

Press Release: Totnes and S Devon Labour Party

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Totnes and South Devon Labour Party has selected local social worker and Totnes Town Councillor Louise Webberley as their parliamentary candidate in the general election.

Louise said: 'I am delighted to be representing the Labour Party in Totnes, the constituency I live and work in, and where my daughter goes to school. After ten years of cruel cuts and three years of Brexit madness, the people of South Devon never needed a Labour government more than they do today'.

The hustings, on the evening of 29 October, was interrupted by the news that the successful candidate would be going straight into a full election campaign, as Parliament had just agreed a 12 December date for a general election.

Four candidates, all experienced campaigners, took turns to address questions from party members. Louise highlighted Universal Credit as a critical issue for constituents, with local people being forced into poverty by the five-week wait for payment and the punitive sanctions regime. Gerrie Messer agreed, citing her own experience of challenging PIP assessments on behalf of applicants, and drew attention to the lack of mental health services locally.

Pauline Wynter highlighted housing problems, with no requirement for developers to build affordable homes or the infrastructure needed for new residents. She also spoke passionately about the need to reform the global financial system so that the climate emergency can effectively be addressed. Sarbaz Ahmed focused on the need for Labour to defend the NHS from a decade of cuts and from the possibility of a US trade deal. Other policies highlighted at the hustings were Labour's Green New Deal, and the party's plans for a National Education Service with free education from cradle to grave.

Candidates talked about how Labour could offer hope to communities across the constituency, from families in Brixham to public sector workers in Dartmouth, and from small businesses in Totnes to rural villages in the South Hams. Everywhere there is a need for secure jobs and housing, healthcare, and education to improve people's prospects. Only Labour can offer hope to people across our diverse towns and villages.

In the end, Louise won through an impressive field to front the party's election campaign. Labour has 850 members in the constituency, who will be campaigning tirelessly for the next six weeks. In 2017, Gerrie Messer secured the highest Labour share of the Totnes vote for 70 years at 26%.

A public meeting on Labour's Green New Deal policies will be held at the Mansion, Totnes, on 16 November at 11am. Speakers will include Clare Moody, former Labour MEP, and local climate activist Ben Stollery. There will be a chance to meet Louise and discuss Labour's other policies informally after the meeting.