

My inbox this week has been overwhelmed by messages from constituents on the issue of foxhunting. By the end of Tuesday evening I had received over 600 emails asking me to vote against proposed changes to the existing legislation. What makes this interesting is rarely do I get such a significant number of emails via electronic campaigns. Usually I'd expect to receive between 60 to 100 notifications from constituents with the badger cull 18 months ago generating the most at around 150.

This therefore made the whole issue of foxhunting even more important for me. My views on foxhunting, and general animal welfare matters, are well known. Like Ann Widdecombe when she was next door, I am a longstanding opponent of hunting with dogs on the grounds of animal welfare. I have debated the issue on local radio and TV many times with those who are in favour but I simply do not like it. And as it happens nor do the vast majority of the public.

The legislation that exists now is a compromise that works for everyone.

In the event, after the SNP decided it would vote against the proposed amendment to legislation along with a decent number of Conservative MPs, myself included, and so the Government decided not to go ahead with the vote.

It was an important recognition by the Government of the strength of feeling from the British public on this matter. I am not sure now whether there will be a future vote on foxhunting or if that is it. Nevertheless from my inbox I know where my constituents stand on this matter and I am grateful for all the emails. However the main reason I hope that it doesn't come back is we have far more important things in Parliament to be talking about than this, both for the countryside and the country as a whole.