

Lynda Waltho MP



Constituency Report May 2006

Representing Amblecote, Cradley, Quarry Bank, Lye, Norton, Oldswinford, Pedmore, Wollaston, Wollescote and Stourbridge Town

A new Councillor for Stourbridge

It was great news that Pete Lowe, local boy and community activist, was elected at this month's local elections to serve the people of Lye and Wollescote.

Pete has been working in and around the ward for some time now and his obvious talent for hard work and dedication to local people was finally rewarded by his election victory.

Pete has immediately instituted regular advice surgeries, something that local people had been asking for, as well as taking on a

demanding role as the Shadow Spokesperson on the Environment.

Lye and Wollescote Ward residents can contact him on 07949 590460. His next surgery is at the Sunshine Club, Crowle Drive, New Farm Estate, on Saturday 3rd June, from 10 a.m. to 11.30 a.m.



Lynda with Pete Lowe, Labour Party Councillor for Lye and Wollescote

Coffee Morning at Stourbridge Age Concern



Lynda with members of Stourbridge Age Concern, plus Geoff Hill, Ron Dalton, Chair of Age Concern (both standing), and Mrs. Hill (far right)

I was kindly invited by Stourbridge Age Concern to their coffee morning to aid fundraising for the planned expansion to their building. Age Concern is vital for the community as it is open 364 days a year. A substantial amount has already been raised, but there is still a long way to go to reach £700,000.

Stourbridge Age Concern has two services available; a drop-in service held at the Elton Centre, St John's Road, and a day service at Mary Stevens Day Centre, Hagley Road.

The Centre has advisers who can assist with benefits, pension queries, holiday and respite advice as well as providing classes from keep fit to art. For further details call 01384 390065.

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Lynda opens the Black Country Visual Arts Network Exhibition

I was really honoured to be asked to open the first of what is hoped to become an annual exhibition of the work of Black Country Visual Artists on Saturday 20th May.

Stourbridge has an extremely high concentration of visual artists and the aim is to showcase and highlight the artistic talent that is so obvious to those of us who live here.

Since the closure of the Living Gallery, there has been no dedicated venue for the exhibition of visual arts within the town. The exhibition will both promote and use the heritage of Stourbridge and the borough to showcase talent combining it with one of Stourbridge's historically important buildings, at the Bonded Warehouse. This is an exciting prospect linking the past to the present whilst looking to the future. How apt that a beautiful building once part of the crucible for our world beating past will now hold our unique talent of today, albeit for a short time this year only. Really worth a visit!

Hot Issues in the Westminster Postbag

The two issues about which I received most correspondence this month have been Pensions Issues and the proposed Education and Inspections Bill.

Education

There was a significant NUT lobby on the Education Bill as well as some interesting individual contributions from local teaching staff, governors and parents. I voted in favour of the Bill after amendments to ensure that a ban on academic selection and interviews was added to the face of the Bill as well as a requirement to act in accordance with a tough new admissions code. I was also pleased that the Bill was amended to enable LEAs to propose new community schools which was a missing link, I felt, at the second reading. The Bill also ensures a strengthening of the system for tackling failure and underperformance, and a statutory right for school staff to discipline pupils. It will revolutionise the provision of school meals and gives LAs responsibility for making sure young people have a range of exciting and positive things to do in their spare time, as promised by the youth green paper.

Pensions

Many people took the opportunity to share their ideas with me on the soon to be published Government response to the Turner Pensions Review. All views were fed to the Minister and I hope to expand on this topic after publication next month.

Votes in Parliament

I have voted in favour of the following bills this month:

Finance Bill
Civil Aviation Bill
Police and Justice Bill
Northern Ireland Miscellaneous Provisions Bill
Legislative and Regulatory Reform Bill
Education and Inspections Bill
Armed Forces Bill

In addition I have had meetings with:

- **Jim Knight, MP**, Minister of State for Schools, on educational issues in relation to Dudley Schools and the Education and Inspection Bill.
- **Tony Blair, Prime Minister**, regarding Manufacturing in the West Midlands.
- **Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer**, regarding trade and aid issues.
- **John Hutton, MP**, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions regarding the government's response to the Turner Review on Pensions.

Advice Surgery Dates for June

Friday 2nd June, 3.00 p.m. – 5.00 p.m.

Cradley Library, Colley Lane, Halesowen

Saturday 17th June, 10.00 a.m. - 12.00 p.m.

Lye Community Centre, Crosswalks Road, Lye



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