

Grayling: Putting passengers at the heart of transport

Chris Grayling, Transport Secretary, speaking today at Conservative Party Conference in Manchester said:

(Check against delivery)

“Ladies and Gentlemen.

I want to start with a very simple message. Thank you.

I spent the election campaign travelling the country and meeting many of you on the campaign trail. Sometimes it was to knock on doors. Sometimes to look at railway stations and by passes. In Birmingham, Andy Street and I even learned how to drive a tram.

I know how hard you worked. I know how disappointing it was that your hard work didn't always deliver the results we hoped for. And I know that our Party would be nothing without all of you, and your commitment to the values that we hold so dear. So thank you.

But we are in government and we have a big job to do together. Not just in delivering Brexit. Not just in putting record investment into our transport in every part of the country. But because our opponents are the most left-wing opposition this country has ever seen.

The militant tendency has really taken over Labour. The damage they could do to this country if they were to form a government would be unthinkable.

We have to make sure it can never happen.

And this afternoon's session is about a key part of how we can make sure it doesn't happen.

Theresa May talked last year about building a country that works for everyone. She

was

right, and we should be united behind her as she and our team seek to build that country.

And

talking of teams. I have a pretty good one in transport

John

Hayes

Martin

Callanan

Jesse

Norman

Paul

Maynard

Our

two whips;

Andrew

Stephenson

Liz

Sugg

And

our two great PPS's, James Heapey and Scott Mann.

Now

before I talk about the difference we are making, I just want to say a few words about this morning's sad news about Monarch Airlines.

When

a big change like this happens, it's really tough for all those involved – passengers and crew alike – and my heart goes out to all of them.

As

soon as it became apparent that the airline was struggling we acted quickly. We are today mounting the biggest civilian repatriation exercise this country has seen in peacetime and we will bring back 100,000 people who are stranded overseas.

And

we've spoken to all the other airlines and asked them to do what they can to make sure people affected can rebook their trips elsewhere as quickly as possible.

But

let nobody think this is a sign of general problems in our aviation sector.

Monarch has been a victim of the success of other airlines, like Easyjet and Jet 2. This summer most of our airports carried more passengers than ever before.

And

they did so because of the success of our economy. We have a great record to build on. You may remember that back in 2010 I was the Employment Minister. With the legacy of Labour, every month I waited with trepidation to see the unemployment figures arrive from the statisticians.

Seven

years later things are very different.

Thanks

to our work in government, we have the lowest level of unemployment since the 1970s, we have the highest ever number of people in work, and we have opportunity spreading across our society.

I

am proud of that record.

There

are many parts of our vision for Britain continuing that progress. The work that Justine is doing to strengthen our schools and vocational education. The work that Greg is doing to support the development of a more diverse, high tech economy.

But

I have the exciting job. My bit is about the things that join all of that together.

The

roads.

The

railways.

The

ports

The

airports.

Even

planning for Space Ports so that in future we can launch satellites from right here on British soil.

And

building on the work my colleagues have done since 2010 reversing a decade of decline under Labour.

Now

I bumped into a relic of that Labour failure in the corridor the other day...
... John Prescott. Remember him...

And

do you know what he had the nerve to ask me. When are we getting our new
trains
in Hull?

To

be fair to him, under 9 Labour ministers and 13 years, he never got a new
train.

Well

John, I have good news for you, they are being built right now.

In

fact between now and 2020 we will be replacing or refurbishing every single
train in the north of England.

The

biggest modernisation programme for rail in the north since the steam age.

More

trains. Longer trains. More seats. Free wi-fi. The things passengers say they
want.

It

didn't happen under Labour.

It is happening

under Conservatives.

And,

John just in case both your jags aren't working, it is not just Hull that is
getting new trains.

Wales

and the Southwest have brand new intercity trains starting later this month.

And

there are more to come – in East Anglia and the East Coast Mainline – and in
the West Midlands and the South.

It's

a big contrast to when John Prescott and his colleagues were in power.

Passengers

had to put up with trains that dated back to the 1970s.

Labour

cancelled and delayed as many road projects as they opened in thirteen years

in
Government.

They
ran away from big decisions on investment.

And
last week in Brighton they had the nerve to claim that we aren't investing in
the future.

Well
Ladies and Gentlemen, it's taken Conservatives to start to build a modern
transport system.

That's
why we are spending more on our infrastructure than any Government in
decades.

Schemes
that are already transforming the prospects for businesses and travellers.

Many
of them within a few miles of where we are standing now.

The
new Heysham link road, opening up the economy of North Lancashire, thanks to
the hard work of David Morris and Eric Ollerenshaw.

The
long awaited link road between the M56 and the M6 and upgrades to motorways
across the north.

The
first ever rail link between Manchester's two main rail stations, Piccadilly
and Victoria.

The
missing links that are finally linking Newcastle and London by motorway.

The
first electric railway between Liverpool and Manchester.

And
while we are on the subject of electrification, we have already electrified
nearly four times more miles of railway within the North West,
yes within the North West, than Labour did across the entire
country in thirteen years in Government.

That
programme will carry on. Using electrification where it makes a difference to
passengers. Using digital technology where it makes a difference to
passengers.
Always focused first and foremost on what does actually make a difference for

passengers

That's

why when I was in Manchester and Leeds two weeks ago, I announced that I want the Transpennine railway to be Britain's first major inter-city main line digital railway.

New

technology that will help create a more reliable railway, increase capacity and create better journeys for passengers.

And

our investment programme in the North will continue. Today I can announce our plan to deliver £100 million for local road schemes across the North of England.

This

Investment will help to reduce traffic congestion in the North West the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber. The details of individual schemes will be announced in due course.

But

it's not just about investing in the North.

We're

finally moving ahead with dualling the A303 to the South West.

We're

upgrading the A14 to provide better links from East Anglia to the Midlands.

We're

modernising commuter railways in Birmingham and Bristol and providing funding for the Welsh to do the same in Cardiff.

We've

started work on a new Thames Crossing between Essex and Kent.

And

today I want to set out for you another big part of our plans.

Our

railways haven't made nearly enough progress in using new technology for rail tickets. Last year I said to you that we needed to get rid of the paper ticket on our trains.

Since

then we've been working on plans to achieve that.

So

today I am setting out details of our £80 million programme to bring smart ticketing.... using mobile phones, barcodes and smartcards across almost all

of
the rail network by the end of next year.

It's
what passengers want. And we will deliver it.

But
it's not just about what Government does.

We
need the private sector to use its skills to unleash the potential of the
north

And
to support the development of the Northern Powerhouse.

That's
why Liverpool's new deep water port is so important.

It's
a gateway to the Northern Powerhouse.

So
are the ports on the East Coast.

In
a post-Brexit world we need those links around the world, to deliver the
trade
opportunities that will help us secure the prosperous future this country
deserves.

Links
like Manchester Airport.

A
few weeks ago I had the privilege of being part of the launch of its new
terminal project.

A
billion pound private investment in the success of the Northern Powerhouse.

Manchester
Airport is a crucial hub for this country.

That's
why we are spending 165 million pounds on the new relief road for the
airport.
To help build on that private sector investment.

And
this is the bit that Jeremy Corbyn and his Momentum socialists will never
understand. We need a strong private sector, working in partnership with
national and local government in the Northern Powerhouse.

If
you treat business as the enemy, and tax it until the pips squeak, it will
simply go elsewhere

And
so will the jobs.

And
the investment. And the opportunities for our next generation.

Just
look at how hostile they are to the private sector.

In
my area, they are always attacking the train companies.

After
all what has rail privatisation ever done for us? Not a lot really....

Except
for all those new and replacement trains here in the North.

Except
for all the new trains in East Anglia, across the South, in the West
Midlands.

Except
for reversing the years of decline under British Rail and doubling the number
of people using our railways.

Except
for opening new services and routes for passengers, like the new line from
London to Oxford.

Or
the Grand Central trains to Sunderland and Bradford.

Of
course in Jeremy Corbyn's world we would be so much better going back to the
days of British Rail.

Those
"Glory days" when lines were closed and services axed.

When
passenger numbers slumped and investment in our railway equated to
bolting bus parts onto railway wheels.

Not
to mention the famously awful British Rail sandwiches.

And
how would they pay for renationalising the railways? By confiscating assets

from the private sector. How on earth do they think they will attract jobs to Britain if they behave like the government of Venezuela?

For all their talk, the Labour Party always leave the country worse off than they found it – and it is ordinary people who pay the price in fewer jobs, higher taxes, more debt and ultimately worse public services.

They don't understand that it is businesses and workers that create the wealth to pay for public services. Their plans are unaffordable and driven by ideology, not the balanced approach the country needs.

Ladies and Gentlemen. This country needs to move forwards, and not backwards.

And that is what we are doing, under Theresa May's leadership.

Taking the big decisions that we need to secure all of our futures.

This time last year I told you we had a big decision to take. That we needed to finally move forward with the airport expansion that this country so desperately needs.

I was proud to be the Transport Secretary who announced that we intend to go ahead and build a third runway at Heathrow Airport.

Subject to the necessary consultation work and securing the backing of Parliament, we are aiming to give it the formal go ahead in the first half of next year

The expansion of Heathrow will make a difference right across this country.

Here in Manchester and North.

In Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Across the West and the South

Places where new air links to Heathrow will open up new opportunities for enterprise and jobs.

Of

course it's not our only big infrastructure project. Nor will it be the last.

There's...

Northern
Powerhouse Rail.

Crossrail
2

And
HS2, which will link them together.

Now
I know many of you have doubts about HS2.

Why
are we building this big and expensive project?

Why
are we creating such fast links between our Cities?

But
if I asked you how many of you want to see more space for commuters and to get
more lorries off the roads, I bet most of you would say yes please.

But
that's what HS2 does. By moving the express trains off our existing
mainlines,
it means more commuter trains, and thousands of extra seats in the rush hour.

Here
in Manchester.

In
Leeds.

In
Birmingham.

In
London.

And
more space for freight trains the rest of the time.

And
since I stood here a year ago, the construction work on this project for all
of
our futures has already started.

All

of this provides a fantastic opportunity for the next generation.

Young engineers who can be part of projects that will last a lifetime, and which they can look back on with pride in later years.

This coming year is the Year of the Engineer in Britain.

We want to encourage that new generation to be part of this exciting vision.

This morning, I met with some of those young apprentices who are part of our vision for our 21st century. Young people who are already working to make those new projects a reality.

In our ports, on our railways, on our roads, in our aerospace and automotive factories.....

Ladies and gentlemen, they are sitting in this audience. They are an inspiration to our nation. I hope that what we are doing will help them build skills to last a lifetime.

Let me be clear, this Government will always put the interests of ordinary working people first.

We want to make our country a fairer place to live and work – where people get out what they put in, and how far you go in life depends on your talent and hard work, not where you came from. In particular that will mean a better future for all those starting out in life, who fear it will be harder for them than it was for their parents' generation.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Jeremy Corbyn and his union paymasters want none of this.

They want to turn the clock back.

They want to resist modernisation.

They
don't care about passengers or consumers.

They
make promises they cannot hope to keep.

We
aren't like that.

Ladies
and Gentlemen

Our
job is to make sure those young people have jobs.

To
make sure all of them have opportunities to make the most of their lives.

That
is what we are all about as a Government.

It
is what the Northern Powerhouse is all about.

And
our transport strategy will help make that a reality.

In
the coming years this country faces a stark choice.

A
political throwback to the days of penal taxes, nationalised industries,
socialist dogma, high unemployment and economic decline.

Or
an enterprise driven nation, building ties around the world, and seeking to
create opportunities for all.

That's
what Conservatism is all about.

It
is a battle we have to win."

ENDS