

Play Your Part, Keep Colleagues Safe

Sir Peter Bottomley MP

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Two constituency visits in the past week brought me close to the farm fields between Ferring and Goring-by-Sea where Persimmon are wrongly aiming to plant over 450 new homes. Each visit reminded me of the procedures and precautions to reduce the spread of C-19.

Hundreds in the school family chose the new name St Oscar Romero Catholic School to replace the title Chatsmore Catholic High School. The Bishop of Arundel and Brighton Richard Moth presided at the Mass with two of our local priests. The school head Peter Byrne spoke before introducing my long-term friend Julian Filochowski of the Romero Trust.

Julian took me twice to El Salvador, the land named after the Saviour, where priests were killed for troubling the oligarchs. The British Parliamentary Human Rights Mission to Archbishop Oscar Romero's office and other groups including trade union activists helped us link with the oppressed and to discover secret interrogation and torture rooms.

The second, recorded by the fearless BBC reporter Martin Bell, was when I represented the British Council of Churches at Oscar Romero's funeral. Fourteen innocent people, mostly women, died around us when events turned bad.

The injunction around the Palace of Westminster and in many other workplaces to PLAY YOUR PART AND KEEP COLLEAGUES SAFE applies to much more than the need to suppress the transmission of C-19. If invited to tell my life story, I would omit sins of omission and of commission to allow time to explain the approach we took to reduce serious injury and death on our shared roads.

We did not grandstand with a lowered legal limit for alcohol (criminalising many more), or of mass random testing (deliberately targeting most the people who had not taken alcohol before driving), or increasing court imposed penalties (none of which exceeded the 1,200 deaths a year associated with over-the-limit driving).

We did bring attention to three actions that could result in a significant measurable continuing reduction. In summary, we helped each person to play a part. As a host at a party, a pub, an office gathering or at home, we can make alcohol-free drink available within reach. As a passenger we can pick a driver unaffected by alcohol. If a drinking driver, can we decide in advance whether to drink or to drive this evening?

It worked: young men's behaviour became better than their fathers instead of remaining worse. The number of deaths below the (unsafe) legal limit fell as dramatically as those above. In recent years some clever people have written about nudge theory. I prefer to write about applied common sense.

That approach was used for the extension of the eastbound platform at Goring station by Chatsmore Farm. I admired it and thanked the rail staff on Friday. After preparatory foundations, the main work was completed in 2 ½ days by the railway infrastructure experts. They used recycled plastic blocks. Twelve carriage trains no longer hang over the level crossing, blocking the road for two unnecessary minutes many times a day.

In a conversation on Monday, I asked a senior Network Rail person to start a long-term plan to replace level crossings. The old arrangements do not deliver the improvements that are essential.

Parliament this week is considering the Internal Market Bill. There are good points on many sides. Do not think all on one side are in the same party. Do expect positive developments. If we and the EU work together, we can all gain.