

## EU Referendum – Comment by Helen Grant MP 07-06-16

When the Referendum campaign was launched last February I was relieved that the PM had scheduled the vote as early as realistically possible. Business and enterprise need uncertainty like a hole in the head and he was right to get this issue behind us, whatever the outcome.



Unfortunately, over the course of the last four months, campaigns on both sides of the argument have progressively deteriorated into mutual mud-slinging with precious little substance.

Records show that similar antics took place during the 1975 referendum and so I guess I shouldn't be surprised, but I am disappointed. Such an important and far reaching issue, where almost everything is arguable and little is absolutely provable, demands a higher standard from campaigners. The need for concise, accurate and well-presented debate is paramount if we are to make an informed decision on June 23<sup>rd</sup>.

To that end I strongly recommend googling 'BBC EU Reality Check' or click <http://bbc.in/23JIRxS>. This is a comprehensive and seemingly unbiased resource that presents the pros and cons of most of the issues encompassed by our membership of, or exit from, the EU. It also exposes many of the flawed claims and fictions being bandied about through reckless rhetoric, and that includes some of our national press.

The kind of negative campaigning we have been subjected to of late disengages voters and that is something to be avoided, especially now. A low turnout (as much as a very close outcome) could challenge the validity of the decision and may even result in an early general election.

One report on the BBC website goes on to suggest that if a party then successfully campaigned on a new EU promise, that government could claim that their election mandate overrules the referendum. Such a challenge to our democracy, combined with further lingering economic and political uncertainty, would be very serious indeed.

I am therefore imploring my constituents to ignore negative campaigns, focus upon authoritative unbiased reporting, and then ensure they use their valuable referendum vote for the sake of our children and their future generations.

I close with a late reminder that the extended deadline for registering to vote is **Midnight Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2016**. It takes about 5 minutes online here: [www.gov.uk/register-to-vote](http://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote)