PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS
OFFICIAL REPORT

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European Union Constitution: Constitution Committee Report—Motion for Approval [Col. 438]

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I am raising this matter tonight because it is an extremely grave one for the 36 Engineer Regiment and for the town that I represent. It is an irony that 19 years ago I had to fight exactly the same battle when it was proposed to move the regiment from Invicta barracks in Maidstone to, at that time, Thorney Island. It was a bleak prospect and the town and regiment rebelled. I am pleased to say that we secured a reversal of the policy.

It would seem that yet again we are threatened with the removal of the 36 Engineers from Maidstone. I am sure that the Minister will accept that it is very important that morale is kept as high as possible in an Army that is stretched as badly as it is at the moment. Part of the maintenance of good morale is ensuring that families are happy, especially when the forces have to serve overseas for any length of time.

The 36 Engineers is a sapper regiment, so almost by definition it spends a large amount of time abroad and has one of the highest rates of separation from spouses and families in the entire Army. It is thus essential for recruitment and retention that the soldiers can go away feeling that their wives and families are happily integrated in the local community. In turn, the wives have considerable influence over whether their husbands decide to stay in the Army. It follows that if there is general unhappiness with the serving conditions, the soldiers will not give a particularly happy account to potential recruits.

In Maidstone, the 36 Engineer Regiment is based near the centre of a large town, which offers not only good shops but extremely good schools, including the envied grammar schools, and many opportunities for wives to work. The Gaffney report described the regiment's relationship with the town as "ideal" for a major unit. It is. Super-barracks are no substitute. They would need to be built and maintained, and would be costly. The regiment currently enjoys the freedom of the town, and the citizens of Maidstone and the surrounding areas regard the Army with immense gratitude following its intervention, first, after the 1987 wind storm when we had to clear roads urgently and, secondly, during the floods which, the Minister may recall, devastated parts of my constituency a few years ago.

The Minister appears remarkably unmoved by all that, however. I shall quote from a recent letter from the Secretary of State for Defence. He said:

"I should tell you that the Army is committed to consolidating its estate into fewer and larger sites. As a result, a singleton site such as Invicta Park Barracks will be kept under review for possible disposal in the longer term. I should stress that no specific time lines have been established for this process but the points you make regarding the presence of 36 Engineer Regiment in the area will be taken into account."
Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[Tony Cunningham.]

6:47 pm

Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone & The Weald, Conservative) Link to this | Hansard source

I am grateful for the opportunity to have this Adjournment debate tonight and I also wish to record my gratitude to the usual channels on the Government side who ensured that I knew that I had to be here somewhat earlier than I might have predicted.

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The 36 Engineers is a sapper regiment, so almost by definition it spends a large proportion of its time working on sites overseas. I am therefore concerned that the types of training that the regiment has is not being done onshore at Invicta. I am also concerned that the town, which has been without a large barracks for 19 years, is becoming used to living without these activities. The bâtiment and the mess are used by the local community, and it is vital that we find a solution that will allow the town and the regiment to live together.
Emily Thornberry MP

- Labour MP for Islington South & Finsbury
- Entered Parliament on 5 May 2005 — General election
- Majority: 484 voters — 607th safest out of 642 MPs
- Send a message to Emily Thornberry
  (only use this for your MP) (via WriteToThem.com)

- Get messages from your MP (via HearFromYourMP)
- Email me whenever Emily Thornberry speaks (no more than once per day)
- Voting record
- Topics of interest
- Recent appearances in Parliament
- Numerology
- Register of Members' Interests
- Early Day Motions signed by this MP (From edm ais.co.uk)
Voting record (from PublicWhip)

How Emily Thornberry voted on key issues since 2001:

- **Quite strongly against** introducing a smoking ban. [votes, speeches]
- **Very strongly for** introducing ID cards. [votes, speeches]
- **Quite strongly for** Labour's anti-terrorism laws. [votes, speeches]

Read about how the voting record is decided.

More on [well-known issues](from the Guardian) & their full record

- **Occasionally rebels** against their party in this parliament.

Topics of interest

Select committee membership

- Member, Communities and Local Government Committee (since 24 Oct 2006)
- Member, Draft Legal ServicesBill (Joint Committee) (since 3 Aug 2006)
- Member, Environmental Audit Committee (since 14 Jul 2005)

Asks most questions about

- **Subjects:** Departmental Policies, Water Action Plan, Water and Sanitation (Funding), War Criminals, Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act
- **Departments:** Home Department, International Development, Work and Pensions, Deputy Prime Minister, Treasury

(based on [written questions asked by Emily Thornberry](and answered by departments))

Previous MPs in this constituency

- **Chris Smith**

Nearby constituencies

- **Holborn & St Pancras** (1.9 km)
- **Islington North** (2.5 km)
- **Hackney South & Shoreditch** (3.5 km)
- **Hackney North & Stoke Newington** (3.6 km)
- **Cities of London & Westminster** (4.2 km)

Journalist?

Please feel free to use the data on this page, but if you do you must cite TheyWorkForYou.com in the body of your articles as the source of any analysis or data you get off this site. If you ignore this, we might have to start keeping these sorts of records on you...
Most recent appearances in parliament

If this MP or Lord has contributed more than once to one debate, only one speech is shown.

**Written Answers — Treasury: Cycling** (2 Nov 2006)

“To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what incentives have been given to organisations to promote the cycle to work scheme among their staff since its inception.”

**Written Answers — Treasury: Cycling** (2 Nov 2006)

“To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many organisations have registered for tax exemption under the cycle to work scheme since its inception.”

**[Mr. Martyn Jones in the Chair] — Council Leaseholders (Works Charges)** (1 Nov 2006)

“I do not know whether the letter to which the hon. Gentleman refers is one dated sometime in December. If so, I have a copy of it. It is from the ODPM and signed by Baroness Andrews, who wrote it to Steve Hitchens.”

More of Emily Thornberry’s recent appearances

RSS feed (?)
Please note that numbers do not measure quality. Also, MPs and Lords may do other things not currently covered by this site. (More about this)

- Has spoken in **23 debates** in the last year — average amongst MPs.
- Has received answers to **39 written questions** in the last year — average amongst MPs.
- Is a member of **3** select committees.
- Replied within 2 or 3 weeks to **5% – 15%** of messages sent via WriteToThem.com during 2005, according to polling data — well below average amongst MPs.
- Has attended **82% of votes** in parliament — above average amongst MPs. (From Public Whip)
- People have made **10 comments** on this MP’s speeches — well above average amongst MPs.
- This MP’s speeches are understandable to an average **15–16** year old, going by the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level score.
- **89** people are tracking whenever this MP speaks — email me whenever Emily Thornberry speaks.
- Has used three-word alliterative phrases (e.g. "she sells seashells") **19 times** in debates — well below average amongst MPs. (Why is this here?)
Report, view, or discuss local problems
(like graffiti, fly tipping, broken paving slabs, or street lighting)

Enter a nearby postcode, or street name and area:  

How to report a problem
1. Enter a nearby postcode, or street name and area
2. Locate the problem on a map of the area
3. Enter details of the problem
4. We send it to the council on your behalf

FixMyStreet updates
- 207 reports in past week
- 432 fixed in past month
- 2074 updates on reports

Photos of recent reports

Recently reported problems
- dog fouling bin
- benches missing
- Weak Bridge sign knocked aside
- holes in the road
- Rubbish
Obstruction to pavement

Reported anonymously at 21:18, Sunday 11 March
Sent to Cambridge City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council
12 minutes later

Overgrown ivy obstructing pavement. Impossible to walk along pavement.

Offensive? Unsuitable? Tell us

Back to listings

Updates

Posted by Rachel at 22:41, Wednesday 14 March,
marked fixed
This actually works - it has been cut back.

Provide an update

Name: 

Email: (optional)

Update:
This site is in Beta (test) mode, so local authorities near you may not be included in alerts.

1. Enter your email address

2. Enter a postcode e.g. SW9 8JX

3. Choose what size area you would like to receive alerts for
   - My street (approximately 200 m) view on a map (new window)
   - My neighbourhood (approximately 800 m) view on a map (new window)
   - Wider area (approximately 2000 m) view on a map (new window)

Create alert >>

Recent site updates

April 2007 Added 50 more councils.
March 2007 Added an API and a few more councils (inc. Islington and Hackney)
February 2007 Added loads more councils (inc. Camden and Tower Hamlets)
December 2006 beta launch
**Weather**

**London, England**

- Today: 15°C
- Fri: 16°C
- Sat: 15°C

Temperature: 10°C
Humidity: 71%
Windy: NE at 16 km/h

**BBC News | UK | UK Edition**

- UVF urged to destroy its weapons
- Grooker: Selby battles back
- Labour awaits voters' judgement

**Daily Horoscope for Gemini**

You might have a very different perspective than someone close to you today, even if you are working with an identical set of information. Don't get discouraged about this disagreement; honest discussion will prove fruitful now. Your flexibility can help you get what you want, as long as you don't give up too quickly.

Friday, May 4, 2007

**Word of the Day**

**fetor** (noun) An offensive odor; a stench.

Synonyms: malodor, malodour, reek, stench, stink, mephitic.

Usage: He waited in the basement, trying to ignore the moldy fetor that permeated the air.