

The view from North Dorset

North Dorset MP Bob Walter talks about human trafficking and a local poet's work to raise awareness of the crime.

For many of us here in Dorset, slavery is a distant phenomenon. Many people remain unaware of the terrifying scale of this horrific practice, or that it takes place so alarmingly close to home in seemingly safe rural areas.

Human trafficking is a brutal crime which ruins lives, and which is appallingly one of the fastest-growing international criminal activities.

Traffickers treat people like commodities. We must ensure that Britain is not a safe haven for traffickers; they must be pursued and brought to justice.

Last month I marked this year's Anti-Slavery Day in the UK. In this regard, I had the pleasure of meeting North Dorset poet and librettist Ben Kaye who has recently penned the lyrics and story for a unique, arts-

based project designed to raise awareness of human trafficking in the UK.

Anya 17 will be the first opera in the UK to focus on this difficult issue. It receives its concert premiere with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Ensemble on 7th March 2012, and has been endorsed widely by leading UK charity groups and international organisations.

As one of Anya 17's official supporters, I hope to raise the project's profile by finding an international audience for this groundbreaking 'Big Society' idea.

Contemporary slavery takes various forms, one of which is human trafficking, a cruel form of organised crime where women, children and men are treated as commodities and exploited for criminal gain.

Trafficking does not have a place in our modern society. Anti-Slavery Day represents a chance for us to reflect on the plight of those who suffer from this terrible



crime and to remind ourselves of the role we can all play in stopping it.

Turning to another important opportunity for serious reflection, on Sunday 13th November I will be joining hundreds of people across Dorset in laying wreaths to commemorate Remembrance Sunday and the sacrifices of our service men and women past, present and future. I am proud to be taking part this year in Services of Remembrance in Shaftesbury and Blandford at the invitation of the Royal British Legion, a charity which has become the nation's custodian of Remembrance.

I remain a firm believer in upholding the Military Covenant and our responsibility, both in government and society, to support and protect members of our Armed Forces and their loved ones as they continue to serve us all now and in the future. I would urge all readers to give their support to this year's Poppy Appeal and wear their poppy with pride.