

City of Durham CLP Report – July 2018

Durham Issues

The Miners' Gala

It was great to attend the 134th Durham Miners' Gala on Saturday 14 July, and of course it goes without saying that this event was a huge success.

The Gala was once again incredibly well attended, with an estimated 200,000 people from Durham and across the UK joining the celebration of our mining heritage. It was wonderful to see so many people enjoying the fabulous weather, and having such an good time with friends and family.



Roberta with Angela Hankin and Harry Cross

This year I had the honour of joining members from our Sherburn branch, and we marched through Durham with the Sherburn Colliery banner, and their fantastic band. It is always great to catch up with people marching through Durham, as well as meeting some new faces on the way!

I was also able to join our City of Durham Labour Party banner for a while and catch up with Angela Hankin, our Chair, and other local members too.



The Labour Party Tea Tent was again a huge success, thanks to the hard work of our fundraising officer Hannah Walter, and our incredible, committed members. so my thanks go to the officers of the CLP, and all of the volunteers who made the Tea Tent such a huge success.



The incredibly popular Tea Tent!

If you want to help support the Miners' Gala, and ensure it continues in the future, you can find out about become a Friend of the Miners' Gala by visiting the website www.friendsofdurhamminersgala.org



Roberta waving to the balcony from the crowd

Durham Women's Gala

On Saturday 30 June, I had the pleasure of speaking at the Durham Women's Gala, which took place in Wharton Park.

The event was a wonderful day out for families from across the region, with live music from Ladies of Midnight Blue, an all-women brass duo, and Mums in Durham choir. There was also plenty of activities for children and families such as mini-golf and a women's heritage trail.



I spoke alongside fellow MPs Chi Onwurah, Helen Goodman and Sharon Hodgson, as well as Clare Williams from Unison, Dame Vera Baird and Jude Kirton-Darling MEP.

This gala also gave us the chance to celebrate the contribution that Durham made to the women's movement. The first petition for Women to get the vote from County Durham was presented to Parliament in 1869, and there is a strong history of political engagement and education for women in region

My thanks go to Councillor Maura McKeon, who originally conceived the idea of bringing back the Women's Gala, and to the rest of the organising committee – Councillor Marion Wilson; Vera Baird QC; Aurelia Smith; Val Hudson, Clare Williams; Susan Egglestone and Chris Fletcher - for all their hard work in making this idea a reality, as well as all of the people and organisations who supported the event.



Constituency Visits & Campaigns

Durham University Engagement Event

I recently had the opportunity to chair the second Durham University Engagement Event—A Question and Answer session with Vice Chancellor Stuart Corbridge.

A great many people took part in the event, and a number of really important questions were asked of the Vice Chancellor.

It is clear that there is a significant level of concern about the University's plans for expansion amongst local residents, and it is very important that people who live in the city continue to engage with this process.

I very much hope that further events will be arranged in the future, and that dialogue between the University and the community will continue.

Roberta calls meeting to discuss Church Street



Following proposals put forward by Durham County Council to widen the footpaths along Church Street, I held a meeting with local residents to discuss the initial plans.

It was good to see so many people in attendance who wanted to share their views on the proposed changes, and my thanks go to Ian Ramage, Assistant Director of Estates and Buildings at Durham University who came along to outline how the works planned **by the University link into the council's plans**

for Church Street. As further plans come forward, I will continue to work with local residents to ensure that people who live and work in Church Street are not negatively affected by any affected changes.

Speaking at the FMB Conference

I spoke at the Federation of Master Builders Northern Conference following the release of their report **'Licence to Build' which calls for a mandatory licensing scheme for builders, to help ensure constituent quality in the industry, and increase consumer confidence.**

The issues I spoke about included the skills shortage in the construction industry, and the housing crisis in the UK. A mandatory accreditation scheme could have real potential in improving standards, and increasing the potential for continuous professional development in the industry.

I took the opportunity to back the FMB's calls for industry-wide licensing, and you can read the full report at www.fmb.org.uk



Roberta celebrates the NHS at 70

I recently had the chance to meet up with staff and patient at University Hospital North Durham, as part of the

It was great to be able to take some time to thank our wonderful NHS staff for the work that they do.

It is clear that we have a huge amount to be proud of in the NHS, and a huge amount to be grateful for, especially the hard work carried out by its dedicated staff.

While we will of course celebrate the remarkable work that the NHS and its dedicated staff have done over the past seventy years, we must also be aware that across the UK, and here in the North East, the NHS is not being given enough resources, are having to work with restricted budgets, and more and more NHS contracts are being awarded to private care providers.

I will continue to work both in the constituency and Westminster to ensure that our NHS is fully supported.



The NHS at 70 in Durham Market Place



Roberta and local members campaigning in the Market Place

As well as meeting up with staff and patients at UHND, I also joined Labour Party members in the Market Place in Durham to celebrate the NHS at 70.

It was wonderful to see so many people happy to sign our birthday card to the NHS, and everyone was happy to hear that Labour will continue to stand up for the NHS and its amazing staff.

My thanks go to everyone who organised this fantastic event, and took the time to bake cakes as part of the birthday celebrations! This anniversary has served to remind us how important our NHS is, and that we must continue to support it in the future.

Roberta appears on Sunday Politics



On Sunday 24 June 2018, I appeared on the BBC's Sunday Politics North East and Cumbria .

The interview covered a range of topics, including NHS and Public Health funding, as well as Durham University's plans for growth.

I was glad to have the opportunity to raise the concerns that many of us share about the future funding of our NHS.

Universal Credit

The full Universal Credit service has recently been rolled out in Durham, and along with Labour colleagues I continue to challenge the Government to put a **benefits system in place that will fully support people's needs.**

As we have seen, there are a number of issues across the UK with the transition to Universal Credit , with delays for claimants meaning that families are being pushed into debt and the poor administration meaning that many people are struggling to access Universal Credit at all.

I have already met with advice groups and individual claimants in Durham, and have urged the Jobcentre to make the transition as smooth as possible. I am very concerned about the impact Universal Credit will have on people in Durham, and I will continue to work in the constituency and Westminster to deal with these issues, and minimise the impact Universal Credit has on families in Durham.

Advice Surgery Sessions



I have continued to notice more people than ever attending my advice surgeries over the last few months. With cuts to local services, and changes to benefits set to continue, many of my constituents are finding it very hard to make ends meet.

I will continue to work to help residents who need support, and who are struggling to deal with the effects of the unfair and divisive policies being pursued by the Government.

Leaving the EU



Roberta in Westminster

Brexit continues to be the key issue in Westminster, with a series of key votes taking place recently.

I supported all of the Lords amendments, and voted **against the Government's decision to reject them**, except amendment 51, on which I abstained. Instead, **I voted for Labour's amendment 51a, which** underlines our determination to retain the benefits of the single market, and build on our manifesto commitments.

I also had the chance to question the new Minister for Exiting the EU on how any Brexit deal will affect universities access to European research funding. The White Paper that the Government has recently released indicates only that **"the UK wishes to explore association in research and innovation programmes"**. After two years of negotiations, it is disappointing that more has not been done to support universities through Brexit.

I remain very concerned that the Government has not delivered a Brexit package that acts in the best interests of the UK, and I will continue to do my best to prevent Brexit negatively affecting Durham and the North East.

MP questions Minister on Rohingya support

As you will remember, last year I visited Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh, and this is still an issue I am very concerned about. During a recent debate in Parliament, I questioned the Minister of State for International Development on what the Government is doing to support Rohingya refugees who remain in Bangladesh as monsoon season approaches.

Monsoon season accounts for almost 80% of rainfall in Bangladesh, and refugees face the threat of heavy rain, landslides, diseases and dirty water. As the repatriation of the Rohingya is still taking some time, it is vital that we do all we can to help protect refugees from the dangers of the coming rains, so I will continue to press the Government to take further action to help deal with this crisis.

Roberta holds follow up meeting on CSW

I hosted a follow up to the 62nd Commission on the Status of Women in Parliament, following my recent visit to the Commission.

This was a Cross-Party debate to reinforce the Beijing Platform for Action to advance **women's rights, and to challenge regimes that** do not support equal rights for women.

It is vital that that we keep this issue high on the political agenda, and I will keep pressing the Government to push for change internationally.



Roberta marches against Trump



On Friday 13 July, I joined the thousands in London who took part in the march against Donald Trump to show my resistance to his dangerous and divisive policies, and it was heartening to see so many people standing up against his racism, sexism and xenophobia.

The march in London saw over 250,000

people in attendance, and was only one of many demonstrations that took place across the UK. The message was clear that thousands and thousands of us reject the warm welcome the Prime Minister gave to President Trump.

I understand that the Prime Minister may feel that she had to meet the **President, but she didn't have to roll out the red carpet and provide the level of pomp and circumstance that we saw over the weekend of 14–15 July.** However, it was encouraging to see so many people across the country taking a stand against the awful policies of Donald Trump.

I also totally refute the comments made by the International Trade Secretary Liam Fox, who said that those of us on **the march were 'an embarrassment'.** In fact, I believe it is the Government that should be ashamed of themselves, for showing support for a President that has started trade wars with allies, separated children from their families and rolled back action on climate change. Everyone who took part was showing a commitment to social justice, inclusion and the hope for a better world



MP meets with Minister to discuss 'Miners Claw'



Along with representatives from the Durham Miners' Association and Laura Pidcock MP, I recently met with the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work to discuss the Government's decision to not add Dupuytren's contracture to the list of prescribed diseases for which compensation can be sought.

This disease, dubbed 'Miners Claw' causes fingers to bend in towards the palm of the hand making grip almost impossible, and the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council (IACC) recommended that it should be added to the list in 2014.

Despite this, the Government refused to follow this advice, and we met with the Minister to ask her to look again at the evidence, and reverse this decision which will affect many constituents in Durham.

Although the Minister has indicated that the Chief Medical Officer will review the evidence in this case, I will continue to work with the DMA to press the Government to take action on this important issue.

Roberta chairs first Labour Planning Commission

This month, I chaired the first meeting of the Planning Commission, a group that I set up with Andrew Gwynne with Jeremy's support, to help set out planning policy options for the next Labour Government.

The Commission is made up of a number of planning experts and key stakeholders, and will be holding a series of regional meetings across the UK to discuss planning issues with planners, planning leads, developers and residents.



My thanks go to all Planning Commission members for getting us off to such a good start, and the Commission will be officially launched at conference this year. It is clear that there are many problems that need to be addressed within the planning system, such as land availability, training and the role of SME builders amongst others, and the Commission will ensure that Labour has the policies in place to address these and other issues.

Roberta meets Durham Johnston students



It was good to meet up with a delegation of students from Durham Johnston school on their recent visit Parliament.

As well as having the opportunity to look around Westminster, they also sat down with me to discuss the work I do in Parliament, Brexit and the future of the UK, and the issues facing our constituency.

It's great to see so many engaged and enthusiastic young people showing an interest in our democracy, and I hope more schools take the chance to visit Westminster.

Roberta meets with National Trust



In my role as Shadow Minister for Planning and Local government, I met with representatives from the National Trust to discuss the importance of the planning system to our wonderful heritage sites and green spaces.

As the Government has now published a new National Planning Policy Framework, it has become clear that it needs a lot of work to strengthen the protections for heritage sites, green spaces and the Green Belt.

I look forward to working with the National Trust in the future to ensure that our planning system delivers the homes that we need, and fully protects our heritage assets. You can find out more about the work that the National Trust does by visiting [www.national trust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk).

MP attends Local Government Conference



I attended the Local Government Conference which took place at the beginning of July, and was pleased to be able to join colleagues from the Local Government Association Labour Group during the conference.

During his speech to the conference, the Leader of the LGA Labour Group, Nick Forbes, outlined some of the successes our councils have seen over the past twelve months, but also highlighted the problems they are facing as central Government cuts continue to impact on much-needed services.



It is vital that councils get the funding they need to ensure they can provide the services that people rely on every day, and I joined the LGA Labour Group in calling for more support from the Government.

Roberta at the launch of Labour Friends of Local Government



As well as attending the LGA conference itself, I joined the rest of the Shadow CLG team at the launch of the Labour Friends of Local Government.

This group will strengthen the ties between Westminster and local Government, and it was great to see so many councillors and fellow MPs in attendance.

Campaigns round-up

It has been an incredibly busy few months for campaigning in Westminster. Here is a brief round-up of some of the campaigns that I have supported.

Carers Week 2018



Roberta pledging her support for Carers Week

Unpaid carers make a huge contribution to our society, providing vital support to friends and family members, and Carers Week is a great opportunity to recognise and celebrate this. Along with Labour Party colleagues, I will continue to work hard to ensure that carers get the recognition and support that they deserve.

Srebrenica



Roberta signs the Srebrenica book of remembrance

I recently signed Srebrenica UK's book of pledges. 23 years ago today, genocide took place in Srebrenica. It's so important we will remember the victims and honour the courage of survivors.

I was very pleased to support the Islamic Relief UK campaign highlighting the need to address and stop honour based violence against women and girls.

Shoulder to Shoulder with the NHS



As we celebrate the NHS turning 70, I took the opportunity to lend my support to the Cancer Research 'Shoulder to Shoulder' campaign to support the NHS in improving cancer outcomes.

This campaign calls on the Prime Minister to ensure that the cancer workforce is a long term priority for the Government.

Care After Breast Cancer

Following treatment for breast cancer, women are often being left without ongoing support, meaning that side effects including anxiety and depression are far too common. I was pleased therefore to support Breast Cancer Care's campaign to improve after care support.



Roberta supporting the Care After Breast Cancer Campaign

Islamic Relief Campaign

