

Schools are struggling to plug the massive budget deficits created by Tory Government – Angela Rayner

Angela

Rayner MP, Labour's Shadow Education Secretary, ahead of the party's Opposition Day Debate on schools funding, said:

"Schools are struggling to plug the massive budget deficits created by a Tory Government incapable of running a schools system.

"On Monday we heard from headteachers who are increasingly faced with difficult choices of whether they can afford to have classrooms cleaned, sport pitches mowed or to keep hold of vital support staff who are essential to school communities.

"With three quarters of school budgets taken up by staffing costs, the fear across the sector is that classroom teachers could be cut next.

"At the election the Tories offered warm words to parents about better schools and promised to protect school funding. It is clear that their legacy will now be one of cutting school budgets, super-sized class sizes, and no progress made in the international league tables.

"Our children deserve better."

Three construction companies fined after worker fall

Three companies from Essex have been fined after a worker fell over seven meters through a fragile roof he was replacing.

Chelmsford Crown Court heard how Rafal Myslim was standing on the fragile roof at Dengie Crops Ltd in Asheldem, when the asbestos sheeting gave way and he fell 7.5m onto a concrete floor, hitting a number of pipes within the building on the way down. There was no safety netting or other protective equipment to prevent him from falling and he suffered a hematoma on the brain.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive found three companies at fault for the fall. Dengie Crops Ltd contracted Ernest Doe & Sons Ltd, who are an agricultural machinery supplier, to help the company replace their roof. Ernest Doe & Sons Ltd did not have the appropriate experience and subcontracted the work to Balsham (Buildings) Ltd who worked out how the roof replacement should take place. Balsham then subcontracted the actual replacement of the roof to Strong Clad Ltd.

Ernest Doe & Sons Ltd were unable to act effectively in their role as principal contractor because they had no experience of working in construction. They could not effectively oversee Balsham (Buildings) Ltd plans that had highlighted the risk of a fall. None of the parties involved put in place safety measures for 40% of the roof that did not have netting below. They relied too heavily on the verbal briefings to workers reminding them of where the netting was rather than putting in place effective safety measures for the whole roof.

Ernest Doe & sons Ltd, of Ulting, Essex, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 22 of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007. They were fined £360,000 and ordered to pay costs of £10,000


Balsham (Buildings) Ltd, of Balsham, Cambridge, pleaded guilty to breaching 4(1)(a) and 4(1)(c) of the Work at Height Regulation 2005. They were fined £45,000 and ordered to pay costs of £7,000

Strong Clad Ltd, of Castle Hedingham, Essex, pleaded guilty to breaching 4(1)(a) and 4(1)(c) of the Work at Height Regulation 2005. They were fined £7,000 and ordered to pay costs of £3,000

HSE inspector Adam Hills said: "The dangers of working on fragile roofs are well documented. Every year too many people are killed or seriously injured due to falls from height while carrying out this work.

"Work at height requires adequate planning, organisation and communication between all parties. This incident was entirely preventable and Mr Myslim is lucky to be alive."

Notes to Editors:

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. It aims to reduce work-related death, injury and ill health. It does so through research, information and advice, promoting training; new or revised regulations and codes of practice, and working with local authority partners by inspection, investigation and enforcement. www.hse.gov.uk^[1]
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ ^[2]
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>

Journalists should approach HSE press office with any queries on regional press releases.

Public warned of H7N9 avian flu after nine deaths

Chinese disease control experts said that the public should stay on alert for H7N9 avian flu, which has caused at least nine deaths this year.

H7N9 has entered its peak season and direct contact with live poultry remains the main source of infection, said a statement by Zhejiang provincial disease control and prevention center Tuesday.

Genetic analysis showed that there had been no mutations of the virus, but since late Autumn last year the epidemic had been reported in a wide range of areas, it said.

The virus was more active in 2016 than in the same seasons in previous years. A total of 44 cases were reported last year in Zhejiang, causing two deaths.

H7N9 is a bird flu strain first reported to have infected humans in March 2013 in China. It is most likely to strike in winter and spring.

At least nine people died from the virus since the start of this year, according to disease control centers in Henan, Guangdong and Hunan provinces.

On Tuesday, health authorities in Henan province announced two deaths from the virus, respectively on Jan. 23 and 24. Both patients had worked at restaurants prior to the infections.

Green Party announces anti-nuclear Copeland by-election candidate



24 January 2017

The Green Party has selected Jack Lenox as its Copeland by-election candidate, opposing nuclear power and instead offering a safe energy future with increased investment in renewables.

The announcement from the Greens comes just one day after Labour said its candidate, Gillian Troughton, has been “quite clear of her support for the nuclear industry, no ifs and no buts”. [1]

Jack will also be campaigning for Britain to maintain a close relationship with Europe and to stop the creeping marketisation of the NHS, as well as vowing action to protect West Cumbrian homes from flooding.

Jack has lived in Copeland for four years and works as a software engineer. An active member of the community, Jack performs with and serves on the committee of the Keswick Amateur Operatic Society. In 2015, he helped organise the first web conference in Cumbria, bringing industry experts from across the world to Keswick.

Jack said:

“I’m delighted the Green Party has selected me to contest this by-election. Copeland has borne the brunt of Government funding cuts and healthcare is facing stark challenges – West Cumberland Hospital’s maternity and A&E departments are under threat. The constituency will also suffer if Theresa May rips the UK out of the single market and turns our country into a corporate tax haven.

“Copeland comprises some of the most deprived parts of the UK, it suffered severe flooding during the storms of last winter, and its constituents are forced to deal with continuous price hikes and cutbacks to public transport services. On top of all this, an ill-conceived new nuclear power plant is due to be built at Sellafield, the site of the UK’s worst ever nuclear disaster.

“The Green Party is the only party with truly progressive solutions to the issues Copeland faces. It’s a privilege and an honour to represent the Greens as a beacon of hope during this turbulent period in British politics.”

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

“Jack is giving people in Copeland the chance to vote for a candidate who opposes nuclear power, believes in Britain having a close relationship with Europe and fights for a truly public NHS. No other party is able to offer voters this clarity on the big issues facing the area. In a time of divisive politics and high levels of distrust, Jack will make an excellent Green Party candidate and we’re proud to have him.”

Notes:

1. <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/2687914/labours-by-election-fight-to-hold-constituency-dominated-by-sellafield-nuclear-power-station-is-being-bankrolled-by-an-anti-nuclear-energy-firm/>

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Xi pushes poverty alleviation



Chinese President Xi Jinping talks with villagers and local cadre at the home of villager Xu Haicheng in Desheng Village, Xiaoertai Township of Zhangbei County in north China's Hebei Province, on Jan. 24, 2017. Xi Tuesday pushed for increased efforts on poverty alleviation during an inspection tour to the city of Zhangjiakou. [Photo/Xinhua]

President Xi Jinping Tuesday pushed for increased efforts on poverty alleviation.

He stressed the importance of precision in the battle against poverty, saying that poverty alleviation should focus on targeted people and industries, and use the right tools to produce results.

Xi made the remarks during a tour of the city of Zhangjiakou in northern China's Hebei Province, where he inspected an impoverished village, visiting and chatting with poor families, discussing how they could shake off poverty.

"Fighting poverty is the fundamental task in building an all-round moderately prosperous society," Xi said.

He called for more efforts to help the poor develop industries that could grow in a sustainable manner, set up sustainable mechanisms for poverty alleviation, and create ways for them to achieve prosperity.

Poverty relief is high on China's 2016-2020 agenda, and the government has vowed to lift everybody out of poverty by 2020. By the end of 2015, China still had 55.75 million people living in poverty.

Since the start of the reform and opening-up in 1978, China's economic boom has helped lift more than 700 million people out of poverty.

"Poverty alleviation is getting more and more difficult as it progresses to the end," Xi said.



Chinese President Xi Jinping (C) walks with grassroots cadre at the home of villager Xu Haicheng in Desheng Village, Xiaoertai Township of Zhangbei County in north China's Hebei Province, on Jan. 24, 2017. Xi Tuesday pushed for increased efforts on poverty alleviation during an inspection tour to the city of Zhangjiakou. [Photo/Xinhua]

He stressed the importance of making sure every poor family had a program for increasing income and every poor person had a way of casting off poverty.

The president pointed to relocation as an important supplementary approach in fighting poverty and highlighted the role of ecological compensation, which would not only help improve the ecological environment but also boost incomes.

Stressing the importance of education in poverty alleviation, Xi said, "Making sure children of impoverished families enjoy access to high-quality education is a fundamental solution to poverty."

During the tour, Xi also inspected a dairy company in Zhangjiakou, where he urged for more efforts to create a globally competitive dairy industry with safe, high-quality products.

He said that the most rigorous standards, the strictest regulation, the

harshest punishment and the most serious mechanism of accountability should be adopted to ensure food safety.

Xi also listened to local officials briefing on the local economy at a meeting, where he said cutting excessive production capacity in the iron and steel sector was crucial for Hebei, a major steel producing province, to improve its industrial structure and create new growth engines.

Xi called for efforts to ensure outdated production capacity was eliminated and "zombie enterprises" phased out.

During the tour, Xi also urged for efforts to make the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games a "remarkable, extraordinary, excellent" event.

The Zhangjiakou site of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games is the best natural ski area in northern China.