

# eNEWS

from Rt Hon Valerie Vaz MP

March 2025

Birchills Leamore - Blakenall - Bloxwich East - Bloxwich West  
Paddock (Part of Ward) - Palfrey - Pleck - St. Matthew's



## World Book Day 2025



World Book Day has been celebrated on the first Thursday in March since 1998 and on 4 March, Parliament marked the day. As Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Publishing, I was pleased to welcome MPs who collected the books for £1 to give to their schools. World Book Day helps children make the choices for themselves increasing enjoyment in reading. You can visit the [website](#) for resources including the 'World of Stories' audiobook range for all levels. 🌀

## International Women's Day at the Inter Parliamentary Union Drop-In



On 4 March the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Human Rights marked International Women's Day celebrated on 8 March. It was co-organised by the Inter parliamentary Union for the Representatives of the Peace Brigades International who provide support to women human rights defenders across 7 countries in South America, Africa and Asia by raising awareness, advocacy fundraising, matching UK-based capacity and support with the needs of defenders on the ground. 🌀

## Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill Remaining Stages



On 17 and 18 March 2025 the Commons met to debate the remaining stages of the Bill. After 7 votes on the proposed clauses and amendments, the Bill was read a third time with Ayes 382 and Noes 104. The Bill will be considered in the Lords. 🌀

## **Employment Rights Bill**

As I chaired the Bill Committee, I was unable to vote, but the Bill is the biggest upgrade to workers' rights in a generation. It tackles insecure work by giving rights to reasonable notice of shifts, guaranteed hours, and banning fire and rehire. Workers will gain day-one rights for paternity, parental, and bereavement leave, along with stronger sick pay protections. Employers must justify flexible working refusals and prevent workplace harassment. The Bill also repeals anti-union laws, strengthens trade union recognition, ensures fair pay agreements in adult social care. Reinstating the School Support Staff Negotiating Body will improve conditions for school staff. The Government partnership with unions creates a fairer, more cooperative workplace. The Bill passed all stages 🌀

## **Office of Rail and Road (ORR) meeting**



On 19 March 2025 at a drop-in with the ORR I raised concerns about lack of step-free access at Bescot Stadium Station. Network Rail gave a six-month timeline from November 2023 which remains unresolved. The Government is reviewing the Access for All fund which operates in 5 year cycles and City Region Sustainable Transport Fund is not available until 2027. It is unacceptable that people with disabilities, parents with pushchairs, travellers continue to struggle with lack of access. ORR will raise again with Network Rail 🌀

## **APPG Portugal: Meeting with Ambassador for Portugal to the UK**



As Chair of the APPG I was delighted to host HE Nuno Brito, Ambassador for Portugal, at a meeting with MPs Lords and members of the Portuguese Chamber of Commerce. Amb Nuno Brito spoke on the relationship between Portugal & UK, economic growth, protecting and defending common values and building on trade relations. We discussed the war in Ukraine, European political trends and upcoming elections in Portugal 🌀

## **Planning and Infrastructure Bill Debate**



I spoke in the 2nd Reading debate on 24 March 2025 raising the transparency of decisions made by planning committees, training for committee members. I also raised buy-to-let companies became the largest type of business in the UK. Homes are for people to live in and mentioned the work of Walter Segal and Moran Scot and the Method House. It passed Ayes 330 Noes 74 🌀



## **International Day to Combat Islamophobia 2025**



On 12 March 2025 Amnesty International UK (AIUK) organised a drop-in to brief MPs on their work to fight Islamophobia. The U.N. General Assembly established the International Day to Combat Islamophobia in 2022, designating March 15 as the day of the celebration. The UK marks Islamophobia Awareness Month in November. 🌀

## **Meeting with Ambassadors reporting on summit in Egypt**



MPs and Peers met the Ambassadors, HE Manar Dabbas, Jordan, Amb Husam Zomlot, Palestine, Amb for Saudi Arabia Prince Khalid bin Salman Al Saud; Amb for Egypt Nasser Kamel and the Deputy Amb for Qatar. The Ambassadors explained that at the Arab Summit £50 billion was committed to rebuild Gaza as an alternative to the US plan to remove the Palestinian people from Gaza to Jordan and Egypt. This was a united message from the Ambassadors. 🌀

## **Irish in Britain St Patrick's Day**



On 17 March 2025, St Patrick's Day was marked with an event in Parliament celebrating the work of Irish in Britain. This charity champions representation and advocacy for the Irish community in Britain. With over 130 member organisations supporting local communities, they have made significant strides in launching health and wellbeing initiatives, contributing to national policy with research and developing community leadership. I am pictured with Brian Dalton, CEO of Irish in Britain. 🌀

## **Letter to Openreach about Telegraph Poles**

I wrote to Openreach about a Notice to erect telegraph poles in a street in Bloxwich. The Electronic Communications Code (Conditions and Restrictions) Regulations 2003 states that companies should install cables underground rather than on telegraph poles where it is reasonably practicable to do so. After receiving my letter, Openreach confirmed that they are not erecting any telegraph poles and sent an engineer to the area to confirm this to residents. 🌀

## **Dame Barbara Woodward DCMG OBE speaks to APPG on UN**



Dame Barbara spoke about security, prosperity and global development. With the UN's 80th anniversary, the Sec-Gen's key appointments, are Tom Fletcher humanitarian aid and Elinor Hammarström as UN Legal Counsel. The U.S. has unfilled posts, making their policy direction unclear. Responding to my question on democracy and migration, Dame Barbara said there needs to be conflict resolution and proactive monitoring of global flashpoints. The 5 summits in 2025 are on women's issues, oceans, social concerns, development funding

## **Royal Holloway and Bedford New College Students Visit Parliament**



I met with students and Professor Nick Allen who teaches the 'Parliamentary Studies' module at Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, London University. The students visited on 19 March. As an alumna of Bedford College, we had a wide ranging discussion about Parliament, my work as an MP and democracy. Many said they would go on to a career in politics.

## **Joy of Moving visits Parliament**



This programme was set up in partnership between Ferrero and English Football League in the Community. On 19 March 2025 there was a demonstration teaching child how to enjoy getting active through play. In 2024, Sport England found 52% of children do not meet the Chief Medical Officer guidelines of taking part in sport and physical activity for a least 60 minutes a day. I saw the programme in partnership with Walsall FC Foundation at Delves School. Children said they understand the need for activity and eating a varied diet.

## **National Insurance Contributions Bill – Lords Amendments**



The Bill returned to the Commons following the Lords amendments. The Bill introduced on 6 November 2024 intends to raise employers' national insurance contributions to 15%, lower the secondary threshold to £5,000, and increase the employment allowance to £10,500.



## **Lords Amendments on Bills**



The [Non Domestic Rating Bill](#), [Great British Energy Bill](#) and [National Insurance Contributions Bill](#) were amended in the Lords and returned to the Commons. The amendments were debated and voted on and the Bills sent back to the Lords. The Commons voted a total of 11 times, that evening, as the Lords amendments were not accepted. The Lords will now debate the Bills as amended by the Commons. 🌀

## **National Minimum Wage (Amendment) Regulations 2025**

The regulations will raise the National Living Wage from £11.44 to £12.21, raise National Minimum Wage for workers aged 18 years and over (but not yet aged 21) from £8.60 to £10.00; workers above school leaving age (but not yet aged 18) from £6.40 to £7.55, and apprentices who are under the age of 19 or in the first year of their apprenticeship from £6.40 to £7.55. This was approved by the House of Commons on 5 February and approved by the House of Lords on 18 March 2025. 🌀

## **Tobacco and Vapes Bill**



The Bill aims to create a smoke-free generation. It was introduced to the Commons on 5 November 2024, scrutinised at Committee throughout January 2025 and passed its third reading on 26 March 2025. The Bill will now go to the Lords for debate. 🌀

## **APPG on Classical Music**



At the APPG meeting on 25 March, we discussed the Curriculum and Assessment review, by Professor Becky Francis CBE which published its Interim Report. It is vital to ensure that music and learning an instrument is available to all children and to improve access to the arts. The final report is due in Autumn 2025 🌀

