



Josh MacAlister
Labour Candidate for Whitehaven and Workington
Greystoke, Penrith

By Email

10th December 2023

Dear Josh,

I believe that it's really important to recognise when people move their previously entrenched position to one that more closely resembles our own. Your party's Shadow Chancellor, Rachel Reeves, was such a fan of the work of others that she copied and pasted it into a book under her own name, landing herself in hot water. Your leader, Sir Keir Starmer, has a recent habit of copy and pasting Conservative policies, even where they're already government policy and in operation, and I can see that you have quickly followed suit.

I therefore welcome your support for Conservative plans for new nuclear, and for the work Trudy Harrison and Mark Jenkinson have undertaken to date, to bring new nuclear to West Cumbria, although you and your party have sadly neglected to set out your support for growing decommissioning activity at Sellafield, as we've seen from a Conservative government.

Let us not forget that it was under a Blair/Brown Labour government that our decommissioning companies were privatised, and our public sector nuclear capability and intellectual property was sold off. It was also under Jeremy Corbyn that our entire nuclear industry was placed in serious jeopardy - a policy position supported by Sir Keir when he loyally served in Corbyn's shadow cabinet trying to thwart Brexit and the will of West Cumbrians, who voted overwhelmingly to leave the European Union.

Your party's general election pledge to borrow an additional £28bn per year will increase inflation and require increased tax and spending cuts to support it. Previously where cuts have been required under Labour governments, to support a bloated welfare state for example, it has been at the expense of West Cumbrian jobs and industry.

I also welcome your support for steelmaking, another key pillar of recent Conservative governments – and one being championed by the Conservative Mayor of the Tees Valley, Ben Houchen. So, it would be remiss of me not to point out that your Labour Cumberland council is standing in the way of a devolution settlement for Cumbria, and therefore standing in the way of multi-billion-pound investment and taking control of powers that currently sit in Westminster. This would seem to contradict recent national Labour policy around wanting to see greater devolution, especially outside of city-regions.

Workington also hasn't forgotten that it was under a Labour MP and a Labour government that it lost its steelworks. A Labour government that was unwilling to support a steel industry, or our other industries for that matter, in the way recent Conservative governments have.

At a recent dinner with the Minister for Nuclear and Networks your Council Leader, Councillor Fryer, was clear that Cumberland was closed to government investment – and openly struck down the idea of the new 400kv electricity network upgrade that West Cumbria needs for industry – including new nuclear or steelmaking. This is deeply damaging to the area both in terms of attracting inward investment and jobs, but also West Cumbria's reputation for being pro-business.

Which brings me to my final point – the need for coking coal for both virgin steelmaking, including in electric arc furnace, and for most steel recycling.

On Sunday 3rd December on *BBC Politics North*, in relation to the Woodhouse Colliery project I was deeply shocked that Labour frontbencher, Alex Cunningham MP, said:

"It's not going to happen. We'll be in government before they get to that stage and believe you me – we will not allow that project to go ahead".



Andrew Johnson

Your party's response to the news reporting that followed was clear that you don't support the creation of thousands of well-paid local jobs, both directly and in the supply chain, and the investment that the mine brings.

Why do you and the Labour Party believe that steelmakers, regardless of where they are in the country, should rely on coal imported from halfway around the world on diesel ships? Or believe that West Cumbria should not benefit from the continued global demand for high-quality coking coal that will be mined in other countries regardless and in a more environmentally damaging way than here in the UK?

Will you now commit your party to supporting the residents of West Cumbria and change your position on the Woodhouse Colliery?

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A P Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Andrew Johnson

Conservative Candidate for Whitehaven and Workington