

## **eNews February 2023**

### **UK Infrastructure Bank Bill**



The House voted on amendments to the UK Infrastructure Bank Bill [Lords] on 1 February. The Bill would put the UK Infrastructure Bank on a statutory footing and clarify its powers to lend to local government. There were two votes. New Clause 2 ensures the Bank considers the location and ownership of the businesses it invests in. Amendment 5 would ensure that the Bank's objective to support economic growth includes reducing economic inequalities. I voted in favour of both amendments, which were not passed.🌀

### **Community Art Fair**



On Saturday 4 February 2023 I attended the launch: "Making Art with Local Communities" at the New Art Gallery. Creative Factory was founded in 2015 and are based in Butts Road, WS4 2BL. In 2018, Deb Slade, Ruth Radcliffe and Maxine Hayward opened a community arts workshop venue in an empty hairdresser's shop. They now have 100 attendances per week. The exhibition celebrates the creativity of local groups who benefit from the use of a safe workshop environment. The exhibition was excellent and runs from 4 February to 18 June 2023.🌀

### **Home Office Questions**



At Questions to the Home Secretary on 6 February 2023, I asked the Minister: "A man was stabbed to death outside ASDA in Walsall town centre. An 18-year-old was stabbed to death on Cook Street, Darlaston. What discussions has the Home Secretary had with the new Chief Constable about the serious violent crime in Walsall?" The Minister responded but did not address either case nor whether she would contact the new Chief Constable to discuss the increase in serious violent crime. In 2022 1,937 violence and sexual offences were recorded in the area around the town centre. There were 4,917 offences in the last 3 years total indicating a crime surge during 2022.🌀

## **UK Youth Rocketry**



The UK Youth Rocketry Challenge drop-in event was held on 6 February in the Attlee Suite. The challenge is aimed at students aged 11 – 18 from any secondary schools, colleges, educational facilities, or youth groups to design, build and launch a model rocket with a fragile payload. I met the students from Tonbridge School in Kent who took part in the National Finals for the UK Aerospace Youth Rocketry Challenge 2022. Their flight feedback was very successful, and the team won 1st place in the UK.🌀

## **Urgent Question on NHS Strikes**



For the first time in the dispute, ambulance workers, nurses and physiotherapists walked out together in England. The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care made a statement. I asked the Minister when the Secretary of State for Health met Pat Cullen of the RCN. It is vital to know when the Secretary has met with the RCN as Pat Cullen has asked on numerous occasions to negotiate the pay settlement and end the strikes.🌀

## **Seafarers' Wages Bill**



The House voted on amendments to the Seafarers' Wages Bill on Tuesday 7 February 2023. The Bill makes provision to the remuneration of seafarers who do not qualify for the national minimum wage. New Clause 2 would require the government to publish a report on the implementation and monitoring of the measures contained in the Bill. I voted in favour of this Motion, which was not passed, Ayes: 215, Noes: 274. The Bill will now move to its next stage.🌀

## **Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill**



The House considered the Lords amendments on 7 February and voted on a Motion to disagree with Lords Amendment 10 to the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill which makes provision to freedom of speech and academic freedom in higher education institutions and in students' unions. The amendment provides a definition of "within the law", which qualifies the right to freedom of speech. I voted against this Motion, which was passed, Ayes: 283, Noes: 161.🌀

## **Bescot Stadium Station (BSS) Must Be Accessible**



Member of Parliament for Walsall South



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PRESS INFORMATION – 7 FEBRUARY 2023 – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
**VALERIE VAZ MP CALLS FOR BESCOT STADIUM STATION TO BE ACCESSIBLE**

RT Hon Valerie Vaz MP said:

"I received a response from the Minister to my letter to the Secretary of State for Transport (RT Hon Mark Harper MP) raising the issue of access to Bescot Stadium Station and the Minister responded to say that the nomination period for the next round of stations to receive Access for All funding has now closed, there is no existing centrally funded schemes available and to contact the Mayor of West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and West Midlands Trains (WMT).

I am disappointed by this response on behalf of people with disabilities and parents and have written to Mayor Andy Street CBE WMCA and Ian McConnell Managing Director of WMT.

Disabled access is vital for users of the station and the disabled fans of Walsall FC. This is a breach of the guidance of the Equality Act 2010 provided to all station operators on the standards required to improve access to their services.

Other stations including Perry Barr were upgraded for the Commonwealth Games and there are plans to redevelop Witton Station. Bescot Stadium Station should be on that list."

I received a response from the Minister raising the issue of access to BSSStation. The Minister said that the nomination period to receive Access for All funding has now closed and to contact the Mayor of WMCA and West Midlands Trains (WMT). I am disappointed by this response and have written to Mayor Andy Street CBE WMCA and Ian McConnell Managing Director of WMT. Accessibility is vital for users of the station. This may be a breach of the guidance of the Equality Act 2010 to station operators on standards to improve access to services.🌀

## **President Zelensky Special Visit to Parliament**



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky paid a visit to Parliament and addressed both Houses in Westminster Hall in his first historic visit to the UK. President Zelensky gave The Speaker of the House of Commons, the helmet of a Ukrainian pilot. Written on the helmet were the words: "We have freedom, give us wings to protect it." President Zelensky said, "it is in our power to guarantee with words and deeds that the light side of human nature will prevail."🌀

## **IKEA Creating Affordable and Sustainable Futures**



I was delighted to host a Parliamentary event in the Churchill Room: A Home Makes a Life: IKEA, Creating Affordable, Sustainable Futures. I welcomed the attendees and I spoke about the evolution of IKEA's sustainability over time. IKEA Birmingham in Wednesbury Walsall has won the award for the best global IKEA store. Peter Jelkeby, the Country Retail Manager and Chief Sustainability Officer, gave a speech about IKEA's sustainability achievements and goals for the future.🌀



## **Political and Public Life Awards**



I hosted the 15th Annual Asian Voice Political and Public Life Awards on 2 February 2023 at the Terrace Pavilion. These awards are an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of those who have made a special contribution to our political and public life over the last 12 months by breaking the glass ceiling. This year's roll call of winners includes some of our country's most important senior political figures including Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer and Rt Hon

Penny Mordaunt. All the winners have created a positive impact on British society, in the local communities and the international stage. The evening was a great success and nearly 200 guests including Parliamentarians, diplomats from several Embassies, the Armed Forces, business and community leaders attended 🌀



## **Swap Your Old Stamps**



Remember to swap your stamps before they expire. Barcodes have been added to regular stamps. Regular stamps without a barcode will no longer be valid after 31 July 2023. There is a 6-month grace period from the initial 31 January deadline. You can either use up your non-barcoded stamps before this new deadline or swap them for the new barcoded ones. For further details visit the [Royal Mail website](https://www.royalmail.com), you can download the swapping form or fill out a form to get one sent to you. 🌀

## **NATO Parliamentary Assembly**



I attended a meeting of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Brussels where we reaffirmed our support for Ukraine. There was a wide-ranging discussion. I said that there was an autocratic axis separating Russia and China from us. Frans Timmermans gave the EU view on Climate and Energy. I suggested that there must be an intersectional response that includes climate injustice, health inequality and racial injustice. We need to build an alliance with EU countries. 🌀

### **Education Questions**



During Education Questions on Monday 27 February I asked a question to the Education Secretary about funding for schools in Walsall South. I asked: "A headteacher in one of my schools said that there were material errors in the assessment and review of the infrastructure parts of their bids for funds from the school heating programme. What is the Secretary of State doing to ensure that the bids are properly assessed?" The Minister responded that he will have a meeting with me and the schools to discuss this.🌀

### **World Book Day 2023**



World Book Day is celebrated on Thursday 2 March 2023. World Book Day changes children's lives through a love of books and reading. Their mission is to promote reading for pleasure, offering every child the opportunity to have a book of their own. I acted as the dedicated Parliamentary Champion and attended the World Book Day Event in Parliament on Tuesday 28 February. I also tabled an Early Day Motion which draws attention to this fantastic initiative which has drawn cross-party signatures.🌀