

Clever, Creative, Committed and Compassionate

Sir Peter Bottomley MP

Worthing Herald Article

11th August 2022

In private business, in the public services and in the utilities, sensible people want to work for leaders and supervisors who get joint tasks done properly in ways that are sustainable. The clever boss wants to hear when things are going wrong, whether on purpose or by mistake.

I wish we could believe all the water companies encouraged everyone within the organisation to raise within the organisation questions about investment to reduce leakages and to report excessive regular discharges into rivers and coastal waters.

Southern Water have helpfully and promptly investigated and reported on the worrying slick apparently coming from around the outflow pipe. There was an unplanned evacuation of parts of Worthing's beaches. Pollution investigators were directed to test the bathing water near Heene road.

We have been assured the most likely reason for the change in the appearance of the seawater was disturbance of the silt that built up around the outfall. Samples are reported to have contained no ammonia, indicating there was no spillage of foul fluid. The investigation also cleared the stretch from the Lido to Steyne Gardens. The dirtied shingle and built-up material could be removed from around the outfall.

Years ago, when there was too much rain, there were floods in East Preston and in Worthing because screens or outfalls had not been cleared. Water could not flow out. Then, public and private bodies, helped by residents' groups, worked out the short-term and the longer-term actions to avoid frequent repetition.

Cleverness is not being sharp; it is choosing to do what works, including spotting what possible new developments to back. Old industries can reinvent themselves. This week's issue of Coinslot International, the industry 'bible' for the UK low-stake gaming and amusement sectors includes an example. The famous showman Pat O'Neill of Connaught Leisure started me reading it.

As a teenager I had worked during holidays at Battersea Fun Fair on a kiosk: 'Roll-up, roll-up: everyone's a winner.' Pat, then close by, was a friend of my employer. Years later I became Pat's MP when he lived on East Preston's Willowhayne. We met in Worthing when he hosted dinners for good causes. He also invited me to briefings by the BACTA, the British trade association for amusements and low stake gaming.

One of the great people was legendary Jimmy Thomas. From 1956 he had over sixty years in casinos, bingo, change machines, and with his son Simon rescued and transformed London's Hippodrome. He died aged 88 on my birthday two weeks ago.

Coinslot this week gives six pages to Jimmy. Three are given to tributes by those who knew him and by many influenced by him. The editorial reflects on his 'generosity of spirit, his willingness to mentor those just starting out, his smile and his friendship'. I worked with his son to end the spread of the appalling fixed-odds betting terminals in bookmakers' shops. They multiplied when sharp operators found ways around the laws that were supposed to control exploitation.

Creative commitment and showing compassion should be dedicated to achieving results, whether in a school or college, in a hospital or medical practice, in a professional services group or as a publican or restaurateur.

When a journalist asks me to comment on a constituent's issue, I explain that our case work is confidential; only the person affected is free to say how we advised or tried to help. What I and my team can do in public is to spell out the lessons and to campaign for change for the better, by law, by practice or by publicity.

Examples include residential leasehold reform, protecting the Goring Gap . . . and trying to gain greater achievements at lower cost from Southern Water.