



Rebecca Pow E-Bulletin  
30th January 2018

Hello again,



Spring is on the horizon and I have certainly had a spring in my step with the host of positive Government announcements on a plethora of environmental issues recently, many of which I have worked on myself. Since my last update I seem busier than ever, with local matters such as the A358, social care in Somerset, working with Musgrove Park Hospital on a plan to build a new surgical centre, speaking up for the Royal Marines, continuing to fight for improved broadband and more besides.

My time is as usual divided between London and the West Country but as always Taunton Deane is at the heart of my Westminster work, whether it be feeding in information from our local Citizen's Advice Bureau to inform a speech on universal credit, citing issues being faced by the local health care sector, or

working with the Avon and Somerset PCC to fight for increased funding that will ensure we are kept safe. As I have said from the outset, I was elected to represent Taunton Deane in Westminster - not the other way around!

### [Campaign for a new Surgical Centre at Musgrove Park Hospital](#)

In Parliament there are many tools that can be harnessed to promote constituency issues to Ministers. I recently made use of an End of Day Adjournment Debate, granted to me by the Speaker of the House of Commons, to make the strongest possible case for a £79.5m new surgical centre at Musgrove Park Hospital.

Our county hospital is a valued part of life here and I am sure, like my family and I you will all have had close associations with it for one reason or another. Whilst the dedicated and skilled team of staff working at Musgrove have recently been rated as 'outstanding' for patient, for many years they have had to work in less than ideal conditions on some parts of the estate. Some operating theatres

built in the 940's by the American Forces as a temporary hospital for the D-Day landings, complete with flat roofs, (that often leak and are a maintenance headache), antiquated pipework, and an archaic air conditioning system are still in use.

My debate highlighted the problems and supported the bid to NHS Transformation for 5 new theatres and a new state of



the art endoscopy unit which will enable the hospital to cope with the dramatically increasing demands being made on it, as patients numbers escalate and Somerset's elderly population grows. Since before my first election in 2015 I have worked to bring this issue to the attention of the Secretary of State for Health Jeremy Hunt and following the announcement of a £3.5billion government fund for upgrading hospital infrastructure I am optimistic that the project is drawing nearer. To make this case even more robust and to demonstrate public support I will be launching a parliamentary petition. If you would like to sign this petition please email my office on [rebecca.pow.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:rebecca.pow.mp@parliament.uk) or call on 01823 443062. I believe that the top class care offered at Musgrove Park should be matched by the very best facilities, so I hope that you will join me and support my campaign.

[WATCH MY DEBATE HERE](#)

## [25 Year Environment Plan](#)

Judging by the amount of correspondence I receive on diverse issues relating to the environment I know this is an area that people in Taunton Deane really care about, so I am sure that many will be interested in the Government's ambitious new 25 Year Environment Plan.

I was delighted to be invited to the launch by the Prime Minister where she stressed that being good stewards of our inheritance for future generations is vital. The Government has made great strides already including establishing Blue Belt Marine areas, banning microbeads in wash off cosmetics (a campaign I was directly involved with), halting the ivory trade and clamping down on littering but the 25 Year Plan enables much more.

Tackling plastic waste is a key focus. Enough plastic to fill the Albert Hall a 1000 times finds its way into the ocean annually. Extending the successful 5p plastic bag charge to small retail outlets should reduce this waste further as should encouraging supermarkets to introduce plastic free aisles and investment into finding plastic alternatives and consultations are underway regarding cutting down on single use plastics and on a returnable plastic bottle system. (I always carry a re-fillable bottle).

## [Basket Case](#)

My ambition for wider use of Somerset wicker shopping baskets may at last come into its own. I have had my basket for over 25 years (just renewed the handle) bought from the Willow and Wetlands Centre in



Stoke St Gregory and it is still standing me in good stead. Using a local basket like this is a great way of not just carrying the shopping but supporting a local industry, local craftspeople and the tourist trade.

## A358

Having worked doggedly to secure the funding commitment for the A358 I am now determined to see the right route chosen for all residents and businesses in Taunton Deane.

Many people thought the last consultation was flawed as there was only one route offered and crucially it did little for Taunton Deane. As your Member of Parliament I was pleased to play my part in pressing both Highways England and the Secretary of State for Transport in no uncertain terms to open a second and improved consultation and I am pleased that my calls, together with those of many others locally bore fruit.



Many of you will by now have attended the exhibitions and no doubt fed in your views in the new consultation process. This time, three options were offered, with links to the new Nexus business site included, as well as clearer links to Junction 25 and the M5. I shall continue to monitor the process closely and represent my constituents views where appropriate to both Highway England and the Department of Transport to ensure the best outcome for those in Henlade, the wider local area, the economy of Taunton as well as achieving the strategic aim of moving traffic more quickly east - west.

## Gift from the Duke of Wellington



I was proud recently to be able to present the Mayor of Wellington, Gary James with a book, written by the current Duke of Wellington, Charles Wellesley. The book, a gift to the museum, is a comprehensive collection of portraits and paintings of the First Duke of Wellington, Arthur Wellesley, one of our greatest historic heroes, who in his day was revered not just in Great Britain but right across Europe. In fact there are more portraits of the Iron Duke in the National Portrait Gallery than of any other

historic figure in this country, including Elizabeth 1 and Henry VIII.

I was honoured to present the signed book from the 9th Duke to the Museum. He is a

living link with his great ancestor, who took his title from the town. I'm also delighted that, the current Duke, like me, is right behind plans to restore the Wellington Monument.

### Seeability - volunteering opportunities

All over the constituency many people are doing invaluable work for a wide range of charities and I enjoyed a visit to Fiennes House in Wellington, recently to meet the dedicated staff working in this residential home run by national sight loss charity, Seeability. It provides a home for adults with sight loss and learning disabilities, complex needs, autism and some with challenging behaviour.



It was a pleasure to meet the staff and residents and some of their parents and to see first-hand what an important facility this is. Fiennes House employ 53 members of staff and have around 15 volunteers. However, they are in need of new volunteers to help with day to day activities for the residents, which includes reading, cooking and fundraising. If you were interested in learning more about this, or possibly volunteering yourself, then please contact Donna O'Brien on [dobrien@seeability.org](mailto:dobrien@seeability.org).

### Rebecca Raises Rural Issues

Finally I was pleased to launch the first ever Rural Vulnerability Day in Parliament recently and to make a reference to it in The Chamber itself during Business Questions with the Leader of the House. The problems being faced in rural areas, from Wiveliscombe to Wellington, the Blackdowns to the Quantocks, often get overlooked and the aim of bringing together organisations to share experiences, with the Rural Services Network as a lynch pin, was to highlight the deprivation often suffered in our country areas. Delivering services to remote areas, whether it be transport, social care, leisure activities and such like is costly in sparsely populated areas and yet the need is great particularly as a higher proportion of those over 65 live in our rural areas. Anyone with knowledge of this area is being encouraged to feed into the Government Green paper on Social Care being published shortly, making a special case for the challenges of our rural areas.

I hope that this update has given you a small taster of issues I have been involved in recently. As ever do get in touch if you have any particular issues you'd like to raise or indeed views to share.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rebecca Pow". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

Rebecca Pow  
Member of Parliament for Taunton Deane

