



## Tessa's January Update

Hello everyone,

Now we're well and truly into 2026, I'm flat out representing you both in Parliament and here in Somerset.



I'm glad there's a reprieve for farming as our campaign to raise the inheritance tax threshold from its £1 million base was supported by many locals, bolstering the calls of farmers who met my colleague Alistair Carmichael MP, Chair of Parliament's Environment Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee at Yeo Valley Canteen last February. I'll continue to do all I can, alongside my colleagues, to demand the Government scraps this tax in full.

Next, it's trying to sort out fair business rate bills for pubs, hospitality and our High Streets.

Locally, I met farmers to discuss the problems of hare coursing, theft and the serious organised crime which is driving a rise in rural crime incidents in Somerset. Don't hesitate to call 101 if you see something suspicious, and 999 if a crime is in progress - but please don't tackle these situations yourself, as it's not safe to do so.

I'm delighted young people will, from next year, enjoy opportunities to live and study in Europe under a revived Erasmus Scheme. I supported my colleague Al Pinkerton's UK-EU Customs Union Bill through its first reading in Parliament. A

new customs union with our 500 million European neighbours would provide a genuine opportunity for growth, reduce our dependence on the US and China and critically, hugely benefit trade here in the South West. There's a long way for the Bill to go before it becomes law, and I'll keep you updated.

At the end of last year, I'd spent days in Committee and meeting Ministers, Government lawyers and Clerks, poring over the detail of the Public Office (Accountability) Bill, better known as the 'Hillsborough Law'. Now I'm in new rounds of discussions between Ministers and lawyers, thrashing out the final wording and trying to stop any clauses being left to 'interpretation'. Frankly, it's embarrassing that I've had to spend so many hours challenging Ministers who've tried to weaken the 'Hillsborough Bill' at every turn - insisting that some public servants should be 'shielded' from having to tell the truth when things go wrong. It's critical this legislation is right - not just for the many individuals and families who've suffered appalling injustice when public servants have lied to protect themselves and their organisations, but because failure now might take decades to remedy.

As ever, if you have any concerns or anything you'd like to talk to me about, please write, call or come and see me.

No appointment is necessary - it's first come, first served. If you can't come to meet me, I'll come to see you.

Thank you.

Tessa

