

# Lynda Waltho MP



Constituency and Parliamentary Report June/July 2005

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

*Dear Members,*

*June was a busy month, with many events in the constituency and meetings for new and experienced MPs to attend in London. We also started a new round of surgeries across the constituency and the casework is coming thick and fast!*

*July has been another busy month but much more manageable since at last I have an office in the Commons and some excellent staff to assist me both in London and the Constituency.*

*I've been to many local organisations in and around Stourbridge; it's been great to see what excellent work is going on in our schools, colleges, businesses, and health facilities.*

*I do hope you will enjoy this small snapshot of some of my work over the past two months.*

*If you would like any further information on anything contained within this report, or indeed anything else, please do not hesitate to contact me.*

## First Advice Surgery for Constituents

On June 10<sup>th</sup>, I attended Beauty Bank Primary School to present prizes to pupils, and afterwards held my first Advice Surgery. Later that day, I also attended a meeting with Dudley Young People's Partnership to discuss issues around Sure Start.

On the night, I went out on patrol with the local police, where I experienced first hand the problems that police have to deal with in Stourbridge, particularly at 'closing time'.

## A Welcome to the House of Commons



Lynda speaking to Tony Blair

On June 7<sup>th</sup> I attended a small get together arranged by John Reid to celebrate the achievement on being elected to the House of Commons. The meeting was also attended by the Defence Team which gave new

Labour MPs a chance to discuss our plans for the future.

## Supporting the British Lung Foundation



Lynda ready to 'get breathless'

I supported the British Lung Foundation's 20<sup>th</sup> birthday campaign by 'getting breathless' on an exercise bike at the House of Commons during a Lung Health Awareness Day on 8<sup>th</sup> June. I was delighted to support the British Lung Foundation in its 20<sup>th</sup> birthday year. One person in every seven in the UK is affected by a lung disease and has to live with breathlessness all the time, it is vital that people look after their lungs and taking part in this campaign was a great way to start!

On the afternoon, I also attended a reception by the Department for Education and Skills with the Rt. Hon. Ruth Kelly MP to give new Labour MPs the opportunity to discuss the Government's plans for the future.

**A date for your diary!** Lynda will be going on a short walk with the Ramblers Association on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September, meeting at 10:30 a.m., venue to be confirmed. Are you interested in taking a walk with Lynda in support of the Ramblers Association? Please call the constituency office for further details.

## Campaigning to support Parents and Carers



Lynda pictured with Sylvia Heal MP, campaigning to support parents and carers

On the morning of 15<sup>th</sup> June I attended a new group called the 'Under 1000 Group', for all Labour MPs who have a majority of less than 1000. These meetings will continue to discuss how we can keep our majority, and make it larger.

Later that day, I also attended a reception hosted by Adrian Sanders MP, Chair of the All Party Group for Diabetes. Representatives of Diabetes UK outlined their care, research, and campaign work that they accomplish on behalf of the UK's 1.8 million people with diabetes

On the evening, I was present at the Carers Week Reception. The theme of this reception was to look at the barriers facing carers who want to balance work and career opportunities with their caring responsibilities. The reception celebrated the contribution that carers make every day of the year.

On 17<sup>th</sup> June, I also attended an event in the constituency called Supporting Carers in Dudley. This was held to highlight how the Government supports carers in Dudley through our allocation of the Carers Grant.

## International Aid Policy

During 16<sup>th</sup> June, I was invited to a meeting with the Rt. Hon. Hillary Benn MP. This was to inform MPs on the Labour Party's policies on fighting AIDS and HIV, debt relief, and promoting fair trade.

## Better Access To Town



Lynda with Mr. and Mrs. Hart

During the General Election Campaign, I was always bumping into Mr. and Mrs. Hart, who have problems getting into and around Stourbridge Town. Mr. Hart uses a wheelchair, and Mrs. Hart has to use the road at various points

because pavements are not lowered for ease of access for wheelchair users. I remember how difficult it was for me to access the centre when I had a child in a pushchair and a toddler some years ago and it doesn't seem to have

improved one little bit in 15 years. The pavements are often blocked by parked cars and shop boards. Graham Isherwood, from the Directorate of Urban Environment at Dudley Council, is looking into providing more dropped kerbs and marking out current ones with special painted marking to draw driver's attention to their location so that they do not block them. I am also checking with local police to see if they can assist by enforcing stricter parking conditions in the town centre.

## New Cardiology Unit at Russell's Hall Hospital



Lynda with Matt Banks, Consultant, and Alfred Edwards, Chair of Dudley Group of Hospitals Trust

I was invited to open the new Cardiology Unit at Russell's Hospital on July 14<sup>th</sup>. I was delighted to be invited, as this was my first 'opening' since becoming an MP. The unit brings together facilities that have previously been split over several sites and has the addition of a special 'pacing room.'

## Opening of New Foreign Currency Desk and Passport Checking Service in Wollaston



Lynda with Mr. and Mrs Hall  
NB. I'm the one not in fancy dress!

It was a great occasion to be the first customer at Wollaston Post Office's new foreign currency desk in July. The Post Office now provides Euros and Dollars on demand, as well as a passport checking service and access to travel insurance and E111's.

### ***I.D Cards***

I have received several letters from constituents opposing the above measure. Identity cards will have the capability of cutting down on fraud, an offence on which a new approach is, in my mind, long overdue. Identity fraud has been on the increase steadily through the last few years and has proved incredibly hard to tackle. According to figures in 2004, about 50,000 people in the UK were victim to impersonation fraud taking, on average, 60 hours each to resolve the case and incurring £50 million in banking losses.

It would also speed up verification for transactions such as opening bank accounts. Banks already need proof of identity and with an Identity Card the bank would only have a certain level of access to the applicant's details, i.e. purely that they are who they say they are and not offering any information that the individual does not want to be disclosed. The individual would also have to give consent for this to transpire.

The details would be stored on a National Register with very select access. For instance it would make it much simpler, quicker and more efficient for police to check suspects if attempts through their current databases prove fruitless – the Police would still have to use their databases first. This would become most apparent during the 'stop and search' process. The ID cards Bill will not infringe on the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, but will cut down the time that people are questioned.

There are specific concerns that are yet to be answered: the reliability of the technology, the voluntary/mandatory angle and the cost – these will be discussed and ironed out before further progress is made.

### ***Race and Religious Hatred Bill***

The Bill will have no bearing on the right to lay-preach. It does not seek to silence the masses but rather is aimed at closing a loophole that exists which far Right groups can manipulate to their own racist needs. If passed, the legislation will outlaw incitement against the followers of multi-ethnic faiths. Over the last few years, the far Right has cynically and deliberately targeted British Muslims. This has been recorded across Dudley. Currently, Muslims are not protected by anti race law.

I believe the Bill is about equality before the law for all believers. That is why it is supported by the Board of Jewish Deputies, the Church of England, the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales, the Hindu Council, the Network of Sikh organisations and the Campaign for Racial Equality. As Rob Beckley, the Assistant Chief Constable of Hertfordshire says:

"It is important that people of all faiths, and of none, are free to worship and express personal and political views within the law, including robust criticism and humour. But there is a clear distinction between criticism or even ridicule, and hatred. We believe it is possible to legislate in a way that respects vital freedoms whilst preventing extremists and racists of all types from disrupting and destabilising our society."

The Bill's aim is to protect people from hatred, not to shield them from criticism. This is a goal entirely in keeping with Britain's unique record of religious and racial tolerance – one on which we rightly pride ourselves and one which I have spoken up for all my adult life.

### ***Make Poverty History***

I attended the Make Poverty History March send off which took place in Chamberlain Square, Birmingham city centre on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> June. The marchers were then to make their way up to Gleneagles in Scotland to arrive just before the start of the G8 summit. Along the route, marchers sought to raise awareness about the need for 100% cancellation of the debts of the Worlds poorest countries.

### ***Green Corns***

I will soon be attending a meeting to discuss the activities of Green Corns in the West Midlands. The meeting will be attended by Liam Byrne, the Health Minister with responsibility for regulatory controls. The following Members will also be attending the meeting with me: Pat McFadden MP, Ian Austin MP, Sylvia Heal MP, and Rob Marris MP.

### ***London Bombs***

As I am sure you can all appreciate the bomb attacks of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> July have really shaken everyone up in London. The UK finds itself in a situation it hasn't face since the zenith of the IRA's activities. The Police are collating evidence and pursuing leads. Let's all hope the perpetrators are caught and that this evil will soon pass.

### ***Staff***

During June, I interviewed for vacancies in both the London and Stourbridge offices. I now have three members of staff: Larry Leaf in Westminster, Chris Hale, Constituency Assistant and Sue Raybould, Casework Manager.

### ***Committees***

I have been placed on the Modernisation Committee responsible for the practices of the House, e.g. sitting hours. The Group will meet weekly and is chaired by the Rt. Hon Geoff Hoon MP, the Leader of the House. I have also been appointed to the Financial Services Committee, asked to serve on the Violent Crime Bill Committee and been elected to serve as Vice Chair of the All Party Committee on Heart Disease. In addition, I have also accepted the post of Treasurer of Waterways.

During the Parliament of June and July,  
I have voted on the following:

**Borough Freedom (Family Succession) Bill [HL]**

**Charities Bill [HL]**

**Children and Adoption Bill [HL]**

**Civil Aviation Bill**

**Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Bill [HL]**

**Consumer Credit Bill**

**Criminal Defence Service Bill [HL]**

**Crossrail Bill**

**European Union Bill**

**Equality Bill [HL]**

**Finance Bill**

**Fishery Limits (United Kingdom) Bill [HL]**

**Fraud Bill [HL]**

**Identity Cards Bill**

**Merchant Shipping (Pollution) Bill [HL]**

**National Lottery Bill**

**Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill**

**Racial and Religious Hatred Bill**

**Regulation Of Financial Services (Land Transactions) Bill**

**Road Safety Bill [HL]**

**Transport (Wales) Bill**

**Violent Crime Reduction Bill**



## How to contact Lynda Waltho MP

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