

Help end the family tragedy of stillbirths

Dr Dan writes

Central Suffolk and North Ipswich MP Dr Dan Poulter on life in Suffolk and Westminster



A MEDICAL study was recently published which found Britain still has one of the highest numbers of still-born children in the developed world.

As an NHS hospital doctor who specialised in women's health, I have seen how heartbreaking stillbirths can be for mothers and families – there is nothing more tragic.

This week, I visited Downing Street as part of a campaign led by the Stillbirth and Neonatal Death charity to hand in a petition calling on the government to fund more research into the causes of stillbirths and to discover how improved screening for pregnant women could help to reduce the number of stillbirths in the UK.

The real tragedy lies in the fact that many of these stillbirths could have been avoided had the right level of care been provided to mothers in a timely manner during pregnancy.

That is why I shall continue to lobby government ministers to ensure proper funding is given to investigating the causes and prevention of stillbirths, which bring such heartbreak to families.

■ I have written before about the proposed northern fringe mass housing development, which has been a controversial issue for many Ipswich residents in recent years.

Although I am in favour of increasing the stock of affordable housing in Ipswich and Suffolk, so that our young local people are not forced to move away into neighbour-

ing counties such as Essex, we should look to build on brownfield sites such as those in Ipswich town centre and protect Suffolk's rural heritage, before concreting over our precious green belt.

It is also vital to ensure the proper infrastructure in terms of health-care, public transport, schools and jobs is firmly in place before any new homes are built in Ipswich and Suffolk.

It is important Ipswich Borough Council planners listen to the concerns of local residents, and I shall continue to work alongside local resident groups such as Save Our Countryside Spaces, whose members I recently met, to fight against this unsustainable development plan.

■ Last week I attended a wreath-laying ceremony in Barking to commemorate the life of RAF pilot Henry Fiddes Leech, who was killed when his Spitfire aircraft was grounded at Ladies Walk in Barking the day before the Second World War was declared.

Wreaths were also laid on behalf of the Wattisham Flying Station Heritage, 611 Squadron Association and the Royal British Legion.

It was a pleasure to chat with members of the Leech family, along with local residents, before watching a Spitfire from the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight perform an honorary fly-past following the ceremony.

The conflict in Afghanistan has brought home to many in Suffolk the daily sacrifices made by British

servicemen and women for our country, and it is always important to recognise the courage of those who have served and continue to serve in our Armed Forces.

I would like to commend Terry Betchley for all his efforts on behalf of the Wattisham Flying Station Heritage Group in making this event possible.

■ Finally, it was a pleasure to open Westerfield Church fete last weekend, and to chat informally with local residents over tea and home-baked cakes.

I was delighted to see so many people there and I would like to extend my thanks to Cynthia Reeve for guiding me around the fete, along with all of those who attended or volunteered to help raise money for the local church.

I very much look forward to visiting again next year.