

View From the House

Parliament will rise next week and on that last day I will be raising the issue of planning in Walsall south in a pre-recess adjournment debate.

This is a relatively new procedure, which started with the new parliament. It allows backbenchers to raise issues in the same way as an adjournment debate at the end of the day. A Minister attends the Chamber and responds to the issue. On the last day there are a range of topics that MPs want to raise and Ministers from the various departments to respond to our concerns.

Many of you have let me know that you are concerned about what is happening locally in relation to some of the decisions that have been made where your views may have been ignored.

There have also been debates initiated by backbenchers on Thursday afternoons which the Backbench Business Committee promote. This committee hears requests and tables the debate after hearing representations from MPs. That is how the Cuts to the BBC was debated on 1 December 2011.

I am appalled by the proposed decimation of BBC West Midlands which has a unique 90-year history of both factual and drama programme making. Factual programming for BBC television and Radio 4 will be moved out of Birmingham; losing approximately 150 jobs - including journalists, researchers, engineers and producers. This will have a devastating effect on the local economy and its cultural voice.

I have written to the Chairman and the Director General of the BBC to point out that the move from Birmingham to Bristol will be a loss of some £28 million to the local economy. The unique talents of those people who live in the West Midlands will also be lost. I encourage you to write to the BBC in their consultation to tell them what you think.

At Treasury questions I asked the Chancellor about closing tax loopholes. The Minister confirmed he will commit more resources to tackling tax avoidance and evasion. A loophole allows purchasers of property to transfer the ownership to an offshore company. They then purchase the company avoiding stamp duty. This costs the Treasury almost £1billion.

There was an exciting moment at the Banks's stadium on Saturday when I saw the Sadlers lead the League leaders Charlton 1-0 before Charlton struck back to end the game with a draw.

I wish you and your families a Happy and peaceful Christmas.

Valerie Vaz MP

11 December 2011