



28th July 2017

Hello,

Following an intense few weeks in Westminster after the election, I am back in the constituency for the summer period. Rest assured that the government is continuing to hold its steady hand on the rudder running the country, maintaining the sound economy necessary to deliver the jobs and services we all want and need, whilst at the same time getting on with the job of delivering Brexit.

Back here I am much enjoying getting out and about catching up with people throughout the patch from the Blackdowns to the Quantocks and right across the Vale of Taunton. Just recently I've been met with businesses in Wellington, (including a tour of the museum to see the fascinating archive on the Wellington Monument,) seen some of the enterprising activities filling the town for Taunton Live and stopped off at the charming community run café in North Curry. Totally run by volunteers, this café raises £10,000 a year for charities as well as providing a valuable focal point for local people. Well worth a visit!



A358

A good deal of my time over past months both locally and in Westminster has been devoted to discussions and meetings relating to the proposed A358 road scheme. This has included much liaison with Highways England during the consultation process, with local stakeholders and community groups and with the Secretary of State for

Transport, Chris Grayling himself as well as a reference to the project in a PMQ.

I was pleased to be able to persuade Highways England to extend the consultation period to make allowances for the general election clash and to hold an open meeting at Stoke St Mary which had previously not been on the cards. Early in the proceeding I was also heartened that Chris Grayling took up my invitation to visit the area to gain more insight into the Highways England proposal on the ground. I have made it quite clear to him that there has been much dissatisfaction with the consultation process itself in particular the fact that only one preferred route was proposed in it. I have also pointed out that whilst there are mixed feelings about the route there is an overriding concern that the option offered does not deliver anything for Taunton and whilst it may cost the least to build it also delivers the least benefits locally. It is likely to have a relatively high accident rate and to do little to reduce pollution or relieve congestion through Henlade with only 30% of traffic likely to use it.

Local people have called for this upgrade for over 20 years (I remember reporting on this as a local TV reporter) and I welcome the fact that it is this government who has overseen a strong enough economy to finally commit the funding to it but it is crucial now that the right road is put in the right place to deliver not just strategically but for the people of Taunton.



Positive Move on Plastics

I believe I have made at least one convert to micro-plastic free shower gels – The Speaker in the House of Commons. This followed my reference in a PMQ to the deleterious effects these tiny plastic beads used in many commonly used personal care products are having on our

precious marine habitats. And now, following my own campaign in conjunction with other organisations I'm delighted that the new Secretary of State for the Environment, Food, Farming and Rural Affairs, Michael Gove, has also taken this on board by confirming that legislation will be introduced this year to ban the sale and manufacture of microbeads in cosmetics and personal care products.

The micro plastic announcement was part of a wider speech on the environment and the future of farming delivered by Michael Gove in which he said Brexit offered a once in a lifetime opportunity to reform how we care for our land, rivers and seas. I have been feeding views and ideas from local farmers, environmental groups and many of those with links to the land to inform this process and shall continue to do so. Please get in touch if there is anything you wish to share.

You can read Michael Gove's speech, "The Unfrozen Moment", [HERE](#).

Air Quality

Having been on two air pollution inquiries (Environment Audit and Defra Select Committees) since my time in Parliament, I am only too aware of the dangers to health that fumes from vehicles can pose, with around 50,000 deaths thought to be related to this every year. So, it is right that the Government has committed to addressing this, with new funding available to help local authorities tackle hotspots (and we have two locally, through Henlade and in East Reach.) Diesel cars have been one of the major contributors to the problem, but it would be unfair to level blame at them because it was not so long ago that, for all good reasons, people were being encouraged to switch to diesel cars. Now the government is consulting on a number of scrappage schemes and investing £3bn to tackle the effects of roadside pollution and supporting greener transport initiatives with an announcement that no new diesel or petrol cars and vans will be sold from 2040.

Education

Good schools are our lifeblood and it is our duty to provide an education system that unlocks potential for every child and allows them to achieve to the best of their ability.

I am in constant contact with local schools and applaud their hard and dedicated work but am also aware of the pressures they face with rising costs and concerns over funding going to the front line. I have been at pains to feed in these concerns to government and am very pleased that

that Secretary of State for Education Justine Greening has listened and whilst school funding is already at a record high has recently announced an additional £1.3bn spending on schools on top of the commitment made at the 2015 Sending Review. Core funding for schools and high needs will rise from nearly £41 billion in 2017-18 to £42.4 billion in 2018-19, and to £43.5 billion in 2019-20. This represents an increase of £2.6 billion between this year and 2019-20, and funding per pupil will now be maintained in real terms for the remaining two years of the Spending Review.

In addition, the introduction of a national funding formula, which I together with others locally worked hard for in order to right the historic injustice whereby pupils in Somerset get almost £2000 less per pupil than the best funded nationally, will begin to ensure we can distribute this funding fairly and transparently. The full response to the comprehensive consultation will be announced in September but the over-riding message is that this government is listening to its schools and especially those in Taunton Deane.

Contaminated Blood

I spoke in what was a very moving debate in the House of Commons on the contaminated blood scandal to represent those poor people affected in this constituency.

In the 70s and 80s thousands of haemophiliacs and others requiring blood in hospital for a range of reasons were treated with blood products imported from the USA which turned out to be contaminated with hepatitis and HIV. I am pleased that through concerted pressure the government, coinciding with the debate, announced a full public inquiry to provide the answers the victims have sought for so long once and for all.

View my speech [HERE](#).

Fair for the Older Generation:

Saturday 26 August FREE EVENT

Following the success of my first fair for the older generations last year, I am hosting another event on August 27th at the Somerset County Cricket ground, 11am – 2pm

The focus is on services, activities, hobbies, volunteering opportunities for anyone and everyone over 50. There will be a myriad of organisations offering helpful advice for a healthy old age including the

Hestercombe Gardens Trust, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Care Companies, the Somerset Community Council and much more. There will also be activities to sample, join in or just enjoy such as listening to the Rivertones Choir. And of course, it's a great chance to catch up with your MP in person. I'd love to see you there. More information can be found [HERE](#).

COME TO
**REBECCA'S OLDER
GENERATION FAIR**
Hosted By Rebecca Pow MP



- Helpful advice on activities, hobbies, services, volunteering opportunities and a whole lot more besides!
- Taster sessions and entertainment throughout the day
- Focus on health & wellbeing

A wide variety of organisations offering helpful advice

SATURDAY 26 AUGUST 2017 11am–2pm

COME TO
County Room, Colin Atkinson Pavilion, Somerset County Cricket Ground, Taunton, TA1 1JT

STALLHOLDERS INCLUDE
■ The National Trust
■ Hestercombe Gardens
■ Berry's Coaches
■ And Many more

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Contact Livvi Grant on **01823 443062** or livvi.grant@parliament.uk

Rebecca POW MP *Working hard for you*

Rebecca Gets Recycling

On the subject of health and wellbeing, wherever possible I have been supporting sporting opportunities in the constituency and in Parliament have raised questions in the chamber referencing the merits of both tennis and cricket, in particular womens' cricket in relation to the highly successful Womens World Cup event hosted at the Somerset County ground.

Not everyone is fortunate enough to be able to afford sports kit that is so often a prerequisite for taking part in a range of sports. So I was delighted to discover that the Lord's Taverners charity collects unwanted sports kit for re-distribution to disadvantaged children at home and abroad. I've just taken all my sons' old kit to their collection point at the

County Ground and am pleased that it might be usefully re-used. If you would like to donate some kit or find out more, visit their website [HERE](#).



Welly Monument Big Day

Looking further ahead on October 21st, a special 200th anniversary event in honour of the laying of the Wellington Monument foundation stone is taking place and everyone is welcome.

This iconic symbol perched on the Blackdown Hills was erected to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Duke of Wellington's success at the Battle of Waterloo. And yes, although that was 1815, it took two years before the monument project got started, hence our event in 2017. As you will know, since being the MP I have been supporting a project in conjunction with the National Trust (who now own the monument site,) to restore our treasured monument. I was instrumental in attracting the £million grant from the Libor fund which kick started the project. We are now awaiting news of whether the Heritage Lottery bid has been successful.

On October 20th 1817 a procession of 10,000 people wound their way up to the monument site for the laying of the stone. In recognition of this a commemorative walk is being staged from the town to the site during the afternoon of the 21th. This will link to a series of activities around the monument in the early evening and promises to be a really memorable experience. It would be great to see you there!

Check out my website (www.rebeccapow.org.uk) for updates on this.

A few little facts to finish with:

- Unemployment is now at its lowest rate since 1975. It currently stands at 4.5 per cent – down 0.4 per cent over the past year and down 3.5 per cent since 2010.
- The NHS has been ranked the best health service across 11 developed countries. It outperforms health services in Australia, Germany and France amongst others.
- The UK has been the most successful G7 nation at tackling climate change. In 2014 – the most recent year for which we have full figures across the G7 – UK per-capita greenhouse gas emissions were 33% down on 1992.
- The National Living Wage has given 1.7 million people a pay rise. Someone over 25 on the National Living Wage has seen an increase of over £1,400 since its introduction.

That's all for now, as always you can keep up with all my news on my Facebook and Twitter and do contact my office if there is anything I can help you with.

Have a good summer,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rebecca', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Rebecca