

eNews

from Rt Hon Valerie Vaz MP

July/August 2023



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

Breaking News: Chapel Lane Battery Storage Appeal withdrawn

I am delighted to report that Anesco have withdrawn their appeal to build a battery storage set for the end of August. The campaign to object to this started at a meeting I held with Beacon Action Group in November 2021. Over 300 people objected and is a tribute to everyone community residents and Groups. It was not safe and should never have been considered for the Green Belt. This is a tribute to a strong local campaign. 🌀

NHS Long-term Workforce Plan Announced



On 3 July 2023, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care presented the NHS Long-Term Workforce Plan. I asked the Secretary of State: "What is the point of a workforce plan if the Secretary of State is not actually talking to the workforce? When will he talk to the junior doctors and the consultants?" The Secretary said he had settled with the NHS. I indicated dissent as he has not spoken to Junior Doctors and the Consultants who are striking again. 🌀

Prize Evening at Blue Coat Academy



Blue Coat Church of England Academy held their Summer Prize Evening at St Matthews Church on Thursday 13 July 2023. The Principal, Mr Smith, who took over the school in September 2016 and introduced the proceedings. I was asked to give a speech and hand out certificates. The Church was filled with parent, carers and pupils. I handed out Achievement and Merit certificates to the students. We also heard outstanding music interludes from the choir. Revd Jim Trood closed the proceedings with a prayer. 🌀

Parliament Week at Delves Junior School



On Friday 7 July, I visited Delves Junior School, Bell Lane during Parliament Week, an occasion for pupils to learn about local and national politics. As the MP for Walsall South, I had the pleasure to speak to the pupils about my work in Parliament and in the constituency. The Hall was packed and I answered questions and visited other classrooms to answer more questions. Ms Amundee Bains has organised great events and I wish her well in her new post. 🌀

Education Questions and Statement on Higher Education



At Education Questions on Monday 17 July, I asked: "The Secretary of State told the media at the weekend that she had found the money for the pay settlement from an underspend in the Department. Can she tell the House exactly where she found the money and what policies have not been delivered?". Later, during the Higher Education Reform Statement, I asked "May I ask the Secretary of State, because she has not actually spelt this out, could she define what is a low-value degree?". She answered by saying it depends on whether students continue their degree, complete their degree, and get a job or progress into higher education. It is not clear what this has to do with education.🌀

Great School Libraries with Michael Rosen



On 6 July I met the FAB Michael Rosen at the Great School Library Drop-in hosted by Margaret Greenwood, MP Wirral West. Michael is a well-known author of books for children such as Chocolate Cake, We're Going on a Bear Hunt; Sad Book; Little Rabbit Foo Foo. Michael was there to promote Great School Libraries which campaigns to bring Libraries and access to Librarians back to every school in the UK. Michael Rosen is a former Children's Laureate. I pledged my support to this campaign. In Walsall South, we have lost Pleck Library and I will work to ensure there are libraries for everyone.🌀

Celebrating 75 Years of our NHS



I celebrated our NHS on its 75th birthday on 5 July 2023 by signing a giant Birthday card. This is a reminder of how long the NHS has been in all our lives. We wish the NHS many Happy returns and look forward to many more. As Nye Bevan the founder of the NHS said "The NHS will last as long as there are folk left with the faith to fight for it".🌀

Flooding on St Michael's Street Car Park



St Michael's Street Car Park regularly floods. I have written to Walsall Council and was told that the main drain near the pavement is frequently blocked owing to oil and fats being discharged into the gully. Three of the four recent inspections have identified a build-up of oil and fats which cause the blockage. I have also written to Severn Water to follow up on checks on the main sewer. A maintenance crew will re-attempt jetting and cleansing works. Repair works may still be required if the gully or connection pipe into the main sewer has been damaged.🌀

The draft Environmental Protection Regulations 2023



The Draft Environmental Protection (England) Regulations 2023 restricts the supply of single-use plastic plates, bowls, and trays and bans the supply of single-use plastic cutlery, balloon sticks and expanded and extruded polystyrene food and drink containers, including cups. This SI applies to England only, environmental protection is a devolved matter. I asked the Minister "Will she say whether local authorities, which are broadly the enforcers of the measure, will be given extra resources?". She said £660,000 are to be given. I am pleased Local authorities are supported with extra funds to support this enforcement.🌀

NHS Parkrun 75th Birthday



On 5 July I and other MPs took part in the Parkrun to mark the NHS's 75th birthday. The event was hosted by Nick Smith MP, Chair of APPG Parkrun, of which I am a member. MPs ran or walked around St James's Park. Parkrun started in 2004 with just 13 runners and 5 volunteers in London's Bushy Park. Events now take place in more than 2,200 locations in over 20 countries around the world. Parkrun, is a UK-based global health and wellbeing charity, encourages everyone to move together, outdoors, by walking, jogging, running, or volunteering.🌀

Prime Minister of Yemen



I met the Prime Minister of Yemen, Maeen Abdulmalik Saeed, on 28 June 2023 with members of the APPG for Yemen and discussed the current situation in the country. Whilst the peace is still holding, more humanitarian aid is needed and accountability for some areas that are under the control of other groups. We agreed elections have to be held and there are ongoing discussions. So far the fragile peace is holding.🌀

Portugal All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG)



The APPG on Portugal met the President of the Assembly of the Republic of Portugal, Augusto Santos Silva on Wednesday, 12 July 2023 with other members of the delegation. President Santos Silva is an experienced Socialist Party MP and former Foreign Minister. Meeting delegations such as with Portugal's President of the Assembly and Members of Parliament enable us to discuss issues that are important to both countries such as trade and culture.🌀

The Shark Fin Act 2023



On Wednesday, 12 July, I attended a celebration of Christina Rees MP's Ten Minute Rule Bill to prohibit the import and export of shark fins and to make provisions relating to the removal of fins from sharks. I was a co-sponsor of the Bill and sat on the Bill Committee. The Bill received Royal Assent on 19 June 2023. 20 Kg of shark meat could be imported. Now it is zero. It is wonderful to see this become law. The campaigners have also asked Mary Berry to remove a recipe using shark fin from a cookery book. It has been removed.🌀

Illegal Migration Bill Votes



On the evening of Tuesday, 11 July, I voted 18 times against the Government's Illegal Migration Bill. The House of Lords put forward 18 amendments to the bill which was debated and then voted on. In the course of over 5 and a half hours, the Government disagreed with every amendment and made amendments to those made by the House of Lords.🌀

Opposition Day Debates: Mortgages and Rental Costs; Repurposing Russian Assets



HM Opposition Day on Tuesday 27 June 2023 debated two motions: 'Mortgage and Rental Costs' and 'Repurposing Russian Assets to Rebuild Ukraine'. The motion that "this House is extremely concerned that, under this Conservative Government, average mortgage costs will be increasing by £2,900 per year". This motion was defeated by 213 to 288. On Repurposing Russian Assets to Rebuild Ukraine the Labour Member for Tottenham, Mr David Lammy, moved the motion that "this House condemns Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine; stands in solidarity with Ukrainians in their resistance to Russia's invasion of their sovereign state". This motion was agreed to without a vote.🌀

Institute of Physics Drop-in



The IOP held a drop in at Parliament on 5 July 2023 to highlight a manifesto for change the 'Limit Less' campaign and how it supports young people from underrepresented groups to enjoy physics. I spoke to teachers and students about their experiences of diversity and inclusion in their schools. The campaign is aimed at groups who might otherwise not pursue physics owing to misconceived ideas about physics and stereotypes. Too often young people are told physics isn't for them owing to gender, ethnicity or disabilities, and the 'Limit Less' campaign aims to change that, making physics inclusive.🌀

Arts Council Event



The Arts Council together with Creative Black Country (CBC) which covers Walsall held a drop-in event to promote their 'Creative People and Places' programme, which is designed to help people take part in creative and cultural events specific to their local area and community. Creative People and Places fund 8 projects across the Midlands. CBC work with the local community in Walsall to explore and develop new creative projects and regularly works alongside local experienced creatives and specialists.🌀

Illegal Migration Bill returns to the Commons



On Monday 17 July 2023, the Commons considered further amendments to the Bill from the Lords. Nine amendments were debated. All of the Lords amendments were voted down. I supported many amendments that ensured the Bill is consistent with international law, that is protects unaccompanied children, LGBT asylum seekers, and victims of trafficking. The Bill returned to the Lords but no further changes were made before Royal Assent on 20 July 2023.🌀

Visit England/Visit Britain



On Tuesday 18 July 2023 I dropped into an event Visit Britain to show the UK's rich heritage and show the diverse attractions the UK has to offer. Visit Britain has taken an innovative approach through its captivating advertising campaign, 'See Things Differently.' With a play on Britain's love for tea, the campaign intends to draw in visitors from abroad. I am with Patricia Yates, CEO Visit Britain (L) and Nick de Bois CBE, Chair, British Tourist Authority (R).🌀



FIFA Women's World Cup



On 3 July 2023, I attended the reception hosted by the Football Association and Tracey Crouch MP ahead of the FIFA Women's World Cup. Gillian Keegan MP, Education Secretary and Lucy Frazer KC MP, Culture, Media, and Sport Secretary spoke about and supported the inclusion of more girls and women in football. Ellen White, a record goal scorer for the England Women's Team, spoke about the need to involve more girls in football which is part of the FA's campaign to Let Girls Play. I signed the card to wish the Lionesses 'Good luck'.🌀

