

EXCLUSIVE

Prime Minister Keir Starmer writes for Echo on Gala day in Durham

13th July

Exclusive by Sir Keir Starmer

Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer writes exclusively for The Northern Echo on the day of the annual Durham Miners' Gala.

The second Saturday in July. A day that holds great significance for working class communities, up and down the country.

A day where former mining and industrial communities from every corner of Britain come to celebrate their shared heritage.

Marching the streets of Durham, with banners held high to the tune of village brass bands.

A day that this year, 40 years on from the Miners' Strike of 84-85, will hold a special poignancy for those gathered.

The Durham Miner's Gala is a time for celebration, but also a time for reflection. Reflection on what our country has been through, and the values we share which have kept us going. Values of fairness, community and service. Values that my Labour government hold at our very core.

Now gathering for the 138th time, I'm sorry not to be able to join you all on the Racecourse this weekend.

But know that everything my Labour government does in the coming years, will be driven by those values, just as we carried them throughout the election campaign.

Last week, this country, this region, voted overwhelmingly for change, and now it's our job to start the work of delivering it.

Now I am under no illusion about the scale of the challenge we face. Changing a country is not like flicking a switch.

It will take hard work, patience and determination. Mine will be a government that's success is measured by its delivery, with service, not self-service, at its heart.

Labour will deliver a country that works for you and we've started as we mean to go on. In our first week, I've met with our regional mayor's including Kim McGuinness and Ben Houchen, to set out just how my government will work with them to drive economic growth in our regions.

Chancellor Rachel Reeves has set the ball rolling on our National Wealth Fund and announced plans for major changes to the planning system. Starting us down the path to economic stability and creating 650,000 new jobs across the UK.

Health Secretary Wes Streeting has kicked off a full scale review into our NHS, to find out exactly what is broken and exactly how we fix it.

Sunderland's own Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson is hard at work resetting the relationship between Government and Education, to deliver the best start in life for every child in our country.

These are the missions I set out over a year ago. Missions I said my Government will take decisive action on quickly. Missions I developed from being out around the regions and nations of the United Kingdom, speaking to real people, who had skin in the game.

Missions that are reflected in the values of the people who have gathered on the second Saturday in July 138 times before.

I promise you, I will deliver for the country, and for the North East. I hope everyone has a fantastic Gala Day.