

# RED POST

## Labour in Totnes and South Devon

### Free school meals to carry on - for now

Even before the pandemic, 30% of children in our constituency were living in poverty. We know that lay-offs and pay cuts have left many more families in need. So it's great news that Marcus Rashford's campaign has forced the government to continue free school meal vouchers over the summer holidays. But they won't address the long-term causes of food poverty. For that we need a national strategy.

### Safe at work, safe at home

After Red Post highlighted the issue in May, the Labour Party has called on the Government to fully resource workplace safety inspections. Since 2010, Government funding for the HSE has been slashed by more than half, and spending on health and safety by local authorities has fallen by over 40%. This must be reversed if workplaces are to be safe.

And local public health officers must be given back control of track and trace, with funds to match. So instead of lining the pockets of Serco, our money can help GPs and hospitals respond to local infections.

## We need a recovery for all

### Percentage of people claiming benefits

Claimant count rate



Source: Office for National Statistics

In March, fewer than 1000 people in our constituency were claiming unemployment benefits. In May there were over 3000. This doesn't include workers on reduced wages or reduced hours as employers try to ride out the storm. The OECD has warned that the UK is likely to experience the worst recession in the developed world, thanks to our Government's appalling mismanagement of the crisis. Towns that depend on tourism, hospitality and leisure - like ours - will suffer especially badly.

Labour's Shadow Chancellor, Anneliese Dodds, has demanded an urgent 'Back to Work Budget' to protect jobs. As the Tories seem to be trying on Labour's clothes, we suggest they look again at the Green New Deal: our plan to create well-paid jobs in renewable energy, green construction, and sustainable farming. Our 2019 manifesto would have created 80,000 highly skilled jobs in the SW, 1800 construction jobs in Torbay and the South Hams alone. We need a green recovery more than ever.

Other countries have announced stimulus packages to boost their economies. Our Government continues to talk up austerity as a solution. It didn't work in response to the global banking crisis in 2008, and it won't work now. We demand investment, especially in green jobs and in those public sector jobs that have proved the backbone of the real economy.

## Council news

The Covid-19 crisis has shown how vital our local councils are, from organising volunteers in towns and parishes, to running public health services at county level. Tragically for our Covid-19 response, **Devon County Council** has rubber stamped ten years of cuts and sell-offs in our essential services. Some of our CLP members have stepped up as potential candidates for CC elections in 2021, and we look forward to campaigning with them for a socialist alternative.

Labour members on **Totnes Town Council** have helped shoppers return to the High Street by introducing pedestrian-only access on Saturday mornings, to allow safe social distancing.

Labour members continue to support the work of **Dartmouth Caring and Dartmouth Community Chest**, distributing food parcels, hot meals and prescriptions. From Brixham to Kingsbridge, established food banks and new initiatives are stepping in as the health crisis gives way to a crisis in jobs and benefits.

As **District and County Council meetings** go online, we are concerned that short-cuts may be taken in decision making, and there may be fewer opportunities for scrutiny. Emergency measures must not become long-term excuses to undermine our local democracy and accountability.

## Time to mend the welfare safety net

More than 6000 adults in our constituency are claiming Universal Credit. Of these, two thirds have gone into debt or further into debt since lock-down. Labour is calling for an overhaul of this shameful system, that brings debt and despair where it should bring security. An end to the two-child limit and the benefit cap. No more five-week wait for payment, and interim grants instead of loans. Disability assessments tailored to each person's needs. We are also campaigning to scrap the 'no recourse to public funds' law. We must make sure the poorest and least secure do not pay for this crisis.

## #blacklivesmatter



Let's face it, our constituency is very... white. But that can make racism all the more difficult to challenge. Members have taken part in #BLM actions in several towns, and we are learning more about the legacy of slavery and the impact of institutional racism in our area. It's appalling that Covid-19 kills more people from ethnic minorities because they are more likely to be in poor health, and to work in front line jobs where they are exposed to the virus. On Windrush Day, we should be celebrating the huge contribution BME people have made to our community, not protesting about what it has cost them.

Policing in the US was the original flashpoint for the protests. But here in the UK, black people are eight times as likely as white people to be stopped and searched, and five times as likely to experience 'force' when they are arrested. As we went to press, there were many unanswered questions about the death of a black man in a Torquay police cell in May. The Independent Office for Police Conduct is investigating, and we ask that this is done openly and thoroughly, and that Devon and Cornwall Police act swiftly on any recommendations.

CLP online: join us to debate GE 2019, environment policy and more