

Let Us All Encourage Each Other

Sir Peter Bottomley MP

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Local licensees, publicans and café owners have been talking with me about the difficulties they are facing. Colleagues have chosen from a range of ways to represent the problems and to argue about the unfairness that has caused tight restrictions in areas presently less severely affected by coronavirus.

We should be cautious when estimating the near-term balance between reducing direct health risks with the economic consequences of interrupting normal life, especially in the hospitality trades. Early in the week it was reported that even Lewis Hamilton has had his life changed by C-19.

The relaxation after lockdown has led Wales to impose new restrictions. Few are interested in pasties or scotch eggs making a substantial meal; most care about developing social and business life in as many sensible ways as possible.

Key points are in the message I have put this week to government ministers and to my party leaders. They come from the John Selden, named for the parliamentarian born in Salvington, then part of West Tarring. His mother came from Rustington.

He had two periods of incarceration in the Tower of London. He backed Parliament against Charles I because the king was acting illegally; he wondered if the Commons was too. Later he took charge of records at the Tower! His tomb at the Temple church can be seen through glass in the floor. A tablet to his memory was installed at St Andrew's parish church in Tarring.

The John Selden Inn is said to be on or near the site of his dwelling. Samuel Johnson wrote: 'There is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn.' Man? Emily Chatterton runs the village inn.

She, like Steve at the Parkview and many others, describes the safety steps and cleaning routine at significant cost at a financially challenging time. Customers need confidence. New furniture allows safe social distance. Extra staff offer table service. She writes that very few virus transmissions were in pubs.

Trade between the lockdowns did not reach normal levels; costs rose. Social meeting benefits our mental health. Sharing company can be essential, especially friendly chat in a local tavern.

Turn to the prospect of vaccinations. The uptake and provision of the 'flu jab rightly rises. It makes sense. Influenza is dangerous. Its impact can lead to extra patients in hospital. The Covid vaccines will be effective at a higher level.

I ask that no one gets hung up on any issue of compulsion. Let us, at least most of us, volunteer to take the new protection. When enough of us do that, protection grows for others: see it as self-interest without selfishness.

Older generations knew the fear of smallpox, leprosy, polio and the conditions suppressed by the MMR vaccine giving near complete protection from measles, mumps and rubella (German measles). HIV/AIDS now has treatments that prevent spread and control symptoms.

The HPV human papillomavirus helps protect against cervical and associated cancers, now with protection against genital warts after one of my sustained campaigns.

We can expect several communications arguing against C-19 vaccines. My task is to be representative of the general interest while understanding the needs or the feelings of minorities. As the coronavirus vaccination programme rolls out, I would argue against compulsion. I do strongly encourage participation.

The prime minister speaks of doing everything in our power to help hospitality. Suppressing the virus by vaccinations is part of that.