

I like to throw into my columns occasionally a relevant quote but looking on the internet for one on democracy, the theme of this week's column, all I found was negative or cynical comments about its value or purpose.

I think last week's vote on Syria demonstrated that democracy can and does work when tried and tested. I personally emailed over 500 residents and nearly 400 replied. My local Conservative Association emailed 1200 and over half replied. The views of those who contacted me genuinely helped confirm my own voting intention and that I had truly represented local residents in Parliament.

But now a new term has started and the first legislative issue that was discussed on Tuesday of this week concerns the Transparency of Lobbying Bill. There have been many comments that this Bill will "gag" various organisations during election time and limit freedom of speech and democratic processes. As a former lobbyist, both inside a company and within a consultancy acting on behalf of many other organisations, including charities, I feel very strongly about the value of lobbying in our democratic process. I truly believe that lobbying helps inform and educate MPs on often technical issues. A lot of badly drafted legislation is passed in Parliament, and always has been, but it would be a lot worse without lobbyists.

Yet it is an industry beset by scandal and is opaque at times. The Bill aims to make the industry more transparent and this is something I support. The vote earlier this week was on the principle of transparency and not the individual clauses which have concerned some residents enough to write to me and these will be dealt with later.

Looking at Syria reminds us how valuable democracy is. But the process must be transparent, giving confidence to our system and prevent future corruption, deception and scandal.