

eNews

from Rt Hon Valerie Vaz MP

January 2024

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



Defence Questions



On the first day back after the Christmas recess, at Defence Questions on 8 January 2024, I asked the Secretary of State "Will the Ukraine Action Plan 2023 ever be published? Better still, will there be a Ukraine Action Plan 2024? And when will that be published?" The Secretary of State did not answer the question. In August 2023 the then Defence Secretary Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP said he would publish the Action Plan for Ukraine in 2023. This question was a follow up to my question on 19 December 2023 to ask when the Action Plan will be published. 🌀

Chairing Westminster Hall debates



As a member of the Panel of Chairs, I chaired 3 Westminster Hall Debates on 9 January 2023. I chaired these debates: 2:30 - 4:00 pm: "Increases in anti-Semitic offences" a debate led by Nicola Richards MP; 4:00 - 4:30 pm: "Cost of living in Scotland" debate led by David Linden MP; 4:30 - 5:30 pm: "Future of the Great Western Main Line" debate. Westminster Hall debates give MPs an opportunity to raise issues which are granted by the Speaker and a Minister responds. 🌀

Visit to St Mary's the Mount RC Primary



I was delighted to visit St Mary's to talk to the Head Mrs Amos and the Deputy Mrs Smith about the challenges schools are facing. Despite the lack of support for SEND pupils, I saw a thriving school and visited the classes. I was impressed by a presentation by a pupil to the class on Plastics. It was great to see the School Library where Mrs Amos, Mrs Smith and I are pictured. 🌀

Opposition Day Votes



The topics for the Opposition Day debates on 10 January were (i) 'NHS Dentistry' and (ii) 'the cost of the Government's Rwanda plan and administration of the asylum system'. The motion: "This House recognises that NHS dentistry is in crisis" is important as NHS dentistry in England is in crisis in its 75-year history. The motion was defeated by a vote of Ayes 191: Noes 299. Our 2nd Debate was a motion to call on the Government to publish information relating to the cost of its Rwanda plan and administration of the asylum system. The motion was defeated Ayes 228: Noes 304 🌀

HALO Trust Drop In



The HALO Trust held a drop-in on 10 January 2024 to provide more information about the Trust's work building capacity in host nations to exercise responsible control of their stockpiles and strengthen human security. Unsecured weapons and ammunition threaten the security of civilians and undermine state stability. Across the world, the diversion of weapons from state stockpiles and the unplanned detonation of degraded ammunition has caused immense human suffering. The HALO Trust works with host nations to develop comprehensive weapons and ammunition management, build secure infrastructure, and provide professional development for security force personnel.🌀

Sub-postmasters, WASPI, and Adult literacy EDMs



I have signed the following Early Day Motions (EDMs): '**Sub-postmasters**' calling on the Government to compensate sub-postmasters affected by the Horizon scandal, '**Pension restitution for women born in the 1950s**', '**Integrated Care Board funding for children's hospices in England**', and '**Adult literacy**' acknowledging that poor literacy skills can, lead to poverty, isolation and leave people vulnerable to exploitation. EDMs are motions submitted for debate in the House of Commons for which no day has been fixed. MPs use EDMs to put on record our views or to draw attention to issues. 🌀

Holocaust Memorial Day



Every year the Holocaust Educational Trust set up a Book of Commitment in Parliament. MPs sign the Book as a sign of remembrance to all those who were brutally murdered during the Holocaust. Holocaust Memorial Day falls on the 27 January 2024. It is a way of paying tribute to the Holocaust survivors whose stories must not be forgotten. The Holocaust survivors do a tremendous job to educate all generations about the horrors of the Holocaust what it took to survive. The theme this year is "Fragility of Freedom".🌀

Finance Bill Committee Stage



On 10 January 2024, the House debated and voted on New Clauses 5 and 7 to the Finance Bill at its Committee Stage. New Clause 5 would require the government to produce an assessment of the impact of the Bill's tax evasion and avoidance measures. I abstained in the vote on New Clause 5 which was defeated by a vote of Ayes 18: Noes 300. The Opposition tabled New Clause 7 which would require the Chancellor to review the effectiveness of measures in this Act to prevent fraud involving taxpayers' money. I voted in favour of New Clause 7 but this was defeated by a vote of Ayes 222: Noes 301🌀

Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill



Many constituents have contacted me about this Bill and 3rd Reading on 10 January 2024. The Bill seeks to prevent public bodies from making procurement and investment decisions - such as direct or indirect boycotts, disinvestment, or sanctions (BDS) campaigns - based on their own moral or political disapproval of a foreign authority. The Opposition tabled a reasoned amendment which would oppose any discrimination or prejudice in the economic activities of public bodies, that all such bodies must act without bias or selectivity when making ethical decisions on procurement and investment. Vote: I voted in favour of the reasoned amendment which was defeated Ayes 228: Noes 284. I voted No on the Third Reading of the Bill but this passed Ayes 282: Noes 235 🌀

Send Reform England



I met a group of mothers who set up a campaign group for Special Educational Needs, SEND Reform England, to draw attention to the lack of SEN provision in Schools. Among their key aims are more SEN schools, adequate SEN training for teaching staff and SEN friendly resources in mainstream schools. They undertook a survey over 8 months and have seen the pressure and stress on parents when children cannot access appropriate provision. 🌀

APPG on Football and English Football League



The English Football League held a dinner with a panel to discuss the forthcoming Bill on Football Governance. The EFL want to press for a formula where the Premier League passes on a financial contribution to other leagues to help them survive. The EFL would like the split to be 75:25 that has yet to be agreed. The discussion centred around the pyramid, governance and the regulator to safeguard the future of football and give fans a greater input. The Government have not indicated when the Bill will be introduced. I am pictured with Chairman, Walsall FC Leigh Pomlett and Dion Dublin.🌀

Action Against Houthi Maritime Attacks Statement



On Tuesday 23 January 2024 the Prime Minister made a statement on the further action in response to the Houthi's attacks in the Red Sea. It is a very dangerous situation when the UK launches an attack on another country, so I asked: "What assessment has the Prime Minister made of the risks if the Houthis move to a different part of Yemen and how many civilian casualties were there.?" The Prime Minister did not answer the first part of my question but only said there were no civilian casualties. On the 15 January I asked the Prime Minister: Having been born in Aden I was saddened that the democratic and humanitarian crisis did not provoke such a response, why he did not come to the House before the action and how he will ensure the peace agreement is actively pursued and monitored. 🌐

Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic



It was a pleasure to meet the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies Czech Republic Mrs Marketa Pekarova Adamova in Speaker's House. Mrs Adamova led a delegation which included Ondrej Lochman MP who I met again at the NATO meeting later in January in Brussels. In his speech Mr Speaker praised the Czech Republic for taking in almost 500,000 Ukrainian refugees. Lord Alf Dubs was born in Prague and saved by Nicolas Winton from the Nazis on the Kindertransport. Nearly 80,000 people from the Czech Republic live in the UK and 9,000 Brits live there. 🌐

Nato Parliamentary Assembly



The Ukraine Nato Inter Parliamentary Joint Committee met in Brussels on 29 January 2024 to hear from our friends in Ukraine the current position on the ground. I am pictured with the UK delegation, Lords Hamilton and Anderson and James Sunderland MP. We heard from the Ambassadors to Nato and the Deputy Sec General Mircea Geoana. It was a full delegation from Ukraine. It was suggested that we reframed the mindset from "as long as it takes" to "until Ukraine's victory". The General Secretary Jens Stoltenberg was in the US hoping to unlock the \$60 billion in aid to Ukraine. 🌐

Major Bills debated in Parliament

Two major Bills made their way through Parliament, the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill which HM Opposition voted against and the Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill. The legislation seeks to stop public bodies from adopting their own approach to foreign and trade policy using such means as individual boycotts, sanctions, and divestment. I voted against both at Third Reading. 🌐

