



JUSTIN TOMLINSON

The North Swindon MP gives his views on keeping youths active

It's vital we maintain our strong start to the year

AFTER America postponed its jump off the fiscal cliff in the early hours of New Year's Day, world stock markets have soared, with our FTSE index passing the 6000 mark for the first time in 18 months.

This, combined with retailers John Lewis and Next both reporting strong Christmas trading figures, set the tone for early New Year economic cheer.

However, America's debt remains an incomprehensible \$16.3trillion (£10trillion) and its politicians are failing to reduce it, seemingly only tinkering around the edges.

Failure to act will not only hurt the US, but with the whole world dangerously reliant on a buoyant US economy, it would hurt us all.

The United States, like us, have hit a crossroads. Like the last Labour Government, they are spending far more than they are generating in taxes, saddling the nation with spiralling debt.

They need to take decisive action for all our sakes. In the UK we have cut our deficit by 25 per cent by taking difficult decisions.

This has protected our triple A credit rating, kept interest rates at a record low, seen unemployment fall, new businesses created and manufacturing taking advantage of new emerging markets beyond the US and Europe. The road to recovery will be long, but at least we remain on the right course.

Let's hope over the next two months American politicians can put aside their individual narrow interests to secure their long-term economic future.

At home, I have long championed Young Entrepreneurs and I am delighted the government is expanding its start-up loans scheme.

This offers young entrepreneurs loans of about £2,500 to help them start businesses through the Start-up Loans Company. The Company is chaired by James Caan, who is best known from the television programme Dragons' Den.

The scheme had originally been aimed at 18-to-24-year-olds, but is now being expanded to those aged up to 30.

Young entrepreneurs are also offered advice to help them with their new businesses, which is crucial for those taking their first steps. I hope this scheme will prove popular with Swindon's next generation of wealth creators.

On another matter, it was disappointing to see the Guardian newspaper willing to publish the provocative advert from the Argentine Government demanding the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands.

The Foreign Office says there could be no negotiations on sovereignty unless and until the islanders so wish.

They remain free to choose their own futures, both politically and economically, and have a right to self-determination as enshrined in the UN Charter.

A referendum on the Falklands' future is to be held in March at which the status quo is expected to prevail, and the government is crystal clear that it supports the islanders' wishes.



I MUST BE MAD Josh Layton prepares for his early morning dip

THERE are bracing dips, and then there's plunging into a bitterly cold lake in the Cotswolds first thing on a January morning.

As I stood apprehensively on the bank at Waterland to join hardy open water swimmer Richard Searle, I was already feeling the chill.

Richard is among a small but growing band of die-hards who brave the stretch of water in pretty much anything but Arctic-strength ice.

Lake 32, which is run by Waterland, registered at 6 degrees C during my short-lived dip yesterday – but felt positively Baltic.

Richard changed from his car boot on the bank, pulling on two swimming caps, while I battled with my wetsuit in the changing rooms.

I took part in the London Triathlon this year, which began with a 1500metre outdoor swim, but when it comes to frosty temperatures I defer to my Jamaican gene pool.

In a Titanic scenario I think it's fair to say I'm a lifeboats-first kind of chap. So as I stepped into the shallows, any

It seemed like a good idea at the time – reporter JOSH LAYTON gave up the warmth of the Advertiser office for an early morning swim in icy temperatures

enthusiasm quickly turned to icy trepidation – while Richard looked as if he was wading into the leisure pool at the Oasis.

Originally setting my sights on a 200m-circuit around a raft with a skull and crossbones flag, Richard wisely told me to try reaching a much closer yellow buoy first.

While my wetsuit kept my core warm, I felt a deep icy throbbing sensation in the lower part of my face and my feet immediately started to go numb.

As I swam, my front crawl descended into a disjointed, unsightly shadow of my former stroke.

Piling back onto the bank my adventure was over – after an effort of just 50m.

Richard, however, headed back out with a controlled and highly-efficient front crawl taking him on an 800m circuit.

Back on dry land he admitted having been so cold on previous swims

that he was unable to open the lock on the changing room door – because the mind-numbing temperature drop meant he kept turning the handle the wrong way. On another outing his body core plummeted by three degrees, about the level that hypothermia sets in.

But he swims once a week throughout the winter and says he gets an “almost surreal” pleasure from being in the lake.

The 48-year-old, from Chalford Hill, in Gloucestershire, turns up in the morning before heading off to work as a technical support manager for British Gas.

The sessions, on top of his training for Stroud and Gloucester masters at indoor pools, have a unique set of challenges. “Wearing a wetsuit means you can swim for longer, but one of the things which happens is that you lose muscle dexterity in your fingers,”

Richard said. “I’ve

come out after an hour or so and have tried to take my goggles off but I’ve had no strength to grip them, so I’ve ended up having to use my palm to push them off.”

Despite the pain, silicone-covered heads have become an increasingly regular sight at the lake in Shorncliffe as participation in triathlon and open-water competitions increases.

David Furse, Waterland's director of business development, said: “We have seen a huge increase in the past three to four years. We have gone from 200 members up to about 600 just for swimming.”

“People also come here because it's a nice flat area and they can run and cycle.”

“We have members from all walks of life and had two people who swam the Channel and came to acclimatise to the cold. We keep an eye on people and they are never too far from somewhere where they can get to the bank or stand up. The water is also very clean.”

For more information about swimming and other activities at Waterland visit www.ukwatersports.co.uk or call 01285 861202.

Pictures: STUART HARRISON



COOL CUSTOMER Richard Searle enjoys his swim



A STATE OF SHOCK Josh in the water. Left, he manages a smile with Richard

Developers back with plan to build 50 homes

DEVELOPERS have returned with a plan to build 50 homes on a site near Purton just months after a previous application was thrown out.

Wain Homes have submitted an application for up to 50 houses, including 15 affordable homes,

access and associated works at Widham Farm

Campaign group Purton Ps and Qs have suggested the developer is riding on the back on the decision to allow 700 houses to be built at Ridgeway Farm, after the Secretary of State ruled Wiltshire

Council cannot show an adequate five-year land supply.

The move follows previous applications – in 2008, for 148 homes and open space, which was refused on appeal in 2009; and in 2011, reduced to 50 homes and rejected on appeal in October 2012.

Views on the application must be sent in by Monday and can be emailed to Developmentmanagementnorth@wiltshire.gov.uk citing reference Land at Widham Farm/Widham Grove, Station Road, Purton, Wiltshire (REF 12/04009/OUT).