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Rebecca Pow's E-bulletin

Tuesday 20th December 2016

Reflection on 2016

What a year 2016 has been! Personally, I will never forget it having been my first full year in Parliament; in addition we have had the historic Brexit vote and a new Prime Minister.



In terms of my political commitments it has been an exceptionally busy year but I'm also pleased to say, a most productive one. My priority is always to represent the interests of the constituency in Westminster and vice versa. On some issues it's a matter of keeping up continuous pressure

through meetings with Ministers and indeed the Prime Minister herself.

And I'm delighted that some successes have resulted. Hot off the press and thanks to the campaign I ran which so many of you took part in, a new Fairer Funding formula for our schools is being introduced. The Secretary of State for Education listened. Somerset is getting the 4th largest funding increase in the country which I sincerely hope will benefit our hard working teachers and our deserving pupils across schools in Taunton Deane.

Playing my part in seeing the 21st century overhaul of the UK Hydrographic underway with its 700 strong skilled work force retained in Taunton was also significant achievement and a special highlight has been securing £1 million for the restoration of the Wellington Monument.

Commemorating one of our greatest war heroes and marking the gateway to the SW there will be many local community and economic spin offs from the project. Well done to all involved although there is more to do!



Rebecca on the road again:

I've invested much time in getting assurances for funding commitments relating to transport and infrastructure projects over the year – notably for the A358 upgrade, expansion of Junction 25 of the M5 and for the Taunton Rail Station transformation. Just last week I made representations to Growth Deal Minister Andrew Percy for funding to improve the congested Creech Castle/Toneway.

In addition pressing relevant Ministers for legislation to secure the funding framework for the Somerset Rivers Authority, established to keep us safe from future flooding, has been a key priority. And as I write I am waiting to hear whether Garden Town status will be awarded to Taunton, a designation, with associated funding, which could benefit future sustainable development and something I feel strongly about.



My Environment Forums have been some of my favourite events in the constituency, the latest one with Chair of the EFFRA Select Committee, MP Neil Parish, as guest speaker. As ever, the passion for the natural environment shown by the local community is inspiring and drives me on to continue my work standing up for nature in Westminster. I receive thousands of emails a week, but you may be surprised to learn that I received more emails about protecting bees than on any other subject since becoming the MP! One of my personal environmental highlights was getting the government to announce a ban on micro-plastics in cosmetic and personal care products. These are damaging marine habitats to a horrifying extent. Click [HERE](#) to take part in the consultation and survey.



This Christmas many of us will be enjoying a well-earned break from work and spending time with loved ones but we must not forget those less fortunate than ourselves. Over the last few months I have been working on the Homelessness Reduction Bill a piece of legislation designed to make a real difference in preventing people from reaching a state of homelessness in the first place.

Thoughts are also with those in war torn countries as well as the lonely and elderly. Our increasing elderly population in Somerset is bringing its challenges and I am at pains to raise this with health ministers. I was pleased that my first Older Peoples Fair, with a focus on Health and Well Being attracted so many people. It will be back by popular demand in the

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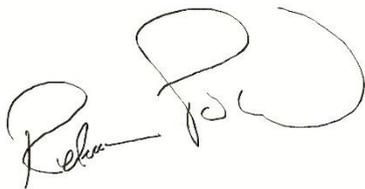
coming year. On a different but no less important note, I was pleased to speak in the Chamber recently about violence against women and children not just here but across the globe. Progress is being made but we need to do more.

Looking ahead

Securing the best deal for this country as we exit the EU will be a top priority for the Government in 2017. Locally my priorities will include keeping up pressure to ensure the economy can grow, pressing for a University of Somerset located in the county town will be an important element of this to reduce the local skills gap and to deliver the courses business requires.

Thank you to all those I have worked with over the year, individuals, voluntary groups, charities, churches, and both Taunton Deane and Somerset County Councils to make 2016 a successful and memorable year.

Wishing you a merry and restful Christmas and here's to a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rebecca', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Rebecca

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