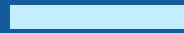




# NEWSLETTER

**Gavin Williamson MP**



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As 2018 comes to an end, I wanted to take some time to reflect upon the past year and all that has happened. From celebrating the 100th anniversary of the RAF to visiting Oman, it has certainly been a very busy and eventful year!

I want to start by thanking all of you for your support. I have received so many supportive emails and letters from constituents and it means an enormous amount to me to receive such encouragement.

I wanted to write in this newsletter about the highlights of my year. As both an MP and the Secretary of State for Defence, I have been extremely busy this past year, both within the constituency and externally.

In January I had the wonderful opportunity to visit Iraq. I met with UK service personnel who are working so hard in the fight against Daesh. It was an extremely interesting visit and definitely got 2018 off to a great start!



In February, I met with the then Defence Secretary to the United States, Jim Mattis. We discussed the great work our Armed Forces do together and the friendship that our two wonderful nations enjoy. I am very much looking forward to working with his successor to ensure that our two nations remain close allies and continue to protect and support each other.



In March, I made my first trip to Afghanistan. I met with UK Armed Forces who are working to support Afghan Security Forces. Our Armed Forces are making such a difference in so many countries across the world and it was an honour to see the work they are doing in Afghanistan.



In April, I had the privilege of laying a wreath at the Cenotaph on Anzac Day. This marks the wartime service of our allies Australia and New Zealand and it was such a privilege to be at the Cenotaph to remember and honour the sacrifice that so many troops made. I always want to stress the importance of remembering those who have given their lives for us and ensuring that they are never forgotten.





In May, constituents celebrated 'Staffordshire Day'. Staffordshire Day was launched by myself in 2015 and is an annual event where constituents can celebrate all that our wonderful area has to offer. The celebrations in 2018 were not just confined to one day, which meant people were given lots of opportunity to get involved with the celebrations. I am already looking forward to Staffordshire Day 2019! Constituents put so much hard work into the event and it makes me extremely proud to say I represent South Staffordshire.

In June, I spent some time in Poland, where I met with British and Polish troops. I also had the opportunity to lay in wreath in Warsaw to celebrate 100 years of Polish independence.



July was a particularly special month as we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the RAF. It was absolutely spectacular to see thousands of people lining the streets of London in order to watch the flypast. We can all be so proud of what the RAF have achieved and I know that they will achieve so much more over the next century.



In August, I had the pleasure of joining Jim Mattis at the Marine Corp Sunset Parade at the Lincoln Memorial. Our Royal Marines and US Marines have an incredibly close relationship and it was great to see the silent drill performed by the US Marines.



In September, I was lucky enough to visit Ukraine for the first time. The UK has trained over 9500 Ukrainian soldiers and it was an honour to see some of the work that they are doing. I met with my Ukrainian counterpart, Stepan Poltorak, with whom I had some incredibly productive discussions. It was a privilege to be able to reaffirm the UK's commitment to the sovereignty of their nation.





October saw the highly anticipated Conservative Party Conference 2018. It was an absolute privilege to speak at the Conference and to spend a few days with my colleagues, all of whom worked so hard towards the Conference. The Prime Minister's speech was truly the highlight and a wonderful way to end a fantastic few days in Birmingham.



I also want to mention the trip I made to New York City in October. HMS Queen Elizabeth arrived in the city as part of her sea trials and it was an honour to spend time on board. It is so important that we demonstrate our commitment to the security of our allies and it demonstrated to the world that our Royal Navy is truly world class. I also had the chance to visit the 9/11 memorial, which was a truly memorable and moving experience.



November was an extremely busy month, but by far the most important and memorable events was being at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday for Armistice Day 100. To be at the Cenotaph was an absolute privilege and I commend all those who helped us to remember the First World War generation. We will never forget those who gave their lives for us in World War One, nor will we forget those who have given their lives as sacrifice in conflict since World War One.



It was a wonderful end to 2018 with another trip to Ukraine in December. I spent time with Stepan Poltorak on board HMS Echo in Odessa. It was so wonderful to be able to join the crew of HMS Echo to say thank you for all that they are doing.





The most important message I want to convey is that absolutely none of this would have been possible without my wonderful constituents. Again, I want to thank you for all of your support over the past year and I hope that each of you have enjoyed a successful 2018 and are looking forward to 2019. I had so many wonderful events in the constituency in 2018 and trying to pick a highlight for each month was impossible, so I have included some photos of my favourite moments below. I always love everything I attend in the constituency and I know that I have got some exciting events and meetings planned for 2019. I am truly honoured to be able to represent South Staffordshire at a national level and am looking forward to being able to work hard for my constituents in the coming year. As always, please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions or issues - myself and my office are always available. I wish you all a wonderful 2019 and hope that it will be a great year for all of you.

