

Parliament is Important in Many Ways

Sir Peter Bottomley MP

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A constituent wrote to suggest a national day of prayer as a way to find the way forward on the dangers of climate change.

I responded on the day the House of Lords rejected a number of proposals intended to strike a fair balance between the rights of protest and the legitimate expectation of everyone else to be able to go about their lives without disproportionate disruption or unbearable disturbance.

Do look, if interested, at the history [national-days-of-prayer-research-document.pdf \(wordpress.com\)](#) or search UK National Days of Prayer 1897-1957. It starts with modern history.

Given views today on appeasement, there may be surprise that there were two days in 1938: the first about the Sudetenland Crisis and the second as thanksgiving for the Munich Agreement.

The most recent was during the 1947 crisis: a terrible war had been followed by harsh winter, trade was poor, money scarce and most essentials were in short supply. The government led by Clement Attlee is generally associated with secular solutions.

Half seriously, it has been suggested the NHS has now take the place of organised religion in our country. Like the BBC, nearly all of us rely on it; we have views on it; we appreciate its breadth and depth of services and we do not expect occasional times of criticism to obscure the general praise and value of the national jewel.

I engage weekly or monthly with Sussex police, with the interlinked NHS Trusts and general practitioners, with the parish, borough, district and county councils. Initiatives follow, including asking central government to allow parish councils to hold online or hybrid meetings. It is unclear to me why there have to be national rules on this kind of issue.

It was good to sit down with Dr Catherine Howe, chief executive at Worthing. I appreciate the constant cooperation my office has with all her colleagues and councillors.

My email Inbox has received many kind messages about my Commons contribution on the BBC. I will make available online a short article together with a lecture given two years ago by Sir David Clementi at Salford when he chaired the BBC. My view is that for all its faults, alternative means of funding the BBC would be worse, especially for the marginalised and vulnerable.

The Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Secretary knows I also strongly support the distinctiveness of Channel 4. Unexpectedly to those tempted to write it off as a haven for left-wingers only, I understand its viewers have a higher proportion of Conservative voters than the national average.

Locally, my week is dominated by the Chatsmore Farm developers' appeal against Worthing Borough Council's refusal of planning permission for hundreds of houses on the farmland by St Oscar Romero school.

To help the Inspector understand, when giving evidence, I shared the aerial view, showing the fields that define the village of Ferring, separating it from Goring-by-Sea and from East Preston and Kingston.

Every parcel of agricultural land seems to be seen as a building plot by a keen builder. I explained that there was little sustained objection to the West Durrington development nor to Teville Gate, Union Place and the Gasworks site.

Internationally, with leaseholder campaigners, I am engaging with the largest shareholder in British builders and European manufacturers of flammable cladding and combustible insulation. The national Norwegian investment managers can help bring pressure to pay the costs that should not be left to innocent householders.

At Westminster and around Worthing, I will work to sustain all that is valued and to support improvements, with all willing partners.