



**LABOUR: WORKING HARD  
FOR COUNTY DURHAM**



# 100 ACHIEVEMENTS



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**#LABOURWORKS**



# COUNTY DURHAM

With a population of more than half a million spread across almost 900 square miles of diverse landscapes, County Durham is a special place. We have a unique heritage and massive potential.

In 2009 a unitary authority was established to replace eight previous councils. From the outset, the priority of the new council has been economic growth, jobs and regeneration - while developing stronger, safer and healthier communities across County Durham.



Since 2010, the government has cut County Durham's funding by £180 million - about 40% of our 2010 budget. These cuts have been targeted unfairly at areas across the north of England - Durham County Council has lost almost 2,500 posts as a result.

Despite the severity of government cuts and a probable further £70 million of cuts to come over the next three years as austerity continues, there have been many achievements since Durham became a unitary authority.

**This publication highlights a selection of 100 achievements across Labour-run County Durham. They are presented by Labour's priority areas:**

**Labour's Priority for County Durham:  
Economic Growth, Jobs and Regeneration**

**Labour's Priority for County Durham:  
Stronger Local Communities**

**Labour's Priority for County Durham:  
Safer and Healthier Communities**

**Labour's Priority for County Durham:  
Cleaner Neighbourhoods, Better Leisure and Libraries**

**Labour's Priority for County Durham:  
Improved Transport and Road Safety**

**Labour's Priority for County Durham:  
Growing our Visitor Economy**

**Labour's Priority for County Durham:  
Schools, Young People and Learning**

**Labour's Priority for County Durham:  
Improving our Housing**

**Labour's Priority for County Durham:  
A more efficient council**

## Labour's Priority for County Durham: Economic Growth, Jobs and Regeneration

1. **Hitachi** chose to locate its new train assembly plant in County Durham ahead of more than 40 other sites across the UK. The biggest inward investment in the region since Nissan has seen train building return to the North East, employing 800 staff with thousands more in the supply chain. The first train to be assembled by the County Durham workforce was unveiled in December 2016.
2. **Atom Bank**, Britain's first digital bank, chose to locate in Durham City ahead of several other sites, with Durham County Council taking shares in the set-up bank in exchange for rent-free offices. The new headquarters at Aykley Heads will create 400 jobs.
3. £10 million has been invested by Durham County Council in **Town Centre regeneration**, including a targeted business support scheme which has supported more than 200 businesses across our town centres. Town Centre Masterplans have been developed for Barnard Castle, Bishop Auckland, Chester-le-Street, Consett, Crook, Durham City, Newton Aycliffe, Peterlee, Seaham, Shildon, Spennymoor and Stanley.
4. **Major new developments** across County Durham have included Seaham Harbour Marina, Dalton Park Phase Two, Freeman's Reach in Durham City, Durham Gate at Spennymoor, the continued growth of NetPark at Sedgefield, the expansion of Newton Aycliffe Business Park, the restoration of the Witham at Barnard Castle and a range of exciting developments at Bishop Auckland, all boosting the economy and bringing jobs to the county.
5. **Newton Aycliffe Business Park** is now the largest business park in North East England, with a further development at Forrest Park, which aims to bring 3,000 more jobs, now underway.

6. The **Seaham Marina** rejuvenation project was successfully completed and opened to the public in July 2013 and has won a number of awards. It includes cafes, shops and the restored lifeboat house, offering great attractions for visitors and residents.
7. **Dalton Park Phase 2** started development in June 2015 to extend the existing park with a cinema, restaurants and a hotel, providing a major economic boost to East Durham.
8. The £35 million **Freeman's Reach development** in the centre of Durham City has safeguarded 1,200 jobs at the Passport Office & National Savings and Investment in modern offices, as well as opening up a riverside walk and restaurant.
9. **NetPark at Sedgefield** continues to grow, with new buildings completed in order to create thousands of jobs and an economic boost in new technologies. The next phase of expansion is underway in spring 2017.
10. The award winning restoration and refurbishment of **the Witham in Barnard Castle** has provided a new meeting / event space and a 225 seat auditorium for conference, theatre, events and cinema.
11. In **Bishop Auckland** the council has worked closely with Auckland Castle Trust to support on-going redevelopment and ensure the smooth running of events such as the hugely successful Kynren which attracted 100,000 people over a series of evenings in 2016. We are currently undertaking works to improve the traffic flow and management around the castle.
12. The council secured £17 million of funding from the European Council Youth Employment Initiative to enable a two and a half year project DurhamWorks to **develop skills and increase opportunities for 6,000 young people** across County Durham.

13. The ground-breaking project **Durham Smart County** launched in summer 2016 has brought together business and health organisations in order to tackle healthcare issues.
14. Durham County Council has helped 1,000 young people to gain **apprenticeships**. Unemployment in County Durham among 18-24 year olds fell from 9.7% in March 2013 to just 3.7% in July 2016.

## **Labour's Priority for County Durham: Stronger Local Communities**

15. Fourteen **Area Action Partnerships (AAPs)** were created by the new unitary council as one of its first decisions in 2009 to improve the engagement of residents, community representatives and partners. Membership now stands at 14,000 people across County Durham, who participate in a wide range of decision making events.
16. Durham has held the **largest participatory budget events ever held in England**, with approximately 1,500 residents taking part in an event in Crook voting to allocate £500,000 and similar numbers in Stanley, Spennymoor, Chester-le-Street and elsewhere voting how to allocate community budgets of up to £100,000. More than 30,000 people have now taken part in PB events, making decisions on how money should be spent locally.
17. **Visiting delegations** from the USA, Denmark and Scotland have all visited Durham to learn more about the success of our Area Action Partnerships and the large number of residents involved.
18. **Hundreds of local improvements across County Durham** have been supported through the budgets of Area Action Partnerships and local councillor's neighbourhood budgets, all funded from the savings made from the creation of the unitary Durham County Council.

19. Individual schemes have included **new war memorials, support for community groups and associations, support for local sports clubs** and environmental improvements.
20. We have been presented with a silver award by the Ministry of Defence for our work in **supporting serving and former members of the armed forces**. The scheme rewards and recognises UK employers and organisations that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to the armed forces community. Durham County Council signed the Armed Forces Community Covenant in 2012.
21. Durham County Council has worked with our partners, including church and voluntary groups, to establish the **Durham Humanitarian Support Partnership**.
22. More than a hundred **community buildings** and five leisure facilities have transferred into community ownership across County Durham.
23. Thousands of local people have taken part in some of the country's largest ever **budget consultations** to tell us which areas of spending should be protected. The public voted areas such as job creation, support for vulnerable young people and support for adults to stay in their own homes as key priorities - and the council has acted to protect these areas.

## **Labour's Priority for County Durham: Safer and Healthier Communities**

24. There were **big falls in anti-social behaviour of almost 50%** across County Durham between 2010 and 2015.
25. In County Durham levels of crime have been falling and are **among the lowest in the country**.

26. The **Safer Homes Initiative** has secured funding of £500,000 and delivered safety and security measures to vulnerable households and supported reductions in domestic burglary and house fires.
27. Intermediate Care Plus teams were jointly created with the NHS to support the safe and timely discharge of patients from hospital and **County Durham has a significantly lower number of people delayed in hospital** when compared to the national average.
28. A **Dementia Strategy** has been agreed to help service users with the condition as well as their carers and to build dementia friendly communities to raise awareness and provide support.
29. We have worked in partnership with housing providers to develop **new independent living schemes** for people with learning disabilities and autism in Consett, Ferryhill, Blackhall Colliery, Esh Winning and Durham City.
30. An **online directory of care and support services** has been launched called LOCATE which provides local people with details of available services and information.
31. A **Wellbeing for Life service** is in place to help people achieve and maintain a positive physical, social and mental state and help people in their local communities.
32. **Over 12,500 carers in the county are supported** through advice, short respite breaks and help with their caring responsibilities.
33. **Riverside safety improvements** have been introduced in Durham City including new safety barriers along the riverbank, following work with our partner bodies.

34. The Civil Contingencies Unit has successfully dealt with 265 emergency call outs and continues to work with residents to form community resilience groups, **to better prepare for emergencies.**
35. The Durham City **Best Bar None** scheme has won national awards and helped reduce alcohol-related crime and disorder.
36. County Durham was selected as a **national pilot site for a diabetes prevention programme;** one of only seven in the country.
37. The County Durham Health and Wellbeing Board was shortlisted for the Local Government Chronicle **Most effective Health and Wellbeing Board** award.
38. The County Durham **Better Care Fund plan** helps people to stay independent in their own homes for longer through the provision of services such as telecare, reablement, community services and support for carers.
39. More than 90% of adult social care users reported that the help and support they receive **has made their quality of life better.**

## **Labour's Priority for County Durham: Cleaner Neighbourhoods, Better Leisure and Libraries**

40. **Almost all waste in County Durham is now diverted away from landfill sites,** following the introduction of alternate weekly collections and the re-procurement of all key waste contracts, while delivering £5 million of savings annually and improved resident satisfaction.
41. A programme of **spring cleans** across County Durham has involved hundreds of local community groups and residents every year.
42. Success in the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) **Northumbria in Bloom** competition has included a Gold award for Durham City and Silver Gilt and winner in the 'Best Large Town' for Chester-le-Street as well as a number of other awards across the county.

43. The **refurbished Wharton Park** in Durham City re-opened in 2016 following £3 million of investment, including new children's playgrounds, signposting and a community café.
44. **Improvements in facilities at the Riverside Park** in Chester-le-Street have included the introduction of the popular 'Splashpad'.
45. More than £1 million has been invested in **Children's Play Areas**.
46. Ten **Green Flags** have been awarded to County Durham Parks and Cemeteries, the highest number in the North East.
47. We have exceeded our ambitious targets to **reduce carbon dioxide emissions** while £4 million has been invested in solar PV panels.
48. **There has been a major refurbishment of Durham Crematorium** and work undertaken to cut emissions. Work is also underway at Mountsett Crematorium.
49. Almost £45 million was invested in a **new Academy and Leisure Centre in Consett**, transforming facilities for young people and the wider community.
50. Over 200 national athletes have been supported through the **Durham Institute of Sport**, including an Olympic medal winner.
51. **Improvements to Libraries** have included the refurbishment of libraries in Chester-le-Street, Consett and Durham City and the relocation of libraries to improved multi-use facilities in Barnard Castle, Crook, Newton Aycliffe, Pelton and Stanley.
52. **Customer Access Points** to help local residents access a range of council services are open in Stanley, Spenymoor (Green Lane), Seaham, Durham City, Crook, Consett, Chester-le-Street and Barnard Castle.

## Labour's Priority for County Durham: Improved Transport and Road Safety

53. A new roundabout at **Sunderland Bridge** on the A167 south of Durham City has eased congestion and improved road safety - a major scheme completed on time in the summer of 2015.
54. A road improvement scheme at **junction 63 of the A1 (M) at Chester-le-Street** was successfully completed in May 2015 and has improved traffic flow. The Northlands roundabout in Chester-le-Street has also been improved with much better public safety for pedestrians, including children walking to Park View school.
55. Major works in **Durham City** were completed in Autumn 2016, including new traffic lights, to improve the traffic flow through the city and cut congestion.
56. A new travel hub has opened in **Bishop Auckland** as part of a redevelopment of the town's railway station. The hub provides information on walking, cycling, bus and rail services and is complemented by improvements to the railway station.
57. A new POP card was introduced for the Council's **Park & Ride**, journeys are now cheaper and easier to use. The card allows travellers to get straight onto the bus and use the card reader without having to queue at ticket machines.
58. For the first time in County Durham, a number of road safety schemes have seen **cuts in speed limits in residential streets** to 20 MPH following consultation with local residents. This has included a number of areas outside our local schools to improve public safety. The scheme is set to be expanded to more areas across County Durham in 2017/18.

## Labour's Priority for County Durham: Growing our Visitor Economy

59. Durham's Year of Culture in 2013 attracted half a million visitors, the programme of events including the return of the **Lindisfarne Gospels** to the North East as part of a spectacular exhibition viewed by 100,000 people.
60. **Lumiere, now the largest light festival in the UK**, has taken place in Durham four times and attracted 200,000 visitors in 2015, boosting the economy by £20 million. Lumiere returns in November 2017.
61. Durham hosted the region's first ever cricket **Test Match** against Australia in 2013, attracting over 70,000 fans across the four days and ending in England securing the Ashes series and a huge media spotlight across the world.
62. **New exhibitions** of national importance have opened at Durham Cathedral, the Bowes Museum at Barnard Castle and the new exhibition space at Palace Green Library.
63. **Major expansions** of visitor attractions are underway at Auckland Castle and Beamish, aimed at attracting hundreds of thousands more visitors to County Durham.
64. A spectacular summer of events in 2016 including **Kynren: A Tale of England** at Bishop Auckland saw a surge in visitor numbers and spending.
65. There have been a range of successful public events at **Locomotion Museum in Shildon** including visits by the Flying Scotsman, Mallard and the 'Big Bash' attracting thousands of visitors to the county.
66. **A range of other world class public events** are held every year, including the successful Brass, Durham Book Festival and Bishop Auckland Food Festival.
67. **Visitor numbers to County Durham continue to rise year on year**, boosting the local economy and creating new jobs.

## Labour's Priority for County Durham: Schools, Young people and Learning

68. The proportion of **young people achieving 5 GCSEs at grade A\*-C including English and Maths have significantly increased** in recent years and have been above the national average every year from 2010 to 2015.
69. More than 93% of primary aged pupils and more than 96% of secondary school applications are offered their first choice of school, **significantly higher than the national average.**
70. Since 2014 the council has provided more than 1,000 **additional primary school places**, by building extensions to schools, remodelling or refurbishment.
71. **Five new schools have been built** and a further six have been refurbished or added significant new build. In addition there have been 58 major maintenance projects including work to roofs, heating systems and windows, all improving the condition of our schools and despite cuts in national funding.
72. Nine of our **children's homes have been judged as 'good' or 'outstanding'** by Ofsted.
73. More than 6,000 learners are engaged in **Community Learning** throughout the year.
74. A training programme has been developed which leads to a **Volunteer Passport**. The passport scheme is a volunteer induction programme open to people who wish to become volunteers and those already volunteering in their communities.
75. The **Future Business Magnates (FBM)** schools competition has continued to engage over 200 young people from over 20 County Durham secondary schools, working with local businesses and Business Durham to bring practical employment experience to the lives of young people.

## Labour's Priority for County Durham: Improving our Housing

76. The Housing Stock Transfer in April 2015 was one of the largest in the country, involving 18,400 homes and with the aim of **securing hundreds of millions in new investment** over the next thirty years.
77. We have created an arms-length company **Chapter Homes** to offer better choice for house buyers and create job opportunities. The pilot scheme at Newton Aycliffe will provide around 125 new homes and an economic impact of around £12.5 million.
78. Between 2011 and 2016, 289 homes have been built through Durham County Council's joint venture with Keepmoat Homes, **Durham Villages Regeneration Company**.
79. The council has marketed some of its long term empty homes at discounted prices - the **Homesteading Initiative** means prospective owner occupiers can purchase at discounts of up to 35% on the condition that they reside in the home for five years. Meanwhile 600 long term empty homes have been brought back into use, thanks to council intervention such as help in renovating homes.
80. Selective licensing, **which requires landlords to undertake more comprehensive checks** on tenants, has continued in a number of areas with predominantly private rented housing across the county.
81. Between 2010 and 2016, **fifteen landlords were successfully prosecuted** for non-compliance or breach of license conditions within the selective licensing areas, demonstrating that Durham County Council will take decisive action against landlords who do not abide by legal requirements.

82. Since introducing the countywide **Private Landlord Accreditation Scheme** in April 2015, over 100 landlords and 2000 properties have now been registered with the scheme, which recognises good landlords who take positive steps to benefit tenants and the community including ensuring homes meet the decent homes standard and undertaking tenant reference checks.
83. Since 2009, Durham County Council has **prevented more than 7,500 single people and families from becoming homeless** through various ways including resolving housing benefit problems, referrals into supported accommodation and assistance into alternative accommodation.
84. To ensure we reach more people and offer better assistance, a dedicated **housing advice line** was implemented in 2015. Almost 5,000 contacted the housing advice line in 2015/16.
85. Between 2008/9 and 2014/5, Durham County Council has supported the building of 8,366 **new homes** in County Durham. Since 2012, 1,844 affordable homes have also been delivered.
86. Between 2010 and 2015, 3700 residents were enabled to live independently in their own homes through **Disabled Facilities Grants**. Durham County Council administered £15 million of funds directly into eligible households to enable people to live independently in their own homes.

## Labour's Priority for County Durham: A more efficient council

87. Despite Conservative & Lib Dem government cuts, Durham County Council has achieved a **balanced budget every year** - living within its means thanks to strong financial management and leadership.
88. The council has successfully closed the Annual Accounts on time and received an **unqualified audit opinion** and VFM judgement from our external auditors every year.
89. Durham residents have been consulted at every step, with **thousands taking part in our budget consultations to set priorities** in 2010, 2013 and 2016 - priorities which we have followed such as support for older people to remain in their own homes, care for vulnerable young people and action to create new jobs.
90. The unitisation of key functions has led to a **reduction in management posts** across the council in order to protect front line services.
91. Durham County Council has implemented and maintained a **Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme** that continues to protect thousands of vulnerable working age claimants - one of only two authorities in the North East to have done so.
92. A single Revenues and Benefits system has been implemented and consolidated, achieving significant savings as a result. **Performance has improved year on year**, with improvements in collection rates, invoice payment performance and average processing times.

93. **The Registrars service has been reviewed and improved**, entering into a shared service agreement with Northumberland County Council with an increased focus on customer service. The new register office at Aykley Heads House provides a choice of celebratory rooms in an elegant listed building.
94. Durham has worked with all eleven other councils in the North East to **reduce costs and improve performance** through the North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO) shared procurement service.
95. Local supplier opportunities have been encouraged as part of our **Buy Local Buy Durham initiative**.
96. The council won the Cabinet Office **first ever procurement award for Social Value Leadership** for an organisation following the introduction of the Durham Social Value Task Force.
97. The new unitary council successfully negotiated and implemented a local agreement to **deliver Single Status**, addressing equal pay risks inherent in the forming grading structure.
98. Durham County Council have improved access and achieved efficiencies by implementing **e-payment and e-billing** for customers and have provided schools with online payment options so that parents are able to make payments for school meals, trips and uniforms online.
99. The **Digital Durham** Programme, delivered on time and to budget, is on course to deliver super-fast broadband to 98% of all households across the county.
100. The council launched a **new improved website** in 2016, including up to date news, video messaging and weather station cameras next to main roads across the county to better inform and help the public across County Durham.
101. Durham County Council was named outright winner of the **Council of the Year** award in 2014, having been runner-up in 2012, ahead of 300 other councils nationally.





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