



**HOUSE OF COMMONS**

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Our Ref: WM10516/MS

17 April 2023

I first visited Aldridge Shed when it newly opened back in June 2016 and I have continued to follow its progress as it has gone from strength to strength as a much valued part of the local community providing support, help and friendship for both men and women with regard to social isolation and wellbeing.

From fledgling beginnings with a small membership and limited equipment it has grown into what we see today and on my most recent visit a couple of weeks ago the membership is now at 110 and counting, and the facilities, tools and machinery have increased beyond recognition through its connections within the community, local businesses including Nisa High Heath, local charities and organisations such as One Walsall, MindKind, Walsall Society for the Blind, and beyond. To emphasise this you need go no further than Aldridge village centre and see the large poppies displayed by the Royal British Legion for our Remembrance Day parade and service which were produced by the Aldridge Shed, and so too was the Beacon to mark the late Queen's platinum jubilee last year. This has now been reworked for the Coronation of King Charles III.

The tremendous community element of the Aldridge Shed reflects and compliments the strength and vibrancy of Aldridge as a community and was particularly evident in the recent Open Day, which attracted many visitors, organisations and our local police team.

Yet it is the atmosphere, camaraderie and friendship which I witnessed at first hand on my first visit in 2016 which continues to go from strength to strength and which sets this group apart. Chatting to some of the members on my most recent visit I could not help but reflect on the many different reasons and routes they had for joining Aldridge Shed, but they were united in their enjoyment of all that The Shed offers – be that a practical workspace, friendship, skills sharing and learning, or just getting out of the house and meeting other people. Put very simply it's not just the machinery at Aldridge Shed that's buzzing – it's the people!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wendy Morton".