

Action To Protect UK Heritage

Parliament's administrators are considering putting an end to using vellum to record Acts of Parliament.

Newport Pagnell is home to William Cowley, the only remaining company in the UK who produce parchment and vellum which is made from animal skin to document historical records relating to centuries of Parliamentary activity.

Parliament's continued use of parchment and vellum is the envy of the world and it's thanks to vellum and its durability that we can read journals dating back to King Charles II, King Richard I and several million historical records for Parliament, including the Magna Carta, the most celebrated document in history, which has survived for over 800 years.

Established in 1870 and now one of three surviving producers in the world, Paul Wright, of William Cowley said,

"There is bitter irony that the very year we celebrate 800 years of Magna Carta, we may also witness the end of recording Acts on vellum. Vellum has excellent 'green' credentials, needs no specialist aftercare, and has provided us with more understanding of earlier civilisations than any other historical artefact."

As an MP I am seriously concerned that proposals for Parliament to end the use of vellum will in fact be a longer term cost and I've written to the Chair of the Administration Committee, Sir Paul Beresford to share my concerns.

I'm determined to try and do my bit to convince Parliament to continue using vellum to record Acts of Parliament for future generations. What records will exist in 2815? What evidence will be left for future generations? Historians have known that but for the use of vellum, we wouldn't have the information or the understanding of earlier civilisations that we have today. I for one would not want to rely solely on electronic data to preserve and protect our heritage. I understand the need to reduce cost but I believe this particular measure is short sighted and Parliamentary authorities should reconsider.