

ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP on MODERN LANGUAGES



Chair: Dame Nia Griffith MP (Lab); Co-Chair: Baroness Coussins (CB);
Vice-Chairs: Tonia Antoniazzi MP (Lab); Lord Dykes (CB); Baroness
Garden of Frognal (LD); Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury (Con).

APPG on Modern Languages:

Annual Report (reporting year 27 January 2023 - 26 January 2024).

1. Meetings held

16 January 2023:

Artificial Intelligence and Machine Translation: How the AI revolution is transforming industry and public services, creating a 'regulatory gap'.

Speakers:

- Dom Hepplethwaite and John Worne, Chartered Institute of Linguists
- Neil Coulson, CommSoft, Sabine Braun and Felix do Carmo, University of Surrey.
- Lucas Nunes Vieira, University of Bristol.
- Guto Dafydd, Welsh Government Translation Service.

30 January 2023:

Report launch: 'Languages Provision in Further Education' by the British Academy and Queens University Belfast.

Jointly hosted by the APPG ML and the APPG on Further Education and Lifelong Learning.

Speakers:

- Sarah Cowan, Head of Policy (HE & Skills), British Academy
- Ian Collen, Director, Northern Ireland Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research (NICILT) at Queen's University Belfast; Minchen Liu, Research Fellow, School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work, QUB; Leanne Henderson, Lecturer in Education Studies; Aisling O'Boyle Senior Lecturer, Education;
- Jennifer Roberts, Lecturer, Centre for Evidence and Social Innovation
- Caroline Cordier, Lecturer in French, Edinburgh College
- Eddie Playfair, Senior Policy Manager, Association of Colleges
- Karen Thomas, Director, Tourism and Events Research Hub Canterbury Christ Church University and lead author of UKinbound's 2018 report *Breaking the Language Barrier: Equipping our tourism workforce for the UK's future*

22 May 2023:

Annual General Meeting

The APPG re-elected its Officers, approved an income & expenditure statement and annual report for the reporting year, and discussed issues relating to the forthcoming reporting year.

24 May 2023:

United Nations World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development.

The APPG hosted an event celebrating multilingual cultural expression co-organised with the Sanskruti Centre for Cultural Excellence, and Dr Ragasudha Vinjamuri.

17 July 2023:

Languages 'TedX': What's new in the field of languages? A series of short presentations:

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Language Trends 2023: Headline findings from the annual survey of primary and secondary schools on language provision and attainment.

Speaker:

- Vicky Gough, British Council.

University Council for Modern Languages (UCFL): report on latest developments.

Speakers:

- Prof Emma Cayley, University of Leeds
- Dr Begoña Rodríguez de Céspedes, Portsmouth University.

'Linguistics in MFL' project manifesto launch: the case for linguistics in the MFL classroom.

Speakers:

- Prof Michelle Sheehan, Newcastle University
- Sascha Stollhans, University of Leeds

Chatterbox: case study of a tech start-up with a social mission

Speakers:

- Mursal Hedayat, Chatterbox
- Hu Naqvi, Chatterbox

13 November 2023:

Hurdles facing school trips and exchanges abroad: finding solutions.

Speakers:

- Gill Harvey, School Travel Forum
- Brian Stobie, Durham County Council
- Liz Black, Association for Language Learning (ALL)
- Suzanne O'Farrell, Association of School & College Leaders

Two meetings were planned but did not take place due to scheduling conflicts: one on the new GCSE reforms and one on the work of Embassies and Cultural Institutes.

2. APPG activity

- In March, Baroness Coussins met officials at the Ministry of Justice on behalf of the APPG for an update on the **MOJ's progress in developing a new Qualifications Framework for interpreters** and translators deployed in the criminal justice system.
- In March, the APPG submitted responses to the **Labour Party's National Policy Forum consultations**.
- In March, the APPG submitted evidence to the **DCMS Committee Inquiry on Minority Languages**.
- In March, on behalf of the APPG, Baroness Coussins gave out the first **National Police Language Services Awards** at the National Police Language Services Conference at Leicestershire Police HQ.

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- In August, the APPG submitted evidence to the **Covid-19 Inquiry** relating to languages and communication in the fields of health, education, justice, and international relations, with relevance to Modules 1, 3 and 5 of the Inquiry (Module: Resilience and preparedness; Module 3: Impact of Covid-19 on healthcare systems; and Module 5: Government procurement).
- In September, the Secretariat attended the **EU Delegation** event on languages education in the UK.
- In October, the Secretariat attended the **ILCS 'Building collaborations between academics and policymakers' policy workshop**.
- In November, Baroness Garden and Wera Hobhouse MP attended the **German Ambassador's Special Forum** on 'Making the Case for German'.
- In November, the APPG issued a public statement of concern about **planned closures of degrees in languages and cultures at the University of Aberdeen**, and wrote to the University leadership and the relevant Ministers in the Scottish Government.
- In November, the APPG supported the **Times Education Commission** in publishing a series of articles in the Times calling for better MFL provision, followed by **media coverage on BBC Radio 4** (see Appendix).
- In November, Baroness Coussins, Nia Griffith MP and Baroness Garden attended the launch of **the Languages Gateway** at the British Academy.

3. Activity of the Officers of the APPG (relevant to the APPG's work):

Spoken contributions:

- In March, Baroness Coussins tabled a [debate](#) on whether **the right for people engaged with the criminal justice system to access translation and interpreting services** will be affected by the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill.
- In March, Baroness Garden spoke in a [debate](#) about challenges of the new **Turing scheme** compared to Erasmus Plus.
- In June, Baroness Coussins spoke in a [debate](#) about **school trips to the UK**.
- In June, Tonia Antoniazzi MP spoke in a [debate](#) about the **Council of Europe**, about her role as a member of the CoE delegation and her experience as a languages graduate.
- In October, Baroness Coussins tabled a [debate](#) on the **relocation to the UK of Afghans who previously worked as interpreters for the British Army** and Afghan former employees of the British Council. She revisited the question during debates in [November](#) and on [December 5th](#) and [12th](#).
- In October, Baroness Coussins spoke in a [debate](#) on the long-term strategic challenges posed by China, in support of the **Mandarin Excellence Programme**.
- In November, Baroness Coussins spoke in a [debate](#) on the report from the COVID-19 Committee *Living in a COVID World: A Long-term Approach to Resilience and Wellbeing*, with reference to evidence included in the **APPG's submission to the Covid-19 Inquiry**.
- On 18 December, Baroness Coussins spoke in the [second reading](#) of the **Victims and Prisoners Bill in relation to interpretation and translation services**.
- On 15 January 2024, Baroness Coussins spoke in a [debate](#) on the BBC Royal Charter.

Written Questions:

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- During 2023, Baroness Coussins tabled 19 Written Questions covering **Afghan interpreters, languages in education, translation/interpreting in justice and health, and new salary threshold rules for language assistants and university lecturers.**
- During 2023, Tonia Antoniazzi MP tabled two Written Questions on **international educational visits.**

Other:

- In November, Baroness Coussins contributed comments to **BBC Radio 4' File on 4 programme on failings in the provision of public service interpreters** in the courts, hospitals, social services and other public services. (See Appendix).
- In December, the **House of Lords Education for 11–16 Year Olds Committee** published its report [Requires improvement: urgent change for 11–16 education](#) which called for better provision of languages education in secondary. Three members of the APPG on Modern Languages are on this Committee (Lord Aberdare, Baroness Blower and Baroness Garden).

Appendix: APPG Modern Languages in the media, December 2023

The Times:

Re: Times Education Commission

Rachel Sylvester: Slump in modern languages threatens economy and national security - The decline in pupils studying a foreign language is bad for them — and bad for Britain

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/233f2824-bbdf-450f-9073-77a3b85eabf7?shareToken=d2667f7a596907ca02c488084719ab38>

The Times Leading Article: The Times view on GCSE languages: Power of Babel - A decline in language learning weakens Britain diplomatically and commercially

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/128c18b7-028e-438f-b7d7-0a32d1674b97?shareToken=e0b0453f14aaca6a9b5fd757693687c6>

Teach languages with grades like music, says ex-minister - Charles Clarke says he regrets the decline in pupils taking modern languages, but claims his decision in the early 2000s is not the cause

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/teach-languages-with-grades-like-music-says-ex-minister-m7wfn9ch7>

Letters to the Times in response to the above:

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/666a510d-64ed-4dfb-a504-152146f99c8d?shareToken=47f3ace31e142d522b64811d329dd3c1>

Lord Darroch of Dew, National Security Adviser 2012-15:

“Do the same for language learning [as for maths] by restoring the requirement that every pupil takes a modern language to [18].”

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Professor Catriona Seth, Marshal Foch professor of French literature, Oxford
University; **Lord Ricketts**, former head, Diplomatic Service:

*“The time when we could rely on everyone else speaking English is long gone.
We urgently need a long-term national strategy to train and retain the inspirational
teachers who can make learning languages once more an exciting feature of the
GCSE curriculum.”*

Professor Sir David Omand, Former director of GCHQ; author of *How to Survive a Crisis*:

*“This is a classic example of a slow-burn crisis that needs remedial action, starting
now and kept up over the next decade, which is how long it will take to make a
difference. The gap between state and private schooling of those taking a language
at GCSE has worrying implications.”*

Re: International school visits and exchanges (APPG meeting 13 Nov 2023)

The Times:

**Nicola Woolcock: Red tape deterring schools from exchanges and trips – MPs call for group travel
to be made easier to revive school exchanges**

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/red-tape-deterring-schools-from-exchanges-and-trips-sc9d9nm63>

BBC Radio 4:

World At One (scheduled for 29 December 2023)

**Interview with Dame Nia Griffith MP, Chair of the APPG, alongside Vicky Gough, British Council, on
making the case for languages.**

Re: Public Service Interpreters

BBC Radio 4: File on 4

**Lost in Translation: Public service interpreting provides a lifeline for people who don't speak
English but campaigners claim it is failing society's most vulnerable people - with tragic
consequences.**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001sm8z>

Re: Closures at Aberdeen University:

BBC Scotland morning bulletin (28 November 2023)

Interview with Baroness Coussins