

View From the House

What a night to remember. Tuesday 27 January will forever be celebrated as the day the Saddlers were in the final of the Johnstone's Paint Cup. The atmosphere inside the sold out Bescot Stadium was fantastic. We defended superbly to earn that place. The players, Dean Smith, all at the Club and the supporters are on the way to Wembley. The Saddlers are raising Walsall's profile nationally: a final in Wembley for the first time in 127 years, hosting UEFA U17 Championship matches, even staging an Elton John concert in June.

Back to earth and Labour forced the Government to agree to 13 conditions to be met before shale gas extraction can take place. These include a requirement for environmental assessment and the need to consult residents on an individual basis.

The Government ignored genuine and legitimate environmental concerns. Issues relating to the protection of national parks, the integrity of the wells, the monitoring of fugitive emissions and public health were disregarded by a Government which opposed further regulation of the industry. Shale gas extraction should only proceed within a framework of robust regulation, comprehensive monitoring and strict enforcement.

I am personally opposed to shale gas extraction in the UK. In my view the focus should be on other safe forms of alternative energy and on achieving a commitment to a 2030 decarbonisation target for the UK power sector. Climate adaptation needs to be a national priority to protect the country from extreme weather caused by climate change.

Health continues to dominate Parliament. At the Health Select Committee inquiry into A & E a trust intimated that NHS Staff have been sometimes working for nothing. I was alarmed when I was told that NHS staff have been coming in early and staying late to help their hospitals cope. It is through the hard work and dedication of NHS staff otherwise the current situation would be a lot worse. This is not acceptable. I asked the Department of Health if they would look into this. At health questions I asked the Secretary of State if he will take steps to ensure that money is reaching A&Es rather than staying with the CCGs.

I was delighted to open the new facilities at Delves Baptist Community Church. It is now accessible to wheelchairs, has a paediatric changing table and counselling room- a wonderful example of improving the lives of those who most need our help.

Valerie Vaz MP

Walsall South.