

End homophobia in football, says Roger

Roger has signed an Early Day Motion calling for an [end to homophobia in football](#). The motion supports efforts to eradicate homophobic abuse from football, and calls on all clubs and supporters to work together to make football more tolerant and supportive of gay people.

Roger calls on DEFRA to ban export of live animals

Roger has written to the farming Minister to express his support for amending the UK's legislation to allow ports to refuse to export live farm animals, which causes the animals additional, unnecessary suffering and distress.

The Government claim that this is not possible under EU legislation. In his letter, Roger pointed out that the UK is legally required to "pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals" when formulating policy on agriculture.



He also pointed out the inconsistency of the Government's position. Says Roger: "The Coalition is extremely sceptical of the benefits of EU legislation in many areas, including human rights, and more than happy to challenge it. Yet they also use EU legislation as a shield to refuse to address issues with which they would rather not engage."

Cuts to legal aid will hit poorest and most vulnerable, says Roger

Roger has written to the Justice Secretary, Chris Grayling, to protest about the effects of the cuts to legal aid on access to justice. He is concerned that the current plans will disproportionately affect those with the greatest need of legal aid, who are the least able to pay for access to the law.



In his letter, Roger informed the Minister that he is already hearing from constituents who desperately need legal advice but are unable to get it. The providers of pro bono legal advice in Birmingham do a wonderful job, but simply do not have the capacity to take up all the cases which would previously have been covered by legal aid.

If these cuts are not reversed, justice will become a commodity which is available only to the rich in this country. Roger also pointed out that the measures are likely to be deeply counter-productive. Quite apart from

the cruelty of denying justice to people because they are poor, people whose problems are not resolved through the legal system because it is priced out of their reach will end up costing more to other parts of the national budget.



Don't bring back blood sports, says Roger

Roger is totally opposed to Government attempts to undermine the hunting ban. There is concern that the legislation around hunting foxes and deer with dogs may be relaxed, with the League Against Cruel Sports describing the proposed change as “revoking the hunting ban by the back door”.

Roger commented: “At a time when so many people are struggling with the cost of living, it is unbelievable that this Government have nothing better to do than bring back a cruel ‘sport’ which the vast majority of people of the UK are utterly against.”



Roger tabled an Early Day Motion calling on the Government to enforce the existing legislation which prevents hunting rather than weaken it. It reads:

“That this House notes with great concern that the Government is considering amending the Hunting Act 2004 by eliminating the restrictions on the number of dogs which may be used to help farmers shoot foxes; is concerned that any weakening of the Hunting Act could permit fox hunting for sport to resume; further notes that there is great public opposition to allowing fox hunting to take place in the UK; further notes that there is no evidence suggesting foxes are a significant cause of missing livestock; urges the Government to listen to the voices of the vast majority of people in the UK who are opposed to blood sports; believes that if the Government does want to relax the ban, the proper way to go about this is through primary legislation rather than through a statutory instrument; further believes that a fox being torn apart by dogs should not be considered a sport; further urges the Government to ensure compliance with the existing legislation rather than attempting to weaken it; and further believes that deliberate cruelty to animals should have no place in this country.”

Roger supports campaign to end FGM

Roger would like to congratulate Fahma Mohamed on the success of the campaign to ensure that schools in England and Wales teach students about the risk of female genital mutilation. Fahma, a 17-year old student, was at the head of the campaign to persuade Education Secretary Michael Gove to contact every school about FGM and how they can help to keep their students safe.

It has been estimated that 24,000 girls under the age of 15 are at risk of FGM in England and Wales. Roger supported the campaign and wrote to Michael Gove to urge him to take action and help schools to tackle FGM.

Roger welcomes the publication of Council's Capita contract.

Roger has welcomed the decision by Birmingham City Council to publish details of its multi-million pound outsourcing deal with Capita, which was signed by the Tory/Lib Dem Coalition when they were in power.

Said Roger: “It is absolutely right that the people of Birmingham should know the details of this contract, under which the Council pays Capita about £126 million a year to run its IT, call centre and billing services.



"I will be particularly interested to find out how Capita can justify being paid £1.2 million to build the website for the City's new library and a further £190,000 a year to run it, when Worcester Country Council spent only £10,000 on the website for its new library and centre, and Liverpool City Council disclosed that the costs for its library website were just four hours of staff time to upload new pictures and alter text!"

NHS England backs down on care.data

NHS England decided to bring in a six-month delay to the launch of care.data, a scheme that would see patients' confidential medical records extracted and used for research, including being sold to the private sector. The decision to delay came as evidence mounted that NHS England's information campaign was inadequate and patients had not been properly informed.

Speaking in a Westminster Hall debate on care.data, Roger called on the Government to use this six-month delay to listen to, and address, the legitimate concerns of patients and doctors. Said Roger: "Instead of rushing through a scheme which lacks awareness and consent, the Government should now work with doctors and patients to ensure that they understand the scheme and are happy with it, before data is extracted or sold."

Roger has tabled Written Parliamentary Questions to ask the Government what conditions of public awareness and consent must be met before care.data begins; what consultations with patients and doctors will take place during the six-month delay; and what steps will be taken to improve public awareness of care.data during this time.



"I urge the Government and NHS England to now make full use of this time to consult with doctors and patients and address their concerns," said Roger. "If the Government now listen to patients and doctors rather than attempting to steamroll over them and carry on regardless, they might actually be able to create a scheme which will be a benefit to patients rather than a burden to doctors."

End abuse of wild animals in circuses, says Roger

Roger tabled a Parliamentary Question to put pressure on the Government over their failure to end the use of wild animals in circuses, despite receiving a popular and parliamentary mandate to do so.



The Government has stalled on bringing in legislation to end this abuse of animals. The Wild Animals in Circuses Bill would ensure that travelling circuses in England must stop using all wild animal acts by December 2015. The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee has scrutinised the draft Bill, but the Government have failed to enact it despite widespread support for ending the suffering of wild animals in circuses.

Post Office decides not to go ahead with proposed move of Swanshurst Post Office

Roger is pleased that this relocation will not go ahead, after the Post Office acknowledged that the distance to the proposed new location would cause inconvenience and disadvantage, particularly to vulnerable customers.



Councillors Fazal and Rehman with Roger outside the post office in Swanshurst Lane, which has now been saved by their efforts.

Roger writes to DWP to protest effects of mandatory reconsideration

Roger has written to the Secretary of State, Iain Duncan Smith, to protest about the suffering the policy of mandatory reconsideration of ESA claims is already causing in his constituency.

Roger wrote to the Minister about the case of one of his constituents, who was told that her ESA was being stopped despite the fact that she suffers from a life-threatening heart condition as well as kidney failure. After her ESA was stopped, she was unable to afford to make the journey from Birmingham to attend her appointments at a London hospital.

Happily, the result of the reconsideration (which took nearly two months) was that the original decision should be overturned, and her ESA reinstated. The original Atos assessment awarded Rogers's constituent just 6 points, but at the reconsideration she was found to actually have 15 points. Roger has called on the Department for Work and Pensions to investigate how Atos got this assessment so badly wrong, as he is extremely concerned that similar grossly incorrect assessments are being carried out on a wide scale.



Keep Birmingham's bees buzzing, says Roger

Roger is a supporter of the Birmingham Friends of the Earth campaign to save the West Midlands Long Horned Bee, and spoke out following the publication of a Government action plan that lacked sufficient force to be effective.

The Government agreed to introduce a National Pollinator Strategy at a Bee Summit organised by Friends of the Earth last year, but the draft National Pollinator Strategy is inadequate in a number of areas, including a lack of action on intensive farming and rising pesticide use.



Roger, who is a strong supporter of FoE’s Bee Cause campaign, commented: “Bees are a vital part of our ecosystem and we rely on them for many of the foods we eat every day. I urge the Government to strengthen the draft National Pollinator Strategy to protect bees, including the West Midlands Long-Horned Bee. We need serious action to tackle the effects of intensive monocultural farming and rising pesticide use on the UK’s bee populations.”

MPs vote almost unanimously against badger cull in House of Commons debate

After a debate on the badger cull MPs, including Roger, voted 219 to 1 that the pilot badger culls had “decisively failed”. Roger commented: “Unfortunately, this does not mean that the badger cull will now not go ahead. Far from accepting responsibility for the utter failure of the culls, the Minister responsible, George Eustice MP, did not even bother to attend the debate and decided to visit a snack factory instead!”



Following the debate, Roger tabled Written Parliamentary Questions to ask the Minister what the outcome was of his visit to the Mondelez factory, and whether he will set up an independent committee to review the effect of the pilot badger culls on bovine TB ahead of any wider roll out of the culls. He also tabled a question to the Leader of the House, to ask whether he will schedule a vote on the badger culls to take place in Government time.

Well done to King Edward VI Camp Hill Girls school for winning the CCE Real Business Challenge



Congratulations to students from King Edwards VI Camp Hill School in the West Midlands, who were named national champions of the CCE Real Business Challenge. The enterprise championship received more than 750 entries from schools across the UK, and the Birmingham students beat 75,000 other competitors to the top prize.

The group will receive events management training while working with StreetGames, a sports charity working in disadvantaged communities across the UK. Their work will also be displayed using bus stop advertising in their local area, to raise awareness of the charity's key issues as well as the schools' achievements.

Living Wage Campaign success at Birmingham University

A campaign to put pressure on Birmingham University to pay all its employees the living wage has been successful. The campaign was supported by Unite the Union and Birmingham Labour MPs, as well as students and staff members at the university.

Roger was among those calling for the university to pay the living wage, and he wrote to the head of the University of Birmingham to support the living wage strike action.



The number of the university's employees who require this increase to get their salary up to the level of a living wage is only a few hundred, and the estimated cost to the university is less than £100,000 per year. Roger reminded the Vice Chancellor that he receives a salary approaching half a million pounds per year, and highlighted the unfairness of squeezing pay at the bottom while providing lavish increases at the top.

The university was initially extremely resistant to paying the living wage, even though this involved a pay increase to staff of just 20p per hour, or £7 per week, claiming it could not afford to pay staff a decent wage.

New Olympic Swimming Pool for Sparkhill

Roger Godsiff joined with local Councillors Mohammed Fazal and Habib Rehman and Sparkbrook Councillor, Victoria Quinn, together with local children to celebrate the news that swimmers in Sparkhill will soon be able to swim in a new Olympic Swimming Pool used during the London 2012 Olympics.



Roger with local Councillors, Mohammed Fazal and Habib Rehman, outside the derelict Sparkhill Pool and Leisure Centre with local children who will benefit from the new Olympic swimming pool used during the London 2012 Olympics.

Thanks to the ongoing campaign by Roger and the Springfield Councillors, together with the support of local people, Sparkhill is going to have one of the nine London 2012 Olympic Training Pools which are to be dismantled and rebuilt in a brand new baths. The new facility will include a 25m six-lane swimming pool, a learner pool and an 80-station fitness suite, dance studio, community room, sauna and steam facilities.

Said Roger: "The people of Sparkhill and the local Councillors have been superb in their campaign to ensure that this replacement baths project went ahead. The previous Tory/Lib Dem Coalition in Birmingham fobbed off local people with vague and uncostered promises but nothing materialised.

"The new Labour administration in Birmingham is to be warmly congratulated for honouring our pledge to get new baths for the people of Sparkhill. The facility that is going to be provided will be outstanding, and it is what the people of Sparkhill deserve."

Congratulations to Maggie Novell, who has been working hard for the people of Birmingham for 26 years!

For help and advice, please see the 'Helplines' section of Roger's website, available at www.rogergodsiffmp.co.uk/helplineAdvice.php, or [here](#).

You can also follow Roger on twitter at [@RogerGodsiff](https://twitter.com/RogerGodsiff) or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/rogergodsiff.



Maggie started working for Denis Howell in 1988 before working for Roger. Thank you very much, Maggie!