

Grant Shapps: Speech to Conservative Party Conference 2019

Grant Shapps, Transport Secretary, speaking today at Conservative Party Conference in Manchester, said:

(Check against delivery)

“Conference, firstly, as Secretary of State for Transport it’s my duty to thank the Civil Aviation Authority, staff across Government, but in particular employees of Thomas Cook for helping to deliver the largest peacetime repatriation in this country’s history.

They carried on, getting people home, even when their jobs were uncertain.

I know communities have come together and that...

With support from Government...

Where jobs have been lost, people will rebuild.

Nowhere more so than here in Manchester...

A city that has come together in adversity so many times.

So conference, please join me in thanking everyone involved, for working so hard...for bringing people home safely.

...

—

Conference...

We are driving the modernisation of our country’s infrastructure...

As is evident here in the North West.

From
improving the M60 here in Manchester...

To
tackling congestion and unlocking new homes in Preston.

And
in the North-East, I know how Ben Houchen is working hard to deliver a new
Tees
crossing.

Across
the country, our road building plan will reduce journey times, drive local
growth and cut carbon emissions.

We're
also improving local bus links ...

And
today we're setting out our £220million package to improve services.

When
it comes to railways, Conference, I could try to impress you with the record
amount we're investing – that's £48bn, over 5 years.

Whilst
pushing ahead with Northern Powerhouse Rail.

But,
as a frustrated commuter myself, I know what passengers really want is for
the
trains to simply run on time...

It's
why one of my first acts as in this job was to prioritise punctuality.

Surprisingly,
until last month, a train was considered on time if it was up to 5 or even 10
minutes late.

I've
challenged this. Now a train will be considered late if it is more than a
minute behind schedule.

And
as the stats show, there's a lot of work to do.

In
fact, as Transport Secretary, I'm now in the only job in Government where *I*
routinely find myself apologising to
others for them arriving late to *my*
meetings.

But
conference, to achieve excellence we must be honest. The current railway is
not
working as we want.

Since
privatisation we've doubled passenger numbers, they're travelling many more
miles and there are record levels of investment...

But
as the 2018 timetable debacle showed, when things go wrong, it's not obvious
who's in charge.

That's
why rail expert Keith Williams is reviewing how we should organise the
railways
in the future.

And
I'm determined to ensure his reforms deliver for passengers.

A
better coordinated railway, pulling in the same direction, to get trains
arriving on time...

And
when things do go wrong? We'll know precisely whose job it is to fix it.

Because
in 2019, in the city once served by Stephenson's Rocket, it's frankly absurd
we're still working out how to run our trains.

—

But
Conference, there's no point being on time today, if we damage our tomorrow.

As
we improve our infrastructure, we must protect our planet.

Now,
some call for us to make sacrifices.

To
save the planet, they want you to stop travelling...

To
backtrack on economic growth...

To
live a little less.

As Conservatives, we know the route to

sustainable living is through stronger environmental protection, new technology and the market.

Consider the acceleration in electric car use, for example.

As I drove up to Manchester in my family's electric car, I found it easier than ever to plug-in and charge up...

That's because there are now more charging locations than petrol stations.

But we must go further to protect our environment and improve our competitive edge...

As you may know, we've already committed to ending the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2040.

However, if we're to become the world-leader in green technology, we must always be looking to expand our ambitions.

I'd therefore like to see government look again at the 2040 target, and thoroughly explore the case for bringing this date forward.

The Government's advisory Committee on Climate Change has said 2035 is a date for which we should aim.

We will need to test the arguments and work in partnership with industry to examine how to proceed.

Just as we rejuvenated our automotive sector in the 1980s, we're going to work with our pioneering car sector to help them sell the next generation of vehicles around the world.

Providing high-skilled jobs, utilising British know-how and ending dependence of fossil fuels

—

And just as we strive as Conservatives to preserve what we cherish for the next generation...

So we know it's our duty to do right by those in our society, no matter what

their
circumstances.

Since becoming Secretary of State I've taken steps to boost transport accessibility...

We expanded the Blue Badge scheme to those with so-called 'invisible' conditions like autism, dementia, Parkinson's and arthritis.

And, we've introduced the 16 to 17 travel card, giving young people half price travel so they can get to college or part-time work...

—

As Conservatives, we know that the person best placed to make decisions about your life, is you.

Yet we also recognise that there is a role for Government, both providing a safety net and expanding opportunity.

From Disraeli's education reform to Mrs Thatcher's Right to Buy...

Government can deliver.

And in transport: those canals and railways that saw us incubate the world's first Industrial Revolution...

Built with private funds, but often requiring legislation.

We know that there is a role for Government enabling the ingenuity that has spurred so much of the prosperity we enjoy.

Conference, our mission is clear...

To build and run world-class, greener and more accessible transport infrastructure.

But, my friends, to do this we've just got to Get Brexit Done...

So
we can invest in our NHS... level-up education spending... and deliver 20,000
more
police.

So
come on, let's come together, let's work together and together let's deliver
for
our United Kingdom.

Thank
you"

ENDS

For further
information, please contact the Press Office on 020 7984 8121.