

eNews

from Rt Hon Valerie Vaz MP

April 2023

Bentley & Darlaston North - Darlaston South - Pleck - Palfrey - Paddock - St. Matthew's - Pheasey Park Farm



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I hope everyone had a peaceful Easter. Parliament sat from 1-16 and 24-30 April



Vaisakhi Celebrations in Walsall



The Vaisakhi Festival took place with a procession on Sunday 16 April from the Gurdwara in Caldmore to the Gurdwara in Wellington Street, Pleck. Vaisakhi is one of the most important events in the Sikh Calendar and marks the birth of the Khalsa, a community of initiated Sikhs that keep a physical identity and follow the principles laid down in April 1699 by Guru Gobind Singh, the 10th Sikh Guru. Gurbani (Hymns) is sung, langar (free food) is served and there are displays of Sikh martial arts. The marchers are offered refreshments. ☺

Valerie Visits Palfrey Junior School



I visited Palfrey Junior School and met Cheryl Collis, Head of School, Angela Hill and Emily Kinsey to see the traffic issues occurring outside school when parents drop their children off and pick them up. There is a traffic regulation in place which prevents cars from coming down Dale Street, during a very restricted time in the morning. Children are encouraged to walk to school and we discussed the traffic regulations. I have written to the Council to ask about repainting the yellow lines, the possibility of a camera and to lower the signs so that drivers can see the restrictions. We also discussed the issues around the Ofsted inspections and the poor state of the building opposite the school ☺

New Library at Hillary Primary School



I was delighted to be at the opening of the new school library at Hillary Primary School on Monday 24 April. It was a beautifully organised space which was built by the firm Peters. I bought 30 books published by the Book Trust and donated them to the school library. I bought them from a small independent book shop. I also donated a reference book on classical music. The whole school gathered in the hall and Mrs Taylor the Head explained the background to the Library. The Mayor, helped by me cut the large red bow at the door of the Library. The children were so enthusiastic about this to have this wonderful space and I hope this encourages and supports all the children as they go through school. The Library will be important for their reading, learning and their enjoyment which they will take with them throughout their lives.🌀

Blue Coat Primary School



I visited Blue Coat Primary School on Friday 21 April. I asked the Head Mr Orlick to draft a motion to debate and I would act as the Speaker, the moderator of the Debate. The motion debated was "Should there be free school meals for all pupils." The debate was opened by a proposer and a seconder and then responded to by the opposer and a seconder against the motion. The debate was opened up to the floor and a number of pupils made contributions. The standard of debate was excellent. I showed the pupils how we voted in the Commons. The Ayes to the Right and the Noes to the left. The pupils voted by passing the tellers who counted the votes and announced it to me. Ayes:8 Noes:2.

Finance (No.2) Bill Day 1



The House debated and voted on amendments to the Finance (No.2) Bill as the Committee of the Whole House on 2 days, 18 and 19 April 2023. There were 3 votes on Tuesday 18 April. New Clause 3 would require the Chancellor to conduct a review of business taxes, and to make recommendations on how to increase certainty and investment, before the next Finance Bill is published. I voted in favour of this Motion, which was not passed, Ayes: 233, Noes: 302.🌀

Finance (No.2) Bill Day 2



On Day 2 of the Finance (No.2) Bill, Wednesday 19 April, there were 2 votes. New Clause 5 requires the Chancellor to review the impact of the tax-free pension allowance changes and to recommend an alternative approach targeted at NHS doctors. I voted in favour of this Motion, which was not passed, Ayes: 218, Noes: 294. The Bill will now move to the next stage in the process.🌀

The Wholesale Stars Awards 2023



I attended the Skills, Training and Apprenticeship awards (the Wholesale Stars) which were held in Parliament on April 18. The awards celebrated and employees who are investing in developing their skills through apprenticeships, training or academic study, with the support of their employer. Shadow Business and Industry Minister Bill Esterson MP presented the awards. AF Blakemore in Darlaston won an award. It was an excellent event and the winners were all very worthy of their recognition and praise.🌀

HM Opposition Day: Water Quality (Sewage Discharge)



On Tuesday 25 April HM Opposition tabled a Motion for debate on Water Quality (Sewage Discharge). On World Water Day on 22 March, I met former Undertones lead singer and environmental campaigner Feargal Sharkey a very vocal campaigner in support of the plan to clean up the 'Tory sewage scandal'. We pushed for a vote in the House to force the Government into tackling the sewage dumping by water companies. The Labour Motion would give the Opposition control of the business in the chamber to produce a Water Quality (Sewage Discharge) Bill. An amendment tabled by the Government was passed, Ayes: 290, Noes: 188.🌀

HM Opposition Day: Cost of Living Increases



In the second part of the Opposition Day Debate, on HM Opposition tabled a Motion on the Cost of Living Increases. The text of the Motion includes: That this House condemns successive Conservative Governments for their mismanagement of the economy over 13 years; regrets that this has resulted in the UK being the only G7 economy that is still smaller than before the pandemic, with squeezed wages and higher mortgage rates that have increased costs by £500 a month for some households. I voted in favour of the Motion, which was not passed, Ayes: 214, Noes: 288.🌀



Affordable Homes Programme Debate

I attended a Westminster Hall Debate on the Affordable Homes Programme on Tuesday 25 April led by Tan Singh Dhesi MP (Slough.) I intervened to raise housing issues that my constituents in Walsall South are facing. I asked the Minister if the Government could make it obligatory for all new builds to have solar panels. Many of my constituents are struggling to find affordable homes. Housing associations must have the freedom to build houses and councils should include more affordable homes. 🌀

Vaisakhi in The House



I attended the British Sikh Consultative Forum (BSCF) Vaisakhi event in Parliament on 25 April 2023. It was hosted by Jane Stevenson MP and Pat McFadden MP. The event was supported by Keir Starmer MP, Preet Gill MP, Tan Singh Dhesi MP and Michael Gove MP. We heard from speakers from the Sikh community. Vaisakhi has been celebrated in Parliament for many years and it was another fantastic celebration this evening. 🌀

Urgent Question on Voter ID



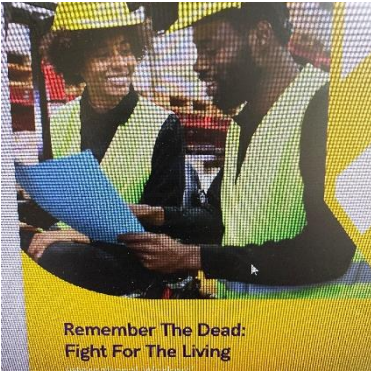
An UQ was granted to ask the Sec of State for Levelling Up, Housing, Communities on arrangements to record the number of voters who attend at a polling station and are denied a vote because they are not in possession of valid ID. Polling station staff will be recording details of anyone turned away for the evaluation of the policy. I asked the Minister when the data will be published and could she ensure it is published within 28 days of the 4 May. The Minister said that the Government will be publishing a number of reports, the first will be published no later than November 2023 and the data collected will be a significant part of that evaluation. 🌀

APPG on Children in Police Custody



The All Party Parliamentary Group on Children in Police Custody held an evidence session in Parliament on Tuesday 25 April 'Hearing from Children and Young People with Experience of Police Custody and Strip Search', which I attended. The purpose of the session is for members of the APPG CPC to hear evidence from children and young people with experience of police custody and or strip search. The session provided an opportunity for their voices to be heard directly by Parliamentarians on their experiences. Their evidence will also inform the APPG CPC's Inquiry into Achieving the Rights of Children in Police Custody. 🌀

International Worker's Memorial Day



Workers' Memorial Day is the day when the International Labour Movement remembers those who have been killed or injured in workplace accidents and those who have died from occupational diseases. The event started in North America in 1986 and has been supported by Usdaw since 1995. The Day is now a global event and is officially recognised by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and by the International Trade Union Movement (ITUC).🌀
