Our economy has grown more compared to pre-pandemic than Germany, France and Japan.

In other policy news, the Office for Veterans Affairs has started issuing their new medal for service personnel who participated in the Nuclear Weapons testing. All eligible veterans will receive their medal by Remembrance Sunday.

The UK is set to rejoin the [Horizon programme](#). The international partnership will ensure UK researchers and scientists will continue to access to the world's largest research programme. Good news for emerging technology such as AI & health tech, and ultimately good

for our economy.

Hampshire County Council are set to receive an additional £3,579,462 to protect essential bus services and make travel improvements, building on the £80million of Bus Services Improvement Plan+ funding for 2022-23 and the £1 billion investment for bus services in 2022.

As ever, my team and I are here for any questions or concerns you may have. Please do get in touch!

Best wishes  
Caroline Dinenage

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