



# News from **Westminster** Oct-Nov, 2023

No. 165



## Report from Sharon Hodgson MP



*Once again Sharon helps out at the launch of the Washington Royal British Legion poppy appeal, in ASDA at the Galleries.*

### Welcome

I'd like to welcome members from Birtley and Lamesley wards, who officially joined the CLP on October 12th, 2023.

### Israel and Gaza

It is devastating to see the escalation in Israel and Gaza, following Hamas' horrific massacre and hostage taking on October 7th and now with Israel's subsequent aerial bombardment and ground operation against Hamas that has killed over 8,000 innocent Gazans. The Labour Party is calling for humanitarian pauses, to ensure that vital aid can be provided and that innocent Gazans can escape the violence whilst ensuring that Israel is able to defend itself and ensure the release of all the hostages. These are dark days, but we must strive for a future where Palestinians and Israelis can peacefully coexist in this region; the two state solution. I stand against the rise in antisemitic and islamophobic abuse and fully support the provision of extra assistance to help ensure the safety of our communities here in the UK.

### Conference key announcements

Labour Party conference was full of brilliant, innovative and forward-thinking announcements, that I will be proud to

share with constituents on the doorstep. For housing, Labour will create the next generation of "new towns" to rebuild our nation's housing stock. Our plan will tackle the 'Grey Belt' crisis of poorly managed land use and chronic housing shortages by creating 1.5 million new homes. I am pleased to say that under a Labour Government home ownership won't just be a luxury and affordable homes to rent won't just be a dream.

Labour will tackle the NHS waiting list crisis by providing over £1bn to beat the backlog and provide 2 million more appointments each year, funded by abolishing the non-dom tax status. We have also committed to significant further investment in essential health provisions, such as adolescent mental health services and NHS dentistry.

Labour will put police back in town centres and neighbourhoods, with 13,000 more neighbourhood police and increased patrols to put police back on the beat. We will put communities back at the heart of policing and make community policing something to be proud of.

Louise Haigh also reaffirmed our commitment to bring Britain's buses and trains back into public ownership. As we have seen with the scrapping of HS2, we cannot rely on the Conservatives to tackle our failing transport services.

### Conference Diary run-down

I spoke at a range of events advocating for Universal Free School Meals. It was great to see so many organisations wanting to host panels on the topic of school food, as well as the amazing levels of audience attendance, demonstrating that this is at long last becoming less of a fringe issue and more mainstream in the political sphere.

The conference had a real buzz, with the anticipation of next year's election. On display was a party demonstrating unity, a leader showing strength, and announcements signifying that we are serious about governing. It is evident that a new era of national renewal is needed, and conference made it clear that a Labour government is the only way to get Britain's future back.

### Rolls-Royce factory visit, Washington



In October, I was given a tour of the Rolls-Royce factories in Washington. Since my last visit, they have built the Fleet Support Facility (FSF), which is the site's second factory. The FSF was transferred from the old site in Pallion and oversees the production of components used in civil & defence engines. After our visit, Rolls-Royce announced due to organisational restructuring that 2,000 – 2,500 jobs will be lost globally. Since this announcement I have met with Rolls-Royce and will closely monitor the impact that this could have on workers in Washington.

### Leamside Line All-Party Group meeting



Following recent developments in the Leamside Line Campaign, I was pleased to co-chair our APPG meeting last week. We welcomed the Minister for Rail, Huw Merriman, in the hope he would clarify the Government's position following their recent u-turn. Whilst he contested that any u-turn had taken place it was encouraging to hear the Minister recognise the importance of a regional business case, and I was pleased to hear from local stakeholders about their support for the Line. Despite this Government's disregard for the North East, it is clear that the campaign is stronger than ever. I hope to receive a response from the Prime Minister to my recent letters to him, explaining this u-turn, but I won't hold my breath.

### By-Election victories

Recently we've seen phenomenal wins in Tamworth and Mid Bedfordshire where we overturned huge Tory majorities, and alongside our earlier by-election success in Rutherglen and Hamilton West, we are seeing swings of over 20% towards Labour. These seats are especially important as they typify areas that Labour had lost in 2019, areas such as Tamworth where the leave campaign was strong, and areas such as Mid-Bedfordshire which has been Conservative for almost 100 years. Clearly, Labour with Keir Starmer is redrawing the political map and we are ready to take the fight to the Tories at the upcoming General Election.

### Ticket Abuse - campaign update

This month has been busy for the Ticket Abuse campaign from commenting on the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Bill, to speaking to journalists and academics and to all relevant Members of the Opposition Frontbench team. I was fortunate to watch the second reading of the Royal Albert Hall Bill from the floor in the House of Lords. APPG members and I, alongside Shadow Attorney General Emily Thornberry have repeatedly raised concerns regarding ticket resales for many times face value, especially from seat holders and Trustees within the Royal Albert Hall. We fear that the Royal Albert Hall Bill would expand and formalise the influence of seat holders, without providing any extra safeguards or lessening conflicts of interest to protect the reputation of this much-loved charitable institution. We were delighted to see that, after building a crossbench coalition, only the peer who introduced the bill spoke in favour of it at the debate. We will now wait for the results of the committee stage, but we are happy to see that the acceptable amendments of our friend Lord Hodgson (no relation incidentally), pictured here during the debate, are up for consideration.

### Labour Party Conference, Liverpool 2023



It was brilliant to attend conference with our CLP delegates Judith Marshall, Cllr Allison Chisnall and Cllr Logan Guy - they did our constituency proud. I was really pleased to attend Northern Night with them and I made sure as many people as possible took a photo with the Leamside Line sign. It was great to feel the support in the room for the campaign, especially from Labour Mayoral candidate Kim McGuiness.

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