

This confirms that the Tories truly are the party for the few not the many – McDonnell

John McDonnell, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, responding to Michael Fallon's claim to protect a wealthy few from income tax changes, while not ruling out tax hikes for low and middle earners, said:

"The mask has finally slipped. The only guarantee the Tories are prepared to give at this election is to big business and high earners. While low and middle income earners have seen no guarantee from Theresa May that their taxes won't be raised. And pensioners are left to worry about whether they will be able to heat their homes or even keep their homes, with no clarity on cuts to winter fuel payments or the dementia tax.

"This confirms that the Tories truly are the party for the few not the many. As only Labour can guarantee no rises in NICs or VAT, while 95 per cent of income taxpayers will be protected from tax hikes in the next parliament."

World's 1st driverless rail transit system unveiled in Hunan



Chinese railcar-maker CRRC unveils a new product called Autonomous Rail Transit (ART) in Zhuzhou, Hunan province, June 2, 2017. [Photo: Thepaper.cn]

Chinese railcar-maker CRRC on Jun. 2 unveiled a new product called Autonomous Rail Transit (ART) in Zhuzhou, Hunan province, and the bus-rail combo rapid transit system is expected to speed up city's public transportation.

According to CRRC, ART uses rubber wheels on a plastic core instead of steel wheels. It's also equipped with the company's copyrighted technology to automatically guide the vehicles. It carries the advantages of both rail and bus transit systems and is agile and non-polluting, Thepaper.cn reported.

ART is much cheaper than ordinary subway, which cost about 400-700 million RMB per kilometer in China. And compared with electric streetcars, which cost 150-200 million RMB per Kilometer, ART is only about one-fifth the investment.

CRRC began designing the ART system in 2013. The first ART car is 31 meters in length, with a maximum passenger load of 307 people or 48 tons. Its top speed is 70 kilometers per hour, and it can travel 25 kilometers in distance after 10 minutes of charging.

The world's first ART line will be launched in Zhuzhou, with a total length of 6.5 kilometers. Upon completion, it will be able to dock with the city's mid-low speed maglev train.

Tories challenged to come clean on their plan for a 'Dementia Tax' and Winter Fuel means test

Labour is calling on the Tories to come clean on how many pensioners will be hit by their plans for a dementia tax and means testing for Winter Fuel Payments.

With six days to go until voting, Theresa May has still not ended the uncertainty facing millions of pensioners.

Tory plans to scrap universal Winter Fuel Payments could hit as many as 10.8 million pensioners, according to a Labour analysis of Pension Credit data.

Meanwhile, the Tories are still refusing to give a figure for the cap they will put on their dementia tax, the name given to their plan to force people to pay for social care with their homes.

An analysis by the Labour Party (see below) shows the effect of the Tory dementia tax on older people living in a house worth the average UK price of £217,500 if the cap is set at £72,000 or £100,000 and they find they need home care at the capped level.

At a cap of £100,000, a person in this situation needing the capped amount of care would lose 42 percent of the value of their estate. The more someone's house is worth, the lower the percentage they would lose.

Labour has set out its pledges to older people – maintaining the triple-lock on state pensions to protect incomes, investing £37 billion into the NHS and £8 billion into social care over the next parliament and protecting Winter Fuel Payments and free bus passes.

Jeremy Corbyn, Leader of the Labour Party, commenting on this analysis, said:

“It is staggering that just six days from polling day millions of pensioners still don't know what's in store for them if they are unlucky enough to get dementia or any other condition that needs care in the home.

“The dementia tax is itself unfair but what's made matters even worse is the way Theresa May announced a cap and then failed to say how much it would be.

“Alongside this, older people face the additional uncertainty of not knowing who will be eligible for a Winter Fuel Payment. The introduction of a means test could mean more than ten million people losing the payment.

“Theresa May's Tories only offer to pensioners is insecurity and cuts. Labour will stand up for older people by maintaining the triple-lock on state pensions, investing £8 billion into social care over the next parliament and protecting winter fuel payments and free bus passes.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Winter Fuel Payments

The Conservative manifesto also includes a commitment to means test the Winter Fuel Payment which, if linked to Pension Credit, could remove the support to heat homes from ten million pensioners. But analysis by the Labour Party has found that even this could be an underestimate, as 40 percent of those eligible do not claim Pension Credit. This would leave a further 800,000 older people without support to heat their homes, bringing the total number losing out to 10,800,000.

Resolution Foundation analysis of Conservative plans to means test the Winter Fuel Payment:

<http://www.resolutionfoundation.org/media/blog/death-taxes-the-conservative-manifesto-and-the-changing-politics-of-intergenerational-fairness/>

DWP estimates of benefit take up, showing 40 percent of those eligible for Pension Credit do not claim:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/535362/ir-benefits-take-up-main-report-2014-15.pdf

Dementia Tax

A 75 year-old owner occupier with savings of £20,000, whose home is worth the UK average house price of £217,500 facing home care costs of £100,000.

Under the current system: subject to income, would pay nothing towards their care costs

At a cap of £72,000: would pay £72,000 – would use all their savings and have a 24 percent charge (£52,000) set against the value of their home

At a cap of £100,000: would pay £100,000, the full cost of care

AVERAGE CARE COSTS: Analysis for the Dilnot Commission in 2010 found that 45 percent of 65 year olds could expect to spend (or have spent on them) more than £25,000 on care services, and 10 percent could expect to spend more than £100,000. Source: Dilnot Commission Report Vol 2: Evidence and Analysis

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130221130239/https://www.wp.dh.gov.uk/carecommission/files/2011/07/Volume-II-Evidence-and-Analysis1.pdf>

AVERAGE WEALTH OF OLDER PEOPLE: 34 percent of older people aged 70-79 have non-housing assets below £23,250 but assets including houses above £100,000. Source: IFS, based on English Longitudinal Study of Ageing, wave 7

<https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/9243>

HOUSE PRICES: Average House Price (Feb 2017) in the UK is £217,502 Source: Land Registry <http://landregistry.data.gov.uk/app/ukhpi>

Getting things done – Ninewells Village



I have received residents' complaints about the deteriorated state of the paths network within the Ninewells Village residential area within the hospital grounds.

In particular, the paths running up Lister Court are in poor shape – see right :

I raised this with Netlatch (who have responsibility for maintenance within the Ninewells Village grounds) seeking improvements and I am grateful for their prompt response confirming this will be done.

Driver starts school bus blaze, killing 13



A bus catches on fire inside a tunnel in Weihai city, east China's Shandong Province, on Tuesday, May 9, 2017. [Photo: thepaper.cn]

A fatal school bus fire that killed 11 children and two adults in eastern China's Shandong Province on May 9 was allegedly started by the bus driver, who also died, police said Friday.

The 11 children were aged between three and six, with five from the Republic of Korea and the rest from China.

The fire was started on the bus floor near the driver's seat. A lighter cap was discovered nearby and gasoline residue found on multiple spots on the bus, according to a police officer with the Shandong provincial public security bureau.

Electricity faults and traffic accidents were ruled out as the cause of the fire, the police officer said.

The driver's overtime and night shift allowance had been suspended, angering him, causing him to buy gasoline to set the fire, police said. Police received reports around 9 a.m. on May 9 about the fire inside Taojiakuang tunnel in Huancui District, Weihai city. The rented bus was delivering the children to a kindergarten, with 13 people onboard.

All were killed, including a female teacher.