



# Young people and unsung heroes

**OUTSTANDING COUNTRYSIDE and companies are some of the great strengths of Derbyshire. On the debit side are low aspiration, educational achievement and social mobility. Notwithstanding fantastic, well-paid jobs (Rolls-Royce, Alstom and the largest cluster of rail companies in Europe, and Toyota), many of these jobs are not going to young local people. Research from London suggested that the fantastic success of their secondary schools started with their primary schools in the early 2000s (London Challenge, Teach First, etc.).**



A visit to one of my target 100 schools



Addressing youngsters, volunteers and trustees at Enthusiasm, a youth club in one of the most deprived parts of Derby



With the Polish group at Eurojam Scout Festival in the High Peak

My main focus has been talking about careers and aspiration to primary school children throughout the more deprived parts of the county. Before the summer holidays, I visited 35 schools and have another 20 booked in before Christmas. My aim is to get as near to 100 visits during my term of office as I can. I start with a brief history of the Shrievalty, move on to young, local people who have achieved fantastic things and then move on to jobs of the future – particularly those with an environmental focus. Rolls-Royce and Toyota have some amazing futuristic projects and, of course, Alstom are working with Hitachi on the new HS2 trains. I am working closely with the police, who have introduced me to a number of schools, and the local equal opportunities team who have created a careers portal for schools.

I have attended police award ceremonies in the north and south of the county. I was overwhelmed by the courage and sensitivity shown by police officers in handling potentially lethal and traumatic situations. I went out with the Street Pastors over August Bank Holiday until the clubs closed at 4.00 am. The way young female police officers talked down potentially violent drink or drug-affected youngsters was incredible. I have attended Magistrates' Courts and Crown Courts and was impressed with the quiet efficiency of the court staff and the use of technology.

Young people have been a major part of my programme. I judged a national mooted competition which was won by a local school (which I did not judge!). I have attended scouting events including a European scouting festival called Eurojam based in the High Peak, as well as the final of a schools' debating competition run by the local law society and judged the semi-finals. I attended a concert in Buxton by the Derbyshire Youth Orchestra; their principal violinist was nine – what a future he has.

My other main focus has been on unsung heroes. The amazing Street Pastors tend to those who have had too good a night out. I visited a drug addiction centre

in Derby run by ex-Class A drug addicts who have an incredible success rate based on tough love. I spent a day with a lady from the ambulance service, who has made it her mission to ensure that the 'down and outs' [sic] get access to the health service. I have visited charities who specialise in helping children and families who have been the victims of abuse.

The Platinum Jubilee was fantastic. I went to a beacon lighting at Grin Low Hill above Buxton (the views were amazing) and a couple of brilliant street parties. Inspecting the army's 170 Engineer Group Jubilee parade in Derby on 4 June was an inspiration. Any one of those I saw could walk straight into well-paid jobs in 'civvy street'.

It seemed very strange and sad to bear witness to the death of Queen Elizabeth – surely one of our greatest monarchs – so soon after the Platinum Jubilee. She truly was somebody who epitomised the words 'duty and service' and her funeral was a fitting tribute. I am still hearing the drums!

Derbyshire County Council, Derby City Council and my Under Sheriff Andrew Cochrane were incredibly well organised for Operation London Bridge (many thanks to them) so I was duty bound to do my small contribution as well as I could when I read the Proclamation at County Hall, Matlock and Market Place, Derby.

Apart from the Platinum Jubilee and the events surrounding the death of Queen Elizabeth and the accession to the throne of King Charles III, the one thing which has stood out for me has been the opportunity to meet so many people and organisations doing amazing things. The vast majority of primary schools I have visited have enthusiastic staff and have welcomed my initiative. It has also been a huge opportunity to put people together. To some, the Office of High Sheriff has seemed an anachronism. My impression has been that it is a great opportunity to make a difference.

**Michael Copestake**  
*High Sheriff of Derbyshire 2022-23*