

Christmas Message – View From the House

Christmas is always a time when we think of those of our families and friends who may be away or who are no longer with us.

For those serving in conflict zones, it is always hard for the families left behind. A friend's son and daughter in law have both served in Afghanistan. She counts the days until they return.

And with thoughts of duty and service, I want to clarify that Noor Inayat Khan was one of three women in the Second World War to be awarded the George Cross, all of whom served in the SOE alongside many other women. Strict editing on my part caused the confusion. The same sculptor Karen Newman created Noor's and Violette Szabo's memorials.

Many of you let me know your views about the increase in fuel duty. I voted against this in November. It was not until the Autumn Statement, in December, that the Government decided not to implement the 3p rise in fuel prices. I hope it helps when you visit family and friends over Christmas.

The spirit of compassion will be even more evident this Christmas with the growing numbers of people using food banks. With cuts to welfare benefits, this will affect working families by as much as £534 a year say the Institute of Fiscal Studies. By far the majority of people affected are in work. But the Government is still cutting the rate of tax for the highest earners.

The Church at Junction 10 has coordinated the food bank. Referrals to them are coming from many different sources including the Sure Start Centres which remain at the centre of supporting families.

Let us all remember the innocent children and teachers in Newtown Connecticut who went to school but never returned home. May God comfort their families.

Valerie Vaz MP
16 December 2012