

This week has been Parliament Week, an annual festival that engages people from across the UK with Parliament, explores what it means to them and empowers them to get involved. I have always been keen to encourage a much greater awareness of all aspects of Parliament, from the building through to the procedures and practices. What the public generally sees of Parliament is such a miniscule part of what happens here. The snippets of either Prime Minister Question time or the ding dongs over the Despatch Box account for probably a single digit percentage of what happens here. So much more occurs beyond the mainstream parliament channel. We spend a significant amount of time in cross-party environments working through legislation or policy on every issue under the sun in a constructive and productive way. There are an enormous number of meetings, raising issues on behalf of constituents, groups and even entire communities, or listening to organisations informing and educating us on issues that affect our constituents or communities. And all this is done in a Palace with a rich and deep history that extends beyond the magnificent architecture and which has shaped who we are and what we can and cannot do today.

Very few understand our hours, jargon and procedures and as a consequence we often lose the public sympathy on who we are as an industry. While there has never been a point in history where politicians have been loved, we have done our best over decades to erode respect through the actions and behaviours of some. Parliament Week tries to reconnect people with the institution and aims to enlighten what we do, how and why we do it. Events have taken place throughout the UK and now more than ever as we face the implementation of Brexit do we need to more weeks like this.