

LAST weekend I spoke with my predecessor and as we compared notes on the floods of 2000 with those of 2014, we agreed these are among the times when a constituency MP can really make a difference.

My caseload remains huge and every day brings victories you (rightly) never read about in the paper, but the recent floods presented a whole series of new challenges.

I wasn't away during Parliament's half-term recess; I have been flat out visiting every affected part of my constituency, helping those on the ground problem solve what to do next and although I may not have the shoulders for it, heaving my fair share of sand-bags.

Everywhere I have been — including Easton, Twyford, Kings Worthy, Sutton Scotney, Littleton and Hursley — I've seen a community effort that was more than up to the challenge, and the various authorities working together and playing a bad hand as well as they could.

In Winchester city centre, it goes without saying another major weather event is beyond anyone's control, but we owe much thanks to the multi-agency response from

Westminster Diary

By Steve Brine,
MP for Winchester and
Chandler's Ford



city and county councils, Environment Agency and the armed forces which has allowed us to walk a fine line and manage water levels in the most intelligent way possible.

We're quick enough to always lay blame in this country but credit where it's due.

In many ways the action taken here — the restriction upstream in the River Itchen is one obvious example — shows lessons learned from the experience of 2000 and is something I will be feeding into the Government's COBRA team so other areas can learn from Winchester.

Where next? As we move from management of the crisis to recovery I will be pulling together a series of round-table sessions — community by community — to learn the lessons of our response

and understand what assistance I need to make the case for within Government. If you want to feed into that, as a resident or local councillor, do contact me.

Finally, there is much more information on the recent floods — including important information about the recovery support packages being made available by Government — online at www.stevebrine.com/flooding.

On a completely different subject, I am still doing everything in my power to keep constituents involved in possible changes to the NHS locally.

To that end, I will chair a special ASKtheNHS meeting in Winchester on Thursday, March 27.

More details of my work, locally and in Westminster, via www.stevebrine.com or on 01962 791110.