

Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP

Member of Parliament for Hertsmere

End of Term Report – Summer 2020

As Parliament rises for the summer, I wanted to update you on my work as your Member of Parliament over the past few months in my latest Summer Report.

Clearly it has been an unprecedented time. The coronavirus has been the biggest threat this country has faced for decades and we have all taken drastic steps to alter our everyday lives to tackle it. Thanks to the hard work and common sense of people across the UK, including locally in Hertsmere, who have followed the rules, we are now beginning to progress towards both keeping the disease under control and returning to normal life.



As always, a report of this length cannot cover everything so do check my Twitter, Instagram, Facebook or website for further updates. I am here to help so please get in touch with me at: oliver@oliverdowden.com.

The Arts

I was absolutely delighted to have been appointed as the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport in February and to have the opportunity to play my part in the Government. It is an interesting and important brief and has lots of relevance in Hertsmere.



As in many other respects, we are fortunate to have the best of local and London. We have great cultural institutions on our doorstep, such as the Bushey Museum, the Radlett Centre, Reveley Lodge, Wyllyotts Theatre and more. I was delighted that Hertsmere Borough Council planning committee voted unanimously in favour of Sky Studios Elstree. Opening in 2022, this will provide thousands of quality jobs, billions of pounds of investment and is a real vote of confidence in Britain's screen industries... right on our doorstep!

Equally, we have quick access to London to some of the world's best galleries, museums, theatres and cultural institutions. The pandemic has taken a terrible toll on these institutions as they have been shut for months. As Culture Secretary and your MP, I am acutely aware of my duty to preserve this rich heritage for future generations. So, I was delighted to agree a £1.57 billion investment to protect Britain's world-class cultural, arts and heritage institutions. This is the largest ever single government investment in culture in the UK and is designed to help the arts weather the storm of COVID-19.

Defending Our Countryside and our Environment

Defending our countryside and our environment has remained a key priority of mine since I was elected, and I continue to work hard to protect our precious green open spaces.

Aldenham Reservoir

I am extremely disheartened by the developments at Aldenham Reservoir. As I have said many times before, it is vitally important that we do not damage the reservoir's wonderful open spaces and continue to retain public access. Just before lockdown, I





convened a meeting with David Williams, Leader of Hertfordshire County Council in order to discuss Liberty's actions, including recording the footpath as a right of way.

I am frustrated to see that LLL have now both lowered the reservoir by one metre and erected a fence along the perimeter. Publicly, I have urged LLL to work with local authorities, who I know have tried to reach an agreement with LLL regarding the future of the reservoir.

I continue to liaise with relevant local groups, constituents and agencies involved. Most recently, I have written to the Secretary of State to register my support for the footpath to be recorded as a public right of way.

Woodcock Hill Village Green

I have opposed Taylor Wimpey's plans to Deregister and Exchange village green land at Woodcock Hill, Borehamwood. Woodcock Hill Village Green is a wonderful green space in Borehamwood which I have visited many times since becoming the Member of Parliament for Hertsmere, including as part of Mitzvah Day and even planting trees as part of the Queens Commonwealth Canopy project and an Extinction Rebellion tree. I always say that one of the greatest pleasures of living in our part of Hertfordshire is the countryside we have right on our doorstep, it makes our towns and villages distinct and special places to live.

I visited the green last week to meet with representatives of the Woodcock Hill Village Green Association, and I have lobbied the Secretary of State in support of the village green. I have also responded to their consultation expressing my support for the green and strongly opposing Taylor Wimpey's plans. I will continue to work closely with the Association.



Radlett Rail Freight Terminal

I am incredibly disappointed in the decision taken by St Albans District Council to remove the Park Street Garden Village from their local plan in favour of this rail freight terminal. Since being elected, I have consistently fought against this terminal.



As I have said many times before, I do not want any developments on green belt land. But if it must be developed, it is ludicrous that the land is used for a completely unnecessary and disruptive rail freight terminal. There is an acute need for housing and in efforts both to provide housing and protect the green belt, the Park Street Garden Village site was vital.

St Albans District Council made the decision to remove the Park Street Garden Village from their local plan in favour of this ridiculous proposal. I know that this will have a detrimental effect on our local area and adversely affect people in Hertsmere. I continue to press them to change policy.



Fly-tipping and Recycling Centres

Many residents were also in touch with me during lockdown with concerns about increased fly-tipping, particularly along Hilfield Lane and Pegmire Lane. This is an appalling blight on our precious countryside by a small minority of selfish individuals. I urgently contacted Environmental Health at Hertsmere Borough Council and liaised closely with local councillors. I was then pleased to hear that the Borough Council worked extremely hard to re-open both Potters Bar recycling centre and Elstree recycling centre.

Our Community

During this ongoing pandemic, I have responded to more pieces of constituency casework than ever before. I have been determined to support my constituents through this difficult and uncertain time.

I was pleased to check in with constituents and local councillors through various video calls, but I was particularly delighted to participate in a conversation with Rabbi Feldman, which was live streamed across the United Synagogue's platforms. We discussed work, faith and the challenges faced by our country. You can find a link to this on my Facebook.



Like many people, I was appalled to read what the Grime artist Wiley recently posted on his social media. There is no place for antisemitism in Britain – in politics, on social media or indeed anywhere else. Britain in 2020 should be rid of this scourge. The Home Office is leading on this and looking at this incident as a potential hate crime. The Online Harms Bill, which I am leading on from the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, is legislation we pledged to deliver to make the internet a safer, more open and tolerant place for everyone. I will be working with leaders in the Jewish Community this summer and I am grateful for engagement I had last weekend with leaders like Karen Pollock and Lord Mann. I look forward to delivering this important piece of legislation and will continue working closely with the Jewish Community from Hertsmere and beyond in the months ahead.

Potters Bar Radio has been set up by a group of local residents to help combat isolation and I caught up with the volunteers from 'You Donate, We Deliver' in Radlett who were recognised with a Points of Light Award from the Prime Minister for their hard work getting food to NHS staff across Hertsmere.

The Bkhativedanta community have also gone above and beyond to support our local community through this crisis; the 'Krishna's Helpers' have served some of our most vulnerable with services such as 'meals on wheels' for the elderly. Thousands of wholesome meals have been provided for the NHS, and over 800 meditation and care packages have been delivered for NHS staff, care workers and other key workers.

I have been so impressed with how Hertsmere has come together to support each other through this crisis. Moving forward, I hope that we retain some of the community spirit that has shown Hertsmere and the nation at its best.

Moving forward...

As we begin to ease into the new normal, I was pleased to be back in the constituency last week for a day of meetings and visits. I visited Home Farm Glamping in Aldenham and had an important meeting with the Woodcock Hill Village Green Association. I visited Aldenham Reservoir, did some food shopping in Bushey Heath and had meetings with councillors. I am looking forward to beginning my constituency surgeries again, and visiting schools, care homes, fire stations, GP surgeries, theatres, shops, pharmacies, post offices, colleges and so much more.

I made clear my priorities when I was elected Member of Parliament for Hertsmere. We rely on our **transport** links and as a commuter myself I know important these are. I have secured major improvements to our railways, including extending Oyster to Potters Bar and Radlett, and know there remains much more work to be done.

As outlined above I will continue my work **defending our countryside**, including fighting against the Radlett Rail Freight Terminal and securing the future of Aldenham Reservoir.

I got an excellent education at one of our local state schools and so I have been determined to ensure that all children get the best start in life. I helped secure a new primary school at Yavneh and facilities at Dame Alice Owen's and I continue to work with the County and Borough councils to develop a new secondary school.

There is so much more I hope to achieve, and I will continue to work hard on your behalf to do so .

As always, please do get in touch with me at oliver@oliverdowden.com if you have anything you would like to raise with me.

