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Gloucester

Matters

LOCAL NEWS FROM **RICHARD GRAHAM**, CONSERVATIVE MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR **GLOUCESTER**



GET BEHIND THE PM TO DELIVER BREXIT AND SAFEGUARD LOCAL MANUFACTURING

‘The country wants Brexit done’, said Gloucester’s MP Richard Graham, ‘so that we can all focus on other priorities, like public services and technology.’

Richard said, ‘The best way is to leave with a sensible agreement with our neighbours - crucial for citizens’ rights, business certainty, jobs in manufacturing and the security of our country above all. Getting the Withdrawal Agreement through Parliament gives us a transition for the detailed trade deal that will take time. I’m doing all I can through the cross-party Select Committee for Leaving the EU to make sure that happens.’

Both Labour and Conservative politicians were elected on manifestos to respect the Referendum result. Richard said ‘So this shouldn’t be a party issue. We need to fulfil the Good Friday Agreement and prevent the Northern Irish border returning to the bad old days. We should back the PM’s negotiations to get the best possible Deal which will be a compromise.’

Fourth generation family business Poetons’ is a chemical coatings business with 150 employees in Eastern Avenue. Anthony Poeton said No Deal would be ‘Close to disaster for modern manufacturers part of

Just In Time supply chains.’ And Michael Carter of local construction firm EG Carter said, ‘The uncertainty risked causing a downturn in investment and construction.’ They urged Parliament to support the Government’s Deal.

SOMEWHERE SAFE TO STAY

Gloucester has been chosen for a national pilot project for a new rough sleeping hub, £630,000 funding has been allocated. The Somewhere Safe To Stay site should be up and running close to the city centre in the early spring.

Richard said that the Hub would work closely with government and local partners to identify the causes of individuals’ rough sleeping, and provide support through their difficulties - whether financial or personal.

The picture is encouraging and shows a downward trend. Significant progress has come from the Government’s £1m Social

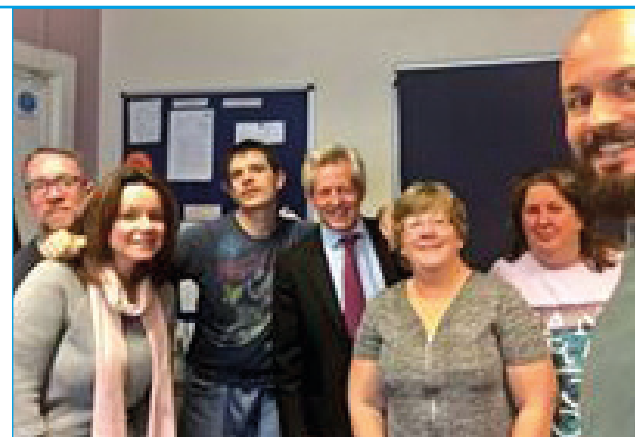
Impact Bond (SIB), which has supported over 88 individuals into housing in the first 12 months.

Gloucester City Council has also incentivised landlords to make more private rental housing available. Deputy Council Leader Jennie Watkins said ‘fulfilling their enhanced statutory responsibilities on homelessness was vital.’

New city charity HaVinG (Having a Voice in Gloucester) is focused on both sustaining rough sleepers and developing pathways for them



Richard is working on the Select Committee for Leaving the EU to make sure we leave and with a deal



The P3 Team with Richard

to have a life of purpose. You can help fundraise for them by sponsoring Richard sleep in the cathedral cloisters on March 22nd via Richard’s total giving website: <https://www.totalgiving.co.uk/mypage/richardgraham-cc19>

Richard leads 165 cross party MPs funding pitch for colleges



GlosCol Principal witnesses the letter handed to the Chancellor

Gloucester's MP said 'Now that we've resolved NHS funding, this is the time to do more on education. Every school is getting more money per pupil than they did last year. But their costs - mostly teachers' salaries and taxpayer contributions to their pensions - are rising faster, so we need to help them at the same time.'

Further Education colleges like GlosCol have had the toughest financial deal since 2010. They are the Cinderella of education, so I've

written to the Chancellor with Labour MP Nic Dakin, supported by 165 MPs from four parties, seeking an above inflation increase for colleges. We believe more funding would be good for skills, productivity and social mobility.' Richard added 'I hope the Chancellor responds positively in the Spring Spending Review.'

The Association of Colleges' Chief Executive, David Hughes noted that 'It's great Richard recognises the significant role of colleges and is advocating a cross party approach.'

More Sports for all in Gloucester

Sport is good for us, and great cities should have great sporting facilities. Has Gloucester? 'When I became MP in 2010', Richard noted, 'we had no functioning athletics track for competitions, our Football Club had been washed away in the floods and there was no AstroTurf pitch easily available for most schools. Our Rowing Club had some great rowers but cramped & ancient facilities. And there were very little at all for the disabled.'

Eight years on things are different. Richard and the Council helped the new voluntary Gloucester Athletics charity get the funding needed to renovate the Blackbridge Athletics Track. And the Council has agreed funds from a £1.6m planning dividend for a new Sports Hub at Blackbridge, to include athletics, football, gym and clubhouse.



Richard tries out the new AstroTurf at Archdeacon Meadow

'If our bid to the Football Foundation is strong enough, then 2019 will see GCFC come back to Meadow Park & Gloucester' said Richard. Richard is arranging for the Sports Minister to visit to see for herself why this is so vital.

Meanwhile Gloucester Rugby has developed programmes like HITZ, and Walking Rugby, both of which Richard has joined in. Gloucester Rowing Club has a large base on the other side of the canal and Hartpury University hosts a programme to develop the next generation of Olympic rowers.

The two most recent developments are the stunning new University of Gloucestershire Sports Arena at Plock Court. Richard helped open the new Kings School hockey AstroTurf, and said 'The Head is committed to a Community Use Agreement so this great facility will

be used half the time by the wider Gloucester world, including lots of primary schools and especially Kingsholm.'

Lastly the Gloucestershire Wheels for All project. It's a charitable initiative by Mary Clare Faulkner of Leonard Cheshire Foundation at the Athletics Track using adapted bikes for old and young alike with different physical limitations or disabilities, like cerebral palsy 'roadrunner' world champion, Charlie from the Forest of Dean, training there. Richard said 'Charlie had the potential to be a Paralympian. And everyone who goes there, their parents and coaches, are champions of courage and commitment.'

Bob Purcell of the Gloucester Athletics Track said 'Gloucester looks transformed from a decade ago. A lot of the credit goes to our MP and City Council.'



The cherry n white bike is the best transport going

Don't be too green for the A417

Our MP is the only politician in Gloucester almost always on his (cherry & white) bike. Nor is he a fair weather cyclist. But he drew the line at a Labour councillor in Stroud who recently tweeted that the money spent on sorting the A417 at Nettleton Bottom and the Air Balloon roundabout should be spent instead on pedestrian and cycle lanes, and that slower speed limits would solve the problem.

'This bit of road' said Richard 'is a cause of road accidents and frequent traffic jams. Every year there are injuries and death, poor air pollution and disrupted journeys. Businesses

and families pay the price. No one should again prevent a sensible plan that most of the county want to see happen as soon as possible. How will slower speeds on an A road help massive tail backs? Does anyone cycle to work up Crickley Hill? City and county need a proper road solution - and I hope will be announced in March.'

Cllr Richard Cook said 'email our MP on richard.graham.mp@parliament.uk to let him know if you want a solution to the A417 Air Balloon problem, or whether you think the money should be spent on cycling instead.'

The Phoenix rises from the Olympus Theatre?

Not long ago the Art Deco Olympus Theatre in Barton St was in dire straits. The shows had dried up, the creative arts tenant gone, some of the old fittings sold off and (it was rumoured) a cannabis farm was flourishing where the orchestra had once played.

Owners Ash Chavda and Babu Odedra have now got control again, the cannabis farm has gone, and they've given Phil McCormick and his Gloucester Arts Council a long lease to resurrect this phoenix from the ashes. Phil showed Richard round recently, highlighting the new old chairs given from an Andrew Lloyd-

Webber theatre in London. With the backing of GAC Patrons, actors Jeremy Irons and Simon Pegg, thousands of Facebook followers, ambitious plans to bring the theatre back to life look possible.

Cllr Lise Noakes said 'If anyone can do it, it's probably Phil. He'll need a lot of help with goods and services and some willing volunteers. At the end we could have an historic 450 seat venue back in use. Dare to dream!' Follow on Facebook - <https://www.fb.com/1419528221594268/posts/2279817382232010?sfns=mo>

Helping circa 15,000 tenants in Gloucester

The government's new Tenants Fees Act is a radical change for the rental sector - capping security deposits at five weeks rent, and removing the majority of upfront fees for renters in Gloucester.

Richard was on the Bill Committee that looked in detail at the proposals. He said the cross-party Select Committee's recommendations were followed, especially on the cap: 'landlords wanted a higher figure but we felt that five weeks was a sensible compromise that didn't incentivise tenants not to pay the last month's rent.'

Cllr Jennie Watkins, who rents, said 'This change will make a huge difference to tenants, who find a range of expensive charges unaffordable and a barrier to securing private tenancies.'



The Rooftop Housing team with Richard at the site development on Tarrington Road, Tredworth

LESS 'NO SHOWS' = MORE NHS APPOINTMENTS

Cllr Collette Finnegan worked in the NHS for over 30 years. 'One of the things that almost breaks your heart', she said is the number of missed appointments. There were 187,000 missed appointments last year or 30,000 lost NHS hours.

'At a time when the NHS is trying to reduce hospital waiting time for certain illnesses or conditions', said Richard, 'I hope all of us will make a huge effort in 2019 not to keep the NHS - and another patient - waiting.'

2,000 RESIDENTS ON UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Next month Citizens Advice starts a new contract to help residents with Universal Credit (UC) applications. Recent changes include improvements to pension credit, child allowances, max rate on deductions of advances, and the increase in work allowances for those with children.

An MS Miracle Supporting Eastgate Market



Roy with Richard, Lyn Ackroyd & the MS Centre team

Multiple sclerosis is a degenerative disease. It always gets worse. Or does it?

Last month Richard visited our fabulous MS Centre in Linden and met Roy Palmer, an MS sufferer who had been in a wheel chair for ten years, but after going through a new treatment in London, he now walks again, and leads a Constabulary Cadet Team. No-one meeting Roy now would know that he'd ever had MS. 'It's an amazing story', said Richard, showing that technology and science can turn a life around. Roy and Emma showed great determination. The treatment - for the right person - is now available in Bristol's Southmead Hospital. Linden Residents Association Chair Lyn Ackroyd said 'the MS centre is another great facility!' More details and how to donate to the MS Centre here: <https://glosmsinfo.org.uk/>



With the city council team and traders in Eastgate Market

Richard recently invited Environment and Farming Secretary Michael Gove to visit Eastgate Market in its 50th year to see fishmonger MR Smith. 'There is nothing better than your own brilliant local fishmonger who can descale and fillet your fish in front of you', said the DEFRA Secretary of State, whose father had a fishing business.

The Gloucester MP encouraged residents to use our own market and saw new trader Idun Spirit's own wellbeing brand range. Councillor Paul Toleman said 'It's no good complaining the High Street is dying if you only shop over the internet or by phone to a supermarket.'



HOW TO CONTACT RICHARD GRAHAM

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The photographs included do not imply that people shown with Richard either endorse or oppose him as a Member of Parliament.

Seeing the Ability

At the recent Disability Confident seminar hosted by Forwards with MP Richard Graham, Julie Stephens described her career as a Site Communication Assistant with Lloyd's Bank and now at the NHS as a medical audio typist.

Nothing unusual in that, until you see Julie's guide dog and realise she is blind. 'It's about seeing the ability not the disability', said Richard, 'and realising there is help for employers and employees alike - specially adapted keyboards and telephones for example - to make the job work for everyone.'

'Most people with disabilities' said Cllr Pam Tracey 'love to prove they have masses to offer, and usually lift team morale from their commitment.' Contact Forwards on 01452 529663 to see

if they know of someone who might suit your vacancy, see:

<https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/how-you-can-help/> to sponsor a guide dog puppy.



Sister Betty with a happy family at the GRH



Julie explains her working experiences

GRH upgraded - all Gloucestershire NHS Trusts now rated 'good'

The independent Care Quality Commission (CQC) has just upgraded our NHS Hospitals Trust rating to 'good' after their latest review. MP Richard Graham said 'this is a leap forward and puts us in a small handful of counties where all 3 of our NHS Trusts (Care Services, Mental Health and Hospitals Trust) are rated good. It's the dedicated, caring work of thousands of staff from consultant to cleaner at the GRH who've achieved this and I congratulate them all under strong management for the improvements.'

But the MP also said the Trust knew there is more to do: 'waiting times for cancer have improved, but for some other operations are still too long. That will be a key focus on their drive to be rated 'outstanding' in 2022.'

COMMUNITY NEWS

NEW DISCOUNT RAILCARDS

125,000 people have already bought the new 26-30 Railcard, saving a third on most journeys.

A new Railcard for 16-17 year olds is available from the Summer with 50% discounts. See <https://www.railcard.co.uk/>

NATIONAL LIVING WAGE AND TAX FREE ALLOWANCE INCREASES IN APRIL

The National Living Wage will rise from £7.83 to £8.21 an hour: up from £6.70 before the National Living Wage was introduced in 2016.

The Tax Free Allowance goes up to £12,500 from £11,850.

And beer, cider and fuel levies have been frozen again.

Pubs don't have to close..

Around the country about 18 pubs a week close as drinking habits and drink and drive laws have changed. But Richard believes it doesn't have to be like that. His father (90 this year) still runs a small company with a pub. 'He taught me that you have to constantly re-invent a pub. The same formula doesn't work forever' Richard said.

Our MP highlighted the Abbeydale based Ridge & Furrow re-opening in the summer, after a long campaign. Cllr Andrew Gravells helped Richard prevent a petrol station being built and the pub is now open again. The popular Turks Head also opened in Southgate St, so Richard noted 'that's two more than we had a year ago.'



Celebrating the re-opening of the Ridge & Furrow

Kings Square revamp to start on site this year

The Conservative-run City Council has pledged to start works to revamp Kings Square by the end of this year.

A planning application has been submitted for the Square and the surrounding Kings Quarter area. Works to the Square should be on-site in the Autumn and take around a year to complete. The £5 million revamp of the square is being funded by the City Council.

Richard said "The Council's plans for Kings Square are a major stage of the regeneration of the city, and moves us one step closer towards achieving our vision of a city with cultural activities, improved retail, as well as a hub for creative businesses and start-ups." Works to improve the Kings Walk shopping centre will also start this year, including a refurbishment of the car park, improvements to the covered mall and new public



An image of how Kings Square could look after it is revamped

toilets, including a changing places facility for the disabled. Council Leader Paul James said, "The Square will stay as an open space for events and activities and for people to enjoy. We want to put it back at the heart of life in the city."

Better city centre policing in Gloucester



More visible policing in our city centre: PCSOs and CPOs together

'Getting policing right in Gloucester is vital', Richard said and that means 'the right resources to tackle terrorist threats, child abuse, extreme porn, modern slavery and drugs & knife crime - without forgetting street crime and burglaries. It's a tough ask, and one which our Constabulary mostly responds to very well'.

Richard highlighted the additional £970m nationwide extra funding for the police, as well as separate amounts for counter terrorism and organised crime.

The new police budget is £120m, which is an increase of 7.7% on last year. This doesn't include funding for areas like counter terrorism work which is covered separately.

Westgate Tenants Association Chair Maggie Day said, 'Things are better in the city centre now, there's no doubt about that, but I would still like to see more police.'