

Lynda Waltho MP

Constituency and Parliamentary Report – July 2007

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



Lynda with some of the young swashbuckling pirates

Heyday Stourbridge visit Lynda at the House

One of the most enjoyable events I am able to organise as an MP at the House of Commons is for local Stourbridge community groups to come to London for a tour of the House and to meet me at my second place of work!

It is a pleasure to see so many people fascinated by the history and splendour of the Palace of Westminster where I am privileged to work.

I was recently able to meet up with Heyday Stourbridge and Stourbridge Age Concern after their tours so that they could see and discuss some of the work I do for Stourbridge constituents in London.



Lynda with Heyday Stourbridge members

Lynda Calls Time to Visit Local Pub

I recently dropped in to the The Crown in Oldswinford as part of 'Proud of Pubs Week'. I was able to see the positive contribution The Crown makes in the local community as well as discussing issues with the licensee, Chris Foxall, following the smoking ban. The ban has meant that pub culture in Britain is changing. Now over 80% of pubs welcome families; almost a third of all pubs will start to offer new forms of entertainment with karaoke and beer festivals being particularly popular. I even heard of one pub offering video snail racing!



Lynda pulls a pint with The Crown licensee, Chris Foxall

Speaking Up for Stourbridge

Royal Mail Dispute

I have been lobbied by postal workers in Stourbridge to support the CWU campaign for a better pay settlement for its members. Obviously, nobody wants industrial action, but the reticence of the Royal Mail to enter into meaningful negotiations with the CWU has backed them into a corner. The Royal Mail maintains that the central issue is modernisation. The CWU is not opposed to modernisation and acknowledges that some job losses will be inevitable, however it is not fair or just for postal workers to accept pay freezes, and a real-term wage cut, for three years.

A welcome for increased University Grants

John Denham MP, the Secretary of State for the newly formed Department for Innovations, Universities and Skills has announced a shake-up of the living costs grant available to university students.

I am delighted by this announcement as I believe it will open the door to University education for students whose family income is less than £25,000. That is an increase of £7,000 on the previous threshold.

It is a misconception that full grants for living costs are a thing of the past. It is plain to see that this measure will help those less well off, opening up the door to opportunity, a basic tenet of what good government is about.

Students from a family earning less than £60,000 will be entitled to some form of maintenance grant. Quite rightly, the affordability of University education is a serious consideration for parents and students alike and with these measures I am hopeful that wasted talent in this country caused by financial restraints will decline considerably as a direct result of this decision.

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Lynda raises issue of local funding cuts

Not for the first time I have raised the issue of local funding provision for the Voluntary Sector in the House of Commons. I recently intervened in a Debate and questioned Phil Hope, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Cabinet Office on the issue of continuity of funding.

Quite some time ago, Dudley Council made massive funding cuts to the Youth Voluntary Sector in Dudley. At the time I raised the issue in the House and lobbied actively against this decision. Eventually, I am happy to report, better council prevailed and some funding was restored.

This was an encouraging development which has just been bolstered by the joint Cabinet Office and HM Treasury announcement that bank assets that have remained unclaimed for a minimum of 15 years will be diverted to voluntary organisations through the Big Lottery Fund.

However, even with some funding secured the issue has shifted slightly. For instance, the What? Centre and KIDS Orchard Partnership, have service level agreements with the Council but are worried about the continuity of their funding. It is difficult for voluntary organisations to work to their optimum potential when they don't know whether they will have sufficient funding next year. The key to efficiency is security and continuity and in inviting the Minister to visit these two organisations I am hopeful of convincing the Council of the merits of continuity.

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