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Peers' websites provide a useful portal to the work of members of the Upper Chamber, says Lord Lexden

n the House of Lords last month we celebrated the 25th anniversary of the world wide web in a debate led by Martha Lane-Fox. Contributions ranged far and wide - as is to be expected in our House – but a number of speakers touched on the way in which the internet has changed so dramatically the way we can communicate and promote our work.

As members of an unelected, appointed House we need to point out constantly to the public why we are here, what our role as a revising, scrutinising Chamber is, and the contribution we make to the democratic process as a result of the way we improve legislation. And the internet is a remarkably easy and effective way to help us do that.

This is a subject which our Information Committee – under the redoubtable Chairmanship of Lord Kirkwood of Kirkhope - keeps under close surveillance. But because the internet makes authors of us all - and presents us with so many platforms

to explain our work - we can all lend him a hand.

The digital revolution has provided many different ways to do this, and fellow peers

can choose for themselves the platform that suits them best. That is the web's great strength. Some of us who want to produce short, sharp messages, tweet - not

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something, I must admit, that is ever likely to attract me. Others promote our work via Facebook. Some - like my long-standing friend, Lord Norton of Louth, as great an expert in a Chamber of experts that you would ever wish to meet - have their own admirable blogs. Many of us take part in the

Lords of the Blog.

Lord Lexden

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Welcome to Alistair Lexden's website

Local News Lord Lexden co extend the new libel law to Northern Irelan Fuesday, 25 February, 2014 A strong line-up of speakers supported Alistair exden's renewed call for action in a speech on ebruary 25 when he brought the issue back to e... xtend the

rd Lexden visits Barki

day, 14 February, 2014 is successful comprehe reflects the diverse ethnic ter of its loc and culture Peers have chosen a number of ways to engage digitally with the public. While Lord Lexden has a website, Lord Norton blogs and Baroness Grey-Thompson is active on Twitter n, published on February 12 and base d, wide-ranging inquiry, discusses the on a detailed, wide

The work that

we as Peers do needs

to be known and

understood more

website can help

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widely. A personal

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But much of this, though

important as well as enjoyable, is transitory. A tweet makes a single point and disappears into the digital ether. Blogs, valuable and

> interesting though they are, tend to be about issues of immediate, often passing interest and are not always easy to find.

n's official website. This website supports his work in the House of Lords, with to onservative History Group and also the Carlton Club.

That is why I believe

crucially, create an archive of material about their activities - speeches in the House

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more peers should consider running their own websites, where they can both comment on matters of contemporary interest and,

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Lord Lexden (formerly Alistair Cooke) is a Conservative peer who took his seat in the House of Lords in January 2011. He is a political historian who is the official Historian to the Conservative Party and the Canton Club.

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and outside it,

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A website can build up a full picture of our work and breadth of interests. It provides an easy way through which users of the internet can communicate with us and discuss aspects of our work that is of interest to them. It provides a permanent record of our contributions to our House which is of use to journalists, commentators and – in time – historians. But above all – particularly set alongside the extremely useful *They Work For Us* website – it aids those things which are so crucial to effective communication of our role: transparency,

personal blog from London

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visibility and

accountability. The work that we do needs to be known and understood more widely. A

personal website can help tremendously. I had a website set up for me by a kind

friend, Adrian Harris, then website manager at Conservative Campaign Headquarters, when I came into the House three years ago. It records everything of public significance, both political and non-political, that I do. It provides electronic links to the speeches that I have made in the Chamber, and to my oral questions. I include the main points from speeches that I make outside the House, and the full text of occasional lectures (such as the one I gave on Prince Albert and British politics in Coburg last September). The articles and reviews section of the website contains all my historical pieces and book reviews, including of course those which have appeared in The House. I add the school visits that I make as part of the Lord Speaker's outreach programme.

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Follow

One of my hobbies is writing letters to the press, usually with historical points. They can all be found in another section of the website. I eagerly add all the flattering photographs taken on my travels, while discarding those which show a less prepossessing person!

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There have been some 22,000 visits to my website so far. After UK visitors, the four countries from which most of them have come are the USA, France, Germany and Brazil, some of them drawn perhaps by my speeches advocating the extension of voting rights to all British citizens living

overseas. I am hoping for more from Commonwealth countries since I do all I can to highlight the plight of homosexuals in so many of them where they are treated as criminals.

Most of those who get in touch with me raise interesting and constructive points to which it is fun to reply. Every week brings its surprises. I have just been asked to address a conference of house builders on the history of housing – a subject rather far removed from the ups and downs of the Conservative Party over the centuries about which I do claim to know something.

Alistair Lexden is a Conservative Peer. His website can be found at www.alistairlexden.org.uk

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