

eNews

from Rt Hon Valerie Vaz MP

November 2023



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

Valerie speaks in Debate on King's Speech



I spoke in the debate on the King's Speech on 13 November and raised the Israel-Palestine conflict; I called for an immediate ceasefire. The Opposition will establish Great British Energy which will cut energy bills, create good jobs, ensure energy security, and protect the planet for future generations. I spoke about the need to fund local authorities which are struggling with the cost of supporting SEND and vulnerable children. The collapsing criminal justice system was missing from the speech, so I raised the need to fix prisons and put more police on our streets. We have a dithering, do-nothing Government 🌐

Bescot Stadium Station disabled access meeting with Network Rail



On Friday 3 November, I organised a meeting with Network Rail, West Midlands Trains at Bescot Stadium Station to discuss the issue of disabled access at the Station. Walsall FC Trust members, Ray Dale, Bob Thomas, and Helen Thorpe-Wood attended. Joanna Sainsbury, a Walsall FC fan who uses a wheelchair made the case for an accessible station. There was a constructive discussion about the need for a lift. I met with Minister Huw Merriman to ask about funding on 5 July. A petition was presented in the House on 24 October. NR will hopefully have a solution soon 🌐

Visit to Firsteel, Walsall



I was delighted to visit Firsteel, the coil metal coating company, on Friday, 3 November to discuss British industry with Tony Grimshaw, Director of What More UK and the Northern Automotive Alliance. Firsteel, based in Brockhurst Crescent, is dedicated to the manufacture and development of customised pre-finished metal solutions, one of only two in the country. This specialist business provides both metal and coating expertise for a range of substrates and applications, supported by long-term relationships with the world's leading metal suppliers 🌐

Supporting the GMB campaign for Equal Pay



I supported the GMB campaign for Equal Pay for Asda workers on 3 November, at Asda St. Matthews Superstore with Tom Warnett, the National GMB Political Officer. Equal pay is a priority for the GMB Union, and women workers across the country are organising with GMB to campaign for pay justice. On Monday, 6 November women in similar jobs work for nothing. GMB want workers in ASDA stores, who are mainly women, to do work of equal value to those working in distribution, mainly men. ASDA pays distribution workers up to £3 more an hour than those in store 🌐

Remembrance Day 2023

I placed a cross in the Constituency Garden of Remembrance in Parliament. 11 November 2023 marks the armistice that ended the First World War: "at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month" of 1918". I laid a wreath at the Remembrance Day service in Walsall 🌐



Child Trust Funds: Public Accounts Committee Report

The Public Accounts Committee published a report on 23 July which showed that billions of pounds are sitting in the Child Trust Fund (CTF) accounts of millions of young people aged 12 to 20 born between 1 September 2002 and 2 January 2011. These accounts have been set up by HMRC and in April 2021 the average account value was £1,911. Around 887,000 of these accounts are for children who are in low-income families, who are unaware they have CTFs. Providers continue to charge fees up to a cap of 1.5% on the accounts. I would advise all young people and their parents to contact HMRC and The Tracing Group, which has set up a Child Trust Fund register, to track down their accounts and withdraw these savings 🌐

Usdaw Protecting Retail Workers Parliamentary Reception



As part of Usdaw's ongoing Freedom from Fear Campaign, I attended the Respect for Shopworkers Week Parliamentary Reception on 13 November 2023 with Paddy Lillis, General Secretary of the Usdaw. Through its Freedom from Fear Campaign, Usdaw is working with employers to make working life safer. Employers have a legal duty to protect staff from customer harassment. Every year tens of thousands of retail workers are physically attacked, and hundreds of thousands are subject to verbal abuse and intimidation 🌐

Valerie votes on Amendments to King's Speech calling for ceasefire in Gaza.



On 15 November, there were amendments to the Motion on the King's Speech. Amendment (r) tabled by HM Opposition called for longer humanitarian pauses to allow in aid and the movement of civilians. Amendment (h) tabled by the SNP called for the Government to uphold international law and protect all civilians in Israel and Palestine by calling for an immediate ceasefire in the conflict. I voted Aye to both amendments, Amendment (r) was defeated Ayes 183: Noes 290 and Amendment (h) was defeated by a vote Ayes 125: Noes 293. I am pleased there is a ceasefire and hopeful it will be permanent 🌍

Meeting with Historic England



Historic England held a drop-in in Parliament on 14 November marking 25 years of Heritage at Risk. I met with members of HE and I asked Dr John Edlin Building Manager of St Matthew's Church to attend and discuss how St Matthew's could access funds to ensure the Grade II* listed building is protected and safe. Dr Edlin and I discussed setting up meetings with the regional team to try and influence Walsall Council's Heritage Officer to preserve St Matthew's which has been in existence since 1190. The Heritage at Risk Register for 2023 was published on 9 November which lists 6 places in Walsall South needing help to remain in good condition 🌍

Meeting with Minister for Children and Families



I was pleased to invite the Heads of schools in Walsall, Davina Clacy, Headteacher of Old Church CofE Primary School, Sean Davis, Head and Governor Old Church, and Andy Mills, Head and part of the Old Church family of schools, to meet with the Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing David Johnston OBE MP on Tuesday 21 November. The Heads raised the issue of their budgets, SEND pupils, and other aspects of life and challenges in schools. The Minister said local authorities are given funding directly for SEND. I was concerned that this is not received by schools 🌍

Horticultural Trades Association Drop In



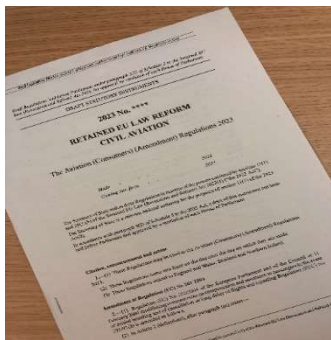
At the Horticultural Trades Association Drop In I met Minister Mark Spencer MP, Minister for Food, Farming and Fisheries to highlight the Value of Plants worth £15.7 billion to the UK. The HTA was founded in 1899 as an organisation formed by its members with the aim of representing horticultural tradesmen to deal with the issues they faced as an industry, which still drives the HTA today. It was good to support the horticultural industry 🌍

Question to the Home Secretary



At Home Office Questions on Monday 27 November 2023, I asked the Home Secretary: "One of the ways of dealing with illegal migration is to look at the number of cases. Can the Home Secretary say how many legacy backlog cases there are—if they have yet been triaged—and how many of those result from illegal migration?" The Home Secretary answered by saying: "The historic backlog has been reduced by 65%. It has fallen by more than 59,000 cases since the end of November 2022. We have recruited 2,500 asylum decision makers, and we have increased tenfold the pace at which these decisions are made."

Delegated Legislation Committees



I was a member of the Committee scrutinising the Aviation (Consumers)(Amendment) Regulations 2023 on 11 November 2023, I chaired the Committee scrutinising the draft Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 (Consequential Amendment) Regulations 2023 on 29 November and was a member of the Committee scrutinising the draft Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (Codes of Practice)(Revision of Codes A, B, C, D and H and New Code I) Order 2023 on 30 November 2023

Code of Practice for Trade Unions and Strikes regulations.



The House voted on the Code of Practice on Reasonable Steps to be taken by a Trade Union (Minimum Service Levels) and draft Strikes Regulations on 28 November. The Code of Practice to be taken by a Trade Union (Minimum Service Levels) passed by a vote of Ayes 280: Noes 199. I voted against the motion. The Strikes Regulations 2023 relating to Border Security, Passenger Railway Services, NHS Ambulance Services and the NHS Patient Transport Service passed by votes of Ayes 285: Noes 203, Ayes 281:Noes 201, and Ayes 297: Noes 166 respectively, I voted against

Data Protection and Digital Information Bill 3rd Reading



The House debated the 3rd Reading of the on 29 November having passed the Report stage on the same day. The Bill is intended to update and simplify the UK's data protection framework to reduce burdens on organisations while maintaining high data protection standards. I voted in favour of the Re-committal motion moved to recommit the Bill to a Public Bill Committee, but this was defeated: Ayes 209 to Noes 275. I also voted in favour of Amendments 11, 5, 1, and 218 tabled by the Opposition, but these were defeated by the Government.

