

Now that the Beast from the East has passed, the roads and paths are clear, and a general clear up has begun following a week of crippled services, we can take an opportunity to reflect on some of the good that came out of the chaos.

I have received many messages about those who went the extra mile to help others during the snow. Elderly neighbours got a knock on the door to check they had enough supplies, younger residents clearing paths of ice, 4x4 vehicles helping stranded motorists and volunteers roaming the streets late at night to support the homeless. All these kind acts of community spirit show that despite all we see and hear, and many would have us believe, there is much to celebrate within society.

I have the enormous privilege of being the Civil Society Minister. In short I represent charities, social enterprises, community and youth organisations and volunteers in Government and it never ceases to amaze me the dedication and commitment of those within this sector. Those that I am particularly proud of are the army of volunteers who quite often don't realise how special they are, or what they bring, or where we would be without them.

And many don't actually think of themselves as volunteers. Volunteering ranges from working in the local charity shop, reading books to school children through to the grassroot sports coaches and school governors. Events like last week however give us an opportunity to thank them for their work. I recently launched a new consultation on how to support civil society into the future so if you are one of the many people involved in civil society please do get involved by going to the government website.

We want to hear the views of ordinary people doing extraordinary things that help people, communities and society come together.