

Last week was Dog Awareness Week. It may sound like a daft title but it was run by the Royal Mail in conjunction with the Communication Workers Union, supported by many animal charities, to raise awareness about the increasing number of dog attacks on posties. Last year across the ME postcode there were 37 recorded attacks, some of which would have led to serious injury.

This has become quite a hot topic in Parliament, not just because of the campaign by Royal Mail but as a result of seeing a number of tragic events involving dangerous dogs. MPs from all parties have raised concerns about the inadequacies of current legislation, a position supported by the police and local authorities.

The Anti-Social Behaviour Bill has just finished its committee stages in the House of Commons and dangerous dogs legislation is being considered in this legislation. I was a member of the Committee and therefore got to play a lead role in trying to update the previous Act, which remains to date one of the worst pieces of legislation passed.

This Bill aims to facilitate a number of things that the current dangerous dog legislation does not cover, such as dog attacks on assistance dogs such as guide dogs and extending the criminal offence of allowing a dog to be dangerously out of control to all places which will include private places as well as the public places.

Sadly my own amendment to include protected animals (such as cats, horses etc) from dog attacks was not accepted by the Government and nor was another amendment to introduce dog control notices.

So although the vast majority of dog owners are incredibly responsible there are some that are not, and it is those postmen and women along with others, who suffer. In my view more needs to be done to defend society from those people but at least we are one or two steps forward.