

MP's Diary

News from John Howell MP for the Henley Constituency July/August 2011



Henley Constituency
Town and Parish Clerks with
John at No 10

Decentralisation and localism – our parish and town councils

I hosted a visit to Parliament of almost 40 Oxfordshire town and parish clerks. After a full tour of both Houses of Parliament I took the group to No. 10 to have coffee with the Prime Minister and to have photos taken on the steps of No. 10.

Our parishes and towns are at the heart of the Government's approach to localism and decentralisation; and these are inextricably linked to the notion of the Big Society. Through some of the policies I have helped generate, we are delivering greater power to local communities and strengthening local democracy: Central Government has taken a high degree of control over what can be done locally over the years. We are reversing that and we will now see local decision-making become the norm rather than the exception.



John at the Diamond
Synchrotron

Oxfordshire's leading science expertise

The Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership has agreed to support a bid for one of the Government's new Enterprise Zones which covers Harwell, Oxford and Milton Park. The bid is called Science Vale UK. Although the Enterprise Zone will not be situated in my constituency we will benefit enormously from the new jobs it is expected to create.

To find out more about Oxfordshire's world class science, leading scientists at the Diamond Light Synchrotron and the Rutherford Appleton Laboratories at Harwell gave me a personal tour of their facilities and the exciting science, technology and engineering they are creating.



John asking a question of the
Justice Minister in the House

Ending our compensation culture

At questions to Justice Ministers I called for a clamp down on 'bloated compensation payments' which result in the tax payer footing the bill from high success fees charged against public authorities. I also called on the Government to reform our ever growing and rotten compensation culture.

Justice Minister, Jonathan Djanogly MP, confirmed that the Government is taking forward a fundamental reform of no win, no fee conditional fee arrangements in order to deter frivolous claims and those without merit getting to court.



John at the Redgrave Pinsent
Rowing Lake

Checking up on our Olympic rowing preparation

I visited GB Rowing Team rowers at the Redgrave-Pinsent rowing lake to check out their preparation for the World Rowing Championships and for next year's Olympics. David Tanner CBE, British Rowing's International Manager pointed out to me the contribution which the facilities at the lake have made to the country's rowing success.

To understand the professionalism of our rowers and staff you have to experience it first hand and I was pleased to get a feel not only of what goes on on the water but what goes on backstage to make it all happen.

Watch a video about our planning reforms

You can now get a feel for the changes I have been helping to make to the planning system on video. By following the link below you can see some clips which I pre-recorded for a conference I could not attend in person.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4XhGPKmP8c>

You can also read the interview with me conducted by the Guardian newspaper <http://www.guardian.co.uk/local-government-network/2011/jul/08/john-howell-planning-vacuum-utter-nonsense>

Do you know your MP?

Recent research has suggested that few people know whether their MP has had a career outside politics. Total Politics magazine recently pointed out that those who had were something of an endangered breed but that the experience they brought to Westminster was hugely valuable. To find out what I did (and what I am doing now both in Westminster and in the constituency) take a look at my web-site www.johnhowellmp.com

Supporting the Constituency

In the period between the General Election and June 2011 I have undertaken over 260 engagements in support of the constituency. In addition to my programme to visit all our schools the total includes 40 engagements related to business and almost 90 related to local charities or specific support for local communities and initiatives.



Townlands Hospital, Henley

There seems to be a growing body of dis-information about Townlands. First, we are told that the NHS reforms are delaying Townlands. Yet, the only change that has arisen out of the reform plans is the removal of PCT approval limits for projects and the requirement that approval be given for projects by the Strategic Health Authority (SHA) instead. This is not new. The Department of Health wrote to PCTs back in February to explain this.

Secondly, we are told that the County Council is responsible for the delay. Yet in October last year the PCT told me that the project to re-provide Townlands was dead in the water unless a bigger but more complex project involving the County Council went ahead.



Unemployment falls again

The number of unemployed claimants again fell in the constituency. In June the total came to 643 people. Only three constituencies in the country have lower numbers.

To find out more about John's work visit his website at www.johnhowellmp.com

If you would like more information about what the Conservative Party is doing locally please visit www.oxfordshireconservatives.com

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