

Emily Thornberry MP

ISLINGTON SOUTH AND FINSBURY

February 2025 report



Historical visits in Islington South

The London Archives boasts an enormous collection of material. We were shown fantastic original material that ranged from hand painted blitz damage maps of Islington to panoramas of Islington's pastoral past. I was lucky enough to see the oldest item in the collection, the William I Charter, which guaranteed the collective rights and privileges of Londoners that existed under the previous monarch, King Harold Godwinson. The archive is open Monday - Thursday, 10am to 4:30pm, and Wednesday 10am to 7pm; if you are into history, I cannot recommend a visit enough!

The London Archives



Wesley's Chapel

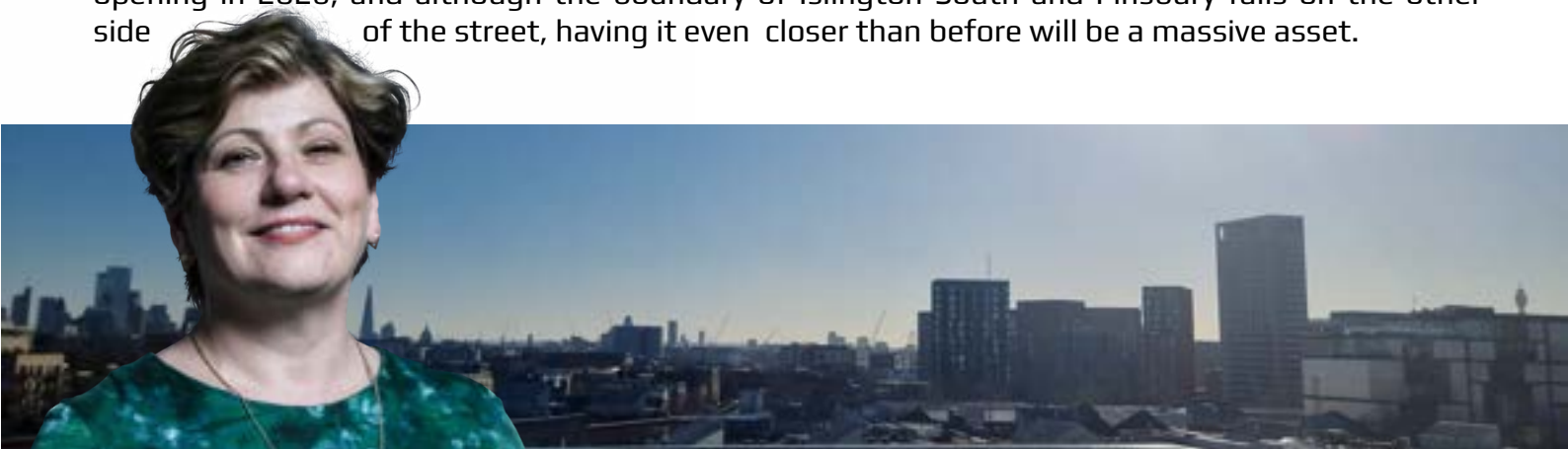


Wesley's Chapel and Leysian Mission is hidden away in St Luke's, opposite Bunhill Fields. The 'Mother Church of World Methodism', it was built for John Wesley, whose house on site draws pilgrims from as far afield as Brazil and South Korea.

I first met the Superintendent, Revd Canon Dr Jennifer Smith, when we were both on the Today Programme the day after Trump's re-election. On our visit we discussed the Chapel's 400-strong congregation and their community efforts, particularly work with local schools.

The London Museum

I sat down with the Museum Director Sharon Ament to discuss her vision for the new London Museum site. I came away very impressed, not only by the scale of the task of building a new museum, re-purposing the Smithfield market space, and the difficulties of moving 350,000 display objects to the new space; but also, by the enthusiasm Sharon and her team have for building partnerships with local schools, sourcing from local businesses, and spreading the economic heft of the museum around. I am very much looking forward to the museum's official opening in 2026, and although the boundary of Islington South and Finsbury falls on the other side of the street, having it even closer than before will be a massive asset.



Foreign Affairs Select Committee work

As I wrote to you last month, my Foreign Affairs Select Committee is currently working on three major inquiries:

- The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and the UK's role in the region
- Soft Power and the BBC World Service
- Disinformation

Next week, we will travel to Israel, Palestine, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. I am looking forward to meeting with partners in all four countries to discuss what a sustainable future - one which guarantees freedom and statehood for Palestinians alongside security for Israel and regional neighbours - looks like. As Donald Trump's deeply concerning comments about "the Riviera of the Middle East" in Gaza remind us, while we focus our energy on the immediate priority of ensuring the ceasefire holds, we must not lose sight of what comes next.

As well as those major inquiries, my committee has this month begun a piece of work on the UK's sanctions strategy. We want to know whether our sanctions policy is fit for purpose: are our sanctions well-targeted? Are they having the desired impact? How are we supporting the companies tasked with implementing sanctions policy day-to-day? We have already held a public hearing on this topic and I look forward to reading the evidence we receive from the public.

I'm particularly excited at the moment about the opportunity to scrutinise the UK's post-Brexit relationships with the EU. I have met with both the Europe Minister and EU Ambassador in the last month to discuss this work, and I look forward to it taking shape.

If you would like to submit evidence to any of our ongoing inquiries, the evidence portals can be accessed [here](#).



Meeting the Brazilian Ambassador



Questioning witnesses at our hearing on sanctions



On Channel 4 News talking about our work on the conflict and the need to get aid into Gaza



Justice for MI6 members, sacked for being gay

In January I was successful in the ballot to ask a question at Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs).

PMQs is a great opportunity to raise individual cases with the Prime Minister, and I took this opportunity to ask the PM about a constituent who was sacked from the Secret Intelligence Service in the 1980s after disclosing he was gay.

I'm glad the PM agreed that we absolutely have to right this historic injustice.

You can see my full question [here](#). Please do get in touch if there are any issues you'd like to see me raise in Parliament!



Raising a constituent's case during Prime Minister's Questions

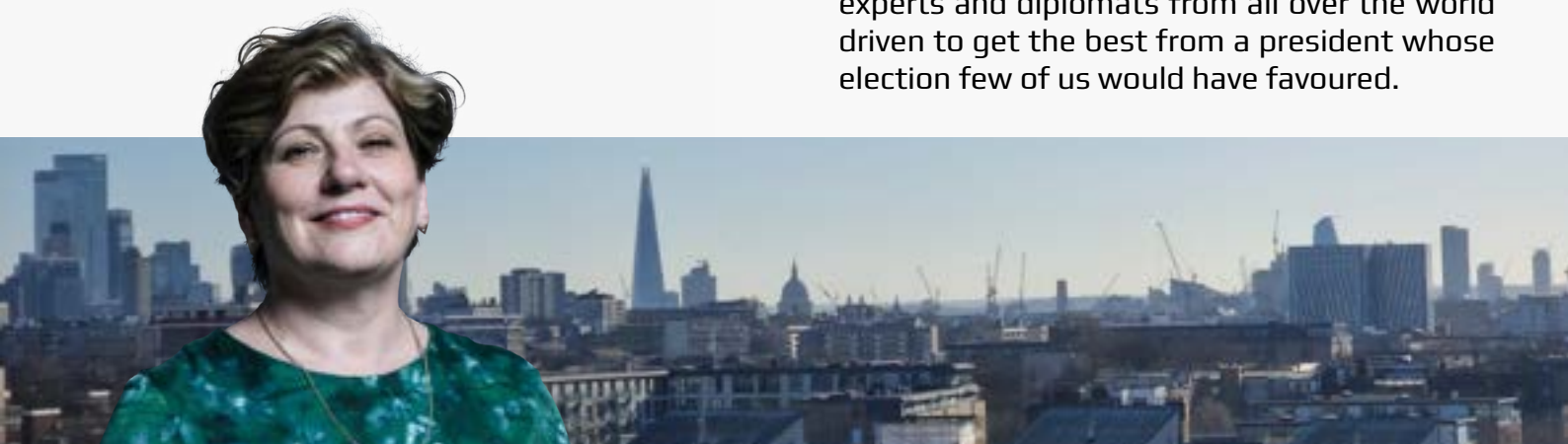
Speaking at Chatham House and the British Foreign Policy Group



On the panel with Michael Martins of Overton Advisory; Leslie Vinjamuri of Chatham House's Americas programme; and Evie Aspinall of the British Foreign Policy Group

On 22 January, I visited Chatham House to speak on a roundtable with their Middle East and North Africa programme. The expertise in the room was unbelievable - and very daunting! It was an incredibly productive conversation from which I took many new ideas for my committee's work on and visits to the Middle East.

The following week, I visited the British Foreign Policy Group in Mayfair for panel on the implications of Trump's election for Britain and the world. In a conversation which ranged from tariffs to China, we debated whether the optimists or the pessimists have got the right approach to Trump. I was once again astonished by the expertise in the room, and pleased to make connections with experts and diplomats from all over the world driven to get the best from a president whose election few of us would have favoured.



Holocaust Memorial Day at the Town Hall

I spent Holocaust Memorial Day at Islington Town Hall to remember those who perished during the Holocaust and more recent genocides, and to say solemnly, 'never again'.

The 27th of January marked the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, and 2025 marks the 30th anniversary of the end of the Bosnian Genocide.

As we gathered to remember these atrocities, we need to remember the vile ideologies that gave birth to them are not yet dead. When I visited menorah lighting on Islington Green, with my friend Rabbi Mendy, the event was targeted by protestors.

I was shocked to discover that one of the protestors had been targeting the event since 2011. This family event in celebration of Jewish faith and heritage had nothing to do with events unfolding in the Middle East or the actions of the state of Israel. This was clear antisemitism. It is a stain that needs to be expunged from our society, and I will continue to call it out.



Author Gerry Hahlo sharing the story of his grandfather's escape from Nazi Germany and his father coming to Britain as a refugee on the Kindertransport

Lunar New Year at the ESEA Community Centre



With De Beauvoir Cllrs Joe Walker and Jasmine Martins and Hackney Speaker Sheila Suso-Runge at the ESEA Community Centre

It is the zodiac year of the snake, and I was lucky enough to celebrate and see it in with De Beauvoir councillors Jasmin Martins and Joe Walker at the East and Southeast Asian Community Centre (ESEACC).

There was lion dancing, mahjong, calligraphy workshops, and performances throughout the day; and I was lucky enough to try some of the amazing food which the ESEACC is famous for through their weekly lunch clubs. The ESEACC is an amazing community space and is open to all – I am so pleased that it calls our constituency home.

The ESEACC also run a free advice service, a mahjong club, and a table tennis club. The full ESEACC schedule can be found at:

<https://www.hackneychinese.org.uk/whats-on>; and for the latest updates their Instagram is: @eseacommunitycentre



Visit to Lloyd's of London

At the beginning of February, I visited Lloyd's of London on the invitation of outgoing Chairman Bruce Carnegie-Brown, whom I met on a panel at Labour Conference last year.

Our conversation covered insights into geopolitical risk, particularly in the Red Sea; trade, particularly UK-US and UK-EU; and the rising market for climate disaster and cybercrime insurance. I was particularly keen to discuss sanctions given my committee's work on the topic - it was fascinating to hear about their underwriters' experience of implementing sanctions policy on the ground.

It was a real treat to look round the beautiful Lloyd's building and pay a visit to the famous underwriting room.



The famous 'Casualty Book' which recorded disasters at sea



The Underwriting Room



With outgoing Lloyd's Chair Bruce Carnegie-Brown, incoming Lloyd's Chair Sir Charles Roxburgh, and the Lutine Bell

Fabian Society New Year's Conference

On 26 January I was invited to speak on a panel at the Fabian Society's New Year's Conference at the Guildhall.

Alongside pollster Luke Tryl, the UK Chair of Democrats Abroad Kristin Wolfe, campaigner Jovan Owusu-Nepaul, and broadcaster Jon Sopel, we discussed what a second Trump presidency might mean for the UK.

In the fascinating hour-long chat, we discussed everything from our trade relationship with the US and prospect of a trade deal, the US' role in peace in the Middle East, and what lessons the Labour Party should learn from the Democrat's loss across the pond.



Speaking in the Guildhall's stunning Great Hall



Visit to Faculty AI with Stephen Morgan MP



Seeing the pen in action



Even spotted some
fab shoes



With the Minister
and Faculty AI's
co-founders

At the end of January I joined Early Years Minister Stephen Morgan MP in attending an AI Content Store Hackathon, held at Faculty AI, an AI specialist tech company based in the constituency.

This hackathon explored how we can make better use of AI to make teacher's lives easier, and began with an interesting presentation of the AI Content Store Faculty AI are developing with the support of the Government. This store will use anonymised data to train AI models, enabling AI to be used to support teacher's in tasks such as developing lesson plans.

I was also shown two of the winning entries to the 'AI Tools in Education' competition, who had won Government funding to develop their idea. This included a former teacher who had designed an auto-transcribing pen that uses AI to translate pupil's harder to read writing, and meant teachers didn't have to carry piles of books home!

Media appearances



Discussing how to deal
with Trump on the Today
Podcast with Nick
Robinson and Amol Rajan



Discussing EU negotiations on Peston
with Steve Baker and Andy Haldane



Discussing the inauguration with Kay
Burley on Sky



Filming for a Channel 4
documentary on Elon
Musk and disinformation



What else I've been up to this month



Hackney Anti-Knife Crime Summit with Cllr Anntoinette Bramble



Our annual fundraising dinner at Frederick's with Andrew Marr



Hand-drawn WWII bomb damage maps at the London Archives



Seeing a piece of cut undersea cable - a major emerging threat from Russia - with Defence Minister Luke Pollard



Visiting an UNRWA camp in Jordan last month



Visit to Kadans Science Partners



Meeting the Brazilian Ambassador to the UK - Antonio de Aguiar Patriota



Diary

Parliament

23 Jan - Meeting with the Saudi Ambassador
23 Jan - Meeting with Christian Aid
25 Jan - Fabian Society New Year Conference
27 Jan - Foreign Affairs Committee hearing with grassroots groups from Israel and Palestine
27 Jan - Meeting with the EU Ambassador
28 Jan - British Foreign Policy Group panel on the second Trump presidency
28 Jan - Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on the situation in Syria
28 Jan - Meeting with the Europe Minister
29 Jan - Asked a question at PMQs
29 Jan - Lunch with the Arab Ambassadors Council
29 Jan - Meeting with the Kuwaiti Ambassador

3 Feb - Foreign Affairs Committee private meeting
3 Feb - Meeting with the Brazilian Ambassador
3 Feb - Meeting with the Foreign Secretary
4 Feb - Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on the UK's sanctions strategy
5 Feb - Meeting with the Bulgarian Ambassador
6 Feb - Visit to Lloyd's of London

Constituency

23 Jan - Meeting with the Chair and CEO of the Whittington and UCLH
24 Jan - Hackney anti-knife crime summit
24 Jan - Visit to Skin Analytics
24 Jan - Visit to Wesley's Chapel
27 Jan - Holocaust Memorial Day at the Town Hall
30 Jan - Girl's District Football meeting
31 Jan - Visit to Faculty AI
31 Jan - Visit to the London Archives

2 Feb - Lunar New Year at the ESEA Community Centre
3 Feb - Frederick's fundraising dinner
6 Feb - Meeting with Edward Benyon
6 Feb - Meeting with members of the local Bangladeshi community
7 Feb - Surgery at St Luke's
7 Feb - Visit to the London Museum
8 Feb - Surgery at the Town Hall

Media

23 Jan - Kay Burley
27 Jan - Politics Live and Sophy Ridge
28 Jan - Channel 4 News
31 Jan - Encompass Podcast

1 Feb - The Week in Westminster
5 Feb - Jon Pienaar on Times Radio, Andrew Marr on LBC, Peston on ITV
6 Feb - The Today Podcast
14 Feb - Westminster Insider Podcast

