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Good afternoon,

I hope you are all keeping well.

We have all been deeply saddened by the passing of His Royal Highness, Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh. A beloved husband, a formidable man and true servant to the United Kingdom.

From his time as a naval cadet at Dartmouth, to his retirement as a working member of the Royal family in 2017, he lived a life that defined the very concept of service. He leaves a legacy that goes far beyond the steadfast companionship he provided to Her Majesty the Queen for over sixty years, not least with the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme from which young people will benefit for generations to come.

I have written to Her Majesty, and everyone in the Royal Family, to express our condolences at this difficult and deeply sad time. Leicestershire County Council and Rutland County Council have books of condolences which anyone can sign online.

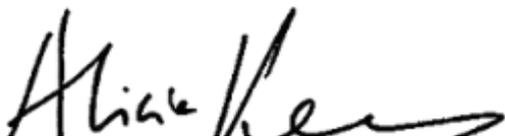
In today's newsletter I cover:

- This week's COVID-19 and Vaccine news
- Government Funds for local businesses and organisations
 - High Street Fund
 - Culture Recovery Fund
 - Brooksby Melton College upgrade
 - Recovery Loan Scheme
 - Funding to Tackle Violent Crime
- Banning Conversion Therapy
- Delivering my promises of MMDR and A52 improvements
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Last month marked one year since a national lockdown was announced to tackle a virus that none of us could have imagined would change our lives and way of life as greatly as we have experienced over the last year. We have all suffered losses – friends and loved ones, businesses, freedoms and memories that will sadly never be.

All the while, there have been herculean efforts by so many. The NHS, carers, our police, emergency workers, prison staff at HMP Stocken, council staff, shop workers, bin men and women, funeral workers, bus and train drivers, teachers, school and nursery staff, and utilities workers, and everyone who has worked so hard to follow the rules. We should also remember our farmers, and those working in the food chain and the many, many more who continued to protect and serve us all throughout the pandemic.

I hope you're all enjoying the easing of lockdown this week, let's just hope the snow holds off so we can make the most of it!



This Week's COVID-19 and Vaccine News

I first want to pay special tribute to staff at HMP Stocken, who managed to control an outbreak at their facility, and keep cases from spreading to the wider community. Our numbers are where they are in our region in no small part because HMP Stocken responded exceptionally well to a very difficult set of circumstances. They all deserve our praise.

Yesterday marked another major step in the easing of the lockdown across England.

- Pubs and restaurants are able to reopen – outdoor settings limited to either six people or two households
- Indoor settings must only be visited alone or with household groups
- Non-essential retail; personal care premises such as hairdressers, beauty and nail salon; and indoor leisure facilities such as gyms and spas will reopen
- Overnight stays away from home will be permitted and self-contained accommodation can reopen
- People should continue to work from home where they can and minimise domestic travel
- International holidays are still illegal

The sacrifices made by the British public and the success of our vaccine programme take us closer to defeating this virus – but we must all remain cautious as we have seen rising cases across Europe. I urge everyone to continue to behave responsibly as restrictions are eased this week. There are easy guides on the Government's re-opening plan which can be found at the bottom of the newsletter.

In Rutland and Melton, COVID-19 data shows a decrease in our rates of the virus locally. Whilst rates remain reasonably low, they are above the average rate in England, which is falling. In Harborough cases are the lowest in our County and are some way below the national average.

Please get tested and otherwise stay at home if you have any symptoms, and please do get a test if you have any concerns at all and/or work outside of home, or if you have any symptoms. We can get our rates down even further to support the vaccination programme even further.

On vaccinations we are doing extremely well locally, with 75 per cent of our adult population now having received their first dose. Nationally, over 32 million have had their first dose and over 7.6 million their second dose as I write this today.

This week the MHRA announced that people under the age of 30 in the UK will be offered the Pfizer or new Moderna vaccine going forward rather than the AstraZeneca vaccine. All vaccines and indeed medicines have side effects, and the chances of someone developing a blood clot after having had the AstraZeneca job remains very small: 4 in 1 million. By comparison, the blood clot risk of the contraceptive pill is 1 in 1,000. The guidance remains that anyone who has already received their first AstraZeneca vaccine should receive a second dose of AstraZeneca, regardless of their age, except the small number of people who experienced blood clots with low platelet counts from their first vaccination, or who have one of a very specific, and short, number of conditions on which your GP can advise, or be found on my [website here](#).

I had the AstraZeneca vaccine, and when invited, I will book to have it for my second dose. As such, I wish to remind residents, that if you are aged 45 or over, or are now in a category of people being vaccinated, you can now book a vaccine at a mass testing centre without waiting for a letter in the post. The Government is making sure you have as

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many opportunities to get vaccinated as quickly as possible – please do travel and book [here](#).

Government Funds for Local Businesses and Organisations

High Street Fund

Our high streets have had a tough year – perhaps the toughest ever. But I am heartened by the work being done by the Government, including grants worth £35,628 to high streets across Rutland and £45,239 for Melton’s high street. This important fund will give business owners the funds they need to boost tourism, improve green spaces and provide more outdoor seating areas, markets and food stall as they recover from COVID-19.

Brooksby Melton College Upgrade

I have also been pushing for more investment in vocational education, so we can rebuild faster after the pandemic, and I’m delighted that Brooksby Melton College is one of 16 colleges across the country identified for the Government’s £1.5 billion FE Capital Transformation Fund to upgrade and revitalise their buildings and estate. This is fantastic news as Brooksby is a standout college, particularly in its land-based and performance arts courses and the exceptional results it supports students to achieve.

Culture Recovery Fund

As Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Department of Digital Culture, Media and Sport, I have been working hard to ensure that our corner of the East Midlands is targeted in the second round of the Government’s Culture Recovery Fund. I’m thrilled to see that four further businesses in Rutland and Melton are set to receive over £109,000 including: Symphotech, [Rocks By Rail - The Living Ironstone Museum](#), [Pinder’s Circus](#) and [St Mary’s Church, Melton Mowbray](#).

The support given to culture by the Government is unprecedented, providing the sector the funds it needs to reopen safely. Now that we're on the road to recovery, there is much to look forward to as organisations get ready to reopen their door, welcome back audiences and making plans for the future. I can't wait to be able to visit our local organisations in the near future.

I've also fought consistently for our pubs which play an essential part in our economy and are one of the joys of living in Rutland and Melton. It's been a tough year for many of them.

Discretionary Local Grant Funding

But with pubs now open from yesterday, Melton Borough Council approved support grants from a new discretionary funding pot totalling £195,000. This will be worth between £2,000 and £5,000 per grant and is great news for our wonderful pubs and restaurants across Melton and the Vale. I know just how pleased pubs are to reopen, so let's support our local pubs in Rutland and Melton: Book a table, make a plan to visit your local. I know I will be.

Tackling Violent Crime

As we open up, we also need to be mindful to tackle violent crime, and ensure that the causes of crime are addressed. That's why I am very glad that Leicestershire and Rutland Police will be receiving £539,000 to tackle violent crime and support victims. These are exactly the kinds of investments we need to build safer communities, and is part of an over £130 million investment across the country.

Banning Conversion Therapy

As many of you know, one of my other big campaigns, which is deeply heartfelt, is to ban conversion therapy. Over the last few weeks, I am delighted that the Government has publicly backed a ban on this

practice, and hopes to bring in legislation shortly. I have been privileged to speak to people of great stature, such as Dr Ranj Singh, Lord Williams - former Archbishop of Canterbury, members of Stonewall and, most importantly, survivors of this dreadful practice, in further events to raise support for prohibiting this fraudulent and abusive set of practices.

This week, I was also delighted to address a group of therapists and psychiatrists, led by the Royal College, who overwhelmingly backed a ban as well. Across faith communities, the therapeutic professions and medicine, there is agreement: conversion therapy must end.

Opportunity to receive Gigabit Vouchers

The 2019 Conservative manifesto commits to ensuring every person is within 30 miles of a change point, and to provide gigabit-capable broadband in the home which is a game changer for rural areas. I welcome the Government's £210m worth of voucher funding as immediate help for people experiencing slow broadband speeds in rural areas. Details of the new scheme have been published this week and rollout has already begun, and you can find out more about it [here](#).

Delivering my promises of MMDR and A52 improvements

When I stood to be your MP, I pledged to improve the safety and efficiency of our local roads and public transport. Since then, I have worked hard to upgrade the A1, to reduce congestion and hours lost, and allow local authorities across the East Midlands to more strategically use available land.

The A52 near Bottesford is an accident hotspot and it is wrong that every week the entire road is shut down around Rutland and Melton because there is a major accident. I am very pleased that Highways England is, after I raised constituents' concerns, currently developing a decision plan to install safety improvements

design plan to install safety improvements.

My campaign to improve the A1 is very much underway. Whilst this will take quite some time, I have secured the support of all necessary stakeholders and founded the A1 MPs working Group in Parliament. I am also very pleased that the Government has adopted changes to the Green Book, that will shift focus from the use of a benefit cost ratio (BCR) to considerable weight being placed on the broader strategic case for infrastructure investment. This could have a real impact on our project to make the A1 safer including on the A52 through Bottesford.

In terms of the MMDR, I know central government is working hard with Leicestershire County Council and Melton Borough Council to make the southern leg of the road a reality. Government knows that this project is vital to the Melton local plan, and will help unlock development throughout the region. I am working hard to support that process, to make sure that residents and businesses have access to the significant economic benefits.

I have also been working with local police and local authorities to ensure that fly-tipping is addressed. I know it continues to be a scourge for local communities, and I continue to fight to ensure it is taken seriously by local police and that perpetrators are apprehended.

More broadly, I know too that rural communities do not get our fair share of funding, and it is a problem I have been committed to addressing since being elected; indeed, it was one of my manifesto commitments. I was therefore delighted to write about why we need a [better rural funding settlement](#) in Conservative Home, where the message of better funding for rural communities was well received. Rural communities have particular challenges that need to be addressed, and I am delighted that Ministers have also made it clear that they want to see more robust settlements going forward.

HIF Funding Rutland

And speaking of a local plan, while planning does not fall under the remit of Members of Parliament, I understand that questions persist as to the impact of the rejection of the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) development for St George's Barracks in Rutland.

Before last month's decision and even more urgently since then, I have been working with central government and Rutland County Council to ensure that the Local Plan remains viable, and that development can continue to be controlled and have as much input from the County Council as possible. I know many people are rightly worried about what uncontrolled planning can do to our villages, and I will do everything I can to ensure uncontrolled, unwelcome planning cannot come to Rutland after the Council's decision.

The Ministry of Defence made clear a number of years ago that the site was a surplus requirement for the Armed Forces and as such the Ministry of Defence had a responsibility to achieve the best return on investment possible. I will continue to advocate for a proper process around St George's Barracks to make sure that the site is taken forward in a way that balances the Government's ambitious housing agenda with the needs of our local communities to develop a new Garden Community at the site.

I want to thank Rutland County Council for engaging with central Government on St George's Barracks and I will raise concerns that constituents have with me regarding the development, despite not being able to get involved with planning issues.

International Affairs

Since becoming Rutland and Melton's MP, I have done all I can to be a voice for those whom others seek to silence. One of my campaigns in Parliament has been to raise awareness of the genocide being committed against the Uyghur people by the Chinese Community Party, alongside their flagrant breaches of the people of Hong Kong's rights.

Having secured an inquiry by the Foreign Affairs Committee on the atrocities being committed against the Uyghur in October 2020. I have been a steadfast advocate for a Magnitsky sanction regime, as it allows the UK Government to impose asset freezes and travel bans on persons it determines to have committed serious human rights violations.

The Foreign Secretary's announcement of sanctions against four CCP officials responsible for serious human rights abuses is absolutely right – and it is right we act as a unified international community against genocide. I will continue to urge the Government to support the Uyghur people and remain focused on tackling and preventing atrocities around the world.

Furthermore, the UK has a moral and legal duty to support the people of Hong Kong, and I am proud that last week the Government announced a £43 million comprehensive welcome package for BN(O) Hong Kongers to help them settle successfully into life in the UK. The arrival of Hong Kongers will enrich the UK enormously and help thousands of people to live in freedom. I was delighted to have written on this for [the Daily Express](#), defending the right of the UK to stand up for Hong Kongers and freedom-loving people everywhere.

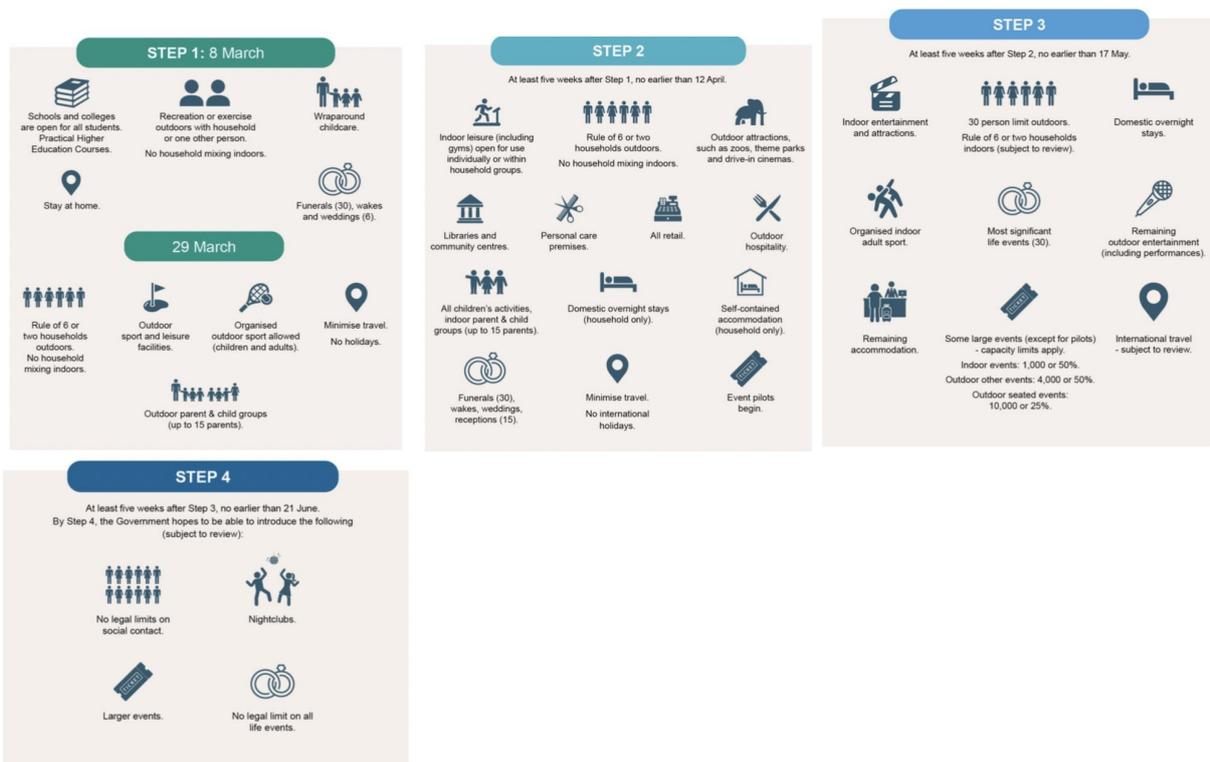
I was also very pleased, but saddened at the same time, to write in the Daily Express about the repeated violations undertaken by [China in the South China Sea](#). This kind of salami slicing is exactly what needs to be stopped, and it is why I am glad the Government has taken such a strong line on the Indo-Pacific in the Integrated Review.

More broadly and since I arrived in Parliament, I have called for a dedicated unit to address atrocity prevention at the Foreign Office. I am enormously pleased that last month the Government announced the creation of a Conflict Centre establishing a unit to tackle atrocity prevention as per my proposal. This is something I have lobbied for extensively and will allow for the protection of humanity and humanitarianism wherever our values are threatened and make the

maintain a high level of vigilance wherever our values are threatened and make the UK's response to atrocities far more effective. We should remember that the UK has a long history of preventing atrocities, and I was pleased to write about one such example recently. Thanks to the efforts of our Armed Forces, the UK and allies [were able to create a safezone for the Kurdish people](#), and by so doing save countless lives from Saddam Hussein. I was honoured to be able to address the Kurdish Representative on the 30th anniversary of this milestone moment in international relations.

I'm delighted to see that the Government's Defence Command Review will make our Armed Forces better equipped and more capable of dealing with threats to our security. It is a bold and assertive plan that not only represents our biggest investment in our Armed Forces since the Cold War, but one that puts security and resilience at its heart.

I come from a counter-terrorism background, and this review will better equip and protect our Armed Forces which our greatest asset and ensure that we focus more on conflict prevention and rebuilding of areas post conflict.



I am very keen to help any constituent who may require my assistance. If there is something you feel I could assist you with, please use the link below.

Contact Me



[view this email in your browser](#)

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