



GERMINAL

**Brussels Labour: International
Branch of the British Labour Party**

December 2017

New Leadership Team



Richard Corbett Leader

Richard Corbett has been elected as the new leader of Labour MEPs, following the departure of Glenis Willmott. Although Glenis will be greatly missed, Brussels Labour looks forward to working with Richard in the future.

Writing for the *Geminal*, Richard said:

“I am greatly honoured to have been elected Leader of the Labour Members of the European Parliament today by a vote of my peers.

I still believe in the value of the European Union, which has helped establish peace and prosperity

in our continent. If we leave it, we must work to ensure that we maintain the closest possible relationship with it, both as a matter of principle and also as a matter of practical national interest when a ‘No Deal Brexit’ or a ‘Bad Deal Brexit’ would wreak economic havoc.

These are challenging times for our party and our country, as we try to prevent this terrible Tory government making mistake after mistake in its shambolic approach to the Brexit negotiations with our European allies. I hope to be able to offer my experience and expertise to my colleagues in leading this debate.”

Seb Dance Deputy Leader

Seb Dance was elected the new deputy leader of the EPLP, after the position was left vacant by Richard becoming leader.

Seb sits in the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats Group (S&D) and is the UK Labour Party’s environment and climate change spokesperson in Europe.

He is a Member of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) and was coordinator for the S&D Group in the Parliament’s inquiry committee into the dieselgate scandal (EMIS).



Prior to entering the European Parliament, Seb led various campaigns for ActionAid UK, an international development charity, focusing primarily on fighting poverty and tax avoidance by multinational companies. He also worked as an advisor to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland between 2007 and 2009.

New Labour MEPs



John Howarth: South East England

John is the new Labour MEP for South East England, replacing Anneliese Dodds after her election to Westminster.

Born into a mining family on Tyneside, John attended the local comprehensive school and became the first of the family to go to University. He became involved with the Labour Party during the first of the UK General Elections in 1974, becoming National Secretary of Labour Students.

In public life John served as a senior councillor first on Berkshire County Council, and then on Reading's Unitary Council. He also served for 11 years as a Member of the Council of the University of Reading and was a Trustee of several charities.

He is now a full member of the European Parliament's Budget Committee, a substitute member of the Regional Development Committee and a member of the European Parliament Delegation to the Caribbean.

Wajid Khan: North West England

Wajid Khan became Labour's newest North West MEP in June 2017, after Afzal Khan left Brussels for Westminster. His main policy interests include workers' rights, youth empowerment, human rights, and Brexit.

Wajid was born in Burnley, Lancashire, where he continues to live with his wife and children. He served as a Labour councillor and Burnley Council cabinet member. He also serves on the Labour Party National Policy Forum and International Policy Commission, in addition to serving on the North West regional board.

His career so far includes being a senior lecturer at the University of Central Lancashire for 12 years, a course leader in community leadership, working in the voluntary sector with young offenders. The Burnley race riots in 2001 inspired Wajid to develop a number of community cohesion projects which gained him the Higher Education Active Community Fund (HEACF) Volunteering Award for social and community cohesion in 2004.

Wajid has had a European outlook for a long time, and contributed to European-wide 'Volunteurope' conferences in Germany, France, Poland, Bosnia and Italy.



Rory Palmer: East Midlands

Rory Palmer is Labour MEP for the East Midlands, taking over the role of Glenis Willmott upon her retirement.

Rory became an MEP in October 2017 after serving for six years as the first deputy city mayor in Leicester. As deputy city mayor Rory worked across a wide range of policy and service areas including public health, social care, transport and climate change. He chaired Leicester's Health Wellbeing Board and established and chaired the Leicester Child Poverty Commission. Before this, he was a city councillor for 10 years and served on a number of national and regional bodies.

He was born in Worksop, Nottinghamshire and graduated from the University of York with a degree in Social Policy. Rory is married and with one daughter and in his spare time enjoys spending time with his family, playing tennis and other sports, country walking and cooking.



Thangam Debbonaire speaks to Brussels Labour

Isobel Laing



As a former Bristol West constituent, I was excited to hear that Thangam Debbonaire MP was coming to speak at Brussels Labour. Having campaigned with her on her hugely successful 2017 General Election campaign, I was anticipating a meeting full of the joy and verve that Thangam brings to everything she does, and I was certainly not disappointed. With typical vigour, Thangam ranged from issue to issue, taking time to speak frankly and expertly about issues as varied as the 2017 General Election, drug policies in Bristol, interaction between MPs and the European Parliament, her experience of being an MP since being elected in 2015, and the importance of representing your

constituents in everything that you do.

The challenges presented by Brexit were discussed at length, and questions from concerned Brussels Labour members were answered with candour. It was really heartening to hear Thangam's thoughts on the specialist knowledge of Labour members here in Brussels, which she argued should be made as available as possible to those in Westminster, as we all work together to mitigate the harsher impacts of Brexit. She also spoke on the importance of maintaining the UK's relationship with the EU, and the impact that Brexit will have on her constituency and around the UK, particularly when looking at young people.

It is always an honour when politicians from Westminster take time to visit the Brussels branch, and particularly at this time it is good to know that Labour members across Europe are not being forgotten by MPs. Thank you so much for coming Thangam, it was a truly memorable evening.

Brussels Labour Pub Quiz

Thank you to everyone who came to the annual Brussels Labour Pub Quiz. Turnout was fantastic, with a total of 23 teams participating.

Together we raised a total of €755, which will be donated to the Jo Cox Foundation, which focuses on issues such as loneliness, women in public life, the Syrian conflict, and protecting civilians in conflict, and also to the charity Convivial, which supports asylum seekers and refugees in Belgium.



Labour and European Federalism: where do we go now?

Matthew Hogarth



On the 18th of October, Brussels Labour was pleased to welcome members of the Young European Federalists to hear their views on a variety of European issues, including Brexit and their campaigns for a federal Europe. This provoked some difficult questions for myself, and I'm sure many in the room, who are both European federalists and Labour members and try to reconcile the two.

Whilst many members of the Labour Party, and indeed some of our elected representatives, are affiliated to the European Movement in the UK, the party as a whole has always found it difficult to promote an explicitly federalist policy on Europe. The idea of a federal Europe has often been considered electorally unpopular, or been met with fears that it would be ammunition for the Tories and UKIP. This combined with a minority of Eurosceptics in the party has left Labour shying away from the issue ever since its pro-European shift in the 1980s and 90s.

If, as members, we would like to see the Party advance a more federal policy, in line with many of our social-democratic sister parties, perhaps the starting point would be encouraging a culture shift amongst members and parliamentarians, in understanding better what federalism could mean, as JEF does with its campaigns and education programmes. It should be made clear that advocating a federal Europe does not entail a superstate, but would rather fit into a vision of multi-level federal governance within the nations of the UK, which has been most recently advocated by Jeremy Corbyn himself.

Having said this, given the present state of affairs with Brexit, this might be considered a moot-point. Can we really advocate a federal Europe whilst at the same time our Party policy is to leave the European Union? Perhaps the first question that needs to be answered is where European federalists in the UK go from here. Do we oppose Brexit and continue to call for deeper European integration? If Brexit does happen, do we immediately start the campaign to re-join, or do we call for close relations between the UK and the EU?

Jeremy Corbyn at #TogetherEurope

Jeremy Corbyn came to Brussels on the 19th October to speak at Together Europe. He was greeted with great enthusiasm from the crowd, and spoke on the importance of the Socialists and Democrats working together across Europe, and the rest of the world, to create a strong movement and find solutions to inequality.

Corbyn remarked, "It is possible to win the argument if our message is bold and our message is radical. If we listen to what the majority actually want, we will prove the elites and their pundits wrong, that we in this movement have the enthusiasm, the ability and the ideas to change this world. But I also know we can only do it when we work together both at home and across the globe."

The Rise of ‘Brocialism’ in the Party is Alienating LGBT+ Members

Elliot Robson



Brocialism – it’s a term you may have heard attached to the Bernie Sanders campaign for the Democratic nomination last year. It represents the scores of straight white men that attached themselves to the movement and attacked anyone who disagreed with them; namely women, the LGBT+ community, and other minority groups. These ‘Bernie Bros’ would be, and still are, just as likely to use sexist language about Hillary as any Trump supporter. If a queer person had the audacity to question them, they’d hear the same offensive language thrown at them that you might expect from someone in a “Make America Great Again” cap. In this respect, they are more similar to Trump supporters than those on the left, fighting for equality. These straight white

men have seen their historic power over women and minorities eroded and have seen a growing acceptance of queer people in wider society, which does not fit into their narrow world view. They saw this as a threat to their own, fragile masculinity and put their faith in a radical leader who promised to make the current liberal order come tumbling down.

In recent months I have seen the spread of Brocialism across from America to the UK. I was horrified to see on Twitter someone who claimed to be a Labour member call Ben Bradshaw, and amazing MP and campaigner for equality, ‘Bent Bradshaw’; a moniker that was last used against him by his Conservative rival in the 1997 General Election. As Bradshaw himself pointed out to the offending member, this didn’t turn out too well for the incumbent Tory.

I have also heard from friends that in some CLPs the issue has become such a problem that there is effectively what they term a ‘queer caucus’ fighting to maintain equality at a local level. In diverse areas such as London this has worked. A large LGBT+ membership along with Jewish and other minority groups have managed to fight off attempts to restrict their voices in the local parties. But I worry about areas such as the one I’m from in the North East. The lack of support networks for young LGBT+ activists can easily lead to isolation and rejection in the face of resurgent prejudice. I know that if it wasn’t for my incredible queer friends in my local Labour party, I may have been repelled by the homophobic dinosaurs I found in my local party, perhaps for good.

I’m not for one second saying that all of the new members who joined the party to support Jeremy fall into this toxic camp, or even the majority. We all know that sexism, racism, and homophobia cross ideological divides and need to be tackled in all political hues. I do believe though, that an aggressive minority is currently trying to entrench itself in the party, throwing around offensive, and bullying language at anyone who tries to call them out. This we cannot stand for.

I’m sure like many people in the Labour party *Pride* is one of my favourite films. The mutual support given by a gay rights activist group in London and a mining town in Wales is representative of everything that makes the Labour movement so important to me. The acceptance, love, and inclusivity shown by Mark Ashton, Dai Donovan, and Sian James must be the standard that every member holds themselves to. Where we find intolerance, we must act quickly and firmly to stamp it out. Only then can we make Labour fierce again.

GMB Brussels Branch



The GMB Brussels Branch - headed by President Charlotte Butterick and Secretary Alice Reynolds - have been continuing to represent workers in Brussels during this turbulent year of evolving Brexit developments. We also have a growing team of dedicated workplace organisers, who are trained to deal with a range of issues. Please get in touch if we can help.

GMB Brussels Branch are sad to announce 2 of its officers are departing after the Christmas break. This leaves the positions of Youth Officer and Training Officer open. Therefore there will be a GMB EGM in the New Year, so please look out for further information on this soon. If

anyone is interested in becoming an officer please don't hesitate to ask Alice or Charlotte about the roles. Branch meetings for 2018 are expected to be in March, June, September and December. Precise dates will be circulated as soon as possible. If you're not yet a member, you can find out how to join by emailing secretary@gmbbrusselsbranch.eu.

Last, but not least 2 lucky members were nominated to be delegates to GMB Annual Congress June 2018 in Brighton in the last branch meeting. One of them being our very own Race Officer Shamik Das. We are sure they will represent us well, and enjoy meeting all our fellow branches.

That's all for now – Season's Greetings and Happy New Year from GMB Brussels Branch.

Executive Committee: Brussels Labour

Jo Wood – Chair

Sue Davis

Keir Fitch – Vice-Chair

Tom Fillis

Rosemary Hindle – Secretary

Paul Hagan

Jos Gallacher — Treasurer

Eleanor Linsell

Tim Allan

Imogen Tyreman

Upcoming Meetings

An email will be sent round in January confirming the first meeting

Membership payments

To confirm your membership of Brussels Labour as well as to the Labour Party, you need to pay a small additional subscription.

Unlike constituency Labour parties in the UK, Brussels Labour is entirely self-funding, so to help support our activities members are asked to pay an annual fee of 25 euro (waged) or 5 euro (unwaged/stagiaires).

It's easy to forget if you've paid or not—if you are unsure get in contact with Sue at membership@brusselslabour.eu

She can send you through the correct bank details or collect payment at a meeting.

Online

Website:
brusselslabour.eu

Twitter
[@brusselslabour](https://twitter.com/brusselslabour)

Facebook
[Facebook.com/brusselslabour.eu](https://www.facebook.com/brusselslabour.eu)

Email
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**Merry
Christmas and
Happy New Year
from Brussels
Labour!**

