

A lot of work in Parliament is done beyond the green benched chamber of the House of Commons including in Select Committees. I sit on two. One deals with constitutional issues and has just started an interesting consultation on proposals to improve voter engagement and the other shadows the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Although my main enthusiasm within DCMS is the sports brief, the wider issues are equally fascinating. We are doing two inquiries at the moment which are particularly interesting, not just from a policy perspective but also because of their impact on the local area and individual constituents. This is where we politicians need to get better at showing why what we do in Parliament is important to the man or woman on the street.

The first inquiry, which is a relatively short one, is on tourism. The Committee intends to visit Chatham Dockyard in the near future and hear from interested groups about what Government can do to encourage and promote tourism within the UK. Last week's announcement by the Chancellor to cut Air Passenger Duty for children under 12 was great news for UK tourists going abroad but more needs to be done on promoting venues at home and one way, I believe, is to cut VAT on accommodation and attractions in the UK. This will lead to jobs and a huge long term economic boost in Kent.

The other inquiry we are doing is into the future of the BBC. The broadcaster remains incredibly popular but in our changing digital world the way it is funded is up for debate. We are nearing the end of our inquiry and a massive report will be published shortly on what the BBC does, how it should change and what the next Charter, covering its governance and funding, should say. Believe it or not, a report like this impacts on you not just as a viewer of television but also a reader of a local newspaper.

This is why politicians need to explain better the work we do beyond the Chamber because it is valuable and important.