

Labour Rose

A new generation
for change

News from Stockton North Labour MP Alex Cunningham

Number three - Summer 2011

SAVE OUR NHS

Fight goes on to protect the NHS from Tory tampering

"The fight to protect the NHS in the face of devastating reforms planned by the Tory-led Government has been central to my work representing you over the past six months. I've been pleased to work with local people, doctors, nurses, fellow MPs and trades unions like Unison to highlight flaws

with the Government's plans which are already costing health professionals their jobs and increasing waiting times.

"We've already seen hundreds of NHS staff across Teesside sacked and crucial accident and emergency service targets abandoned even though the Government has made promise after promise to protect the health service and increase its funding.

"But it's clear to me that local people are not going to stand back and accept that the multi billion pound reorganisation of their National Health Service is the right way forward.

"Two local events, a demonstration outside North Tees University Hospital and a debate at The Arc, were well attended with tremendous public support. Even police and ambulance drivers made their support for the cause clear.

"Some progress has already been made in persuading the Government to think again – but whilst the Prime Minister holds press conference after press conference telling the country how much he loves the NHS, the work to privatise services to allow companies to make vast profits out of our NHS goes on."



Alex with Frances O'Grady, deputy general secretary of TUC

Pension Age

Residents in Stockton North have been in touch with Alex to tell him their concerns about plans to increase the state pension age for women from 60 to 65 by 2018 and then increase both men's and women's state pension ages to 66 by 2020.

The plans will see 330,000 women born between December 1953 and October 1954 have to wait 18 months or two years longer for their state pension. "People need proper

time to plan for the increase in the state pension age, and the change is happening too fast and causing a lot of worry and anger. It will be the poorest women who suffer the most as a result of the government's plans, those who do not have savings to fall back on and are in low-paid jobs", said Alex. More than 170 MPs, including Conservative and Liberal Democrat backbenchers, have signed an Early Day Motion calling for a rethink of the plans.

Police Cuts

One hundred and seventy eight of Cleveland's most experienced Police Officers could be forced into retirement thanks to Government cuts. Cleveland Police Authority has approved the use of controversial 'A19' regulations to force early retirement on some of the most experienced Police Officers in the country to help cope with the cuts.

Across the country 12,000 Police Officers are expected to lose their jobs thanks to front-loaded cuts of 20% being imposed by the Home Secretary. In Cleveland a minimum of 230 are set to go.

"The Government is forcing through cuts to our Police Service that will ultimately lead to fewer police on the beat and fewer experienced



support officers to deal with serious crime", said Alex. "Worse still, they are in denial about the reality of the situation on the ground, simply refusing to acknowledge that these cuts will lead to many fewer front line Police Officers."

"As these cuts begin to hit home, it is our local communities that will suffer."

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Ban (page 2)



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loan sharks (page 2 & 3)



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In Brief

Circus Animals

Alex backed the wishes of local people that wild animals ought to be banned from circuses. He said: "I am amazed that in the 21st century the Government is hiding behind a possible legal action somewhere else in Europe to delay a ban in this country. The vast majority of people want this ban and we should have it."

Stockton loses out

Residents in Stockton are losing out under the Tory-led government's new Housing policy, the New Homes Bonus. Whilst Richmondshire District Council received £6,272 for each extra home in their community, Stockton Borough Council will get just £1,313.90. And whilst the City of London has been given £28.51 a head in funding the government has given Stockton Borough Council just £3.99. Labour called on the government to tax bankers' bonuses and to spend £1.2bn on delivering 25,000 affordable homes.

Port Clarence Post Office

Alex was pleased to hear the Post Office service has a new lease of life at Port Clarence. He tackled the Post Office when they said the original one was closing and was assured the service would be reinstated.

Lustrum Beck pollution

The discharge of tons of human sewage directly into Lustrum Beck, which flows through the middle of Stockton, was a major issue for local people in April. Alex demanded an enquiry by the Environment Agency and details of what Northumbrian Water planned to do to guarantee there would not be a repeat of the incident. The agency said they were considering prosecuting the company while Northumbrian Water have apologised.

Stockton High Street/Swallow Hotel

The plans to redevelop Stockton High Street and give our ancient market a makeover will hopefully attract more shops and shoppers to the town. Alex is playing his part in encouraging developers to invest in the Town Centre. He has also pressed Whitbread, owners of the lease on the now closed Swallow Hotel, for action. At the time of writing the company were due to reveal their plans. We await the announcement with interest.

Nuclear waste at Port Clarence

Nuclear waste dumped at Port Clarence has "a very low radioactivity content" and "will have no health effects on nearby residents" according to the Department for Energy and Climate Change and the Ministry of Defence. Alex wrote to the Government after concerns were raised about the site. He said: "I hope local residents will be reassured by this response. I am told the amount of radioactivity associated with the material is at such a low level that it is exempt from statutory regulation under the Radioactive Substances Act 1993. I know the Environment Agency is monitoring the site regularly to ensure they are operating within their license."

Billingham Health Centre

Plans for a multi purpose health and care centre in Billingham have been ditched by the Tory Government. Alex said: "This is extremely disappointing news and comes just 10 months after the Health Secretary scrapped plans for a new hospital for our area. At a time when the Government is coming under sustained pressure over its plans for the NHS it is becoming increasingly clear that Andrew Lansley does not understand the healthcare needs of local people in Billingham and across the Teesside region."

British Tomato Week

With a huge complex at Billingham producing millions of tomatoes every year, Alex was pleased to back British Tomato Week last month. You can normally buy our home grown tomatoes in local supermarkets.

Fight to protect Teesside industry

Major employers throughout our area will be hard hit by the way the Government has developed its policy around carbon reduction.

Alex has been working with companies in the Stockton North constituency and across the country, raising on the floor of the House of Commons and in parliamentary questions, the problems they face – problems which could render them no longer viable.

We all know that we as a nation need to cut emissions but it needs to be done in such a way that industries like the ones on Teesside which have been working hard in recent years to do just that, are properly helped to achieve the targets.

One example of the impact is on the fertilizer industry - the feedstock needed is made at two plants in the UK, one at Haverton Hill – but we could lose that industry altogether if the emissions programme isn't developed in a measured and sensible way.



Alex is part of a group in the House of Commons fighting on behalf of a diverse range of energy intensive industries manufacturing everything from chemicals to glass and will continue the work to give the fighting chance. It is no good government promoting manufacturing and then putting the boot into Teesside industry.

Alex acts to protect children



them to highlight the dangers of passive smoking. Alex presented a 'Ten Minute Rule Bill' to the House of Commons, saying: "When the British Lung Foundation teamed up with Mumsnet to find out the views of parents on smoking, over 85% of them supported a proposed ban on smoking when children are present.

"We already have legislation that bans smoking on buses, trains, planes and taxis. I remember when people were allowed to light up on public transport and that was considered normal; I think most would agree attitudes have changed significantly. Adults can make up their own minds about smoking. It is children we need to protect."

"I am really pleased that MPs voted in favour of my Bill even though some MPs forced a vote on a children's health issue. I had support from Conservative, Liberal Democrat, Labour and other MPs which shows the strength of support there is for this issue.

"I just hope the Government is listening and doesn't dismiss a ban without looking at the tremendous health benefits it would bring about."

MPs have backed a call from Alex to introduce a ban on smoking in cars when children are present. Stockton North is ranked 15th in the British Lung Foundation's league table of 'parent smoking hotspots' and Alex has been working closely with

Loa



The sco sharks an on the le society strongly targeted Stockton May.

Alex—working hard for Stockton North



On shift with Sandy and Mandy



With Health staff on NHS demo



At Lustrum Beck

Community Energy Plans Axed

Community schemes to generate environmentally friendly electricity and help raise much needed funds for organisations have been kicked in the teeth by the Government, led by the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, Liberal Democrat Chris Huhne MP. The Government has ditched incentives to encourage the small scale development of solar photovoltaic panel schemes meaning that many of the plans led by small local organisations can no longer go ahead. One such scheme in Stockton North would have seen the Norton Sports and Social Club generate not just lots of electricity but also hard cash to help fund and maintain their activities.

Alex, who led a debate in Parliament on the issue, is demanding the Government think again and allow these kinds of projects to go ahead: "It is no good the government claiming to be the greenest ever if it strangles initiatives like the one in our area before it has even started," he said. Meanwhile, Alex is working to play his part in encouraging the development of other "green" industries like the manufacture of wind turbines to generate the energy needs of the future. He is working with other MPs in the hope that the thousands of jobs that could be created are not lost to other European countries.

A Message from the Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls



As Shadow Chancellor, I agree that we need to get the deficit down. But to do that you need growth in the economy to create jobs, and we put that at risk by cutting too far and too fast, as the Government is doing.

In Stockton North unemployment now stands at 9.1% and nearly 20% of 16 to 24 year olds are unemployed. Across the country there are now almost 1.5 million people claiming Job Seekers Allowance.

The Prime Minister said he would cut the deficit by cutting waste but he is cutting the police and jobs instead. Putting people on the dole is a waste of taxpayers' money and a waste of their potential.

Since October the UK economy has not grown at all. The plan is not working and yet there is no sign of a 'Plan B'.

The Labour Party is fighting against the reckless way in which the Prime Minister is ploughing ahead with his dangerous plans for the UK economy. Labour MPs, including your local MP Alex Cunningham, have been arguing that the Government's cuts risk creating a vicious circle where more people out of work and not in work paying taxes makes it harder to get the deficit down.

Labour's plan to halve the deficit in four years would mean cuts, but those cuts would have not been as extreme as the ones now being implemented. In Government Labour had a plan to make efficiency savings in the police service of 12% which was possible over four years without hitting frontline officers. The Government is cutting police budgets by 20%, frontloaded for the first two years - going too far and too fast and hitting the frontline.

In June I set out my plan for a temporary VAT cut, taking VAT back to 17.5%. This would be a boost for consumers who are feeling the squeeze from rising food and petrol prices; especially for pensioners and those on low incomes.

The Government's plan is making life tougher for families in Stockton North and means more people on the dole and struggling to make ends meet. Sooner or later George Osborne will have to face the fact that whilst his cuts are hurting, they're not working.

an Shark demonstration



to local people wanting to buy white goods, electrical goods and furniture. The company had refused to meet with Thrive to discuss the way they treat their customers but after receiving wide bad coverage of the demonstration on radio, television, and in the newspapers, they gave in and agreed to a meeting.

urge of legal loan and credit companies east well off in our was brought into focus with a protest on High Street in

Alex joined members of the Church Action on Poverty group, Thrive and other demonstrators from across the Borough outside Brighthouse in the Castle Centre, who charge extortionate interest rates

Work instigated by Alex's office to help develop Credit Union facilities in the area goes on with an action plan due soon. Keep your eye on Alex's web site for more information.

Anxious times for older people

Hundreds of older people across Stockton, Norton and Billingham have been left worrying about their future given the financial difficulties faced by Southern Cross Care Homes which have five developments within the Stockton North constituency.

In June Alex questioned the Health Minister in the Commons on what decisive action he would take to ensure older people and their families could be reassured that they could remain in the places they call home if Southern Cross went bust.

Sadly the Minister chose to pass the buck

to local Councils who they say are responsible for the care of older people. Thankfully Stockton Borough Council are on the case and places are available elsewhere if things get worse.

In other news, Alex recently led a debate in Parliament on the future of Social Care Services. He highlighted the fears held by many about the Government's plans to cut benefits and related services. After hearing from Unison about high staff turnover and a low skill base, he also spoke of the need to value and protect care workers and enable them to develop their skills and careers within the sector.



Tristar launch home improvements



In Glebe with councillors & John Healey MP



Listening to carers

Your New Local Labour Teams

Thank you to everyone who voted Labour at the recent Council elections. We now have 21 Labour councillors in Stockton North including seven new ones. Labour made strong gains across the whole area and Bob Cook is now the new Leader of the Council and Jim Beall is Deputy Leader. The teams serving communities in Norton, Billingham and Stockton are detailed below:

Norton



Norton West: david.wilburn@stockton.gov.uk & norma.wilburn@stockton.gov.uk—532517

Norton South: Eileen.johnson@stockton.gov.uk—618848 & Robert.cook@stockton.gov.uk—890058

Norton North: kathryn.nelson@stockton.gov.uk & steve.nelson@stockton.gov.uk—534417

Billingham East: evaline.cunningham@stockton.gov.uk—532090 & mick.stoker@stockton.gov.uk—371641

Billingham North: ray.mccall@stockton.gov.uk—533407

Billingham Central: ann.mccoy@stockton.gov.uk—535604 & barry.woodhouse@stockton.gov.uk—371638

Billingham South: jean.odonnell@stockton.gov.uk—559717 & mike.smith@stockton.gov.uk—371782

Billingham



Stockton Town Centre:

paul.kirton@stockton.gov.uk—559331 & david.coleman@stockton.gov.uk—673952

Newtown: robert.gibson@stockton.gov.uk—614482 & paul.baker@stockton.gov.uk—608406

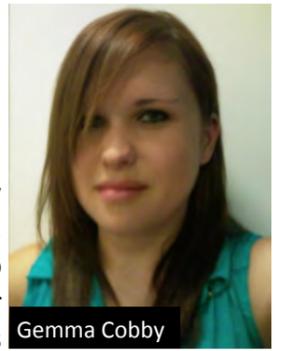
Hardwick: nigel.cooke@stockton.gov.uk—589442 & norma.stephenson@stockton.gov.uk—675891

Roseworth: Barbara.inman@stockton.gov.uk—586564 & jim.beall@stockton.gov.uk—602510

Stockton



Gemma gives a young person's view



Gemma Cobby

The summer break for many students will be very welcome after months of stress revising for exams. Some will be eagerly awaiting their A-Level results to find out whether they will be entering Higher Education and the university of their choice. Others will be starting to look for a full-time job having left school.

Since the formation of the Tory-led Coalition, the government has increased tuition fees in England and Wales meaning that many students starting University in 2012 will face fees of up to £9,000 a year. At the same time, jobs in the public sector have been lost thanks to the Government's spending cuts. Competition is fierce in the job market and in obtaining a university place and it is no surprise that nearly 1 million people aged 16 to 24 are unemployed.

The UK has some of the world's best universities and has drawn in thousands of international students to study in the UK. The concern is that our young people, particularly those from low income families, will be put off applying to University thanks to the huge debt they will incur. It is also important that the government does more to bring down the number of 16-24 year olds out of work, to avoid a 'lost generation' of young people. The Labour Party continues to fight against this unprecedented assault on our young people and recognises the importance of supporting them through this difficult economic period.

Useful Contacts

Are you a carer and need support? Contact George Hardwick Foundation on 0845 3025523

Young carer and need support? Contact Eastern Ravens Trust on 01642 678454

Debt problems? Contact Citizens' Advice Bureau on 01642 633877 or Christians Against Poverty on 0800 3280006

Vulnerable young person or woman needing help? Contact A Way Out on 01642 655071

Serving our area

Alex and his team of staff – four in Stockton and one at Westminster – are available to offer the people of the constituency the best possible service.

The team deals with many constituents' problems every day, ranging from pensions, all types of benefit, CSA, housing, health, crime, social care, planning, tax credits, disability and student issues.

Whatever it is, Alex and his team are always ready to help any way they can. You can see Alex at one of his regular surgeries throughout the constituency or get in touch with him in the following ways:

Address: **Stockton Business Centre, 70 Brunswick Street, Stockton-on-Tees, T18 1DW**

Telephone: **01642 345291 / 0207 219 7157**

Email: **alex.cunningham.mp@parliament.uk**

Website: **www.alex.cunningham.mp.com**

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The easiest way to get involved and join is at:

www.labour.org.uk/join

Or just get in touch with Alex

 **@acunninghammp**

 **facebook.com/alex.cunninghammp**