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## COMMUNIQUÉ

Issue No.2

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## DEAR FRIENDS

Taking a few moments to reflect and prepare this, my second communiqué, is a welcome pause in what have been three quite manic months since the election in May. The electric pace of the campaign has continued unabated into Parliamentary life and I thought you may like an update as to progress.

### In the Constituency

My **Friday surgeries** in Maidstone have been a welcome opportunity to meet over 100 constituents and help with their problems and challenges. Surgeries will continue after the summer recess in early September.

I now have a fully equipped office in both Maidstone and Westminster and staff to assist with the enormous volume of post and emails that arrive every day.

Our **Maternity campaign** has renewed vigour, with the NHS Trust having to undertake a new local assessment under the Health Secretary's tough criteria for reconfigurations. Our team is galvanised and we battle on. I must congratulate MASH and the Kent Messenger Group for their ongoing work and high profile coverage of this important issue..

Regarding our lost **city trains** I was also encouraged in a recent meeting with Transport minister Theresa Villiers, who has agreed to take a look at the situation. More in September.

In **Cranbrook** the need for **Community facilities** continues. I have met with Cllr Roy Bullock and TWBC Chief Executive William Benson to progress this and I have been in regular touch with the chairman of the Parish Council Peter North. We await the report of the Urban Practitioners, due sometime in August, following which I hope some positive steps can be taken in this long standing issue.

### Patronage

In addition to my roles as President of Maidstone Museums' Foundation and Patron of the Maidstone branch of Tomorrow's People I have now become **Honorary Vice-President of the Maidstone MENCAP Trust**, taking over from Ann Widdecombe, supporting all the work they do in the constituency. I am now also a **Patron of the Maidstone Rivers Users Association**, and hope to accompany them on a cruise down Medway River in the near future!

**The Institution of Royal Engineers have invited me to become an honorary member too, which I have proudly accepted.** I have already had the pleasure of meeting the Commanding Officer of 36 Engineer Regiment Lieutenant Colonel Simon Hulme on several occasions, and I look forward to seeing him again very soon. **Regrettably my most recent communication with Simon was to express my deep sadness at the loss of 36 Engineers' Sapper Mark Anthony Smith** who died in a suspected friendly fire incident in Afghanistan on Monday 26th July. My thoughts and condolences go out to his family and friends.

### In Westminster

Having (finally) got my office up and running I was able to prepare my maiden speech which I delivered in the House on the 28th June (see photo above). If you would like to read it please follow this link: <http://tinyurl.com/helenmaidenspeech>

I am now involved in several departments covering a range of policy and debate on a national level, including the Ministry of Justice, the Home office, the Armed Forces, and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, some details of which I set out below;

I am proud to serve as one of five Conservative MPs on the influential 12 member Commons **Justice Select Committee**. The Committee scrutinises the policy, administration, and spending of the Ministry of Justice. In addition, it examines the work of the Attorney General, the Solicitor General, the Serious Fraud Office and the Crown Prosecution Service and reviews draft Sentencing Guidelines issued by the Sentencing Guidelines Council. The committee decides upon its own lines of inquiry, gathers written and oral evidence and reports its findings to the Commons. The government, usually, then has 60 days to reply to recommendations.

In the first months of this Parliament the committee will focus its attentions upon the work of the family courts and the future role of the probation service.

I am a member of the **Parliamentary Support team for the Home office** and will be working on a range of issues relevant to that department, supporting the Home Secretary Theresa May, who is also the Minister for Women and Equalities.

I am **Vice Chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for the Armed Forces, Army Division**. The APPG's role is to promote the interests of our forces in Parliament and to keep Parliament informed about developments in the Army, Navy and Airforce. With Maidstone being home to 36 Engineer Regiment this role will keep me abreast of the challenges and issues facing our soldiers as well as allowing me to be an informed voice for 36 Engineers in Westminster.

I have also been accepted onto the **Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme (AFPS)**. This inducts selected MPs and other politicians into the Armed Services through an extensive training and familiarisation programme. The strength of the AFPS is that it allows MPs to hear the views of servicemen and women directly and candidly, rather than through the MOD. The scheme includes visits to service personnel and facilities both in the UK and in operational theatres around the world, including Afghanistan.

Central to my involvement is my interest in the effects of service life on the families that remain at home, and what can be done to improve life for them.

I have been chosen to be part of a **Commonwealth Parliamentary Association** delegation travelling to Sri Lanka from the 16th to the 23rd of October. Our purpose is to engage and build links with new Sri Lankan Government: to learn about peace-building challenges; and about re-integration and the re-construction of Sri Lanka.

**And finally**, during August I will be taking a break with Simon and the boys in Spain. I look forward to seeing you in and around the constituency upon our return.

With very best wishes

HELEN GRANT MP

## Contact Details

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## Constituency Surgery Dates

3rd September – 10.15am to 12.30pm

10th September – 10.15am to 12.30pm

24th September – 10.15am to 12.30pm

## Diary Dates

**Summer Recess** - started on 28th July, and we return to Parliament on the 6th September.

**Conservative Party Conference** - Sunday 3rd - Wednesday 6th October in Birmingham.