



PHILIP HOLLOBONE MP ...



KETTERING AT WESTMINSTER



... MAKING SURE THE CONCERNS OF LOCAL PEOPLE ARE HEARD AT THE HEART OF GOVERNMENT

Further Funding for Wicksteed Park



Wicksteed Park, which celebrates its centenary this year, has been awarded a further grant of £302,700 to support it in responding to the challenges that the Covid-19 pandemic has created.

This funding is to restart regeneration and maintenance projects that were planned before the pandemic and to help with delays or increased costs. The funding comes in the form of a capital kickstart award from the £1.6bn Culture Recovery Fund to pay for previously planned restoration and refurbishment work around the park. The boost of £302,700 takes the total cash given to the park since the shock administration of Wicksteed Park Ltd. last year to well almost £800,000.

The park received £247,000 from the heritage emergency fund in June and £247,000 from the culture recovery fund in October; that was on top of other awards totalling £2.7m over the past couple of years. This brings the total recent financial support to over £3.5m.

Oliver Wicksteed, chairman of the Wicksteed Charitable Trust which owns the park, said: "We are incredibly grateful that the Government understands the importance of the park and its heritage and is backing us in this way. This grant funding highlights just how important ongoing financial support, coupled with fundraising and donations from the local community, is to help secure the long-term future of the park." Many attractions at the park have been closed since the pandemic started. Fundraising and donations from those who love the park have also topped more than £160,000. The park costs around £110,000 a month to operate.

Vaccine: Northamptonshire Going 'Great Guns'

Philip Hollobone MP writes: Northamptonshire is one of the leading areas in the country for the roll out of the Covid vaccine and the UK is rolling out the vaccine far faster than anywhere else in Europe.

On 2 February I highlighted this local success story with the Health Secretary on the floor of the House: "Could I commend the Health Secretary for the difficult and brave, but correct decisions he made early on in the pandemic in relation to vaccines, which have led today to Britain having a world-leading vaccine roll-out? Could I also draw his attention to NHS Northamptonshire, which, thanks to the very hard work of all the local staff and volunteers, has one of the very best vaccine roll-out programmes in the whole country?"



Matt Hancock MP replied: "Yes, I have been watching the progress of those at NHS Northamptonshire, who are going great guns, and I know they are working incredibly hard. This does not happen by magic; it happens by hard graft, especially of the GPs and the pharmacists, and the support teams and the volunteers, who are doing such a great job in Northants. I am very grateful for what my hon. Friend has said. We did take decisions at risk early, before we knew whether they were going to come off and knowing that we would be criticised if it did not work out. However, that meant we could get those contracts signed ahead of many other places, and it means that we will be able to deliver vaccines for UK citizens and then, of course, play our part in ensuring that everybody across the world can have access to this life-saving vaccine, too."

And the even better news is that the vaccine roll out is going to be accelerated further from 15 March when vaccine supply into Northamptonshire will more than double to over 50,000 doses per week. All areas across the county will see a major step up in the scale of vaccination delivery from this date, but the fastest acceleration will be in north Northamptonshire. This means that there will be a real increase in the number of local people within the Borough of Kettering who are invited for their first vaccination over the next few weeks as well as people starting to be invited back for their second doses.

The Covid infection rate in the Borough is now 69 per 100,000 people. This compares to 71/100k for Northamptonshire as a whole, 88/100k for the East Midlands and 130/100k in Corby. Since the start of the pandemic a year ago out of the Borough's population of 100,000 people 5,656 have tested positive for Covid 19 (15% less than the England average) and very sadly 215 have died. At the peak in January just over a third of KGH's 500 beds were occupied by Covid patients. Thankfully this has now fallen sharply and Covid patients now occupy just 30 beds.

IN THE HOUSE *Standing Up and Speaking Out for Kettering*

Just a sample of the issues Kettering MP Philip Hollobone raised in the Commons recently.

4 March: Philip Hollobone MP, Kettering: There has been a 170% increase in the number of **dog thefts** during the pandemic, a crime that brings immense distress to both owners and their pets. My constituents in Kettering are increasingly worried about that trend and they want to see the problem tackled firmly and decisively. May we have a Government statement on the appropriateness of the penalties available to the courts for convicted dog thieves and on the police response to this rising crime trend?

Rt. Hon. Jacob Rees-Mogg MP, Leader of the House of Commons: Her Majesty's Government understand the high level of public interest in this issue and the undoubted distress caused to victims when their pets are stolen. I know many Members have raised this issue and campaigned on it on behalf of their constituents. It is an appalling crime, and I am sad to hear reports of it increasing over the past year. The theft of a pet is a criminal offence under the Theft Act 1968 and carries a maximum penalty of seven years' imprisonment. The Sentencing Council's guidelines on theft now take account of the emotional distress on the victim caused by any theft offence, including the theft of a pet, meaning that the courts will now take that into account when considering the appropriate sentence. My hon. Friend will know that the Government are committed to recruiting an extra 20,000 police officers and have already recruited over 6,000 to ensure the police have the resources they need to deal with these and other crimes.



3 March: Philip Hollobone MP, Kettering: After the EU's outrageous abuse of the **Northern Ireland protocol** in relation to its failing vaccine programme, is it not clear that, as it stands, the operation of the protocol is not working? There is far too much disruption to businesses and families in Northern Ireland and it needs urgently to be either reset or scrapped altogether.

Rt. Hon. Brandon Lewis MP, Northern Ireland Secretary: There were already challenges in the operation of the protocol in early January this year that were having a direct and often disproportionate impact on citizens. The EU's decision to invoke article 16 has compounded those issues—there is no doubt about that—and significantly undermined cross-community confidence. That action was not in the spirit of the protocol, which is partly why we are taking the actions that I will outline in a written ministerial statement.

1 March: Philip Hollobone MP, Kettering: I warmly commend and support my hon. Friend for the work that she has done on **Covid disparities**. She is right to say that we must go where the data tells us. Can she confirm that across all age groups and all ethnicities men are far more likely to be hospitalised and killed by the virus than women? In the 40 to 49 age group, men are twice as likely to suffer critical illness. Why is that, and what are the implications for the Government response to the pandemic?

Kemi Badenoch MP, Equalities Minister: My hon. Friend asks a very important question, and he is absolutely right. We know that the virus targets different groups differently, but we do not necessarily have all the answers. Some of the issues around the disproportionate impact on men are to do with occupational risk, which is not something we can control for very easily. That is why we are making sure that we address the pandemic holistically. We do not stigmatise any specific groups, but we make sure that we target information and assistance on those who are most vulnerable, particularly the elderly, who are 70 to 80 times more likely to contract the disease and die from it than other age groups.

25 February: Philip Hollobone MP, Kettering: **Rough sleeping** is the most extreme form of homelessness, and the Secretary of State is quite right to prioritise tackling it. The really good news from north Northamptonshire is that the number of recorded rough sleepers has fallen from 62 in 2018 to 22 on the latest count, and in Kettering the number has fallen from 17 to one. Will the Secretary of State join me in praising John Conway and the housing team at Kettering Borough Council for the tremendous work they are doing to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping?

Rt. Hon. Robert Jenrick MP, Local Government Secretary: I would be delighted to extend my praise to John Conway and his officers at the council. The statistics that my hon. Friend has just read out are a real tribute to the hard work that they have put in over the course of the year, in very difficult circumstances during the pandemic. To see Kettering Borough Council having a count of only one individual sleeping rough is an enormous tribute to what they have achieved.

11 February: Philip Hollobone MP, Kettering: I have had my **Weetabix** this morning, Mr Speaker, and I hope you have had yours. Weetabix is a world-famous breakfast cereal made in Burton Latimer in the Kettering constituency. One debate that has been dividing the nation this week, and is perhaps even more divisive than Brexit has been over the years, is whether having Weetabix with baked beans is an attractive serving suggestion for a healthy meal. We all need a little light relief in these difficult times, so may we have a debate on breakfast cereals and their contribution to a healthy diet, so that we can all arrive at the shared position that, with whatever it is served, Weetabix is a great British breakfast cereal fully worthy of promotion?

Rt. Hon. Lindsay Hoyle MP, The Speaker: I have mine just with milk.

Rt. Hon. Jacob Rees-Mogg MP, Leader of the House of Commons: As they used to say: "Weetabix unbeatabix!" My personal preference, if I were to eat Weetabix, would not be to have it with baked beans, which I have always found absolutely disgusting. I am sorry if I have upset the makers of baked beans. There was an advertising slogan—which would be thought desperately politically incorrect nowadays, which was: "A million housewives every day pick up a tin of beans and say, 'Beans meanz Heinz'." But when I was a child, this was corrupted to "a million housewives every day pick up a tin of beans and say, 'Yuck, throw them away'." I am sorry, but that has always been my view of baked beans. However, Weetabix is absolutely splendid served with hot milk and brown sugar, although for preference, Mr Speaker, you will know what I like for breakfast: it is nanny's home-made marmalade on toast.

