

GRAHAME MORRIS MP



ANNUAL REPORT 2021

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

I wanted to put together a brief annual overview of the last twelve months and outline the priorities for 2022.

Covid remains the most serious and difficult issue we face as a country. The Omicron variant is spreading fast and it is vital people eligible for the booster take the opportunity to help keep ourselves, friends and loved ones safe this Christmas.

In 2021, the Government have been exposed on a number of fronts, from breaking covid lockdown rules, failing to properly respond to Storm Arwen and unmasking levelling up as a lie, with continued rail failure on the Durham Coastline.

The tide is turning and even in true blue Tory heartland of North Shropshire, the by-election results shows that Boris Johnson will be held accountable for his lies and incompetence.



I want to thank everyone for their hard work and support throughout 2021, as we campaign to deliver the new ideas that will rebuild Britain and benefit people living in the Easington constituency.

Merry Christmas and all the best for 2022.

Grahame.

MINeworkERS PENSION SCHEME INJUSTICE DEEPENS AS MINISTER REJECTS SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT



"Our mineworkers have served our country. They have served it loyally. They have toiled in the most dangerous and challenging working conditions imaginable. We owe them a debt of gratitude and they deserve pension justice"

Grahame Morris MP

The Government rejected the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee report on the Mineworkers Pension Scheme refusing to transfer the £1.2 billion reserve funds to uplift pensions and blocking changes to the 50:50 surplus share.

This complete and total betrayal of mineworkers exposes the Prime Minister's promise to give miners their 'fair share' from the scheme as a lie. Minister's held trustees to ransom, willing to forgo the surplus share if they agreed to sacrifice the guarantee that protects benefits.

The Minister playing games with the retirement of mineworkers and their widows shows contempt for the men that worked underground, sacrificing their health to sustain the UK economy for over a century.

The Government have been paid time and again for the guarantee taking over £4 billion out of the scheme. The scheme weathered the 2008 Global Financial Crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic, without the need for Government financial assistance. If the Government were ever required to contribute, the amount would be nowhere near the £6.3 billion total they are on course to receive from the scheme.

The Government made a choice to exploit and squeeze retired miners living on average pensions of just £84 a week. The campaign for pension justice will not end. We must remain resolute.

The Government must change position and if not, we must change the Government.

MP LEADS CALLS FOR STORM ARWEN PUBLIC ENQUIRY



"We will get to test the North-South divide in the days and weeks ahead. If the power was out in the capital and people were left without support and assistance for a week and counting, a public inquiry would follow for the residents of Westminster, Kensington, and Chelsea."

Storm Arwen highlighted years of under-investment and I am calling for a public inquiry.

The response to Storm Arwen showed structural failure at all levels, which left vulnerable people without light and heating for prolonged periods. There was no welfare assistance or support on the ground until five days after the Storm and then questions remain about its distribution.

The multiple failures are too long to list and there are conflicting accounts about who did what and when.

There are local lessons, but also questions of national importance. Internal inquiries are about protecting reputations while a comprehensive overarching public inquiry looking at the whole situation will hold people and organisations accountable.

Levelling up is a lie. Our basic infrastructure is weak, leaving our region less resilient during a crisis and for the rest of the time, it holds back our local economy.

When we need leadership, the Prime Minister hides from public anger. However, the anger on the ground comes from being ignored and forgotten.

Engineers worked around the clock to restore power, but the Council's Local Resilience Forum failed to act in the immediate aftermath to deliver welfare support to residents.

A public inquiry into a national crisis where there have been systemic failures is the bare minimum if all the hand wringing about 'learning lessons' is to have any real substance.

Council refuse to condemn UC cuts

County Durham's new Tory Coalition Council rejected calls to condemn the Government's decision to remove the Universal Credit uplift.

Labour councillors were dismayed when the Tory-led Coalition, propped up by the Lib Dems and Durham Independents, rejected a motion to condemn the "decision by the Government to remove the Universal Credit £20 uplift".

Labour communities and inclusion lead, Cllr Angela Surtees, said: "Is this Conservative-led council actively working against the people of County Durham? Why else would it oppose such a clear and important motion – to let it be known to Government that the removal of this uplift will be severely detrimental to a huge number of North East families.

"Prior to the installation of the Tory-led Coalition, Labour was working to mitigate the impact of 10 years of austerity and welfare reform on people in the county. The £20 uplift isn't a cure-all, but goes a long way to support Durham's 30,000 people in receipt of UC, most of whom are in work. It is also worth around £55m to the county's economy.

This Tory Coalition rejected opportunities to make the case for Durham to Government – it claims there is no social care crisis, refuses to oppose National Insurance hikes and now won't condemn one of the cruellest, most inhumane decisions of this cruel and inhumane Government, which, if we take comments by the Durham Conservative deputy leader literally, isn't listening to us anyway



"The chaos we're enduring from Parliament is being replicated here, as councillors focus on party politics over those who voted for them. We're not out of the pandemic and people are struggling. Energy prices are rocketing, supermarket shelves are empty and we've had the largest tax hike in generations...the additional £20 meant some didn't have to choose between eating or heating, but this Government doesn't care, this Tory Coalition doesn't care and the Lib Dems and Independents propping them up don't care either."

Full Council voted to water down the motion, saying it disagreed, questioned and challenged the decision, but refused to criticise the move. It stated that it would work with partners to minimise the impact of the Government decision to cut Universal Credit by £20 a week.

TIME FOR A FAIRER SHARE: CAMPAIGN FOR A PROPORTIONAL PROPERTY TAX

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Council Tax places an **unfair burden on people living in the poorest communities** without generating the revenues needed to fund local services. A Proportional Property Tax, as proposed by Fairer Share, would create a transparent system, generate the revenues that local government requires, and **ease the tax burden on hard-pressed families** across the country.

Grahame Morris
Labour MP for Easington

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Council tax is a broken tax. Everybody in any part of government knows this. The remarkable thing is that no one has managed to find a way yet to reform it, while the tax continues to hit our poorest residents hardest, pushing them into poverty and making it harder for councils to raise funds for critical local services.

The regressive banding system based on 1991 house values penalises people living in the north east of England. As things stand, those renting a two bed semi in Easington pay the same council tax as the owner of a multi-million-pound townhouse in Westminster.

Councils are at the sharp end of this unfair tax and often end up getting the blame for worsening services while tax rises. It's time for change.

Replacing Council Tax with a Proportional Property Tax would see every property owner paying a flat 0.48% of the value of their property, moving the burden from renters to landlords. Around 76% of households would gain under this system.

The real difference with the new tax is that it will put cash in the pockets of the local people who are struggling the most, boosting local businesses and allowing councils to deliver better services. Households in Easington would be better off by £900 per year on average, with no households in the constituency losing out. This would help some families out of cycles of poverty, while providing a huge boost to the local economy, creating virtuous cycles of inclusive economic growth.

Durham County Council's Labour Group is leading the charge supporting a Proportional Property Tax in a Council motion. However, the Council Coalition rejected the motion which seeks to safeguard local government finances and put more money in your pocket. The campaign continues as nationally we build a cross-party consensus on this issue.

Easington School Victory



The former Easington School Buildings have been a blight on the community. I have campaigned since first elected to remove this blight and after many false dawns, I am glad we can now look to the future.

No one ever wants to lose historic buildings and local heritage, but it has been clear for some time that any heritage value with the former school was lost and it had become a drain on the community.

Easington Councillors David Boyes and Angela Surtees have been steadfast, and without their work and commitment this positive change would not have been possible.

Northern Rail Fail Campaign

Seaham and Horden are served by one train an hour, normally consisting of two carriages. Northern Rail is failing to meet the needs of our community and economy. Workers are at risk of losing their jobs, students miss classes, and plans are ruined due to cancelled and overcrowded trains.

I regularly invited the Minister to experience our overcrowded rail service, which he refuses. The second rate rail service on the Durham Coastline has been a long term and persistent problem.

I encourage people to share their stories with me at NorthernRailFail@hotmail.com I will raise cases in Parliament, most recently Harry, 11, who collapsed on an overcrowded service.



Remembrance 2021

Just as they were over a century ago, our armed forces have shown this year just how indispensable they are to the nation's security, from airlifting British Nationals out of Afghanistan, to driving NHS ambulances in Wales

During remembrance, we honour and remember the sacrifices made by our service men and women, veterans and their families, past and present.

It's vital we recognise their heroic efforts and I know local residents will mark this year's remembrance by supporting the local poppy appeal, turning out for remembrance services, or through unique community activities like the pebble poppy at the foot of Tommy. We will honour and remember their sacrifice.



End Commonwealth Visa Fees

The Government failed to respect our military when they whipped Tory MPs to block a cross-party proposals to finally end the scandal of charging Commonwealth and Gurkha veterans upwards of £10,000 in visa fees.

All County Durham and North East Conservative MPs sided with the Government over our Armed Forces to continue this scandal.

Labour has long campaigned alongside service charities like the Royal British Legion for this change. No one who serves our country should be forced to pay twice for their citizenship. Ministers must rethink and scrap these unjust and discriminatory fees.



Unite Hospitality Tips Victory.

Unscrupulous businesses will be banned from taking a cut of tips and service charges off hospitality staff after a long running Unite the Union campaign. As Chair of Unite the Union Parliamentary Group of MPs I am proud of this campaign win.



Customers should be confident that tips and service charges are going to the people they intended. Unite the Union shows how our industrial campaigns can make a really difference to the lives of working people.

The Unite Hospitality Campaigners deserve recognition for securing this change from one of the most anti-union, anti-worker Government's for a generation. Through working collectively our Labour movement is at its best when we can couple industrial campaigning with political action.

Government Block End to Fire and Rehire

The Government blocked a new law to stop businesses' laying staff off and taking them back with worse pay and terms. Despite Government Ministers' stating the threats of firing and rehiring is completely unacceptable as a negotiating tactic, they promised new guidance for companies, rather than a law.

Barry Gardiner MP, who brought forward the Private Members Bill called the Government 'cowardly' and provided more evidence that Ministers were on the side of bad bullying bosses instead of workers.

The Government abused every rule of parliament, scheduling a Friday statement, talking out the Bill at the dispatch box, and even whipped their MPs to vote against the Bill.



Labour promised it would ban fire-and-rehire completely when in government.

Get Boosted Now



- Get Boosted Now. Vaccines have saved countless lives and continue to be one of our best weapons against COVID-19.
- The latest data shows booster is the key to protecting us and the NHS against the Omicron variant.
- Booster vaccines are now offered to all UK adults (18+) before the New Year – this is a national mission so when you are eligible, get your jab

We're in a race between the virus and the vaccine.

Boosters are the best protection against the variant, which is why it's never been more important to come forward and Get Boosted Now.

"The NHS, our GPs, our pharmacists, the military and an army of volunteers are playing their part, working flat out to deliver jabs, save lives and ensure the NHS is not overwhelmed this winter with an influx of Omicron cases.

I encourage you to step forward and play your part.

If you're over 18 and had your second jab at least three months ago, then you can get boosted right now – and its vital that you do.

Every eligible adult in the country is now being urged to book their booster as soon as possible. First and second doses remain available.

To stay ahead in this race against the virus, every adult should get boosted and strengthen their protection as soon as they are able to.