

Parish Release
16th April 2020

What does your MP do working from home?

Like all of us, I have spent a lot more time in my house than normal, with my Labrador George working to assist constituents during this unprecedented time.

Every morning I join a call with the Cabinet Office where I can raise questions, and also listen to MPs of all parties raise their most urgent concerns. I have in the last few days raised the issue of emergency dental cover in North Devon, zoos and measures for bereavement that are in place.

Having described myself as the one-woman tourist board for North Devon, it has been very difficult to be encouraging our tourism businesses to close at the start of the lockdown. I worked alongside Ministers to ensure our holiday parks closed and have worked very closely with the police in the run up to Easter to ensure everything possible was being done to deter tourists coming now, and hope they will come back later in the year. I was one of MPs lobbying Air B'n'B to close over Easter and am delighted that I received confirmation from their Head Office that they had on Maundy Thursday.

Personal protection equipment, PPE, has never been in such demand or received so much attention. Early on in this crisis, a local company, Applegate, advised they could source some items. I have introduced them locally to North Devon Council, funeral directors and social care providers, as well as link them to colleagues elsewhere in the country with PPE shortages. Applegate have now launched an online, non-commercial portal for businesses to purchase PPE, assisting the national effort.

By keeping abreast of government departments at this time, I have also been able to assist our police with their PPE. On a call the police described how the Health and Safety Executive had given different advice on PPE to Public Health England. This did not sound right, so I was able to contact the Secretary of State for Health, Matt Hancock, the issue was resolved, and the police thanked me for working some 'parliamentary magic'.

Working in conjunction with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office my team and I have helped many local residents get back home from around the world. Whilst locally, I have matched voluntary groups with elderly and vulnerable residents coming directly to me for assistance with shopping and medicines. I am in contact with supermarket head offices as well as pharmacies such as Boots and Lloyds to reduce queues, and ensure the most vulnerable locally are getting the help they need without putting themselves at risk in long queues.

Communicating accurate information at this time is in my mind essential and my team have ensured my website is constantly updated: www.selainesaxby.org.uk. I am also answering questions live on Facebook twice a week to ensure everyone here in North Devon can directly access their MP during this difficult time, please like my Facebook page to join in (fb.com/SelaineSaxbyMP). My team and I are answering an increased volume in correspondence, up to a five-fold increase, prioritising those with the most urgent needs.

I am in regular contact with our County Council, District Council and many parish councils; as well as our police, social care providers and the NHS to ensure that everything is working well locally – and I am delighted to confirm it is. There will always be blips in a road that has been built as fast as the one to get us through this pandemic, but please rest assured everyone is working flat out and doing

their best to ensure we do get through this together. I am here to help everyone in North Devon in anyway I can as this pandemic unfolds so please do email me: selaine.saxby.mp@parliament.uk