



NO WORK AT M6 JUNCTION 9

At the Summer Adjournment Debate on Thursday 16 July 2015, I raised the congestion caused by the closure of the southbound entry slip-road at Junction 9 of the M6. Constituents contacted me because they are frustrated and angry at being caught in the congestion.

Many have said it has taken more than an hour to travel along the 2 mile diversion route to Junction 7. I have never seen any works taking place on or under the slip road. There has been no information about why the slip road is closed. This frustration is compounded by confusion about when it will reopen. A press release from Highways England dated 20 May 2015 said it would open on 30 November 2015, but a bulletin dated 15 June 2015 on the Highways England website said that it would open on 30 July 2015.



In her response the Deputy Leader of the House said that the slip road has been closed to reduce congestion on the M6 and local roads after consultation with Walsall MBC and Sandwell MBC. I find this extraordinary because neither I nor my constituents were told. Rather than reducing congestion, the closure has increased congestion. I have written to Highways England, Walsall MBC and Sandwell MBC for the slip-road to be re-opened.

SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF SOUSSE ATTACK

At Prime Minister's Questions on Wednesday 8 July 2015, I was drawn at Question 5.

"Last Friday at Walsall Football Club's Stadium there were tears, flowers and Walsall

shirts and scarves as we remembered Joel Richards aged 19, his uncle Adrian Evans, and his grandfather Charles 'Patrick' Evans, all Sadler's fans who were killed in Tunisia. So can I ask the Prime Minister if he could outline what steps he will take to ensure that bereaved families and survivors of atrocities can have help immediately and in the future?"

The Prime Minister committed to establish a ministerial committee to ensure that support for victims is co-ordinated across Government. As the Prime Minister noted, a high level of support has been provided for survivors of the London bombings 10 years ago and it is crucial that this support is matched for the bereaved families and the survivors of the attack in Tunisia.

Walsall FC have been very supportive of the family of Joel, Adrian and Patrick by arranging the ceremony on Friday 3 July 2015 which I attended. The Club's directors, manager Dean Smith, the entire playing squad, fans and local people were present at the ceremony to pay their respects. It is shocking that this terrorist outrage has had an impact so close to home. I tabled Early Day Motion (EDM) 290 commending Walsall FC on arranging the ceremony.

The Prime Minister must deliver on this commitment and ensure that this vital support is provided immediately and for the future.



20MPH ZONES OUTSIDE SCHOOLS

I called for 20mph speed limits outside all schools in Walsall South during the Summer Adjournment Debate on Thursday 16 July 2015.

The issue was prompted after parents from Bentley West Primary School on Monmouth Road contacted me to say many drivers were travelling too fast outside the School. They collected a petition of 223 names calling for a 20mph zone and traffic calming to be implemented. I presented this to Parliament on Tuesday 21 July 2015 before the House rose for the Summer Recess.

The safety improvements from 20mph zones in other parts of the country have been stark. Figures from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSpa) show that pedestrians hit by a car travelling at 20mph have a 1.5% chance of being killed compared to an 8% chance of being killed if they are hit by a car travelling at 30mph. In Hull, where 20mph zones have had widespread use in residential areas for more than 20 years now, personal injury accidents have dropped by 56% and fatalities by 90%.

I am calling on Walsall MBC to accept the evidence and follow the lead of Hull, Islington and Bristol to introduce 20mph zones outside all schools in Walsall South. Lower speed limits outside schools have been proven to reduce injuries. I have written to local schools to ask for their views.



Surgeries

Valerie holds regular surgeries. To arrange an appointment, please call the Constituency Office on 01922 635835

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NEWS IN BRIEF

IN PARLIAMENT

In July, I asked:

- The Transport Secretary whether he would seriously take into account the fact that Birmingham Airport has a strategic position in the UK and its connectivity to HS2. He responded that he would and acknowledged the importance of the connection to HS2.
- The Health Secretary how many hospitals in special measures have implemented recommendation 13 of the final Francis report on fundamental standards. He responded that he expected that most would have done so but could not give me the figures.
- The Foreign Office Minister whether he would raise with the United Nations the possibility of Ban Ki-Moon leading a delegation to Rakhine state to ensure humanitarian access. He responded that the UK Government has encouraged the Secretary-General to play a leadership role.
- The Health Secretary to outline what steps should be taken to recruit, train and retain front-line staff who are key to patient safety. He responded that Health Education England are working to recruit and retain staff.
- I am a sponsor of the Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (Statutory Requirement) Bill 2015-16. The Bill includes provisions for PSHE to include Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) and education on ending violence against women and girls. The Bill received its First Reading on 15 July 2015 and the House divided 183 Ayes to 44 Noes.



SIDNEY GOLDBERG COMPETITION



On Monday 14 July 2015 I hosted the award ceremony for the Sidney Goldberg Memorial Competition 2014 at the House of Commons. The competition was initiated by Sidney Goldberg's daughter Rachele Goldberg.

It was launched by Speaker Rt Hon John Bercow MP in October 2013 to honour the Memory of Sidney Goldberg, a member of the RAF Volunteer Reserve during the Second World War. Sidney Goldberg, served on the HMS Hilary and was present on a Headquarters Ship during the D-Day landings and provided key interpreted information during the war. This led to him being awarded the Legion d'Honneur in 2004. He passed away in 2011.

The competition was open to Primary and Secondary State schools in the UK from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 5. Secondary School participants wrote essays on subjects related to the War and Key Stage 2 had the option of writing an essay, a newspaper article or submitting a piece of artwork. The first prize for each Key Stage was a trip to Normandy with a parent/guardian to visit sites including Juno Beach, the Caen Memorial Museum and Arromanches.

DARLASTON TOWN FC FUN DAY



The Darlaston Town FC Family Fun Day on Saturday 11 July 2015 was well attended. Darlaston Town 1874 FC are now firmly embedded in their new football home at Bentley Leisure Pavilion. The Family Fun Day took place in brilliant sunshine. Lots of people turned out to enjoy the stalls and prizes.

Neil Chambers, the Club's Chairman, and his team have done a wonderful job of organising the event and many supporters enjoyed the home cooked food. There were displays of dancing from a young girls' dance troop and a time trial for dogs. There were mock sword fights with knights in their chain mail preying on victims. I met the new Darlaston Town 1874 FC mascot – currently called Brian. The season ahead is looking very exciting and the pitch was fenced off ready for the friendly later that evening.

APPG ON EPILEPSY



I chaired the first meeting of the newly formed All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Epilepsy on Wednesday 15 July 2015 and my colleague Teresa Pearce MP was also in attendance and chaired part of the meeting.

There was a good turnout of the epilepsy community for the first meeting. The meeting was addressed by Professor Helen Cross OBE, the Prince of Wales' Chair of Childhood Epilepsy, and Dr Amit Bali, Darzi Fellow. Following the passing of a global resolution on epilepsy by the World Health Organisation in May this year the meeting considered the impact of the resolution on the UK and our commitment to improving epilepsy care.

ITV CENTRAL LOBBY



I was a guest on ITV's Central Lobby Programme on Thursday 9 July 2015.

The discussion was dominated by the Budget which took place the previous day. I said that the Chancellor had not addressed the fact that economic productivity has flat-lined since the start of the recession. There was no investment in new infrastructure and rail electrification projects have been "paused".

VALERIE CHAIRS FIRST DEBATE

On Monday 20 July 2015 I chaired my first proceedings as a member of the Panel of Chairs, to which I was appointed by Mr Speaker at the start of the current Parliamentary Session. The Committee was considering the the draft Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007 (Extension of duration of non-jury trial provisions) Order 2015.

EDUCATION CENTRE OPENING



I was delighted to attend the opening of the new Parliament Education Centre by Professor Brian Cox on Wednesday 15 July 2015. The new Centre was set up at the instigation of Mr Speaker the Rt Hon John Bercow MP.

The new Education Centre will double the number of school children able to visit Parliament each year. The Centre combines state-of-the-art technology with an environmentally sustainable building to offer schools a new world class facility in which to learn about Parliament, democracy and politics. This will benefit pupils from Walsall South, who I regularly meet in Parliament.