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COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

Your regular update from Robert Courts MP



[w: robertcourts.co.uk](http://w:robertcourts.co.uk) [e: robert.courts.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:e:robert.courts.mp@parliament.uk) [fb.com/robertcourts](https://www.facebook.com/robertcourts) [@robertcourts](https://twitter.com/robertcourts)

Important Updates on Coronavirus

I wanted to take the opportunity to provide you with an update on the ongoing Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. This is a subject that is on all of our minds right now and I absolutely appreciate that many of you will be very concerned.

Things are moving at an unbelievably fast pace at the moment, but below I have laid out the latest advice, useful contact details and more to support you at this time.

I continue to work hard both here in West Oxfordshire and down in London on behalf of all my constituents. I have taken the appropriate precautions and followed the latest advice for my team, but please do be assured my office and my team are still easily contactable and we will always do our very best to help.



STAY SAFE STAY HOME

Health Advice

This is the worst **public health emergency** the world has faced in a generation. From the outset, the UK's response has been led by the advice of our chief medical and scientific advisers, whose expertise on how to deal with such pandemics is unparalleled.

The Government has a **clear plan** to deal with the outbreak and its overriding objective is to save lives and reduce suffering.

COVID-19 is so infectious that without drastic measures to limit its progress it would overwhelm any health system in the world. That is why the Government is bringing forward the **right measures at the right time**, ensuring that the NHS has the capacity to treat those affected by the disease.

Earlier this week the Government moved us into '**social distancing**' phase, the next stage of the action plan to tackle the virus.

This means that if you or anyone in your household has one of two symptoms (a continuous cough or a high temperature) then you should stay at home for fourteen days. And, whether or not you have symptoms, everyone should **stop non-essential contact with others** and **stop all unnecessary travel**. Anyone who can should **work from home**.

For the majority of people, the Coronavirus will be a mild illness. What matters most is to **limit the spread** of the virus to those who are most vulnerable. The latest health advice can be found [here](#).

Businesses, Workers, and the Self-Employed

Whilst the Coronavirus pandemic is a public health emergency first and foremost, as the Chancellor has repeatedly said, it is also an **economic emergency**. Indeed, we have never, in peacetime, faced an economic fight like this one. I know that people are deeply worried about the impact Coronavirus will have on their jobs, their businesses, and ultimately their ability to earn a living for themselves and their families. I know that people's anxiety about the disease itself is matched only by their anxiety about their livelihoods.

It is for this reason that the Government has brought forward an **unprecedented support package** for business, including an initial **£330 billion** of guarantees – equivalent to 15% of our GDP.

More information and advice for businesses and workers can be found on my website [here](#). You can also see more about local advice on WODC's website [here](#).

Schools, Teachers, and Parents

After today, Friday 20th March, schools will **not re-open until further notice**.

Schools will still be allowing attendance from **children of key workers** - such as but not restricted to - NHS staff - to ensure public services can continue to operate. A full list of which workers are "key workers" is available [here](#) along with more advice for schools.

The most vulnerable pupils - those who have a social worker or **Education Health Care (EHC) Plan** - will also be supported in schools.

The Government is also working with nurseries and private schools to facilitate closures, including providing financial support.

You can read more about this on my [website](#).

Local Support

We must never forget that there are limits to what central government can do to support people through a crisis such as this, and ultimately we all have to take responsibility and pull together to support one another at this difficult time. This can involve simply checking on any **vulnerable neighbours, family and friends**.

Locally, I have teamed up with charity **Volunteer Link-Up** to encourage anyone in West Oxfordshire who is willing and able to volunteer to do so. This will mainly involve delivering shopping and essentials to those self-isolating. Anyone interested in volunteering in the community is advised to visit my website sign up [here](#).

Neighbourhood Watch have also published their own advice on their website [here](#).

Useful Links

- For the latest health information and advice, see the **NHS** pages on COVID-19: [NHS.uk/coronavirus](https://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus)
 - To learn more about the **Government** response, see: [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)
 - The UK coronavirus **dashboard**: bit.ly/UKCOVID19Dashboard
 - **Public Health England's** coronavirus advice: bit.ly/PHECVCampaign
 - **AgeUK Oxfordshire's** free telephone support service: tinyurl.com/rwjewyy
 - **Volunteer Link-Up**: <http://www.vlu.org.uk/>
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A Little Positivity...

This is bound to be a worrying time for many, but it is so important in these times that we remember not only that people are fundamentally good, but that there is so much good around and so much to appreciate.

I have collected a number of good news and fun stories from across West Oxfordshire and around the web to remind us all that it is so important to keep spirits high at this time.



Did you know...

Today, March 20th, is International Day of Happiness!

What You Can Do...

There are so many ways you can lend your support to the community in this challenging time. It has been so uplifting to see so many constituents already doing so, and if you are keen to get involved, do consider the following:

You may have seen a **card** put through your door recently offering support if you are elderly, **vulnerable or self-isolating**. If you'd like to offer your support to neighbours this way, visit my [website](#) to download a copy of the card.

Witney Land Army is gathering a database of volunteers across our town in order to

help the community, local organisations and any who need support. If you live in Witney and are happy to help, complete their form [here](#).

There are also a number of groups based across the constituency coming together and offering support, including [Eynsham Volunteers](#), [Support Your Witney Community](#), and [Hanborough COVID-19 Mutual Aid](#).

Veterans and their families could be at particular risk from the virus, and the negative side of self-isolation. The **Royal Air Force Association** has put out a call for any volunteers who would be able to help with their four emergency projects: telephone outreach, friendship helpline, RAF themed online entertainment, and delivering supplies to the vulnerable. Do email them at enquiries@rafa.org.uk if you can help.

There are a number of groups forming on social media too, so do keep an eye out if there is anyone who needs any help, or if you want to offer your own time. As previously mentioned too, I have teamed up with Volunteer Link-Up, and you can find more details about this on my [website](#). If you know of any more organisations or groups offering support, do let me know and I will include them in my next update.

Local Businesses Supporting Our Community

West Oxfordshire has an amazing **local business community** and this outbreak has only made that more clear. So many local businesses are stepping up to support our community, and they deserve praise for really playing their part. I encourage you all to support them as they are supporting us.

[UE Coffee Roasters](#) - Donated a coffee machine to **staff at Witney Hospital**, they are donating money to those in need and have started a delivery service.

Takeaways - Do check your favourite restaurants, cafes, shops and pubs to see who is offering a takeaway service, many are! Including **Witney Blanket Hall**, taking orders for pie deliveries!

Blenheim Palace - From Monday, the gardens will be open and free to walk around from 10am-4pm.

The **National Trust** - Has made its parks and gardens open to the public while closing houses, cafes and indoor attractions.

Fluff to Buff Personal Training - Offering a range of online classes and home workout plans, see their Facebook page [here](#).

The Shop Witney - Have just launched their new website and now offer delivery, see it [here](#).

If you know of anymore local businesses that are doing their bit, and need some support - **please do let me know!**

Witney Radio's Support for Local Business

Witney Radio is offering a great advertising opportunity for local service businesses. If you're based in OX18, OX28, or OX29 and provide your service locally, do get in touch and you could be on their **business marketplace** absolutely free!

Email the team on ads@witneyradio.co.uk to find out more.

Witney Letterbox

Any local businesses that want to advertise their **temporary adapted services** to the readership of Witney Letterbox can benefit from a discounted rate of advertising in the next issue, to help in this difficult time.

Contact admin@witneyletterbox.co.uk for more info!

Have I missed something or someone? Let me know for the next update!
robert@robertcourts.co.uk

Feel Good Friday!

As we enter this period of self-isolation and social distancing, it's important to keep our spirits up. As a cat lover, I thought I'd share this incredibly cute video going viral at the moment. It's sure to put a smile on your face!

If there is anything at all I can do to help, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at robert@robertcourts.co.uk

Stay safe, and have a lovely weekend!



Robert Courts MP

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