



## Happy Easter 2017



I would like to wish you all a very Happy Easter. The London and Walsall Offices will be closed from 7 April 2017 and will reopen on 18 April 2017. For contact information you can visit my website [www.valerievazmp.co.uk](http://www.valerievazmp.co.uk).

## Service at St Mary's Undercroft to remember those who died on 22 March 2017

On 22 March 2017 a terrorist attack took place in the Palace of Westminster in which four victims and the attacker died. The attack sent Westminster into lockdown and MPs, staff and visitors were forced to remain for more than four hours while the area was made safe. I responded to the Leader of the House: "May I just thank you for that, Mr Deputy Speaker, and thank the Leader of the House for his statement? Our thoughts and prayers are with the police officer. I thank the police, all the security services and all the staff for looking after us so well". I attended a service alongside MPs at the Chapel of Saint Mary Undercroft on 23 March 2017 to remember those who died.



## Valerie raises concerns on cuts to school funding

On 2 March 2017 I raised with the Leader of the House the consultation on schools national funding formula. I wrote to Headteachers in Walsall South to ask them to respond to the consultation which closed on 22 March 2017. Under the Government's proposals for a national funding formula, 24 out of 38 schools in Walsall South would face a cut in funding. The National Union of Teachers state that the income per pupil in 2015-16 was £4,979, and in 2019-20 this will reduce to £4,489. I called on the Leader of the House to guarantee that there will be a statement immediately following the consultation.



## Valerie opposes motion relating to English Votes for English Law

As Shadow Leader of the House I responded to the motion moved by the Leader of the House to amend Standing Order No. 83S to allow the English Votes for English Laws (EVEL) rules to apply when discussing the issue of income tax in the UK Parliament. HM Opposition Labour Party opposes EVEL, which in our view is poorly conceived, a knee-jerk reaction and a constitutional disaster. It risks dividing the UK, rather than allowing devolved Governments to work together for the benefit of the whole of the UK.



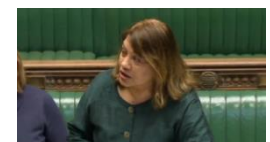
## Emily Wilding Davison Memorial Lecture 8 March 2017

I was delighted to be asked to speak at the Inaugural Lecture of the Politics and International Relations Society on International Women's Day at Bedford College and Royal Holloway. The topic was Women in Politics today. Only 5.3% of working women work in science, engineering and technology compared with 31.3% of working men; women carry out an average of 60% more unpaid work than men; and there are 5 million girls not in education around the world. We need to sow the seeds for women to challenge, empower and push back the frontiers to teach young people in our quest for justice and equality for the generations to come.



## Business Questions 9 March 2017

The former Education Minister admitted he regretted cancelling the Building Schools for the Future programme so I asked the Leader to enable all schools allocated funds under the programme to receive them without having to make bids. The Leader of Surrey Council had a 'gentleman's agreement' with Cabinet Ministers about a deal to prevent a 15% council tax rise in Surrey. I asked the Leader of the House for an inquiry into the discussions around the 'gentleman's agreement'. I also called for a breakdown of all business rates that goes to each Council when the transition is made.



## Valerie meets pupils from Abu Bakr School

I was delighted to catch up with pupils from Abu Bakr School on 9 March 2017. They spent the day in the Parliament Education Centre. I spoke to them about the process known as ping-pong when the EU Referendum Bill which has been amended in the Lords comes back to the Commons. I discussed with them the Labour Party amendments to the Bill. I also explained my role as Shadow Leader of the House.



## European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill: Lords Amendments

On 13 March 2017 I voted in favour of the two Lords amendments to the EU Bill:

1) Guarantee the legal status of EU citizens resident in the UK before negotiations begin 2) Ensure that there is a meaningful vote in Parliament on the final draft Brexit deal. HM Opposition Labour Party tabled and voted for very similar amendments at the Commons Committee Stage of the Bill and Labour Peers helped pass these amendments in the Lords which is why I voted to fully support these amendments. It is disappointing that the PM chose to ignore Labour's amendments. Throughout the Brexit negotiations Labour will argue for the best possible Brexit deal – one that prioritises jobs and the economy and leads to no changes to all EU-derived rights, including workplace rights and environmental protections.



### Business Questions 16 March 2017

The big six energy companies have increased their prices so I asked the Leader what powers the Government will use to protect consumers immediately. I called for a timetable of when and how the EU bill will be debated. The EU is, by a significant margin, the UK's biggest trading partner. I called for a debate on what help will businesses be given to secure those new suppliers. I asked the Leader for a debate on "Race in the workplace: The McGregor-Smith Review". Staff at the Equality and Human Rights Commission are being sacked. It has been reported that if BME talent is fully utilised, the economy could receive a £24 billion boost.

### Valerie meets with ME Campaigners

I met with Susan Poulton and Sue Worrall who attended my pop-up surgery at Morrisons on 17 March 2017 to speak to me about the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) Support Group. 250,000 people in the UK are affected by ME and/or Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. There have been two recent books on the condition; 'Diagnosis and Treatment of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Myalgic Encephalitis' by Dr Sarah Myhill and 'Science, Politics and ME' by Dr Ian Gibson, former MP for Norwich North, and Elaine Sherriffs. Susan and Sue raised the issue of NICE guidelines which contain no evidence based treatment for ME sufferers. I have recently found out that the review will be brought forward from 2019 to September 2017.



### Business Questions 23 March 2017

The Opposition prayed against a statutory instrument forcing the Government to provide time for a debate, but no time was provided to debate the regulations relating to PIP and to tuition fees. I raised with the Leader that those in psychological distress are denied access to additional support. Epilepsy Action and the National Autistic Society are concerned how the regulations will affect people with epilepsy, autism or other long-term conditions. Before Article 50 is triggered, I asked the Leader to ensure that White Papers, draft legislation and an impact assessment are made available before the Bills are published.

### Valerie visits Moorcroft Wood Primary School

It was a pleasure to meet with pupils and staff at Moorcroft Wood Primary School on 24 March 2017. I showed Year 6 how MP's debate in the Chamber. They prepared a motion and the class divided into For and Against. The motion was that there should be no zoos. It was a very good debate and the pupils put across their points very well.



### Article 50 letter delivered

The PM triggered Article 50 on 29 March 2017 starting negotiations for the UK to leave the EU. I asked the Leader of the House if he is aware that CBI say a "no deal" scenario would be seriously disruptive to businesses, consumers and economies in the UK and the EU. Half the Cabinet made a promise that £350 million a week will be available for the NHS so I asked the Leader when will NHS staff receive a 1% pay increase. I also called for a debate on the NAO report "Capability in the civil service" to address the skills shortage and ever-increasing challenges in providing public services.

## News in brief

### Other News

- At the Bath and North East Somerset event I met with successful small business owners and tasted a selection of organic artisan teas and premium pistachios.
- I discussed with local producers and NFU members the EU implications for British agriculture at Cambridgeshire Food and Drink Day. There are 11 farms in Walsall South which could be effected.
- I supported Usdaw pledge to promote the 'It's our NHS' and 'Stand up to Racism' March 2017 rallies.
- Cardinal Bo visited me in Parliament to discuss the situation in Burma. Hundreds of Rohingya houses, schools, markets, shops were burned by the Burmese Army who are unaccountable.
- I voted to support the Decriminalisation of Abortion in England and Wales (Ten Minute Rule Bill).
- I attended the BESDA Awards 2017 to celebrate sporting excellence within BAME communities.

### Emails

- This month I received policy emails on PIP, Cuts to School Funding, Article 50, Rupert Murdoch's bid to buy Sky, and Israel's new settlements law.