

Last week I attended an event in Parliament raising awareness of the over 500,000 grants that the National Lottery has given to good causes. For the past two decades the Lottery has been creating millionaires, and everyone who buys a lottery ticket hopes and understands that it could be them! However, what is perhaps less well known is that when you buy a lottery ticket you are also supporting a range of excellent initiatives throughout the country, at a local and national level.

Over the last 20 years the National Lottery has given billions in grants to support causes across the UK. In fact, it's given over £36 billion since it began in 1994! You'll be familiar with our Olympic and Paralympic heroes and their world class success. National Lottery funding was instrumental in the success of our athletes, supporting their training and preparation for the Games. And it has also benefitted us locally in Chatham & Aylesford, with over £8 million given directly to projects in our community.

For example, The National Lottery has granted over £3.5 million to supporting the busy sport and leisure scene across the constituency through revitalising sports facilities and encouraging participation. These include projects at Walderslade FC, Maidstone and District Netball League, Holcombe & Blue Bell Hill Cricket Club and St Mary's Amateur Boxing Club. And to enable children and young people to build better lives and improve their confidence, the Lottery has also provided almost £1,250,000 to support education and community facilities.

National Lottery funding makes a huge contribution to our nation, benefitting everything from social groups for older people and parenting support networks, to local sports clubs and heritage preservation. I am delighted to celebrate National Lottery and the good causes it supports.

I would also encourage groups across the community to continue to explore whether they are eligible for National Lottery funding by visiting the following website: <http://www.lotterygoodcauses.org.uk/funding-finder>