



News  
from  
**Westminster**  
Dec '18/Jan '19

No. 111



# Report from Sharon Hodgson MP



*Hylton Castle in Sunderland, undergoing renovation.*

## **Brexit**

The “Meaningful Vote” on the Prime Minister’s deal was due to take place on 11th December 2018, but was abandoned by Theresa May and delayed until well over a month later, on the 15th January 2019. According to the Prime Minister, the decision for this delay was taken in order to provide concrete re-assurances on some of the major concerns that had been raised, particularly around the issue of the backstop.

Unsurprisingly, no assurances were provided, and by the time the vote finally took place, nothing much had changed. Unsurprisingly, the deal was defeated by a majority of 230 votes, the largest parliamentary defeat of any British Prime Minister in the democratic era.

In recent days the Prime Minister has finally been reaching out to other political parties on Brexit. This is something that she should have done at the start of this process over two years ago, in order to begin the negotiations with a position that could have commanded support from across the political spectrum.

The Labour Party took the decision not to engage in these talks unless the Prime Minister ruled out a disastrous “No-Deal” scenario, something well within her power to do. A decision vindicated by the fact that reports, from some of the meetings that have taken place so far, indicating that the Prime Minister was not offering any constructive ways forward.

Labour has now tabled its amendment to the Government’s Plan B Brexit motion in order to break the Brexit deadlock and protect the UK from a “No-Deal” outcome. The amendment would instruct the government to rule out a disastrous no-deal and give Parliament time to consider and vote on options to break the impasse.

The Prime Minister’s deal represents the failure of the past two and a half years, that this Tory Government has wasted on botched negotiations, and my constituents must not suffer as a result of their incompetence.

## **Hylton Castle**

In December, I was honoured to be part of a group tour around Hylton Castle to see how the restoration works are progressing. The works are part of a £4.5million partnership project between Sunderland City Council and “Castle in the Community” group, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage.

The works are on track to be finished this year, but for local campaigners, the completion cannot come soon enough. Restoring a 14th century castle is no mean feat, but for Councillors Denny Wilson, Doris MacKnight, Stephen Foster, and Susan Ord who is Chair of the Campaign Group, along with other local campaigners, this is so much more, and is the culmination of decades of dedicated campaigning by the community. The restoration works show the power of community activism when we all come together. Local campaigners, residents, businesses and politicians have all joined forces to make this restoration happen. With persistence and determination over the years, the works are now almost complete, and will bring huge numbers of visitors from across the North East and further afield to our local area.

## Some highlights (No. 111 - Dec '18/Jan '19)

### In Parliament

#### Protection for Homebuyers, Westminster Hall debate



Over the past couple of months, I have been running a consultation on leasehold properties with the help of local members, who have delivered over 2,000 letters to constituents. A great number of people have been in touch with me as a result, with significant concerns about their own experiences. I was therefore pleased to speak in a Westminster Hall Debate in December on Protection for Homebuyers in order to raise some of the key issues that have been brought to my attention.

During the debate, I called on the Government to do more to tackle this problem, and urged them to launch an inquiry into this scandal as soon as possible. You can read my full speech by visiting: [www.sharonhodgson.org/protection\\_for\\_homebuyers\\_westminster\\_hall\\_13\\_12\\_18](http://www.sharonhodgson.org/protection_for_homebuyers_westminster_hall_13_12_18)

Please do email me if you have experienced problems with a leasehold property, on: [hodgsons@parliament.uk](mailto:hodgsons@parliament.uk)

#### Joint Meeting of All-Party Parliamentary Group on Ovarian Cancer, and All-Party Parliamentary Group on Pancreatic Cancer.

As Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Ovarian Cancer, I was delighted to host an event in Parliament with the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Pancreatic Cancer, focussing on multidisciplinary diagnostic services. We looked at how these services could speed up diagnosis of ovarian cancer and pancreatic cancer.

The meeting featured some extremely moving contributions from advocates, one who told us about her personal experiences of ovarian cancer, and another who shared the devastating impact of pancreatic cancer on his family. I look forward to seeing both Parliamentary groups continue to campaign strongly on these important issues in 2019.

### In and around the constituency

#### Sensory Room opening at Biddick Primary, Washington



I was honoured to attend Biddick Primary School recently, to present a cheque on behalf of Washington Rotary Club who have donated £1,000 to help with the School's "Sensory Rocket Room" which has been in use since April. The facility is mainly used by children with sensory needs such as anxiety, autism, and anger issues. It was fantastic to be able to attend and see just how helpful the facility is for those who need it. I know that the school greatly appreciates the donation, and that the money will be put to very good use.

#### Visit to Washington Job Centre – Universal Credit meeting



In December I had an extremely informative visit to Washington Job Centre, where I met with some of their dedicated staff from Disability Support, Customer Service, Universal Credit, Partnership and Employer/Education Engagement teams about a broad range of issues that affect their work, and for those who use their services. The visit gave me a good opportunity to raise many of the questions and concerns I have around Universal Credit, and highlight some examples from my casework of ways in which the rollout is having a detrimental impact on people's lives. I look forward to visiting the centre again in the near future, and working with staff there to support my constituents in navigating this huge upheaval that is Universal Credit.

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