

The Party Conference season is over again for another year and myself and colleagues have returned to Parliament for the last few months before the General Election. One of the main advantages of Fixed Term Parliaments and knowing exactly when the Election will be is that we can concentrate on important legislation and debates without constantly thinking that today is the day we all get thrown out of our offices and on to the doorsteps.

This week we have had really important debates on the devolution of powers following the Scottish Referendum and the future of Palestine and Israel. These are both issues that may not seem immediately relevant but I have been grateful for the numerous emails that I have received with well thought through comments on both issues.

On the former, the Government is looking at how we can develop English Votes for English Laws in order to bring some balance into parliament on matters that only affect English constituencies but can be approved or defeated by the determining votes of Scottish MPs. This is an issue that will rumble on for a little while yet but the initial debate was extremely interesting.

On the latter issue of Palestine/Israel, I voted for the motion calling for the Government to recognise the state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel as a contribution to securing a negotiated two state solution. I was amazed by the number of people who emailed me asking me to do so. We often think foreign affairs do not matter, but they really do.

We also had an excellent debate on foetal alcohol syndrome. This is an issue I have been looking into in part through my alcohol misuse group but also through the work I've done on infant mortality. It is a much misunderstood and often misdiagnosed issue.

So we are back working hard in Westminster. Enjoy the peace and quiet while you can...the General Election will be here sooner than you think and 650 of us will be released on to your doorsteps!