

# Reading Standard



A Berkshire Press Group Newspaper

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# Parliamentary NEWS



**Martin Salter MP** - Reading West

## SECOND YEAR REPORT

A report for the people of **Reading West** and **Reading East** from your members of Parliament.

*Staying in Touch*



**Jane Griffiths MP** - Reading East

Following their election to Parliament, our two Reading MPs pledged to keep you informed of the work they are doing on your behalf in Westminster and here in Reading. This is the second in a series of regular Parliamentary reports to constituents that Martin Salter and Jane Griffiths are publishing and sending to every home in Reading West and Reading East. Both Martin and Jane are determined to keep in touch with local people all year round.

### MARTIN SALTER MP



The last match at Elm Park - Martin was made Honorary Vice-President of the Reading Football Supporters Club - the move to Madejski Stadium has caused new traffic problems which Martin is working hard to sort out.

It is a tremendous privilege to serve as one of your Members of Parliament and I am grateful to the people of Reading West for putting their trust in me. I have tried my best to be an active and hard working constituency MP, in addition to my duties and

responsibilities in Parliament. Hopefully you will find this second report a useful guide to the work that I do on your behalf and for me it is an important way of remaining accountable to my constituents. One of the commonest complaints that people make about MPs or councillors is... "we only hear from you at election time". I am proud to say that here in Reading, my colleagues and I believe in keeping in touch with the people we represent all year round. If you have any comments on this, our second Parliamentary Report, I would welcome hearing from you.

With best wishes

Martin Salter MP  
Your Member of Parliament for Reading West

**MARTIN SALTER MP** - *Staying in Touch with you*

### JANE GRIFFITHS MP



Jane Griffiths MP has been working on behalf of Reading and District Korean War Veterans' Association. Here she has arranged for them to meet the Armed Forces Minister, Doug Henderson MP (centre), to raise veterans issues with him after the MP had shown the veterans' around the house of commons

Six months on here is the next of the regular reports from Martin and myself on what we have been doing around

Reading and in the House of Commons. It is of the nature that the items in this report can only give a flavour of what we have been up to in the last six months but I hope it is enough to show the kinds of things I have been working to achieve. I would be very interested in your views on the items contained in this report or anything else. Please contact me in one of the ways on the back .

With best wishes

Jane Griffiths MP  
Member of Parliament for Reading East

**JANE GRIFFITHS MP** - *Staying in Touch with you*

# Questions to **MARTIN**

## 1. How can I arrange a visit to the Houses of Parliament?

Drop me a line and I will try to fit you in to one of my Tuesday morning tours of the Palace of Westminster. I can take a maximum of 16 visitors per guide and I will meet you afterwards for a question and answer session over a cup of tea. Priority is given to pensioners groups, community organisations and local resident associations.

## 2. What do you like most since becoming an MP?

Getting things done for local people. I still enjoy the casework, the contact with the constituents who come to my advice surgeries and campaigning on behalf of local residents. The recent victories over the Tilehurst Allotments and the plans to cut health visitors and school nurses were particularly rewarding.

## 3. What do you miss most since becoming an MP?

A decent night's sleep! Whilst some improvements have been made in the crazy working hours of Parliament, I still live in fear of falling asleep on the 11.45pm train from Paddington and ending up in Cardiff.

## 4. Where do you sit in the House of Commons?

Anywhere I can - there is not enough room for all 659 MPs in the Chamber, although to be fair, it is usually only full for Prime Ministers Questions, the Budget and the Queen's Speech. My favourite place is below the gangway, two rows behind Dennis Skinner.

# Working for **READING**

## Focus on the budget



Jane and Martin with Chancellor, Gordon Brown MP welcoming the introduction of the new 10p starting rate of tax.

In April the people of Reading, East and West, will really start to see the difference as some of the best of the new Government measures start to happen.

### From 1 April

Minimum wage - benefiting 1,900 people in Reading and nearly 2 million people nationally - two thirds of them women.

26,000 pensioners in Reading will benefit following the introduction of free eye tests for the over 60's from 1 April.

On top of £73 million for a new Hospital Berkshire Health Authority received an extra £29,638,000, a 4.77% increase part of £21 billion extra spending on the NHS over three years

First stage of £19 billion extra spending on schools. The Government has already spent more new money on education without increasing taxes by a single penny and is well on its way to reducing class sizes for 5,6 and 7 year olds as promised.

Lowest ever business tax rates mean about 4,000 small and large businesses in Reading will see the lowest ever business tax rates from April. Standard rate Corporation Tax 30% and small business rate of 20%.

### From 6 April

Tax cut for every National Insurance (NI) payer - worth over £65 a year for some 47,000 employees in Reading by cutting the entry fee for NI contributions

New 10p starting rate of income tax - a gain of £150 a year for low earners.

### From 12 April

Record Increase in Child Benefit - rising by £2.95 a week to £14.40 helping some 24,000 families.

New minimum income guarantee for pensioners - means £75 a week for single

pensioners and almost £117 for pensioner couples. Around 6,000 of the least well-off pensioners in Reading will gain, nearly £5 a week extra for single pensioners and over £7 for couples.



More money for education. From early years education for all four year olds to money to reduce class sizes and improve standards for all.

This is the start of people seeing the new Government deliver for them. On top of things like the reductions in class sizes and reductions in waiting lists we have already seen.

By sound and prudent management of the economy mortgage interest rates are now at their lowest for 30 years, meaning a typical homebuyer is now £130 a year better off. At the same time by keeping inflation low we have made sure that the value of savings is maintained, if not increased. The budget is supporting families and making work pay."

## Focus on Health Services



Martin and Jane join nurses and health visitors to successfully campaign against health cuts in Reading.

More good news for our local health services. The government has provided £73 million to build a new hospital on the Royal Berks site and work has already started. Now it has been announced that they are on target to reduce waiting lists as promised before the election. The improvement has been due to hard work by the doctors and nurses and extra money from the government.



Reading Evening Post headline 31st March 1999 - shows how waiting lists are falling.

Even better news was the decision of the Berkshire Health Authority to drop its plans to cut the number of health visitors and school nurses working in Reading. Martin Salter and Jane Griffiths led a massive campaign against these proposals with nearly 10,000 local people signing the protest petition and writing letters of objection. Both Martin and Jane are extremely grateful to everyone who took the time and trouble to support the campaign and make their views known.

Not such good news has been the announcement that the current plans for the new hospital do not include space for the popular Hydrotherapy Pool, which is

currently located at the Battle Hospital. Arthritis and back pain sufferers have contacted our MPs, who are pressing for this valuable facility to be provided at the Royal Berks.



Martin Salter investigates the benefits of Battle Hospital's Hydrotherapy Pool as part of his campaign to save this service for local people.

Finally, National Health dentists are becoming all too rare, so it was good to see a new NHS dental practice open up in Langley Hill, Tilehurst. Martin Salter is pressing for extra funding to secure the long term future of the new practice.

# UNISON

Southern Region

Congratulations Jane and Martin on another excellent year in Parliament.

For more information about UNISON, Britain's largest union, contact

Tony Jones

Phone: 0118 959 6466

email: t.jones@unison.co.uk

website: www.unison-southern.org.uk

# Working in PARLIAMENT

*Martin Salter writes: -*

I am in Parliament from Monday afternoon to Thursday evening spending the rest of my time in my constituency. Every couple of months I travel to Northern Ireland as part of my work on the Northern Ireland Select Committee.

I was recently elected to Chair the South East Regional Group of Labour MPs which meets fortnightly to discuss regional issues and to hold meetings with government ministers.

Over the last 6 months some of the issues I have raised either in Parliament or directly with ministers have included:-

- \* Pressing for extra money for local schools.
- \* The need to reform the Planning procedures to provide extra protection for open spaces in the urban environment such as Kennet Meadows in Coley and Southcote
- \* The campaign against both the privatisation of Air Traffic Control and British Waterways. Both of these were left over plans from the previous government.
- \* Pressing for free TV licences for pensioners and the housebound

\* Supporting both the Right to Roam and the Bill to outlaw fur farming

\* Lobbying successfully for extra cash for both Reading and West Berkshire Councils

\* Calling for VAT to be dropped from the price of burglar alarms, door and window locks and other crime prevention equipment

\* Continuing to press for a full public inquiry into the health, safety and environmental impact of the activities of the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston.

\* A delegation opposing Berkshire Health authorities proposed cuts to community health services.



**Martin Salter and Cherie Blair with the deserving children who won a VIP trip to 10 Downing Street.**



**Environmental campaigner Stuart White and Martin Salter at Kennet Meadows continuing the fight against development pressures**

## Back-bench committees:

Northern Ireland (Assistant Secretary), "Keep the Link" Group on Electoral Reform (Chair), Parliamentary Affairs, Environment, Transport and the Regions, Local Government, Human Rights, Leasehold Reform, and the All - Party Football Group.

I have also organised numerous visits to Parliament for schools and voluntary groups including trips to Big Ben and a special V.I.P. visit to 10 Downing Street.

*Jane Griffiths writes:*



**Jane Griffiths MP joined MPs from all parties to see Treasury Minister, Barbara Roche MP before the budget to seek to prevent an increase in alcohol taxes. They didn't go up.**

The Parliamentary Beer Club is a Group of MPs from all political parties which works with brewers, publicans and others from the licensing trade. I am Vice Chairman of the Club.

With the second largest brewery in Europe - every eighth pint drunk in the UK is brewed in Reading - and hundreds of jobs in pubs and clubs the industry plays an important part in Reading. That's without taking into account the part it plays in how

people spend their leisure time in Reading.

## The Law must change

The Club was asked by the Government to put together a panel to look at changing our licensing laws. Our licensing laws essentially date back to the First World War with some relaxation in the 1980's and 1990's. The panel has been to Scotland to look at the situation there and we have received evidence from magistrates, council officers, the Police, residents groups, brewers, trade unions representing people involved in brewing and groups representing licensees."

## Purple Turtle

Greg and Danny, owners of Reading Bar, Purple Turtle, have been asked to give evidence to the Licensing Reform Panel. They will be asked about their experiences opening until 2.00 am and whether this has changed the way their regulars drink.

There are currently over 40 different forms of licence with different criteria and processes - clearly bureaucracy gone mad. The whole system should be streamlined. At the same time the current system has given the English the reputation as the lager lout of Europe. Pubs all empty at the same time, creating a problem for the police and other emergency services, and our laws encourage a culture amongst young men of drinking as much as they can in a short time - this happens very little elsewhere in

Europe. It is also very difficult for local residents to take action against pubs and clubs which cause a nuisance. I am looking to make changes to make going out more civilised and safe and end the English lager lout culture.



**Beer smuggling is a growing problem in Reading**

## Taxman

The Beer Club is also concerned about the level of smuggling across the Channel. I joined a delegation from the club to Treasury Minister, Barbara Roche before the last budget asking that duty not be increased on alcohol.

It's estimated that between £3billion to £4billion a year is lost to the taxman as a result of beer smuggling. Bootlegging also has great social costs. By definition, if something is being done illegally and

unregulated then its products will fall into the hands of those who should not have them.

I know that for cash and carry businesses' and smaller local pubs sale of alcohol have plummeted and that can be directly attributable to intimidation of corner shops to stock smuggled drink. Protection rackets are in operation and once originally law abiding proprietors are forced to stock bootlegged goods it tips them over the edge and they stop caring who they sell it to as well.

It is in the hands of organised crime now and I think we barely know the extent of it. Everyone worries about drugs but alcohol is a drug and very dangerous when available outside controlled environments.

I am working within the Club and the Government to try and get alcohol taxes harmonised to end this criminal trade.

## Reading no 9

No, not the long awaited new striker at the Mad House but Reading's position in the smuggling table according to the Brewers and Licence Retailers Association. They estimate that 3,650 vans a year bring smuggled alcohol to Reading - that's a massive 21.9 million pints a year. If you know anyone involved in destroying jobs in Reading by smuggling call **0800 901901**

## Parliamentarian

Since the last issue of Parliamentary Report Reading East MP Jane Griffiths, has spoken or intervened in debates, asked questions of Ministers, or tabled written questions thirty-nine times since the last report in October. The subjects have varied from the financial incompetence of Berkshire Health Authority, to Cross Rail, to the Legal Aid Service in Reading to diplomatic relations with Mongolia to Gulf War Syndrome, Biotechnology and Genetically Modified Foods, to the Fur Farming Bill and the impact of the bananas dispute on Reading companies.

# Questions to JANE

## 1. You sit on the Public Accounts Committee. Why do people say it is influential?

The Public Accounts Committee is responsible for ensuring taxpayers money is wisely spent and not wasted. It can investigate any part of the government or its agencies and other quangos. For a Senior Official to appear before it usually means they have done something wrong and could damage their career. The Committee also makes recommendations to ensure that public money is spent as well as possible.

## 2. How do you spend your week?

A normal week sees me in London, usually either in my office or the House of Commons, between Monday afternoon and Thursday evening, and in Reading from Friday until Monday morning. I stay in London with my student daughter and son Monday to Thursday. I find I work better this way and get out and about in the constituency Friday to Monday.

## 3. What do you think is the most important part of your job?

I can't name the most important part, there are many. Taking up casework and trying to get restitution for people is very important. A large part is being out and about in Reading, visiting firms, local groups schools etc. so that people can let me know what they think about how the Government, and I, are performing. I also think it is important to be in the House of Commons listening and taking part in the debate whenever possible. I was elected to Westminster and that's where I should be speaking up for Reading East people.



**SOUTH AND WEST**  
Regional Secretary JOHN ASHMAN

**Congratulations Jane Griffiths and Martin Salter on a great two years in Parliament.**

DISTRICT OFFICE: 89 Southampton Street, Reading RG1 2QL  
Tel: 0118 975 0777. Fax: 0118 975 0790  
Industrial Organiser: Andy Frampton



**Congratulations Jane Griffiths and Martin Salter for all their work in Parliament.**

South East No.5 Branch, CWU Central Office,  
2 The Bars, Guildford, Surrey GU1 4LP  
Tel: 01483 455636. Fax: 01483 455778  
Chair: Martin Collins  
Secretary: Dave Warren

# Speaking Up For READING

## In Touch With West Reading

**Martin Salter**  
writes:-

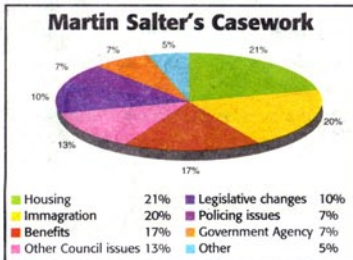
Local people are turning up to my regular MP advice surgeries in their hundreds, with issues and individual problems. This on top of a large mailbox means that I have now dealt with over 2,500 cases. Sometimes these issues are local and I write on constituents' behalf to organisations such as local councils and health authorities. I also



**Another busy day at the office**

deal with Ministers, Government Agencies and other national bodies to ensure that my constituents' views are heard and action is taken.

You can see from the chart below the range of issues I deal with. There has been an increase in the number of people with immigration problems, and a steady stream of housing and child support agency cases. It is always particularly gratifying when the outcome is positive, as was the case recently when I helped a young girl who had escaped the civil war in Sierra Leone to be reunited



with her mother in Reading.

I always aim to ensure that my office provides a helpful, efficient service to all of my constituents, whatever the issue. I continue to deal with a large number of people with problems with benefits, often these are acute when they try to come off benefits and return to work. The Government's reforms of the welfare system will provide a lot more support for people going back to work and it's my job to see that these changes help Reading people.

As well as my fortnightly Friday evening and Saturday morning advice surgeries I've been holding 'Reading Surgeries' in Coley Park, Tilehurst and Kentwood where I call on people at home.

### Getting Out And About

Supporting Reading's huge array of voluntary organisations, businesses, schools, churches, clubs and community groups is immensely rewarding but almost a full-time job in itself! Listed below are just some of the constituency visits I've been on over the last 6 months, on top of my regular liaison meetings with the local authorities and the police.

Royal Mail Christmas Sorting Office, Berkshire Probation Service, St. Mary's Church (Castle Street), Reading Town Football Club, Senior Citizens Christmas Party - Southcoate, Age Concern Christmas Party, Royal Berks Fire & Rescue Service, Dee Park Parent & Toddler Group, Mayors Charity Market, Save The Children's Giving Tree Appeal, Greyfriars Church, Waterloo Meadows, Walk For A Cure - Imperial Cancel Research Fund, Pre-School Learning Alliance, Reading Chamber of Commerce, Crime Prevention Panel, Oxford Road Regeneration Scheme, Kennet And Avon Canal Trust, Inter-Faith - Service of Prayer, Communication Workers Union - Post Office Review, Tesco's School Internet 2000, Denefield School - Fashion Show, Remembrance Sunday - Brock Barracks, Calcot Primary School, Thames Water Utilities, Reading & District Irish Centre, Environment Agency, Royal British Legion - Tilehurst, Tilehurst Free Church, Oracle UK, Mary Seacole Day Nursery, Unison - Reading Borough Branch AGM, -

Junior Mock Trials Reading Magistrate's Court, Theale Green Community School, MS Therapy Centre, Brookfields Special School, Prison Officers' Assoc. Reading Branch, Senior Safe Launch, Hilberian Society, Amnesty International Reading Group, Age Concern, Royal Berkshire Hospital, Whitley Park Junior And Infant Schools, Stepping Stones Playgroup - Meadoway, Mayfair Neighbourhood Watch, South and Central Whitley Community Associations.



**Local campaigners Cathrine Wilton, Bill Fryer and Cllr Sandy Scaife join Martin at the Tilehurst Allotments to draw up plans to protect the site from the developers. Unfortunately some local councillors described this valuable open space as a "rat infested rubbish dump"**

### CAMPAIGNS

Over the last six months I have either led or supported the following campaigns on behalf of local people:

- \* Successfully fought off plans to allow the developers to build on the Tilehurst Allotments
- \* To guarantee the future of the Battle Hospital Hydrotherapy Pool which provides treatment and relief for arthritis sufferers and other similar painful conditions
- \* In favour of measures to stop the illegal use of motorbikes in Melroys Park and Lousehill Copse in Tilehurst
- \* For traffic calming in Armour Road and adjacent streets and a pedestrian crossing facility at the Mayfair in Tilehurst, as well as speed restrictions in Long Lane and Sulham Hill
- \* In favour of the popular Car Boot Sunday Market in Burghfield that West Berkshire Council are trying to destroy

### Reading West

The Reading West constituency stretches from Whitley in the south through to Coley Park and Southcoate, the Oxford Road area, Tilehurst, Purley, Pangbourne and Theale.

### 6 Ways to contact Martin Salter MP

- \* Book in for one of his Advice Surgeries on the 2nd and 4th Saturday each month - Tel: 954 6782 for an appointment
- \* Call in at one of his Friday evening drop-in surgeries in Whitley or Calcot - call 954 6782 for details
- \* Write to Martin at his constituency office at 413 Oxford Road, Reading, RG30 1HA
- \* Drop him a note in the MP mailbox in the Civic Offices, Reading and save yourself the price of a stamp
- \* Send him an email message to [salterm@parliament.uk](mailto:salterm@parliament.uk)
- \* Write to the house of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

**MARTIN SALTER MP - STAYING IN TOUCH WITH YOU**

## In Touch With East Reading

### End Fur Farming

I would like to thank everyone who took the time to who signed the petition or returned the slip from the back of my newsletter in support of Maria Eagle's Bill to end Fur Farming. It was passed by 127 to 4 and I spoke in the debate on the Bill in the House of Commons.



**Adrian Hutton, Nelson Bland and others helping Jane Griffiths MP collect signatures on the petition in woodley opposing fur farming.**

### Hartland Road Lorries

Thank you to everyone that signed the petition about speeding lorries using Hartland Road as a short cut from Shinfield to Basingstoke Road. The Council have written to the companies causing the problem and will take action if the situation does not get any better.



**Councillor Wilf Wild collecting the petition with Jane Griffiths MP from local residents on the Hartland road as a lorry speeds past**

### Balmore Walk

The Acting Chair of Caversham Globe approached Jane Griffiths MP at her surgery and raised some concerns about the Council's plans for Balmore Walk. Jane Griffiths MP wrote to the Chair of the Council's Arts & Leisure Committee, Steve Waite who organised another meeting for people who share those concerns about the Council's proposals. Jane Griffiths MP said, "I am very keen to ensure that people's voices are heard and would encourage people to get in touch with me. I will work to make sure your voice is heard. I am so pleased the Council has been so thorough in its consultation on this matter. Having consulted twice, held a number of meetings and addressed individuals concerns. I am sure that a result will be achieved which will meet most of the concerns raised but also protecting Balmore Walk"

### Bananas

The EU and America are in dispute over the EU's treatment of Caribbean bananas and the US has imposed duty on a number of items. A Reading publishing firm selling art reproductions of drawings from Kew has been hit by the dispute. Reading East MP, Jane Griffiths raised questions on the matter in the House of Commons and is now arranging a visit to the Trade Minister to try and get a better deal for the Reading firm.

**Minister visits Highdown school**  
Education Minister, Charles Clarke MP visited Highdown School just after Christmas at the invite of Reading East MP, Jane Griffiths. He came to look at the use of IT in the school and its use in the school's links with the community. He was

most impressed saying "Highdown is further advanced in the way it has benefited from IT in lessons than any other school I am aware of." Incidentally Highdown is one of only two schools to be mentioned in Bill Gates of Microsoft's new book.

**Visits.** Jane has made many visits to many organisations and groups within Reading East, or organised for the groups to visit the House of Commons including:  
St Andrew's Pre-School Woodley, Caversham Park Pre-School Emmer Green, BKVA Reading & District, RBBH Hospital Maternity Unit, Thameside School, Reading Youth Theatre, Trollup Collis Elliot Elgar Road, Microsoft, Reading Mental Health Users Group, Woodley Team Ministry, Oracle, Reading and Berkshire Refugee Support Group, Highdown School, BBC Monitoring Caversham, Katesgrove Primary, Berkshire Brewery South Reading, Gyosei College, Addington School, University of Reading Science Department, Kendrick School, Hexham Residents Association. If you would like her to visit your group please call 957 3756 or for your group to visit the House of Commons please call 0171 219 5079.



**School standards Minister, Charles Clarke MP, with Jane Griffiths MP, John Howarth, Kate Peak and Highdown Headteacher, Tim Royle, with a teacher and pupils - the school's use of IT in action**

### Reading East

If you are in Caversham, the town centre out to Reading West railway bridge, Emmer Green, the University area, Caversham Heights, Newtown, the part of south Reading east of Northumberland Avenue, the parts of Woodley west of Reading and Crockhamwell Road and the part of Earley from Church Road to, and including, Thames Valley Park then you are in the Reading East constituency.

### 5 ways to Contact Jane Griffiths MP

- phone: 0171 219 5079 or 0118 957 3756  
write: 81 Kings Road, Reading, RG1 3DD  
House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA  
e-mail: [griffithsj@parliament.uk](mailto:griffithsj@parliament.uk)  
drop a note in:
- The box at Caversham Library**
  - The box at Reading Council Offices come to a surgery at:**  
Whitley Advice Shop - First Monday of the month 9-15 to 11-15  
A pub - second Friday of the month 6.00 to 8.00
  - Council Offices - second Saturday of the month 10.00 am to 1.00 pm**
  - Tesco Cafe - fourth Friday of the month 6.30 pm to 8.00 pm**
  - Woodley Library - fourth Saturday of the month 9.30 am to 11.30 am**  
(You do not need an appointment to come to a surgery it is first come, first served.)