

eNews

from Rt Hon Valerie Vaz MP

October 2023



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

NATO Parliamentary Assembly 6-9 October 2023 Copenhagen



I attended the 69th Annual Session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Copenhagen with a cross-party delegation from the Commons and the Lords. We met the UK Ambassador, Emma Hopkins, to discuss issues relating to Denmark. We heard from Lars Rasmussen, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Denmark, Colonel Maksym Suprun, former Commander of the Ukrainian 66th Mechanised Brigade, Mr Søren Gade, Speaker of the Folketing (Denmark's Parliament), Ms Mette Frederiksen, the Prime Minister of Denmark, Deputy Secretary General of NATO, Mircea Geoana, and Mr Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine. 🌀

Old Church Primary School



On 11 October, I visited Old Church Primary School to meet Mrs Clacy and parents, to discuss the traffic flow on Willenhall Street following the accident involving 2 schoolgirls. I watched the school-run traffic on Willenhall Street, discussing measures we could implement to create a safer walking space for the children. I was pleased to see a Crossing assistant in place. I have written to the local authority about safety measures, such as erecting a barrier to stop cars from driving over the pavement, speed signs to be installed, and signs that show there is a school nearby, as well as a zebra/signal-controlled crossing. 🌀

Association of Convenience Stores Event (ACS)



I met my constituent from ONE Stop Darlaston (left) which is a thriving Post Office run by Peter and Pam. There are always customers using the Post Office and Store. I attended the ACS Event in Parliament on Tuesday, 17 October 2023 to celebrate the stores, people, and services of our convenience sector. Small Business Minister, Kevin Hollinrake, gave a speech at the event and presented the winner of the Raj Aggarwal Trophy for outstanding community retailing to Linda Williams of Broadway Convenience. Local convenience stores provide local, secure, and flexible jobs to over 437,000 people as well as vital services. 🌀

Petition to make Bescot Stadium Station accessible



On Tuesday, 24 October, I presented a petition with 474 signatures to urge the Government to recognise the need for lifts at Bescot Stadium Station to make it accessible and to work with the appropriate body such as Network Rail. The petition has been forwarded to the Department for Transport and it should receive a response within 2 months of the petition being presented. I will be meeting with Network Rail shortly. 🌀

Interview on BBC Politics Midlands



I was one of the guests on BBC Politics Midlands on Sunday, 29 October 2023, with the WMCA Mayor, Andy Street, and the PCC, Simon Foster, presented by Rob Mayor. The topics of discussion were scrapping of the second leg of HS2. The new power of the Mayor to take on the role of PCC, which I said is handing Simon Foster his P45, is undemocratic. Shaun Bailey MP suggested binning Sandwell Council, I said Shaun Bailey himself will be binned at the next election. 🌀

Education Questions



I was called for Education Questions at Number 15, and I asked: "What steps she is taking to improve support for children with special educational needs in Walsall South constituency." The Minister for Children answered questions together, to which I followed up by asking: "There is a crisis in funding for SEND in Walsall South. In Old Church Primary, 78 pupils have special needs, which is 19% of the school total. How can the Minister target the funding to the schools that really need it? Does he agree that when Ofsted inspects, it should take into account children with special needs in schools such as Old Church so that these are mitigating factors?" 🌀

My letter to the Foreign Secretary on Israel and Gaza



I wrote to the Foreign Secretary, Rt Hon James Cleverly MP, to "express my deep concern at the continuing violence and humanitarian crisis in Gaza and Israel, which is shared by many of my constituents who have contacted me. The deaths and injuries of hundreds of civilians at the al-Ahli al-Arabi Hospital in Gaza is another demonstration that innocent civilians are bearing the brunt of hostilities." I asked the Government to ensure international humanitarian law is upheld, UK prioritises aid to support humanitarian needs in Gaza, humanitarian corridors such as through Rafah, that the UK works with governments in the region to help secure the release of all hostages, and that the peace process between Palestine and Israel becomes a priority for UK foreign policy. 🌀

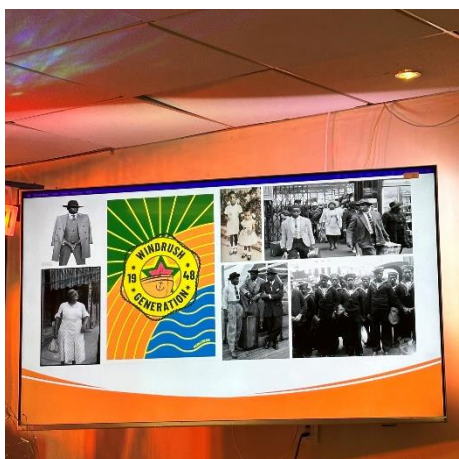
Petition to keep DVLA contract with Post Office Ltd



I presented a petition on Wednesday, 25 October on behalf of residents who are concerned that post offices will no longer provide customers with access to DVLA services. The petitioners request that the Government recognise the importance of DVLA services remaining accessible from post offices, and to renew the contract with Post Office Ltd so that customers have a choice of in-person or online renewal. The petition has been forwarded to the Department for Transport.



Walsall Black Sisters Collective AGM



I attended the WBSC AGM on Friday, 27 October, at the Lighthouse on Caldmore Road. The AGM celebrated the achievements and progress of WBSC over the past 12 months, and the Chair shared the exciting plans for the forthcoming year. We listened to the history of the Windrush generation and a spoken performance by Derrion Thompson. The WBSC provides community activities to empower and develop deprived communities from various ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds in Walsall; addressing inequality and bringing long-lasting change to encourage community cohesion, cultural respect and a diverse community to be proud of.



Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill (Lords Amendments) votes



The Bill was sent back to the Commons by the Lords with amendments, and there were multiple votes on 17 October. The Bill makes provision for the setting of levelling-up missions, reporting on progress in delivering them; about local democracy, town and country planning, Community Infrastructure Levy, the imposition of Infrastructure Levy, environmental outcome reports for certain consents and plans, regeneration, the compulsory purchase of land, information and records relating to land. There were 17 votes, and the Opposition was defeated in all the votes.



Evidence Sessions on 75th Anniversary of the Genocide Convention



I chaired an evidence session on Wednesday 18 October 2023. In the year leading to the 75th anniversary of the Genocide Convention, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, and the Coalition for Genocide Response hosted a series of Parliamentary events engaging with several issues about the implementation of the duties under the Genocide Convention and to look at recent and contemporary cases of genocide. This session covered the Genocide against Rohingya and Myanmar and the question of justice and accountability.



Meeting with the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Yemen



On Monday, 23 October, I met His Excellency Hans Grundberg, Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Yemen, and His Excellency, Yassin Saeed Noman, the Ambassador of the Republic of Yemen to the UK at a meeting in Parliament. Mr Grundberg was the Ambassador of the European Union to Yemen since 2019, bringing over 20 years of experience, including over 15 years working in conflict resolution, negotiation, and mediation, with a focus on the Middle East. Yemen is facing the largest humanitarian crisis in the world. Mr Grundberg is working with all parties towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict. 🌀

Estee Lauder Companies Breast Cancer Campaign



On Tuesday, 17 October, I dropped into the Breast Cancer Campaign to support #TimeToEndBreastCancer. The Campaign unites and inspires people globally in its mission to help create a breast cancer-free world for all. The Campaign and the Charitable Foundation have funded more than £100 million for lifesaving global research, education, and medical services with more than £80 million funding medical research through the Breast Cancer Research Foundation. 🌀

Draft Town and Country Planning Regulations 2023 Committee



As a member of the Draft Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications, Deemed Applications, Requests and Site Visits) (England) (Amendment) Regs 2023 Committee, on 25 October, I asked: "On a point of clarification, how many responses did the Government get to their consultation, as a percentage?" I also asked how the Government will monitor whether local authorities spend the fees on planning and planning officers. The Minister for Housing and Planning responded: "I thank the right hon. Member for that point. I will have to write to her about that if she will allow me." 🌀

Meeting with Ambassadors



On Wednesday, 25 October 2023, the Palestinian Ambassador, Dr Husum Zomlot, briefed the British-Palestine APPG. Dr Zomlot told the meeting of the difficulties the people were facing with a lack of food, water, and fuel. He said that Hamas, who are a group, should not be conflated with the Palestinian people. There needs to be an immediate ceasefire and unfettered access to humanitarian aid. In the end, there must be a political solution. The Ambassador from Jordan said we had to look beyond the short term. The Ambassador for Qatar said they were continuing to have a dialogue with both parties. 🌀

Open letter to the PM to ban trophy hunting imports



I have signed the open letter to the Prime Minister, urging the Government to enact their commitment to ban trophy hunting imports of animals. The letter, coordinated by Henry Smith, MP for Crawley, and signed by 64 fellow MPs, says the Hunting Trophies (Import Prohibition) Bill fell owing to parliamentary procedure in the House of Lords despite having cross-party support from MPs and Peers. We asked the Prime Minister to bring forward a Government Bill to ban trophy-hunting imports without further delay. The commitment was in the last Queen's Speech in 2022. We hope it will be in the King's speech on 7 November. 🌀

University of Wolverhampton Reception



On Wednesday, 18 October, I attended the University of Wolverhampton reception in the Lords to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Lord Swraj Paul as Chancellor and the achievements of students. The University provides the West Midlands with highly qualified, professional graduates, and its mission is to create opportunities for graduates. I met Abi Daré (left), alumna and author of the New York Times Bestseller 'The Girl with the Louding Voice', and Theo Johnson, a Film Maker, Actor, Script Writer, BBC 1Xtra Presenter and Motivational Speaker. 🌀

