

Sally Stephenson

I am delighted to have been shortlisted as the Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for the Vale of Glamorgan. I do hope you will be able to attend the hustings on Saturday. I would like to use this opportunity to give you a brief summary of me and my background, and how I have come to be actively involved in party politics.

I live in the Vale of Glamorgan (Cowbridge) with my husband, Tim, and our two children aged 15 and 13.

A proud European, I studied three European languages at the University of Nottingham and took advantage of the right to Freedom of Movement to spend a year working in France and Spain.

After graduation I worked at Boots The Chemists' head office in Nottingham in a variety of senior marketing and advertising roles. When my children were very young, I took a break from my corporate career and spent three years teaching French and Spanish to three to 11 year olds.

We moved to South Wales in 2011, when Tim was relocated by Tata Steel to the steelworks in Port Talbot. On arriving in Wales, I worked as a Category Manager at The Royal Mint in Llantrisant, before setting up my own business in 2013. I am now the proud owner of *The Pencil Case* on Eastgate in Cowbridge, an award-winning, independent shop selling stationery and official school uniform for all nine local schools.

For many years I was actively involved in my children's primary schools, both in Nottingham and in Cowbridge, first as a parent governor and then Vice Chair of Governors. As a result I have direct experience of the challenges schools have been facing over the last ten years, trying to maintain high educational standards whilst suffering significant budget cuts.

Running a high street shop in Cowbridge has given me the opportunity to get to know hundreds of local families over the years and understand what is important to them. It has also allowed me to experience first hand the pressures of running a small business - from the day to day running of the shop to the impact of changes to business rates and the disastrous consequences of Brexit.

When the government announced the potentially devastating changes to business rates in October 2016, I instigated and led the successful campaign to persuade the Welsh Government to put in place a £10m relief scheme to protect and support small businesses across Wales, especially on our high streets.

But it was the EU referendum in 2016 which really inspired me to get involved in politics. I am so passionate about stopping Brexit that last year I co-founded the local campaign group, Vale of Glamorgan for Europe, which some of you are involved in. In just 16 months we have grown from four to about 400 local members, with 1,950 followers on Facebook and 3,700 on Twitter.

I now represent Vale of Glamorgan for Europe on the Wales for Europe Executive and am a People's Vote 'grassroots leader', participating in regular conference calls and meetings with more than one hundred other local campaign group leaders from across the UK.

Earlier this year I stood as a Change UK MEP candidate for Wales in the European elections. I campaigned hard across Wales and delivered a higher share of the vote for Change UK in the Vale of Glamorgan than they achieved in both Wales and the UK.

I believe I have the skills and experience to be an effective PPC for the Vale of Glamorgan. Being self-employed and a campaigner requires confidence, motivation, resilience, organisation, passion and flexibility - all skills required of an MP. I am used to leading teams, both professionally and voluntarily, and am able to speak to people of all backgrounds, from Cabinet Ministers to regular members of the public. I have had a lot of experience of local and national media and am comfortable being interviewed on radio and TV.

Through living here in the Vale of Glamorgan, running my shop, working with schools and leading high profile business rates and Vale for Europe campaigns, I have got to know hundreds of local people. I understand what matters to this constituency and would be honoured to represent you.