



Sir Keir Starmer  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA  
By email

17<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Dear Sir Keir,

It is with a heavy heart and deep disappointment that I am leaving the Labour Party. I will now serve the people of Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland as the Independent North of Tyne Mayor.

Given you have barred me from running as North East Mayor, despite being incumbent Mayor, I have no other choice. In 2020 you told me to my face that you would “inspire people to come together... disciplining people to be united is going nowhere.” You’ve broken that promise.

I joined the Labour Party in 1985. I campaigned for Neil Kinnock to become PM in 1987. I’ve campaigned in countless elections. My Mam, my brother, my wife, and my two teenage sons are all Labour Party members. There are thousands of brilliant, dedicated activists, numerous councillors, MPs and Mayors who put public service above factional positioning, many of them good friends. They do incredible work in their communities, and I pay tribute to every one of them. I am not encouraging anyone to leave the Labour Party.

You’ve U-turned on so many promises: £28 billion to tackle the climate emergency, free school meals, ending university tuition fees, reversing NHS privatisation; in fact, a list of broken promises too long to repeat in this letter. And please stop saying “I make no apologies for...” before you find yourself saying “I make no apologies for making no apologies”.

Britain is a mess. Wages have fallen behind inflation. People are struggling to pay mortgages. Knife crime is out of control. Business investment has flat lined. The climate response is barely existent. People with chest pains wait an hour for ambulances. Our transport system is in chaos.

It is not grown-up politics to say Britain is broken, and then claim things are now so difficult we will abandon any plan to fix it. That is mental gymnastics worthy of Olympic gold.

Worst of all, you've said you're not interested in hope and change. Well, I am – Britain needs hope and change. Instead of London Labour HQ barring me from running, you could have used my work as a showcase of economic competence.

My Combined Authority has built affordable homes in rural and urban areas. I've worked with businesses large and small to deliver a pipeline of over 5,000 new jobs, all backed by our Good Work Pledge. Implemented a Green New Deal and invested heavily in offshore renewable energy. Our Child Poverty Prevention Programme is hailed as an exemplar of best practice. And we've increased adult education enrolments from 22,000 a year to 33,000 a year for the same budget. All this wealth generation was done without charging people a penny in council tax.

I've led negotiations and delivered an expanded £4.27 billion devolution deal across the North East to transform our region's transport system.

I've done this by being pragmatic and putting results ahead of party politics – to the effect that I've received praise for my "constructive, non-partisan approach" from Labour, Conservative, Lib Dem, Green and Independent Ministers, Mayors, MPs and councillors.

I think I've shown that hope and change is not only possible – but that it's a pragmatic, common sense response to the challenges of our time. This is not a time for faint hearts. It's a time for bravery. Shy bairns get nowt.

I didn't become a politician until I was 48. I'm an engineer. Fixing broken systems is what I do.

We need a new settlement. I value patriotism – and believe it's expressed by public service, not xenophobia. My Dad drove a tank in the army, my brother served in the navy at the time of the Falklands. My politics are simple – I believe Britain should be run in the interests of the people who do the work. That includes those unable to work, and those retired from a lifetime of work. It's not left-wing. It's not right-wing. It's common sense.

The groundswell of support I've received has been humbling. Business leaders, trade union leaders, charity workers, huge numbers of Labour members, and elected politicians from every party have encouraged me to run as an independent, saying they will vote for me because the North East needs an autonomous voice that's not in hock to Westminster Party HQs. They may be right.

In candour,

Jamie