



With September and the academic year underway everything springs back into action. As is well known, the situation in Syria brought Parliament back from Recess a few days early.

Syria. I have been in correspondence with many constituents on the situation in Syria in the last couple of weeks. There appears to have been much confusion on the essence of the debate that took place in Parliament at the time of Recall. It was not a vote on whether or not we should go to war with Syria or even take punitive military action. What the motion was about was pursuing a UN process and another vote in the Commons. The motion condemned the use of chemical weapons by Assad, authorised member states to protect civilians in Syria from the use of chemical weapons and referred the situation to the International Criminal Court. If you would like to read a full account of my response to questions on the matter see my website.

The situation in Syria is changing by the day thus anything more that I say in this context will be out of date by the time it reaches Parish Magazines. I will therefore not make further comment at this stage but am happy to continue debate with constituents who wish to contact me on this.

The '**Lobbying Bill**' is the other key debate that has taken much time and aroused much interest since the return of Parliament. The Government has long promised to bring greater transparency to the political process as part of its commitment to clean up politics. The **Transparency of lobbying, non-party campaigning and trade union administration Bill** has just finished its committee stage. The Bill aims to tackle the problem of third party campaigning. It aims to extend transparency to give the public more confidence about the way third parties interact with the political system. The Bill has three sections:

- It establishes a statutory register of professional consultant lobbyists.
- It tightens the regulation on the amount third party organisations can spend on political campaigning during election periods.
- It introduces new powers to ensure trade union membership records are kept up to date.

Royal Mail. In April 2012 the Post Office, which operates the network of post offices, was separated from Royal Mail and is now a distinct company. The Post Office is not for sale. It is Royal Mail shares that are to be offered for sale. To this end, the Government has announced an Initial Public Offering of shares in Royal Mail to take place in the next few weeks to give the company the chance to raise the capital it will require to be competitive. The Government remains committed to the provision of the six day a week universal service at uniform and affordable prices. Free services for the blind and the armed forces will not be affected. The Government will retain flexibility around the size of the stake to be sold although 10% will be made available to employees as free shares.

The EU Bill has now left the committee stage. This brings the Bill a step closer introducing the commitment to an in-out referendum by the end of 2017. The Bill will take its Report Stage and Third Reading on the floor of the House.

Village Tour. During the September Recess whilst the different Party Conferences take place I will once again be taking the opportunity to get out and about in the constituency particularly visiting some of the smaller villages and hamlets. I look forward to meeting many constituents and learning of particular areas of interest and concern during this time.

Further details of the proposed legislation and the work of Parliament is available on the parliament website at www.parliament.uk. As always I am interested to hear views on the proposals before the House.

For more information my website is regularly updated and offers information on my work both in Westminster and in the constituency. The address is www.johnhowellmp.com In addition, if you would like to subscribe to my free e-newsletter please e mail me at: john.howell@oxfordshireconservatives.com You can also follow me on twitter @johnhowellmp