

View from the House

The fall out from the crisis in the steel industry hit Darlaston with the announcement that there will be redundancies at Caparo's Atlas Fastenings on the Heath Road site.

The skilled workforce have been told that there is no further work when the last contract orders are complete. It must be devastating to be doing a good job fulfilling orders only to be told that you and your 121 co-workers have lost your jobs with immediate effect despite administrators indicating they would try to continue trading as a going concern.

This is specialist, skilled manufacturing at the heart of Darlaston's industrial heritage. It is madness for our local and national economy to lose these skills. And so contradictory when the Caparo Group's companies are profitable, that there should not be investment in the subsidiary company.

When I met with the administrators, I stressed it was vital these skills are retained as there are massive infrastructure projects such as HS2 in the pipeline and these skills will be essential. A decision to close seems short-sighted. What is the government doing about the dumping of cheap excess foreign steel products here and in the EU from China and elsewhere? Nothing. It is this and not workforce issues which is causing this crisis.

In parliament opposition debates covered Tax credits and Junior Doctors' contracts. Both remain live issues. Independent experts are clear that many families will be substantially worse off after tax credit cuts. In Walsall South 75% of children live in families receiving Tax Credits. The cuts will affect over 4,900 families. And these are families who are in work.

Junior doctors have been pushed to the brink of taking strike action because the Government will not listen to them. Patient safety is their main concern. It is getting harder to recruit to permanent posts, a similar story with teachers, which means supply or agency staff have to fill the posts pushing up the costs and making continuity of providing the service a challenge.

Traffic congestion on Broadway is already an issue so I was astounded that Walsall Council has granted planning permission for an additional set of traffic lights despite a lack of evidence to justify the decision. I hope the University of Wolverhampton thinks again rather than proceed against residents' wishes.

Finally, there was a great turnout at the Remembrance Sunday Services in the Town Centre and at the Darlaston. We will remember them.

Valerie Vaz MP

7 November 2015.