



News  
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# Report from Sharon Hodgson MP



*Our Labour candidate Alison Smith, launching her local election campaign, at the Redhouse Community Centre in Sunderland.*

## Local elections

Keir Starmer launched Labour's local election campaign in Dudley, one of many areas Labour are aiming to win council seats in. This is the same town where Boris Johnson made a host of promises to "level up" the country, something which numerous Conservative Prime Ministers failed to deliver. These elections see thousands of council seats up for election, as well as regional mayors and police and crime commissioners. The burden of the cost-of-living crisis and the impact that under-funded failing services has had, means that having trusted representatives who will work in their communities' interests has become ever more important.

I had the honour of attending the official campaign launches for our North East Mayoral Labour candidate, Kim McGuinness, and our Labour and Co-operative candidate in Redhill, Alison Smith. On the doorsteps, residents are eager to see Alison re-elected so she can continue all the important work she does for the Redhill ward in Redhouse.

Kim's launch in Bishop Auckland was truly electric and it was brilliant to hear her lay out her Mayoral plans for transport just a few days later, including plans to take back

control of the local bus network. I am truly excited, as our mayoral and local elections draw closer, to fight hard to get the North East the representation we deserve.

## Labour manifesto commitments

As Chair of both the Ticket Abuse APPG and the Art, Craft and Design in Education APPG, I am delighted to see Keir announce at Labour's Creatives Conference that the party has committed to tackling inequality of access to the Arts and the scourge of ticket touting. Culture belongs to all of us, and ticket touts remain a barrier to opportunity for working people. Meanwhile, Labour has taken heed of my APPG's calls and condemned the Tories' nonsensical EBacc, which completely overlooks the educational value of art, music and drama. I look forward to seeing these campaigns come to fruition.

## Delegation to Washington DC

I was fortunate to travel to Washington DC to meet with members of the Democratic Party to discuss how to bring about a peaceful, democratic and permanent resolution to the crisis in Israel and Gaza. Following a change in the UK's and subsequently US' position, the UN achieved its first successful vote in favour of a ceasefire, which Labour has consistently called for. The UK has enormous diplomatic potential and Keir will work alongside the Shadow Foreign Office to rebuild our credibility and influence on the world stage. Labour must maintain our special relationship with the Democrats, and dialogue such as this is vital, as both parties seek electoral success in the coming months.

## Snorkel factory visit, Washington

Last month, I met with the Directors of Snorkel, a local manufacturing factory. During our visit, we explored their facilities and discussed specific concerns raised by neighbouring residents, including 'orange dust' residue being left on their cars and homes. Following my visit, I was reassured that the factory is adhering to the necessary environmental regulations and is open to constructive dialogue moving forward. I will continue to monitor this situation. If you believe you have been affected by orange dust in Emerson, please do email me on: [sharon.hodgson.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:sharon.hodgson.mp@parliament.uk)

## Some highlights (No. 170 - Mar-Apr, 2024)

### Belfast delegation visit



Last month, I went on a delegation to Northern Ireland, led by Shadow Northern Ireland Secretary Hilary Benn. It was brilliant to visit Stormont and meet with the MP for Belfast South, Claire Hanna, to discuss the political landscape in Northern Ireland, devolution and Brexit. Whilst there we also visited important cultural sites like Queen's University Belfast, the 'Peace Walls' of West Belfast and the iconic Harland and Wolff Shipyard. It was particularly touching to visit the WAVE Trauma Centre to learn about the care and support they provide to those affected by the Troubles. On our trip we also attended a number of important meetings where our delegation learnt more about the Northern Ireland Peace Process, the legacy of the Troubles and the landscape of 21st Century Northern Ireland. As we strive to strengthen our Union, it is vital that we learn from the lessons of the past.

### BBC Politics North, recording



I was pleased to be on Politics North last month, discussing the concerning decline of Special Education

Needs and Disabilities places in schools, and the Ombudsman's report on how the Department for Work & Pensions communicated changes to women's State Pension age. View the report here: <https://tinyurl.com/4zr4dpuw> We also discussed the Post Office's future following the Horizon scandal during which I emphasised that whilst the Horizon Scandal has revealed some of the darkest parts of the Post Office system, the country cannot lose out on this vital service, and it is imperative that we rebuild trust in these community hubs. As we head into a general election, that the programme's agenda was filled with examples of policy failures that have devastating impacts on people's lives, shows that it really is time for change.

### APPG meetings in Westminster

It was brilliant to Chair the Art, Craft & Design in Education APPG, during which: we heard from Labour's Shadow Minister for Schools, about Labour's plans to address the decline in retention and recruitment of our valued creative arts educators; and the Minister for Arts and Heritage, who answered questions about the current state of arts education, and the 2024 UNESCO Global Framework for Culture and Arts Education. I also participated in the Dyslexia APPG, where we had a fascinating discussion about the intersection between race and dyslexia. Our brilliant presenters provided us with real insight into the role that race and dyslexia played in their experiences in education, and gave us much food for thought about how to tackle the barriers that exist to accessing support.

### Canvassing in Middlesbrough South & East Cleveland



I travelled down to Teesside twice last month to help support Luke Myer, our candidate in our twinned seat of Middlesbrough South & East Cleveland, and Chris McEwan, our Mayoral candidate to take on the Tories' Ben Houchen. Much like in Washington and Gateshead South, it was great to see so many people eager for change and an end to the decline we've all seen under too many years of the Conservatives' Governments. As we wait eagerly for the general election to be called, we are working hard to win back seats across the country.

There is no better time than now to encourage your family and friends to join the Labour Party. Join here, by using this link here: <https://labour.org.uk/members/why-join-labour>

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