

eNews March 2023

Valerie Visits Old Church C of E Primary School



I was delighted to visit Old Church C of E Primary School in Darlaston and to speak to the School Council on Friday 3 March to mark World Book Day 2023. I was welcomed by Mrs D Clacy the head teacher and we climbed aboard the School Bus Library. I gave the children the books that were donated by the Publishers Association and we talked about what they like to read. The children dressed up on 2 March in their favourite character.🌀

World Book Day



World Book Day is celebrated on 2 March 2023 and changes children's lives through a love of books and reading, offering every child and young person the opportunity to have a book of their own. I was pleased to pick up a handful of books to give to one of the schools in Walsall South. I tabled an Early Day Motion which draws attention to this initiative and which has received cross-party signatures. My thanks to the Publishers Association for providing the books.🌀

Valerie Celebrates New Walsall Urgent Care Centre



After a campaign and lobbying the Government since 2014, I am delighted to see that the Walsall Urgent and Emergency care centre is open. The new two-storey development at Walsall Manor Hospital will significantly improve emergency care facilities and capacity, and it will offer almost 5,000 square metres of additional clinical space. This is a long-awaited project pressing Ministers since 2014 to secure this vital funding for the Manor Hospital.🌀

Valerie Supports Fight Against Walsall Crime



Serious violent crime has increased in Walsall. I met with the Police and Crime Commissioner Simon Foster and Chief Superintendent Phil Dolby on 17 March to discuss the recent murders and crime on Milton Street. Jack Lowe, Bailey Atkinson and Akeem Francis-Kerr were murdered in and around the town centre. On Milton Street, I was told there are prostitutes and drug dealing—shopkeepers are saying they are tired of seeing young people with money in their pockets. I met shopkeepers in Milton Street on Saturday 25 March to discuss their concerns.🌀

BBC Midlands Politics



On 26 March 2023 I was a guest on BBC Midlands Politics with host Elizabeth Glinka and Conservative MP for Mid Worcestershire Nigel Huddleston. The topics for discussion were the cost of living crisis, the National Express West Midlands bus drivers' strike, and the introduction of photo ID as a requirement to vote. The Government has a poor track record on cost of living issues and failed to address these problems in the recent Budget when it gave a pensions handout to the 1%.🌀

Valerie Speaks in the Budget Debate



The Chancellor of the Exchequer set out the Government's Budget on 15 March 2023. The Budget was followed by four days of debate on the Budget Resolutions. Each day of debate covers a different policy area. I made a speech to the House on Tuesday 21 March 2023. A link to my speech in full: [Budget Resolutions and Economic Situation - Hansard - UK Parliament](#) 🌀

Royal Society of Chemistry Demonstration Event



On International Women's Day I hosted the Royal Society of Chemistry drop-in event in Parliament in the Jubilee Room. Dr Sophia Mitchell from Lab Tots demonstrated a series of fun experiments and many MPs took part in the event including the Science Minister George Freeman MP. I have hosted this event many times and it is exciting to see the experiments. I spoke about the value of science and how crucial it is to champion the inclusion and involvement of women in science.🌀



Marie Curie Great Daffodil Appeal 2023

Marie Curie is the leader in end-of-life experience in the UK and I attended their drop-in event. Marie Curie offers expert care across the UK in people's own homes and in our nine hospices. Last year Marie Curie provided direct support to more than 66,000 people. I am pictured here with healthcare assistant Danielle and Marie Curie ambassador and actor Jane Horrocks.🌀

Social Housing (Regulation) Bill



The House voted on amendments to the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill [Lords] at the Report stage on 1 March 2023. The Government intends to strengthen the regulatory regime to change the behaviour of social housing landlords to focus on the tenants' needs. Amendment 40 would ensure that the regulator is required to carry out regular inspections of every registered provider. I voted in favour. The Bill was not passed, Ayes: 180, Noes: 276. The Bill passed its Third Reading. The House of Lords will now consider the amendments.🌀

Energy Bill Support Scheme (EBSS)



The EBSS Alternative Fund is now open. There is a portal for 900,000 additional households to apply for £400 payments towards energy bills. The scheme applies to those not receiving an automatic discount, such as: wholly or partially funded care home residents, homes on heat networks, residents of park homes, tenants in certain private and social rented homes and more. To apply follow the link: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-energy-bill-support-if-not-automatic>, or contact the service directly: Tel: 0808 1753 287.🌀

Health Questions



On 7 March I asked a question to the Health Secretary about the recruitment and retainment of doctors in the NHS: "As well as recruiting doctors, how do we retain doctors? A doctor in my constituency says that at the end of the day he takes home £100 a week. That is less than a decorator. What are the Government doing about retaining good doctors like my constituent?" The Minister did not detail the steps being taken to give doctors a decent wage.🌀

Sue Ryder Empty Chair Exhibit



I visited the 'Empty Chair' exhibit sponsored by my colleagues Peter Dowd MP and Tobias Ellwood MP. It aims to equip the nation with the knowledge and tools to meet grief with warmth and acceptance, instead of shying away from open conversations. Building awareness of bereavement and grief, creating conversations about how we can better support one another. Empty chairs around a dining table are a visual representation of someone who has died and the place setting was surrounded with items important to them.🌀

International Rescue Committee (IRC) International Women's Day



IRC hosted an event for International Women's Day to raise awareness that women are in the best position to lead during crises and prevent gender-based violence but too often their organisations are shut out of the humanitarian response. With the publication of its Women and Girls Strategy, now is the time for the UK to stand with women leading in crisis. Their three-point plan is: effective investment, enabling leadership and equitable partnership.🌀

Illegal Migration Bill



The House voted on amendments to this Bill. The purpose of the Bill is to prevent and deter unlawful migration, and in particular migration by unsafe and illegal routes, by requiring the removal of people who enter or arrive in the UK in breach of immigration control. There were 4 votes. I voted against the Money resolution which passed Ayes: 310 Noes: 246. The Bill passed its second reading and will now move to its next stage.🌀

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Questions



At FCDO Questions I asked the Minister about other British Nationals who are still detained in Iran. I asked: "British Nationals Morad Tahbaz and Mehran Raoof still remain incarcerated in Iran. What is the Foreign Secretary going to do to bring them home?" The Minister said this work remains a priority for the UK. I hope that the Government can successfully bring Morad Tahbaz and Mehran Raoof home to their families.🌀

Ikea and Shelter 'Real Life Roomsets'



I visited IKEA Birmingham in Wednesbury on Friday 17 March 2023 to meet Deputy Market Manager Viraj Desai and Deputy Store Sales Manager Marek Krol. IKEA and its national charity partner, Shelter, launched 'Real Life Roomsets' to raise awareness of the housing emergency in the UK. The campaign highlights the real living conditions of those who are forced into temporary accommodation. This roomset in IKEA Wednesbury/Birmingham was 'Claire's story'.🌀

Visit from Members of Ukrainian Parliament



I attended a meeting with Parliamentarians from Ukraine on 14 March 2023. The meeting was chaired by John Howell MP (Henley) under the auspices of the Council of Europe. We discussed possible crimes of aggression by Russia. I have tabled two Written Parliamentary Questions to the Attorney General to obtain further information on the Special Tribunal in Ukraine and War Crimes and what help Ukraine needs as this was stressed at the meeting.🌀

Budget Motion Vote



On Tuesday 21 March, on the final day of the Budget debate, the House was asked to agree the Budget resolutions. There were two votes. I voted against this Motion, which was passed, Ayes: 330, Noes: 233. On Budget Motion no. 36: Alcohol Duty, that provision may be made for charging a duty of excise on alcoholic products that are produced in, or imported into, the United Kingdom, we abstained on the second vote. The Budget Motion was passed, Ayes: 321, Noes: 64.🌀

Windsor Framework SI



The Government announced that it would introduce secondary legislation to implement the Stormont Brake in the form of a Statutory Instrument (SI). A Motion to approve the Windsor Framework Statutory Instrument was put to the House on 22 March. The Windsor Framework comes after two years of negotiations between the EU and the UK since the Northern Ireland Protocol came into force in January 2021. I voted in favour of this Motion, which was passed, Ayes: 515, Noes: 29.🌀

British Heart Foundation



On Wednesday 22 March 2023 I joined The BHF in Parliament to learn CPR with RevivR which is a free online tool which teaches CPR in 15 minutes – and all you need is a phone and a cushion. It will teach you how to recognise a cardiac arrest and give you live feedback. There are over 30,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests every year in the UK and tragically, less than one in ten people survive. I would encourage everyone to learn this life saving skill.🌀

Public Order Bill Lords Amendments



The House voted on the Lords Amendments 6B to 6F to the Public Order Bill on Wednesday 22 March 2023. The Bill provides the police with greater powers to respond to disruptive protests. The Lords amendments would limit powers to stop and search based on a senior police officer's view that an offence related to protesting may be committed in a certain area for a maximum of 24 hours. I voted against this Motion, which was passed, Ayes: 297, Noes: 229.🌀

Feargal Sharkey and the Sewage Scandal



On 22 March 2023 I met clean river campaigner Feargal Sharkey in Parliament to discuss the Tory sewage scandal. Sharkey said "that the whole system has become completely dysfunctional." Water companies have spent almost six million hours dumping sewage into the environment, degrading our rivers, decimating our beaches, laying waste to some of the most pristine landscapes – and all of that while paying out £72bn in dividends since privatisation. As a member of the Environmental Audit Committee and signed the report on Water Quality in Rivers.

Justice Questions



At Justice Questions on 28 March 2023 I asked the Minister about HM Courts and Tribunals Service's paused Reform Program. The program has cost £1.6bn since 2016 to modernise the courts system. I asked what the next steps will be. The Minister did not provide an adequate response to my question. 🌀

The Dog Control Coalition Drop-In



I met with Emma Whitfield on 28 March 2023, the mother of ten-year-old Jack Lis who was fatally attacked by a dog in Caerphilly in November 2021. The Dog Control Coalition held a drop-in event in Parliament. It was attended by the RSPCA, the Dogs Trust and other dog behaviourist organisations. Emma hopes to build raise awareness and cross-party consensus on the introduction of more appropriate and effective dog legislation, which is currently complex.🌀

Classical Music Debate



On 29 March 2023 I spoke in a debate in the Commons on Classical Music: Funding and Support. I spoke about the impact of different forms of classical music on my life and development. I spoke about the importance of access to classical music in children's learning and education. The UK hosts a major festival, the Proms, which is a magnet for international artists.🌀

The Merchant Shipping (Fire Protection) Regulations

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

2023 No. 365

MERCHANT SHIPPING

The Merchant Shipping (Seamen's Documents) (Amendment) Regulations 2023

Made - - - - at 9.50 a.m. on 27th March 2023
Laid before Parliament at 3.00 p.m. on 27th March 2023
Coming into force - - 1st May 2023

I sat on the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments for the Merchant Shipping (Fire Protection) Regulations. These regulations implement amendments to Chapter II-2 in the Annex to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (1974), relating to fire protection, fire detection and fire extinction. I raised a question on section 5(d) which relates to the application of the regulations to fishing vessels. The Regulations will come into force on 1 May 2023.🌀

Illegal Migration Bill Vote



The House voted on amendments to the Illegal Migration Bill over the course of two days. There were 3 votes on 27 March and 5 votes on 28 March 2023. New Clause 24 seeks to add a requirement for the Secretary of State to provide safe and legal routes for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children with close family members in the UK. I voted in favour of this Motion, which was not passed, Ayes: 248, Noes: 301. The Bill will now move to its next stage in the process, Report stage.🌀

Finance (No.2) Bill Vote



The House voted on the Finance (No.2) Bill on Wednesday 29 March. Following the Spring Budget 2023 the Finance (No.2) Bill 2022-23 was published on 23 March 2023. The Motion declines to give the Bill a Second Reading. I voted in favour of this Motion, which was not passed, Ayes: 211, Noes: 289. The Bill was read a second time.🌀

Trophy Hunting



On 17 March 2023 the Commons voted in support of the Hunting Trophies (Import Prohibition) Bill on its Third Reading. The Bill will ban the import of body parts as hunting trophies from 6000 species, including lions, elephants, and giraffes. A report by the International Fund for Animal Welfare in 2016 found that at least 1.7 million animal “trophies” were traded between countries over the previous decade. Of this number, 200,000 trophies were from threatened species. The Bill has now been sent to the House of Lords for its 2nd reading.🌀