

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP**  
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

11<sup>th</sup> June 2018

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**RE: CAMPAIGN FOR REAL ALE (CAMRA); EDM 1233.**

Thank you for contacting me recently about the Campaign for Real Ale; your comments upon which I read with great interest.

As a Parliamentary Private Secretary, I am not able to sign Early Day Motions, as doing so would likely be in breach of the Ministerial Code's rules on collective responsibility. However, in any event, I have general concerns about the effectiveness and expense of the EDM system, and I have attached a copy of an excellent article written by my colleague, Chris Heaton-Harris MP, which I feel succinctly sets out those concerns. I hope that this will be of interest to you, and essentially, I think it is much more effective to raise concerns directly with Ministers, both verbally, and in writing, rather than signing EDMs.

However, pubs play a crucial role in the social and economic life of our nation. The British Beer and Pub Association estimate that each pub contributes £80,000 each year to its local economy. I am glad that the pub sector is being supported in a range of ways.

Through the Asset of Community Value scheme, communities can list facilities of local importance, such as pubs. This means that if a pub owner wishes to sell, the community has six months to come up with a plan and funding in order to try to save it. I am glad that there are now around 2,000 pubs across England listed as assets of community value.

I am also pleased that the Autumn Budget announced that duties on beer, cider, wine and spirits will be frozen in 2018.

Many pubs have also benefited from the Government's package on business rates for small businesses. The Spring Budget 2017 also provided a £1,000 discount on business rates bills in 2017 for pubs with a rateable value of less than £100,000 – 90 per cent of pubs in England – and I was encouraged to see this extended in the Autumn Budget for one more year to March 2019.

There is also greater flexibility on weights and measures, allowing beer and wine to be sold in different sizes. It is now easier for pubs to play live music and £320,000 has been provided for the Pub is The Hub initiative to help landlords diversify and provide essential services such as village shops and post offices.

I recognise that pubs are an integral part of our local community and have previously asked Ministers in the House of Commons about the steps being taken to promote our pub trade, highlighting the good work of this industry in Corby & East Northamptonshire.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.



with best wishes,

*Tom*

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP  
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT  
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

## Chris Heaton-Harris: Why Early Day Motions are politically impotent

**Writing exclusively for PoliticsHome, Conservative MP Chris Heaton-Harris describes Early Day Motions as 'politically impotent', and warns he is 'not going to waste time and money on sponsoring or signing EDMs'.**

Since being elected last year, a number of my constituents have asked me to sign Early Day Motions (EDMs). I'm afraid I haven't signed any yet and don't plan on changing that in the future as I think they are pretty much politically impotent and too costly in their current form.

I'm not alone either, quite a number of the 2010 intake all independently decided to do the same thing and I would imagine that if the rules around EDMs don't change at the next election, even more MPs will join the "just say no" bandwagon.

Supposedly EDMs cost around £500 a go and we have already had 2423 tabled in this Parliament. Looking through the titles of the EDMs you'll see many a worthy political cause being lauded, people recently passed away remembered and an abundant amount of motherhood and apple pie. Yet even the most benign EDM rarely gets more than 50 signatories; indeed, many barely scrape into double figures.

I really do think that we need to change how EDMs can be sponsored before too many MPs decide to call it a day on them. Surely a sensible solution would be to say that an individual Member should not be allowed to table an EDM? We should at least try to separate the more popular ones by asking that there be at least ten MPs proposing for it to be accepted as being tabled and thus, opened up for others to sign.

Considering there are MPs out there who tend to sign a large number of EDMs (Sir Peter Bottomley and Alan Meale, please take a bow) surely setting an entry point of ten signatures is not an oppressive barrier if you really do care about a subject?

One of the main reasons (if not the main reason) why so few people sign EDMs is that in the last few years they have turned into the tool of the crap lobbyist. Sitting in a meeting room trying to work out how to justify their Client's retainer, many believe that if they can get a few signatures on an EDM he has done his or her job. Even better if you can persuade your client to run a campaign to get more MPs to sign up; more money for you to set up pointless meetings to talk about a pointless campaign to try and get more than a dozen signatures for a pointless motion that will be ignored by Government and just about everyone else too.

If you are a business, charity or NGO and your Public Affairs outfit recommends an EDM - fire them immediately! Few people take any notice of them and so they are really no more than political graffiti.

So, to my Constituents I say if you are writing to me, please don't ask me to sign an EDM. I'll happily raise subjects with Ministers, ask questions in the House or try to have a Westminster Hall debate - in other words, do things that actually count - but I'm not going to waste time and money on sponsoring or signing EDMs.