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Islington South and Finsbury

Islington Labour
ON YOUR SIDE

Constituency Report (December 2020)

‘Building Britain’s Trading Future’

On 8 December, I held a series of virtual Q&A panel discussions focusing on Britain’s trade policy after Brexit.

I organised ‘Building Britain’s Trading Future’ because it is really important that Britain develops a trade policy that reflects who we are. Whether it’s leading the way in tackling the climate crisis, ensuring that we do not sell arms to be used in Yemen, or ensuring trade policy upholds workers’ rights; we have an opportunity to shape a progressive and ethical trade policy after Brexit, and this Trade Forum was created to develop knowledge and understanding on all sides.

I was joined a fantastic line-up of guests, including the South African High Commissioner Nomatembo Tambo and Bonnie Greer OBE, as well as trade union representatives, businesspeople, activists and campaigners.

We discussed the important issues of trade and investment,

raising standards, sustainability, human rights, and much more.

The Trade Forum hosted a vibrant and healthy debate on trade policy. It was wonderful to see so many Labour members, members of the public, businesses, and charitable organisations attend and ask questions about trade. Lots of people are interested in trade, but many fear that they know little about it – I hope that this event helped, at least in some way, to bridge that knowledge gap.



Session 4 – ‘Protecting Human Rights Through Trade’

Small Business Saturday



Visiting Cally Pets, Kipferl and The Yoga Quarter on Small Business Saturday, 5 December

This year’s Small Business Saturday was on 5 December. As we all know, the Coronavirus has made things very difficult for small businesses in 2020, so it was more important than ever that I showed up and offered my support to some of the amazing small business we are lucky to have here in Islington South and Finsbury.

I paid a visit to etc. (an excellent card and gift shop), Gail Smith Flowers (where I bought a beautiful wild flower Christmas wreath), Kipferl (the only Austrian cafe in London), Cally Pets (my favourite shop), and The Yoga Quarter (whose classes look after both physical health and mental health).

I think we should all make more of an effort to buy local this Christmas from the small businesses who give Islington so much of its character, particularly now that London is going to be subjected to Tier 3 restrictions.

DIT Questions

On [19 November](#), I asked Liz Truss whether she would rethink the government's policy on arms sales in light of the election of Joe Biden as President-Elect of the United States.

President-Elect Biden has spoken powerfully about the need to end support for the war in Yemen and stop selling arms that Saudi Arabia uses, in his words, to "murder children".

In her non-response, Liz Truss made it clear that there will be no rethink and the Tories are comfortable with continuing to

serve as apologists for Mohammed Bin Salman, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia.



[DIT Questions](#), 19 November

Continuity Trade Agreements and UK-Japan

On 17 November, I raised an [Urgent Question](#) in the House of Commons after the government missed the urgent deadline on the ratification of continuity trade deals with key partners including Ghana, Turkey and Mexico. In order for continuity trade agreements to be ratified by 31 December, the government needed to lay all outstanding agreements before Parliament on 11 November, otherwise it would be impossible for them to be given the 21 sitting days of scrutiny required by law.

This Urgent Question followed letters I wrote to Liz Truss on 10 and 13 November, which you can read [here](#), in which I said:



[General Debate on the UK-Japan Trade Deal](#), 25 November

"What makes this abysmal and shambolic state of affairs all the worse is that [...] it has been so totally avoidable."

The long-awaited [General Debate on the UK-Japan Trade Deal](#) took place on 25 November. Whilst I welcome continuity of trade between the UK and Japan, we must keep the agreement in perspective – it covers only 2.2 per cent of our current global trade, compared to the 47 per cent of trade that occurs between the UK and the EU.

During the debate, I confronted Liz Truss with her own Department's report on the question she has repeatedly refused to answer: what's the difference, in pounds and pence, between her Japan deal and the EU-Japan deal it replaces? Needless to say, she didn't look very happy.

A clip of my contribution to the debate received over 1 million views on social media! If you would like to see for yourself the arguments I made, you can watch the clip [here](#).

World AIDs Day

On 1 December, it was World AIDs Day. Every World Aids Day, I think about all of those who have had their lives cut short by this terrible disease, in particular three wonderful, funny and talented friends of mine who lost their lives in the 1980s, just as they were starting out.

Since the 1980s, medical science has come a long way. PrEP is a pill that people can now take to prevent the transition of HIV – and for those who take a daily pill, effectiveness is believed to be 99%!

PrEP is finally available on the NHS and I would encourage anyone who feels they need the drug to get and use it.



Wearing a red ribbon on World AIDs Day, 1 December

Diary

International Trade and Work in Parliament

- 16 November: Video call with the National Federation of Fisherman's Organisations
- 17 November: [Urgent Question on Continuity Trade Agreements](#)
- 19 November: [DIT Questions](#)
- 25 November: [General Debate on the UK-Japan Trade Deal](#)
- 26 November: Video call with UK Fisheries
- 26 November: Interview with the Brexit Archive
- 28 November: North West Quiz of the Year
- 30 November: Video call with Sustain
- 30 November: Video call with Tech UK
- 1 December: Video call with UKinbound
- 7 December: Video call with BBC Policy Team
- 8 December: Chaired Trade Forum Session – 'Promoting UK Trade and Investment'
- 8 December: Spoke at Trade Forum Session – 'Raising Standards Around the World'
- 8 December: Spoke at Trade Forum Session – 'Building a Sustainable Future'
- 8 December: Spoke at Trade Forum Session – 'Protecting Human Rights Through Trade'
- 9 December: Spoke to Exeter Labour Students
- 10 December: Spoke to Cardiff North CLP
- 16 December: Video call with Green Alliance



With Fiona Bruce on [Question Time](#), talking about devolution and Coronavirus restrictions, 19 November

In the constituency

- 20 November: Casework calls
- 23 November: Phone call with the Chair of the Whittington Health NHS Trust
- 5 December: Visited small businesses in the constituency for Small Business Saturday
- 9 December: Casework call with constituent

Media

- 19 November: [Question Time](#) – "We can devolve more power."
- 24 November: Times Radio

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Finally, I would like to wish all of my constituents a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, however you are managing to celebrate this year. Over on my [Instagram](#), I have been posting a photo for each day of Advent. I've been celebrating the fact that despite COVID, Islington remains a beautiful place, especially in the run up to Christmas. I wanted to share some with you below.

