

### **eNews January 2023**

In January we lost 3 amazing constituents, Katherine Ibbotson, Andrea Stanton and Lem Ibbotson. Their amazing commitment to the life of Walsall South will never be forgotten. Their families are in our hearts and prayers, may they rest in peace.

### **Valerie Objects to Citizens Advice Cuts**



I have written to the Chief Executive of Citizens Advice to raise my concerns about Walsall MBC's budget proposal to cut the funding to Citizens Advice Sandwell & Walsall. The Council propose to remove the £245,000 annual grant in their 2023/24 budget. It is a vital service that is needed now more than ever. I have asked Dame Clare Moriarty to intervene and prevent these proposed cuts 🌀

### **Urgent Question on Channel 4**



On Monday 9 January, Mr Speaker granted an Urgent Question to the Secretary of State for DCMS on the future of Channel 4. I asked the Minister: 'May I ask the Secretary of State: why did right hon. and hon. Members only hear about this U-turn on "Channel 4 News" and why has she not put the package before the House?' The Minister responded: 'We are laying a written ministerial statement today.' An Oral statement should have been made to the House. 🌀

### **Justice Questions**



On 10 January, the Minister was asked what recent progress he has made on tackling the backlog of court cases. I asked: 'Has the Minister seen The Law Society's 5-point plan to get rid of the backlog, including investing in buildings and staff, and properly funding Legal Aid? If he has not, will he sit down with The Law Society? These are the very people at the heart of our justice system.' I am pleased the Minister responded that he is talking with The Law Society. The plan includes keeping cases out of the courtroom, reliable technology and better data collection. 🌀

### **HM Opposition Day: Fair Taxation of Schools**



For the Opposition Day Debate, HM Opposition tabled the motion to establish a new Select Committee to consider how to end tax breaks that private schools enjoy and invest that money in driving up standards across all our state schools. I voted in favour of this motion, which did not pass, Ayes: 197, Noes: 303. 🌀

## **HM Opposition Day: A Long-term Strategy for the NHS**



HM Opposition used an Opposition Day to raise the issue of the Long-term Strategy for the NHS. In my speech I spoke about the Government's mismanagement of the NHS. The motion asked for the Government to recognise the current crisis in the National Health Service. I voted in favour of this motion, which did not pass, Ayes: 176, Noes: 296. An amendment to the motion was passed without opposition. The Opposition abstained. See my website for my speech. Here is the link: <https://www.valerievazmp.co.uk/hm-opposition-day-a-long-term-strategy-for-the-national-health-service/> 🌀

## **Stamp Duty Land Tax**



On 10 January the Commons debated amendments to the Stamp Duty Land Tax (Reduction) Bill which intends to reduce the amount of stamp duty land tax chargeable on the acquisition of residential property. The first amendment removes the relief from stamp duty land tax for second homes. I voted in favour of this motion, which did not pass, Ayes: 184, Noes: 311. The Stamp Duty Land Tax (Temporary Relief) Bill third reading which I voted against was passed, Ayes: 308, Noes: 170. The Bill now goes to the House of Lords. 🌀

## **Valerie meets the Ambassadors.**

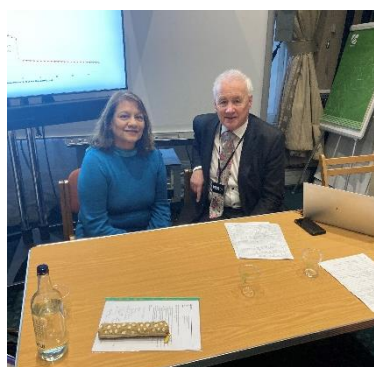


between the UK and Bangladesh 🌀

On 12 January 2023 I met HE Manar Dabbas who serves as Jordan's ambassador to the UK since September 2021. We discussed the Middle East and Refugees. 1 in 2 people in Jordan are of refugee status. I also met with HE Saida Muna Tasneem Ambassador from Bangladesh to discuss the ongoing relationship



## **Valerie Chairs EFL Meeting with MPs**



I was pleased to chair a meeting with Rick Parry, Chairman of the English Football League (EFL), and MPs in the Midlands region. This was the 6th meeting the EFL has had with MPs. The League set out their proposals to every region, there were representatives from Midlands-based football clubs and Rick presented the EFL's plan to make clubs sustainable and not dependent on owner funding. It was concerning to see the increase in value the Premier League has seen and the subsequent widening of the financial gap between the Premier League and the EFL. 🌀



## **Education Questions**



During Education Questions on 16 January 2023, I asked the Minister: 'The Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Bognor Regis and Littlehampton (Nick Gibb), visited Joseph Leckie Academy, which really helped, and I had a good meeting with the heads of Joseph Leckie and Blue Coat Church of England Academies along with my friend the hon. Member for Worcester (Mr Walker). However, the schools still lost out. Will the Secretary of State, or one of her Ministers, meet those two heads and me to find out why on earth they cannot succeed in obtaining funds for vital repairs?'. The Minister agreed to meet with me. 🌀

## **Strikes Minimum Service Bills Second Reading**



The House debated and voted on the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill on 16 January. The Strikes Bill intends to make provision about minimum service levels in connection with the taking by trade unions of strike action relating to certain services. This Bill will prevent public sector workers from making the difficult decision to strike. The House voted on the Second Reading of the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill. I voted against this Motion, which passed, Ayes: 309, Noes: 249. The Bill will now be sent to committee stage. 🌀

## **Valerie Attends Indo-British All Party Parliamentary Group**



On Monday 16 January I attended a private roundtable with the Indo-British All Party Parliamentary Group at the Palace of Westminster with His Excellency the Indian High Commissioner, Shri Vikram K. Doraiswami, who has served in London since September 2022. His Excellency has served as High Commissioner to Bangladesh and as the lead on the new Indo-Pacific Division in the Ministry of External Affairs. We discussed issues relating to the Indian diaspora. I congratulated the High Commissioner on the roll out of E-visas. 🌀

## **My BEIS Question on Post Offices.**



During BEIS Questions on 17 January 2023, I asked the Minister: 'Will the Minister confirm that Post Offices, which are at the heart of our community, will receive support for their energy bills so that they can continue to function for the rest of the community?'. The Minister responded: 'Post Offices, like all non-domestic businesses and institutions, will benefit from the new Energy Price Discount Scheme, which follows the Energy Bill Relief Scheme, as announced by the Chancellor.' 🌀

## **Police Conduct and David Carrick**



The Home Secretary made a statement on misconduct and vetting in the Metropolitan Police Service following the horrific David Carrick case. I asked the Minister: 'Who will be conducting the internal review, when will it report, and will the Home Secretary ensure that previous Metropolitan Police Commissioners will also give evidence to it?' The Minister responded: 'The review will be carried out in a comprehensive and extensive way to command confidence among police officers, members of the public and other stakeholders. I want it to report swiftly.'

## **Support for Students**

Mr Simon Gillies MBE  
Secretary of State for Education  
Secretary's Buildings  
Great Smith Street  
London  
SW6 5RT  
18th January 2023

Dear Secretary of State,

**Student Maintenance Loans**

We are writing to you as a matter of urgency regarding the news that the Government intends to uprate Student Maintenance Loans by only 2.8% in September.

Despite the fact that inflation is set to fall over the coming year, it is currently over 10%, and a 2.8% increase will represent a £1,500 drop in the real terms value of student maintenance loans since 2020/21. This situation is made all the more stark as this below inflation comes after years of cuts to student support.

As the cost of living crisis continues to bite across the UK, students are not immune from these rising costs. According to the National Student Money Survey, student living costs have seen a 18% increase since 2021, with the average student's maintenance loan falling short of covering their living costs by £450 every month in 2022.

This will be disastrous for many low and middle income families. As the amount of Maintenance Loan students receive is means tested against parental income, and the expectation that students will make up the shortfall of their living costs remains, the desperate situation on living standards will have a significant impact on the number of potential students who feel able to take up a place at university. Simply put, many families, and talented and driven young people, will be priced out of Higher Education. Indeed, polling for Universities UK shows 75% of students are concerned about the cost of living, and students are leaving courses due to the unaffordability of their living costs.

Research by the Sutton Trust shows that a student from a lower income background is four times more likely to become socially mobile if they attend university. This decision by the Government, however, is directly causing a loss of social mobility to many young people. Universities themselves recognise the huge potential they offer for social mobility, and in many cases have been increasing the amount of financial support they offer students themselves in the face of Government intransigence.

We cannot allow Higher Education to simply become the preserve of those with the means to pay for it and throw away the life chances of the scores of intelligent and capable young people who need the Government to support them to reach their full potential. We urge the Government to think again, and

I was signatory to a letter to the Education Secretary to ask for further support for students. The Government intends to uprate Student Maintenance Loans by only 2.8% in September. Despite inflation of over 10%, a 2.8% increase will represent a £1500 drop in the real-terms value of loans since 2020/2021. We cannot allow Higher Education to become the preserve of those with the means to pay for it and throw away the life chances of the scores of intelligent and capable young people who need the Government to support them to reach their full potential.

## **Online Safety Bill: Remaining Stages**



On 17 January 2023 all the remaining stages of Online Safety Bill were debated in the House. New Clause 4 would have allowed the industry regulator Ofcom to set minimum standards for service providers' duties relating to the safety of adults, which would be monitored annually. I voted in favour of this Motion, which was not passed, Ayes: 242, Noes: 310. Amendment 43 would have made all safety features provided by service providers on by default for all adult users. I voted in favour of this Motion, which was not passed, Ayes: 237, Noes: 316.

## **EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill**

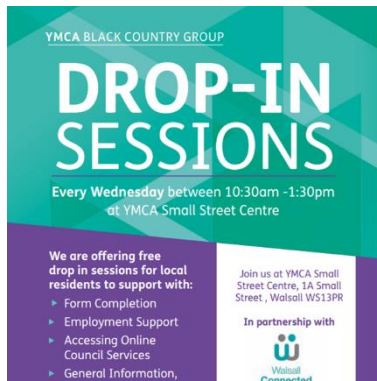


On 18 January 2023, the House considered the Bill. There were 5 votes. The Bill enables the Government to revoke, change or replace EU legislation that was brought into UK domestic law as the UK left the EU, including by introducing a sunset clause that would automatically abolish most retained EU law at the end of 2023. I signed the amendment to the Bill, Clause 36 and voted for it. The amendment requires the Government to publish an exhaustive list of every piece of legislation being revoked under the Sunset Clause, and allow for Parliamentary oversight of the process so the Commons has the final

say. The amendment was not passed, Ayes: 242, Noes: 295.



## **YMCA Black Country Group Drop-in Sessions**



YMCA are offering a service aimed at residents seeking help with form completion, and offering general information, advice, and guidance. The session runs every Wednesday between 10:30am to 1:30pm at the YCMA Small Street Centre, 1a Small Street, Walsall, WS1 3PR. For further information or one-to-one appointments, please contact Jessica Martin on 07706 341613 or via email at [jessica.martin@ymcabc.org.uk](mailto:jessica.martin@ymcabc.org.uk) 🌀

## **Visit to the Launer Factory**



I visited the Launer Factory which has made handbags in Walsall under the Royal Warrant. It was started by Gerald Launer and went on the great success. I was shown around by Gary Barnes the manager of the factory who started there as an apprentice. One handbag can take up to eight hours on average to make. Launer upskill their workforce, some of whom have been working for the company for many years. It is great to see this manufacturing firm in the heart of the Town Centre with a dedicated workforce. Gerald was a musician, and the bags have names of musical terms such as Traviata. 🌀

## **NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Brussels**



On 23 January 2023 I attended a Joint Meeting of the Ukraine-NATO Interparliamentary Council (UNIC) & Sub-Committee on NATO Partnerships (PCNP), as a Member of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA). We were provided with an update on the situation in Ukraine and from Jens Stoltenberg NATO Secretary General. This came on the day the US and Germany committed to send tanks to Ukraine. 🌀

## **Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill**



On 24 and 25 January the House voted for amendments to the Bill which aims to enable Companies House to deliver a better service for over 4 million UK companies and improving the reliability of its data to inform business transactions and lending decisions across the economy. There were 6 votes. New Clause 22 would ensure a person convicted under National Minimum Wage Act not to be appointed as director. I voted in favour of this motion, which was not passed, Ayes: 232, Noes: 296. The Bill passed its third reading move to the House of Lords. 🌀

## **Ukraine Update**



On 26 January 2023 Defence Minister made a statement to the House on plans to send tanks to Ukraine. I asked the Minister: 'Does the Minister agree that we should strongly support the comments of the Secretary-General of NATO when he says that this is an important time to end the Russian tyranny and to remind people that Ukrainians are the victims?' The Minister responded: 'This nation will always stand up for basic principles of international law and justice. 🌀'

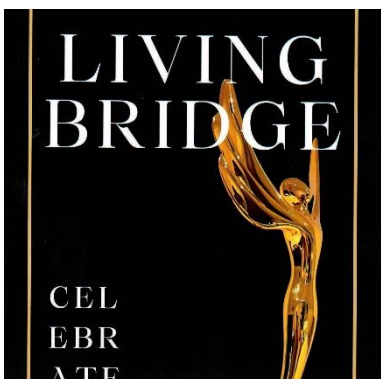
## **Holocaust Memorial Day 2023**



I signed the Holocaust Educational Trust's Book of Commitment, pledging my commitment to HMD and honouring those who were murdered during the Holocaust paying tribute to the extraordinary Holocaust survivors who work tirelessly to educate young people today. I attended the Holocaust Memorial Day Ceremony. Mr Speaker Hoyle, urged people to "learn the lessons of the past". 🌀



## **Valerie celebrates Indian Achievers**



On Thursday 26 January I met the #IndiaUKAchievers to celebrate Indian achievers and 75 years of Indian independence. The National Indian Students and Alumni Union (NISAU) was founded and organised by Sanam Arora. This is to celebrate students who study in the UK and contribute when they return to India. Aditi studied at Loughborough University and is the goalkeeper of the Indian National Football team. She is also the founder of She Kicks Football Academy. 🌀

## **Written Question on Household Support Fund**



I tabled a Written Question to DWP. The Minister responded: "The Household Support Fund is primarily used to meet immediate need including energy and water bills, food, as well as wider related essentials. It is for Local Authorities to decide how they distribute their funding within the parameters of the scheme's guidance and grant determination." As Local Authorities are the distributor of the housing support funding, they should be able to specify to the energy companies that the funds should be used appropriately to pay off the current bills and not the arrears.🌀

## **Walsall v Leicester**



It was a full house, on Saturday 28 January 2023, with an attendance of over 10,000 for the FA Cup clash between Walsall and Leicester a meeting of a Premier League side at the Saddlers in the 4th round of the FA Cup. This was always going to be an exciting encounter as Leicester were winners of the FA Cup in 2021. Walsall missed some chances and defended brilliantly to hold on and did not concede until late in the game. Leicester were lucky. They met a Walsall team who committed 100% but were unlucky not to get a return match. But the tenacity of the Walsall players was great to watch. It was a good game.🌀

## **Valerie Votes on Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill**



On Monday 30 January the House debated amendments to the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill at committee stage. If passed, the Bill would allow the Government to impose requirements for minimum service levels during strikes in six sectors. There were 4 votes. Amendment 1 would preserve existing protections from unfair dismissal, including for an employee who participates in a strike contrary to a work notice under the Bill. I voted in favour of this Motion, which was not passed, Ayes: 246, Noes: 315. The Bill passed its third reading and will now move to its next stage.🌀

## **Urgent and Emergency Care Recovery Plan Statement**





On 30 January 2023 the Health Secretary gave a statement on an Urgent and Emergency Care Recovery Plan. I asked the Minister about vacancies in social care and he will address them. The Minister said there is additional funding, the £500m for this winter. Some of the £500 million is being spent on the workforce, including in social care. I am pleased to hear that the Government is going to address the vacancies in social care funding. I hope that the ICBs and local authorities that need this funding will receive it.🌀

### **Opposition Day**



On Tuesday 31 January 2023 HM Opposition tabled 2 motions for debate: Crime and Neighbourhood Policing and abolishing non-dom status. I voted in favour of the first Motion, which was not passed, Ayes: 195, Noes: 309. In the second part of the Opposition Day Debate, I voted in favour of this Motion, which was not passed, Ayes: 229, Noes: 305.🌀

### **Mahatma Gandhi 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**



An event was held in Parliament Square to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination on 30 January 1948 and Martyrs' Day worldwide. Several tributes were paid throughout the ceremony. We had a minutes' silence to remember the day Gandhiji was assassinated 75 years ago, and I laid a wreath on behalf of Civil Society.🌀