[Rail passengers £1,000 better off under Labour](#)

The next Labour Government will put rail passengers first by putting the brakes on rapidly increasing rail fares and saving commuters £1,014 on their season tickets

Under a Labour Government, passengers will on average save £1,014 on their rail season tickets over the next parliament, compared to the potential cost under a Tory Government.

Since 2010, regulated rail fares have risen by 27.1 per cent, increasing the average cost of a season ticket by £594.

The 2015 Conservative manifesto included a commitment to keeping rail fares frozen in real terms. However, regulated fares were capped at the Retail Price Index (RPI), which consistently over-estimates inflation, rather than the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Labour will cap regulated fair rises at the Consumer Price Index (CPI), using the money saved through bringing rail franchises back into public ownership. As more services come into public ownership, greater amounts of savings become available, and Labour will aim to introduce further fare caps or reductions.

Jeremy Corbyn, Leader of the Labour Party, said:

"Under the Conservatives, rail fares have sky-rocketed and tickets are some of the most expensive in Europe.

"Labour will take Britain's railways back into public control and put more money into people's pockets by capping fares. This will save commuters £1,014 on their rail season tickets over the next Parliament, as part of our plan to promote services for the many, not the few."

Andy McDonald MP, Labour's Shadow Transport Secretary, said:

"Theresa May's failure to commit to freezing rail fares shows just how out of touch they are.

"Under the Conservatives, fares have risen three times faster than wages, passenger satisfaction is plummeting, punctuality has fallen to a 10 year low and promised upgrades have either been delayed by years or scrapped altogether.

"Privatised rail has failed and it will take more than tinkering around the edges to deliver much needed improvements for passengers. Labour will take the railways back into public ownership and put passengers first by capping fares."

The 2017 Tory manifesto has failed to make any commitment to keeping rail fares frozen in real terms, meaning rail fares are likely to rise above inflation (RPI) if the Conservatives win the General Election.

Between 2011 – 2013 the Tories allowed fares to rise by RPI plus 1 per cent. If fares continue to increase by the same rate, the average cost of a season ticket will rise by an extra £160 by the end of the next parliament, compared to being frozen at RPI.

Botanica Mathematica

From the Curator of Museum Services at the University of Dundee :

Botanica Mathematica
D'Arcy Thompson Zoology Museum
2nd – 30th June, Fridays 2 – 4.30pm

The D'Arcy Thompson Zoology Museum at the University of Dundee re-opens to the public for the summer season on 2 June and will be open every Friday 2-4.30pm until 1 September. Throughout June there will be a special addition to the displays – an exhibition of knitted artworks inspired by mathematical biology.

Botanica Mathematica is a textile taxonomy of mathematically inspired plant forms. Its creators, Julia Collins and Madeleine Shepherd, have combined ideas from D'Arcy Thompson's On Growth and Form, computer science, fractals and hyperbolic geometry. The specimen collection consists mainly of crowd-sourced contributions of Binary Bonsai trees.

Generative instructions and algorithmic knitting patterns are the genetic code of these creations; textile techniques are their metabolism. These patterns were released into the wild to evolve and change as makers around the world interpreted them.

The elegant structures, rich textures and fascinating patterns that arise have been collected and classified, with the aid of taxonomist Jo Macrae, as if they were specimens in a botanical herbarium.

The exhibition features Binary Bonsai, Fibonacci Flowers and Hyperbolic Chanterelles displayed throughout the museum.

Madeleine Shepherd will be in the museum on 2 June to meet visitors and discuss her work. You can also find out more on her website here.

[Freedom of religious belief protected in Xinjiang](#)

A white paper released on Thursday said China has fully implemented the policy of freedom of religious belief in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, protecting normal religious activities and ensuring the public's freedom of religious belief.

Normal religious needs of local people have been satisfied, according to the white paper titled "Human Rights in Xinjiang – Development and Progress," which was issued by the State Council Information Office.

Xinjiang has published translations of the religious classics of Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity in multiple languages, it said, adding 1.76 million copies of the Quran and Selections from Al-Sahih Muhammad Ibn-Ismail al-Bukhari have been printed and distributed.

Religious organizations have organized training courses on religious knowledge and etiquette for citizens with religious beliefs.

"Legitimate rights of religious organizations have been effectively safeguarded," the white paper read.

Xinjiang has 112 religious organizations, which receive help from the government to improve their conditions and allow them to play a broader role, it said.

Steady improvements have been made in the training system to cultivate clerics, by offering them systemic training, enhancing their overall qualities, and raising religious organizations' capacity of self-management, the white paper said.

It noted that overseas religious exchanges have been conducted in increasing depth. Xinjiang's religious circles have sent delegations to international academic exchanges and seminars, and its clerics and students at religious institutes have won prizes in competitions for reciting the Quran.

Since 2001, Xinjiang has sent more than 70 clerics and students from the Islamic Institute to study at institutions of higher learning in Egypt, Pakistan, and other countries, and has set up scholarships to award those who achieve outstanding performance, said the white paper.

Moreover, the local government has implemented a policy for planning and organizing pilgrimages to Mecca, and has strengthened services to ensure that all such pilgrimages are safe and orderly, it said.

[Fire put out in north China's Tianjin Port](#)

A fire that was raging at a paper company in north China's Tianjin Port for 12 hours has finally been put out, the authorities said Thursday.

The fire started around 7:20 p.m. Wednesday in the goods yard of Xinnan paper company in Binhai New Area, Tianjin Municipality. No casualties have been reported so far.

Ninety fire trucks battled the flames, extinguishing the fire by 7:30 a.m. Thursday, as strong wind hampered their efforts, said a Binhai New Area spokesperson.

The goods yard is about 7,400 square meters and is the holding bay for nearly ten thousand tonnes of waste paper.

There are no residents and enterprises near the site of the fire, and no secondary disasters have occurred, according to local authorities.

An investigation into the cause of the fire has been launched.

The fire was just 3 km away from a chemical plant where a series of explosions ripped through the warehouse on Aug. 12, 2015, leaving 165 people dead, and nearly 800 injured.

[The Hugo Chavez factor](#)

Others have reminded us that Jeremy Corbyn is an admirer of the late Hugo Chavez, the author of Venezuela's current economic and social misfortunes. Mr Corbyn praised his socialism and singled out for favourable comment the way Mr Chavez shared wealth and changed Venezuela's society. He has been quieter about all this over the last couple of years, as Venezuela has slipped into deep recession, hyperinflation, and social disorder. There are no official economic numbers because they are too embarassing, but the IMF and others think GDP fell by more than 10% last year and continues to fall. Imports halved and supermarket shelves are often empty.

Mr Chavez nationalised a large number of businesses, including the all important oil industry. Venezuela used to be a relatively well off economy, based on huge oil reserves exploited by commercial companies and taxed by the state. As nationalisation tightened its grip on Venezuela's oil they fell

behind in paying contractors, in getting work done to expand and replace, and in pumping enough oil for Venezuela's financial needs. This week they are in the news because a government which has run out of foreign exchange has had to sell deeply discounted bonds to Goldman Sachs to raise some dollars, bonds issued by the nationalised oil company backed by the very oil revenues that are needed for the future bills of the Venezuelan state. There are regular reports of massive food shortages with people going hungry. Now we are told of state violence on the streets against the opposition who seek a change of President and policy.

Mr Chavez gave large sums to the poor by borrowing and by taxing others more heavily. Today this generosity has been badly eroded by rapid inflation, and made worse by the physical scarcity of basic goods to carry on a normal life. Is this really the better way, the socialist dream, that Mr Corbyn recommends? Surely it should be a warning to us all. Nationalising might end up with bad malfunction, as with Venezuela's crucial oil industry. Too much generosity with printed money may just destroy the many through hyperinflation. If people go hungry and are unable to change their government by normal democratic means you do not get an egalitarian paradise, but an authoritarian government trying to stop a civil war born of desperation.

Perhaps Mr Corbyn would like to revisit his enthusiasm for Mr Maduro, the heir to Mr Chavez, and tell us what he has now learned about socialist policies. They were as well intentioned as his, but they have miscarried mightily. Venezuela shows you cannot make the poor rich by making the rich poor. You end up making the whole society poorer, whilst the very rich and the large companies simply leave or stop investing.