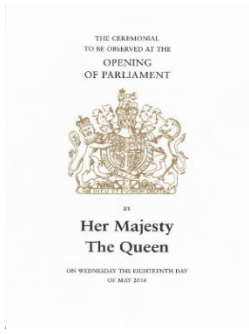




The State Opening of Parliament



The State Opening of Parliament took place on the 18 May 2016 and marks the formal start of the parliamentary year which outlined the Government's programme of legislation and policies for the coming year. The main points: Introduce a Bill of Rights; Give prison governors "unprecedented" freedoms; Consult on the introduction of a new "civil order regime" to restrict extremist activity; Ensure every household has the right to access high speed broadband; Allow local authorities to retain and alter business rates to help protect local communities.

Young Epilepsy Champions Awards 2016

On Wednesday 18 May 2016 I was delighted to present the first award at the Young Epilepsy Champions Awards to celebrate the achievements of those living with epilepsy, their families, carers, teachers and support networks.



As Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Epilepsy, it is vital to recognize those who are tirelessly fighting discrimination, tackling inclusivity and are facing the daily challenges for those living with the condition.

Walsall FC in play-offs against Barnsley



There was a crowd of 8,000 at the Banks's Stadium watched the Saddlers in the FA play-off match against Barnsley on a warm Thursday evening on 19 May 2016. The photo shows the free kick to the Saddlers on the edge of the box. Walsall FC enjoyed plenty of possession around the box in the first half and some good saves from Neil Etheridge at the other end. At the final whistle it was Walsall 1 Barnsley 3, but 1-6 on aggregate taking Barnsley to Wembley. It was the Saddlers last game of the season but they finished 3rd in the league and 10 points ahead of Barnsley.

Cannock Line Electrification and Route Upgrade

On Friday 20th May 2016, I launched the next phase of the electrification of the railway between Walsall and Rugeley which is being upgraded and electrified by Network Rail. The £36m investment will provide passengers with more reliable, faster and quieter journeys and is due to be completed in December 2017. I was delighted to unveil the commemorative plaque on the electrification mast.



Valerie visits Morrisons in Walsall



As part of my Associate fellowship for the Industry and Parliament Trust, I chose to visit a local business. On Friday 20th May 2014, I visited Morrisons at Wallows Lane. I met David Scott, Head of Corporate Services -Corporate Affairs, Policy, Charity & Community and other members of the leadership team. We toured the store and discussed issues affecting the supermarket business. Morrisons make great efforts to keep the consumer safe.

EU Referendum 23 June 2016



I campaigned to remain in the EU. On Monday 23 May 2016, I was interviewed by the Sikh to discuss the benefits of remaining in the EU. I welcomed colleagues to Palfrey Sure Start centre in Walsall to campaign on Monday 13 June 2016. MPs such as



Harriet Harman MP, Angela Eagle MP, Yvette Cooper MP and many others were aboard the battle bus to make the case from the women's perspective to vote 'remain' on 23 June 2016. The UK voted 51.9% in favour of leaving the European Union. Although I campaigned to remain, I recognise that many of my constituents have concerns over issues such as immigration.

Darlaston Multi-Faith Community Festival



The festival took place at All Saints Church Darlaston on 21 May 2016. There were craft stalls and Darlaston Rotary Club, the RAF, the Ravidassia community and Walsall's School Nursing Service. I said that we need to tolerate all religions and that no one religion is more important than another and must not seek to dominate another. We must promote peace democracy and justice which are the basis of all religions.

Valerie meets with Cardinal Bo at the House of Commons

I hosted a roundtable discussion with His Eminence Cardinal Charles Maung Bo on the future of Burma. His visit comes at a pivotal time for Burma and allowed us to discuss Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy election victory, the rights of ethnic and religious minorities, and the ongoing peace process. Canon Fr Anthony Dwyer, Fr Dominic from Burma, and Ben Rogers from Christian Solidarity Worldwide also attended.



Valerie attends Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Sub-Committee on Future Flood Prevention



On Wednesday 25 May 2016, The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Sub-Committee held an oral evidence session on Future Flood Prevention. The session explored a number of themes, including: the planning system's capacity to minimise flood risk from new development, what developers can do to reduce flooding and its impacts, the effectiveness of Sustainable Drainage System (SUDs), ways to improve new and existing homes to make them more flood resistant.

Valerie attends the 25th Anniversary of the Shree Ram Mandir Temple in Walsall



I was delighted to attend the 25 year celebrations of the inception of the Shree Ram Mandir temple in Ford Street on Friday 27 May 2016. There was a week of celebrations at the Temple - among the events was the reading from the Bhagwad Gita by a Hindu scholar. The temple also held health and well-being events with workshops by the medical and healthcare professionals.

Jo Cox MP 22 June 1974- 16 June 2016



I was shocked when I heard that Jo had been shot and stabbed going to her surgery. Jo was a brilliant MP and had a great future ahead of her with her commitment to helping those less fortunate and the voiceless. Jo was utterly committed to the Labour Party and gave evidence to the Learning Lessons Task Force. My last image of Jo was earlier in the week smiling at her as we passed in the Cloisters. My condolences to her husband Brendan and her young children Cuillan and Lejla. Jo was a talented and valued colleague and friend. May she rest in peace.

Valerie speaks at 'New Dawn' unveiling



On 7 June 2016, I was honoured to perform a reading at the reception to celebrate the permanent installation of New Dawn, a contemporary sculpture by artist Mary Branson celebrating the campaign for women's suffrage. This date marked the 150th anniversary of John Stuart Mill MP presenting the first mass petition to the House of Commons calling for women to be given the right to vote. The reading took place in Westminster Hall. I joined Baroness Fookes, Baroness Maddock and Alison Thewliss MP to deliver a short presentation on the history of women's rights from 1866 to 2016. In my presentation I spoke about women's rights in 1906 and the struggles.

Valerie attends Queen's Birthday Celebrations at St Lawrence's Church

I attended a special service in celebration of the Queen's 90th birthday led by Reverend Liz Jones. The Queen's birthday celebrations took place in the Church and churchyard on the weekend of 11th and 12th June 2016. I attended the evening service on Sunday which reflected the theme of her Majesty's service to community, inspired by her faith, and acknowledging the part that local people have to play in making this a better society.



Walsall Canal Narrowboat Trip



On Friday 17 June I boarded a canal narrowboat from Ocker Hill to Walsall Town Centre to look at accessibility to the canal. I want to encourage everyone to use the canal and the banks for walking and cycling. Thanks to Steve Hubbard, I also managed to steer the boat to the moorings at the art gallery.

Valerie meets with Minister of State for Schools about Joseph Leckie Academy



Head teacher, Keith Whittleston, Dennis O'Rourke and me met with the Minister of State for Schools, Nick Gibb MP, at the Dep of Education to discuss the school's Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) on Tuesday 14 June 2016. I was disappointed when the school just missed out on funding. The school desperately needs the additional funding so that children can learn and fulfil their potential.

Land registry backbench debate



I have been contacted by many of my constituents opposed to the provisions to privatise the Land Registry. On Thursday 30 March 2016, I attended the backbench business debate on Land Registry, led by David Lammy MP. As a solicitor, I have often had to use the Land Registry. He is making the economic case for non-privatisation. Does he agree that the Land Registry is entirely self-funding? In fact, it has returned £126 million to the Treasury.

Firebomb attack in halal butchers in Pleck

I was shocked to hear that a Kashmir Meat & Poultry on Wednesbury Road Pleck, was attacked with an incendiary device on Monday 27 June 2016. It is alarming that hate crimes haven't risen 57% nationally, following the result of the EU referendum. I have offered my support to the owners of Kashmir Meat & Poultry at this difficult time for them and raised this in the House of Commons at the Hate Crime statement on Wednesday 29 June 2016: "On Monday, an incendiary device was thrown into a halal butchers shop in Wednesbury Road, Pleck, in my constituency—there is a photograph in The Guardian today of the inside of the shop. Will the Minister confirm how much extra funding will be available for local police forces so that they can investigate and tackle such crimes?"



Adjournment debate on Student Loans Repayments



On Monday 27 June 2016, I secured an Adjournment debate on Student Loan Repayments. The Government has retrospectively changed the contracts of loan repayments and froze the threshold of £21,000 for 5 years. A Minister comes to the House to say there will be an increase in the threshold, and the Government ignored it. A consultation gives an 84% response opposing freezing the threshold and the Government ignored it. Young people have to sign a form with the contract terms in another document online, with 3 rates of interest. I asked the Government to help students not to be burdened by debt but enjoy the benefits of their hard work and achievements.

Birmingham Airport

The Secretary of State announced that the report on the additional runway in South East England will be deferred until October. I asked him if I could make the case for Birmingham airport which served a record 10.2 million passengers in 2015. The new Birmingham Interchange Station links the Airport to HS2 which makes Birmingham Airport the most accessible in the UK.



APPG on Epilepsy Meeting



On Monday 13 June 2016 I chaired the All Party Parliamentary Group meeting on Epilepsy. The title of the meeting was Epilepsy in the workplace: Breaking down barriers. I was pleased to welcome speakers Will Butterworth of Epilepsy Action (far left of the picture), Jamie Burton (middle) and Dawn Oliver of Young Epilepsy (far right), as well as experts on epilepsy, those who work in hospitals and charities across the UK, and those who've experienced epilepsy in their lives first hand. At the meeting, the APPG published a Report on driving bans following seizures.

Events in the House of Commons

- **Charity Maternity Action:** I attended Charity Maternity Action discussion to draw attention to maternity rights. I support Maternity Action's call to end pregnancy discrimination in the workplace.
- **Community pharmacy meeting:** on 24 May 2016 I attended the future of community pharmacy meeting. I have written to the Minister for Community and Social Care, calling for him to review the decision on stop the funding cuts to a vital community service.
- **UK Music 'Wish You Were Here' Reception:** I attended the UK Music event hosted by Nigel Adams MP on the contribution of live music to the UK economy. I sang a Karaoke duet with my colleague Paula Sherriff MP and discussed the impact of copyright on the music industry and UK economy.
- **Association of Colleges Gold Awards:** on Wednesday 8 June 2016 I attended the awards which recognises and celebrates the achievements of successful and influential people who have attended further education and sixth form colleges.



Questions

I asked the following questions in the Chamber:

- To the Minister of State for Defence: "In his earlier reply, the Minister mentioned that we have not supplied munitions for a long time. Will he clarify the date when we last supplied munitions?"
- To the Deputy Leader of the House: 'May we have an urgent debate on the Land Registry? Many people are opposed to its privatisation, so may I have an assurance from the Deputy Leader of the House that that will not be sneaked into the planning and infrastructure Bill and the Land Registry therefore sneaked out of the ownership of the British public?'
- Interventions on European Union Referendum (Voter Registration) debate:
"Is it not the case that students who are registering at this time may have been preoccupied with exams and graduation? Is it not wholly reasonable, therefore, if the system has crashed, for the Government to do something about it and extend the time for registration?"
"With the change to individual registration that has not been possible, the figures are that 1 million young people have fallen off the register so it is not a case of registering twice it's not registering at all"
- To the Chancellor of the Exchequer: "To help Welsh businesses, will the Chancellor consider abolishing the Severn crossing tolls in 2018, rather than just halving them?"
- To the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice: one area of reform should be to stop pregnant women having to give birth in prison. I know that the Government are committed to that, but can we consider carrying out a pilot study so that women do not have to give birth in front of unnamed guards?"



Westminster Hall chairing: Debates and Committees:

- E-petition 109702 relating to restricting the use of fireworks.
- NHS England's Action Plan on Hearing Loss and the adult hearing service commissioning framework.