



~~~~~ I wish you a happy and peaceful Christmas ~~~~~

### Government defeated by 4 votes



On Monday 4 November 2023 the House passed an amendment to the Victims and Prisoners Bill which requires the Government to establish a body to administer compensation to victims and affected partners of the Infected Blood Scandal. I signed New Clause 27 tabled by Diana Johnson MP. I voted in favour of New Clause 27 : Ayes 246: Noes 242, a Government defeat by 4 votes. I have been part of the campaign calling for compensation to be made available to victims of the Scandal. This vote represents a step to justice for thousands of victims

### UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly 4 -5 December 2023 London



As a member of the UK-EU PPA we met on Monday 4 and Tuesday 5 December 2023 in London with the delegation of Members of the European Parliament. The PPA recommended to the Partnership Council a motion on youth mobility schemes, student exchanges, school trips, and touring artists. The PPA submitted issues raised during the break-out groups: data protection, fisheries, and citizens' rights. There was an exchange of views on artificial intelligence and climate change, including the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism

### Victims and Prisoners Bill



The Victims and Prisoners Bill had its Report stage and 3rd Reading debated on 4 December 2023. I voted in favour of three amendments tabled by the Opposition; New Clause 14 would compel organisations to face public scrutiny with honesty during inquiries into state-related deaths. This was defeated Ayes 193: Noes 279. Opposition amendment 33 would ensure that the definition of "victim" includes those tormented by antisocial behaviour, was defeated by a vote of Ayes 190 to Noes 277. The Bill now goes to the Lords

## **Vehicle Emissions Trading Schemes Order 2023**



The statutory instrument was debated on 4 December provides the car-making industry with certainty as it invests in the transition to zero-emission vehicles ahead of the Government's commitment to end the sale of new non-zero-emission vehicles, cars and vans in 2035. The order will be made using powers under the Climate Change Act 2008 to create trading schemes that apply to Great Britain and to preserve an appropriately scaled version of the current regulations for Northern Ireland. I voted in favour of the statutory instrument which passed: Ayes 381: Noes 36🌀

## **All Party Writers Group Winter Reception**



I attended a Winter Reception on 5 December 2023 to hear the issues facing freelance creatives, and discuss the proposal for a Freelancer Commissioner appointed by the Government to represent the interests of freelance creatives. During the pandemic, 3.1 million freelancers did not receive support they needed; the creation of a Freelancer Commissioner would be a step forward for creatives and writers. The Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society introduced a report that found earnings from freelance journalism have stagnated over the past five years🌀

## **Valerie supports the Disability Employment Charter**



The Charter was launched by UNISON one of six founding member organisations for a new Disability Employment Charter in response to the Government's long-awaited national disability strategy published in July 2021. Unison held a reception on 5 December marking 150 employers signing the Charter. The Charter calls for mandatory disability pay gap reporting, time off for trade union equality reps and a two-week deadline for employers to respond to requests for reasonable adjustments. In a UNISON survey of disabled members in 2019, nearly a quarter of respondents waited a year or more for reasonable adjustments to be put in place🌀

## **National Farmers' Union (NFU) Christmas Event**



I caught up with Minette Batters the President of the NFU on 11 December 2023 to discuss the latest farming manifesto. The NFU highlighted four main policy priorities the public thinks would show greater respect to farmers: a long-term plan for food and farming; a more powerful grocery regulator to ensure that farmers and growers are treated fairly; prioritising British domestic food production in the budget; and ensuring that more food in our schools and hospitals comes from British farmers. The NFU survey put food and farming second to healthcare and pharmaceuticals🌀

## **Eyes Have It Event**



On 11 December 2023 I attended the "Eyes Have It" event hosted by Marsha De Cordova Reed MP to launch a report setting out the key issues facing people affected by sight loss and the actions policymakers can take to overcome them. Statistics for Walsall South showed that 3.1% of the population lives with sight loss, 45.4% of ophthalmology patients wait over 12 weeks for treatment following referral, and there are 78.4 optometrists and only 2.1 consultant ophthalmologists per 100,000 people in Walsall South 🌀

## **Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) Questions**



At FCDO Questions, 12 December 2023, I asked Minister Andrew Mitchell MP about the Government's White Paper "The White Paper also talks about development diplomats. How many will be trained and what will be the cost?" The Minister answered by saying: "Yes, the right hon. Lady is quite right: we are increasing the number of development diplomats. The White Paper sets out the aims and aspiration that Britain has to drive forward the sustainable development goals and ensure that we increase climate finance at this critical time." 🌀

## **Pharmacy Students' access to the NHS Learning Support Fund (LSF)**



Several pharmacy students in Walsall South contacted me to say they do not have access to the NHS Learning Support Fund (LSF). On 28 November 2023, I asked a Written Question to the Secretary of State about the trends in the level of pharmacy students. The Minister answered by saying the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan aims to increase training places for pharmacists across England by nearly 50% to around 5,000 by 2031/32. There is clearly a shortage, so I wrote to the Minister to make the case for pharmacy students to be given access to the LSF 🌀

## **Meeting with Dr Ghassan Abu-Sittah**



At a meeting I heard from Dr Abu-Sittah (left in pic) on 12 December 2023 who provided an account of his experience working as a surgeon in Gaza for 43 days. Dr Abu-Sittah said 50,000 were wounded and 70% still needed medical care. On 9 October at Shifa hospital he told us they ran out of antiseptic solution and had to use washing up liquid and vinegar. There were burns and fragmenting bombs. He said everyday is worse than the day before. I continue to call for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire. 🌀

