

For too long the bus industry has put profit before passengers. Labour will change that – Jeremy Corbyn

Labour

will overturn the Government's ban on council-owned bus companies as part of a wider strategy to put the public back into buses and deliver affordable, greener, and accessible transport.

Labour

unveiled its bus strategy to put people not private profit first after figures revealed that passenger journeys in England outside London have declined by 39 percent and by 53 per cent in English cities since 1986. But over the same period in London, which kept regulation of bus services, passenger journeys increased by 99 per cent.

Labour's

policy includes a commitment to low emissions vehicles, Wi-Fi enabled buses, improved joint and through ticketing schemes, mandatory disability and equality training, and a commitment to introduce a national strategy for local bus services, setting out objectives, targets and funding provisions, including considering concessionary fares for 16-19 year olds.

Jeremy

Corbyn MP, Leader of the Labour Party, said:

"Labour

will create the freedom for councils to run first class bus services which the public are proud of. The Tory legacy brought rising fares, plummeting passenger numbers and too many areas where pensioners have a bus pass but no bus.

"Labour

wants to see local communities empowered to determine their own priorities and reverse the decline in bus services. Labour will extend franchising powers to all areas that want them and will overturn the ban on new community bus companies, allowing Local Authorities to replicate the successes of the country's best performing operators.

"For

too long the bus industry has put profit before passengers. Labour will change

that.”

Andy

McDonald MP, Labour’s Shadow Transport Secretary, said:

“Buses are by far the most important mode of public transport, connecting communities, places of education and businesses like no other.

“In supporting local economies, combatting climate change, addressing air quality and tackling social exclusion, the importance of buses cannot be over-stated. Yet funding for buses across England and Wales has been cut by 33 per cent since 2010 and thousands of routes have been downgraded or cut altogether, meaning passengers across the country have to put up with sub-standard services.

“We want to see clean, hi-tech fleets of buses running accessible and reliable services that meet passengers’ needs. For this to happen, we need to give communities the power to reform bus services to make them work for passengers, as well as ensuring the funding and strategy is in place to ensure no communities are left behind.”

Labour’s policy would:

- Create freedom for local authorities to form their own bus companies by removing the Government’s ban.
- Extend the powers to re-regulate local bus services to all areas that want them – not just to combined authorities with an elected mayor.
- Require all new buses to meet the low-emission requirements set out by the Government-sponsored Office for Low Emission Vehicles.
- Require new vehicles to be equipped with Wi-Fi, and install Wi-Fi on existing buses.
- Introduce a national strategy for local bus services, setting out objectives, targets and funding provisions. This would include consideration of a reduced fare scheme for young people aged 16-19.
- Require all bus drivers and staff at bus terminals to complete approved

disability equality and awareness training, including mental and physical disabilities, by a specific date.

- Ensure bus services in England make adjustments for any disabled passenger on the bus including policies for priority wheelchair spaces.

Labour

leader Jeremy Corbyn and shadow transport secretary Andy McDonald are in Tees Valley today (Friday) promoting Labour's bus policy.

[Only the Green Party offers hope to young people, say Bartley and Lucas](#)



Green Party

31 March 2017

The co-leaders of the Greens, Caroline Lucas and Jonathan Bartley, delivered a 'special message' to young people at their Spring Conference today saying that they offer a party interested in 'moving forward, not turning the clocks back'. [1]

Speaking to their conference in Liverpool the co-leaders – elected last Autumn – promised action against an 'extreme Brexit', opposition to tuition fees and action to bring 'private rents under control'.

Caroline Lucas said:

"Whether you voted Leave or Remain, you need a Party that will stand up with consistency, integrity and conviction for your rights. For young people in particular, let down by Brexit, the Green message is one of a more hopeful alternative. Young people deserve a Party that will say loudly and clearly: freedom of movement is your right, tuition fees must be scrapped and private rents brought under control. So today we have this message for young people in Britain. If you want a Party interested in moving forwards, not turning the clock back. A Party that's honest about the challenges we face and brave enough to build a better, more hopeful country. Then come and join us – the Green Party."

The Green Party – who are currently fighting hard in the Manchester Gorton after coming second there in the General Election – are aiming to appeal to young voters who are disappointed with Labour’s stance on Brexit – and who won’t trust the Lib Dems after their years in coalition.

Lucas said the Greens are ‘a political movement that redistributes both money and power. One that redefines the relationship between work and life. One that embraces the future. Pioneering and forward facing. A future better balanced between what we own and how we experience life – and tipped towards what genuinely makes us happier.’

She went on to say that her party ‘is exploring policies like a 3 day weekend, and fair pay. Local banks for the public good. People powered renewable energy. Reclaiming houses as homes, not financial assets. Education as a universal right not a commodity. Proudly defending and sharing the benefits of free movement.’

Speaking after the triggering of Article 50 this week, and the publication of the Great Repeal Bill White Paper, Jonathan Bartley said the Greens are the only party to truly understand environmental protection.

He said:

“In the story of our future, the environment must be centre stage. It has to be. And we are the only Party that truly understands that. That’s why the Green Party is demanding a new Environmental Protection Act. One that takes everything good about EU law and goes even further.”

Notes:

1. FULL SPEECH [HERE](#).

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[Nia Griffith responds to reports Armed Forces are facing a £10bn funding shortfall](#)

Nia Griffith MP, Labour’s Shadow Defence Secretary, commenting on reports our Armed Forces are facing a £10bn funding shortfall, said:

"This is deeply worrying, and the result of years of mistakes and poor decisions made under the Tories.

"The severe cuts imposed on the defence budget since 2010 has led to countless knee-jerk decisions, like scrapping the Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft, which has left us reliant on allies to track Russian subs off the UK coast.

"Last year we saw the Army shrink below 80,000 for the first time, far short of the Government's manifesto pledge to keep it above 82,000.

"Further cuts of £1bn each year, to make up for this mis-management of the defence budget, will do yet more severe damage to our Armed Forces. Reports that the Royal Marines could be further cut are particularly concerning.

"On the Today programme, the Defence Secretary kept referring to investment in equipment but he needs to be investing in our forces personnel to ensure that professional standards remain high, and that they are trained to be able to operate and maintain new kit. Our Armed Forces are driven by the hard working men and women who serve and it's time the Tories recognised that.

"It simply isn't good enough for ministers to say they can't verify whether these reports are accurate. They urgently need to get a grip and explain where they intend these savings to come from."

[Barbara Keeley responds to CLG select committee social care report](#)

Barbara Keeley

MP, Labour's Shadow Cabinet Minister for Social Care, commenting on the CLG select committee report in to social care, said:

"This report is yet more evidence of government failure on social care.

"With less than 10 per cent of directors of adult social care confident they will be able to fulfil their statutory duty to provide care this coming

year, it's clear that the Government simply has not done enough to give social care the funding it needs.

"The underfunding of social care is hitting the care work force with nearly half of all care staff on zero-hours contracts and hundreds of thousands of them scandalously earning less than the living wage. And as the cuts to budgets bite, we are seeing the number of people caring for family and friends unpaid going up faster than population growth. This is bad for the family carers and can put great strain on families.

"The Government should heed the recommendations from the committee and make sure that their upcoming Green Paper does not rule any future funding options out. We need social care to be put on a long term sustainable financial footing and we need an end to this on-going funding crisis."

[News story: Exeter flood defence scheme construction at Quay takes summer break](#)

Vital work to reduce the risk of flooding to more than 3,200 homes and businesses in Exeter reaches another key milestone this weekend as work around the Quay area of the city is halted to avoid disruption to visitors and businesses over the summer. Work will resume in October.

Over the past 5 months contractors working on behalf of the Environment Agency have been building a flood defence system that will be put in place when flooding is expected and then taken down when river levels recede. The defence follows the line of the existing bollards.

A temporary tarmac surface is to be laid to some of the Quay area for the summer as further works in these areas will be necessary. The reinstatement of permanent surfaces will be made at the end of the works in 2018. At Piazza Terracina works are now nearing completion with permanent paving being laid. Over the weekend BMM JV are putting the finishing touches to defences in this area.

Richard Cox, project manager for the Environment Agency, said:

We are making substantial progress and would like to thank all businesses, residents and visitors for their patience and co-

operation.

We appreciate this work has caused disruption to the Quay and other areas of the city. Once complete this £32 million scheme will reduce the risk of flooding to thousands of homes and businesses in the city.

During winter 2017/18, BMM JV will be back at the Quay to complete flood defences around Quay Bridge and the Samuel Jones pub area. Some disruption will be experienced during this time but the Quay will remain open throughout works.

Work is due to start at Eagle Cottages and Haven Road after Easter.

BMM JV is still on site at Bonhay Road where works are due to finish later in the summer. This is later than anticipated due to very poor ground conditions. The appearance of the new 400m flood defence wall being built from Flowerpots to Exe Bridges has caused concern among some members of the public. The Environment Agency wishes to reassure the public that the flood defence, once complete this summer, will be clad in brickwork and have the grassed banks reinstated on both sides.

The flood defence construction works are programmed to finish in 2018.

Stay updated about Exeter flood defence scheme by:

- subscribing to [GovDelivery emails](#)
- following [@EnvAgencySW](#), [@ExeterCouncil](#) or [@DevonCC](#) on Twitter using hashtag #ExeterFDS

Notes to editors

Phase 2 of Exeter's £32 million scheme started in July 2016.

Phase 1 of the scheme got underway in 2014 and saw construction work just downstream of Exeter Quay. The Trew's flood relief channel and the side spill weir at the top of the channel have been lowered. This increased the flow capacity of the flood relief channel, which will help reduce flood risk during high river flows.

Exeter City Council and Devon County Council each contributed £3 million to the scheme. The remainder is funding from Central Government.