



News  
from  
**Westminster**  
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No. 121



# Report from Sharon Hodgson MP



*Sharon raises Nissan exports with PM Boris Johnson.*

## **Brexit**

**Almost three and a half years on from the result of the referendum, there is still no clarity about what our exit from the EU will look like. Only in the last few days has Boris Johnson set out his ‘plan’ for Brexit which, upon first reading, is worse than Theresa May’s, and we are yet to find out whether it will even be acceptable to the EU.**

This Conservative Government has led us to the brink of a No Deal Brexit through infighting, incompetence, and prioritising internal conflicts within the Tory Party over the national interest. The Labour Party has been clear, we respect and accept the result of the referendum, but we are not prepared to allow a No Deal Brexit. I oppose such an outcome, and have supported measures in Parliament to that effect.

We have consistently called for a Brexit deal that would protect workers’ rights and environmental protections, and secure the frictionless trade that businesses rely upon. The only way to break the current deadlock is to go back to the people. A Labour Government would offer the public a final say between the best Brexit deal that can be secured, and remaining in the EU. It’s clearer now than ever that we need

a Labour Government, one that can transform our society for the better and put people before privilege. We have just had our Party conference where we set out our ambitious and positive vision for the country, including new policies on healthcare, education, and the environment.

## **No Deal food question in Parliament**

One of the most concerning impacts that a No Deal Brexit could have is on the supply of food and medicine, and food prices.

The Government has previously suggested that in the event of a No Deal Brexit, a system of hardship payments, benefit advances and budgeting loans would be available to those who need them. I asked Michael Gove MP, about the availability of those funds. You can see the question here: <https://bit.ly/2nQlpQX>

## **Question to PM Boris Johnson on Nissan**

The automotive industry has been clear in their opposition to No Deal, because the introduction of tariffs, or a delay to the just-in-time processes that the industry relies on would be hugely damaging. Indeed, the Chief Executive of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) has warned Boris Johnson that a No Deal Brexit “presents an existential threat to our industry”.

We are again in the situation where businesses such as Nissan have products on ships to destinations around the world, without knowing what the customs arrangements will be when they get there. I challenged Boris Johnson on this in Parliament, you can see my question here: <https://bit.ly/2po9USz>

## **Thomas Cook**

I joined my constituent Kelly Ates, a Thomas Cook employee, Jeremy Corbyn, and other MPs, at a Unite the Union protest and meeting in Westminster against the way in which the closure of Thomas Cook has been handled. Thomas Cook employees now face an uncertain future, they have not been paid since August and have no clarity as to if or when they will get any redundancy pay.

## Some highlights (No. 121 - Sep/Oct 2019)

### In and Around the constituency

#### Washington Carnival, 2019



It was a pleasure to attend the annual Washington Carnival and meet with local charities and organisations to talk about their campaigns in the local community. I was able to talk to a diverse range of groups, including the Rotary Club, Wearside Women in Need, and representatives from Asda's Tickled Pink campaign. I also talked to Washington Clean and Green about the local environment, and my opposition to the construction of a Gasification Plant in the constituency.

#### Company Shop One-Year Anniversary



I was delighted to help celebrate the Company Shop's first anniversary. Company Shop has redistributed 6.5 million items of surplus food across the UK in the last year, providing a source of low-cost, high quality food to the local community in Washington. Not only does this help those working in the public sector with tight budgets access nutritional meals, but local businesses can reduce their waste without losing profit. The work of Company Shop avoids good food going to landfill, benefitting local families, local businesses, and the environment.

#### Police and residents meeting on rising crime

I met with residents from Donwell and Springwell Village recently to discuss the rise in car theft in the local area, and how the community can work with police to take safe action. Residents rightly expect serious crime to be investigated, but cuts to police funding mean local forces

are over-stretched and over-worked. Labour is committed to recruiting thousands of new officers to tackle rising crime rates and ensure that people feel safe in their homes and communities.

#### Labour Party Conference, Brighton

#### Women and Equalities fringe event, Brighton



I joined Dawn Butler MP to discuss gender equality in the health sector and the impact of austerity upon women's health outcomes. I reaffirmed Labour's commitment to narrowing health inequalities across the UK, and to implementing a genuine strategy to arrest the reversal in life expectancy that we are now seeing under the Tories.

#### LACA's event on school meals

School meals are an issue close to my heart, which I have campaigned on for well over a decade. At this panel event, I discussed how offering universal access to free school meals improves educational attainment and pupil productivity. The Tory Government's cuts to school budgets and introduction of a ridiculously low earnings threshold under Universal Credit will deny many children the basic right of a healthy lunch at school. I am proud that Labour has committed to introducing universal free school meals for all primary children as part of its childhood strategy, and I will continue to campaign for further expansion of this policy to secondary pupils and breakfast clubs.



Ben Rathbone-Wells, 2019

#### Labour's Health and Social Care policy forum

Labour's plan to invest £8 billion into social care could radically change the way we look after vulnerable people in this country, and we are committed to establishing a National Care Service in Government. This was discussed with delegates from across the country in detail.

#### Labour campaign for drug reform

I joined my colleagues Thangam Debonnaire MP and Jeff Smith MP to discuss how Labour would address the crisis in drug use, by adopting a public health approach to reform.

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