

# FIFTH PARLIAMENTARY EVENT MAKES A MATERIAL DIFFERENCE

**WORK** and Pensions' Minister, Alison McGovern MP, has recognised the position and purpose of BMF members as employers who are integral to her Department's efforts to help people into work and boost local economies. Ms McGovern was speaking at our Fifth Parliamentary Reception in February on the Terrace at the House of Commons.



Employment Minister Alison McGovern MP and John Newcomb (BMF)

This event was called “**Make a Material Difference**” where our aim was to feature major employment and learning & development initiatives that the BMF and its members have embarked upon. It was deliberately timed to take place just before National Apprenticeships Week that ran from 10 to 16 February 2025.

Our intention was to put two messages across to MPs and Peers:

- how you, as employers, are making your own efforts to raise awareness of our supply chain and publicise the range & diversity of roles that you offer.
- what we want Westminster & Whitehall to do to make it easier for businesses to attract and retain people of all ages & abilities (esp. apprentices).

### EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Parliamentarians heard how the BMF has begun its own recruitment initiative to raise awareness of our supply chain and to publicise the range and diversity of roles with our members to attract and retain talented people. The national launch of “**Make a Material Difference**” took place on the morning of our Parliamentary Reception and that launch is described elsewhere in this magazine.

### LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Parliamentarians also heard we set ourselves a **BMF Apprenticeship Pledge** to take on 15,000 more apprentices among our members by 2030. Our Pledge highlights the BMF's commitment to make it easier for members to hire and support new apprentices. It was therefore pleasing



Chris Kane MP and Nigel Morris (West Fraser)



Tan Dhesi MP with Andrew Roser (Dulux Decorator Centre) and Paul Edworthy & Peter Howard (Akzo Nobel)



David Haldane (Haldane Fisher) and Jim Shannon MP

to announce at this Reception that we had surpassed our target and the number is rising. This underlines our efforts to highlight why a career in building materials is different from other trades or industries.

### BMF & DWP STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Alison McGovern MP, the Minister for Employment, spoke for HM Government. She started by thanking BMF members for coming to Parliament to talk about the 2 big issues she has faced since becoming an MP: (a) people having a decent place to live and (b) a decent job to do.

For some months now, the BMF and DWP have been collaborating on a joint government & industry initiative to publicise the range and diversity of roles with our supply chain to enable people to get into work and empowering them to choose merchanting as a career.

The Minister said that every time you recruit someone from the DWP, you do not only find a new worker - you also employ someone who otherwise would have been overlooked. If you recruit with us, we handle the administration to make it easier for your

business, and you give someone a chance, she added.

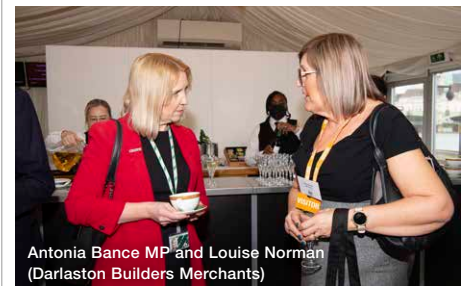
Ms McGovern praised us in saying “the BMF has been a fantastic partner for us”. She said that not all employers have taken the same attitude we have. Since the General Election, only 1 in 6 employers has used a Jobcentre to recruit new staff. Ministers want to change that - particularly in industries with shortages like construction - and the DWP has to up its game to make sure businesses can get the staff they need to grow, she concluded.



Angela Rushforth (Toolstation), Mims Davies MP and Frank Elkins (Selco)

### SUMMARY

This reception was kindly hosted by Bill Esterson, a Labour MP from Merseyside, who chairs the House of Commons' Energy Security & Net Zero Select Committee. The UK Construction Week was our Headline Sponsor and the Band of Builders was our Charity Partner again this year.



Antonia Bance MP and Louise Norman (Darlaston Builders Merchants)

Over 120 BMF guests attended this, our fifth Parliamentary Reception, that took place on a busy Wednesday, after Prime Minister's Questions. We were pleased to welcome 24 parliamentarians - 19 MPs and 5 Peers from the Labour, Lib Dem, DUP, UUP & Conservative Parties.

We would very much like to thank 13 of our manufacturing members - namely Heidelberg Materials; Marsh Industries; Saint-Gobain Interior Solutions; Unilin; Velux; Akzo Nobel; JCB; Knauf; KoverTek; Ontik; Talasey; West Fraser; and Worcester Bosch - for being generous sponsors & supporters.