

Labour announce five point plan for business rates ahead of emergency roundtable with business organisations

Labour have responded to fears about the impact of looming business rate hikes for some businesses by calling on the Government to set up an emergency transitional relief fund and take a series of measures to ease the business rate burden for business. They are also holding an urgent meeting with leading business organisations to discuss a radical shakeup of business rates in the longer term.

Business rates revaluation due to come into effect on 1 April have caused uproar as it has emerged that The average small shop will be hit by an extra £3,663 in rates over the next 5 years, while many large online retailers will see their rates cut. The Big 4 superstores – Tesco, Asda, Sainsburys and Morrisons – will see a 5.9% reduction in Rateable Value, while online retailer, ASOS, will see their rates bill fall from £1.17million to £1.14million, despite reporting UK retail sales growth of 18%.

The changes have led to calls from businesses to reform the business rates system so that it better reflects changing shopping patterns.

Labour's five point plan to help business survive the revaluation and develop a system of business taxation suitable for the 21st Century:

1. Set up an emergency transitional relief fund for businesses facing "cliff edge" increases in their rates, and revise the appeals process to ensure businesses get a swift and fair hearing
2. Bring forward CPI indexation so that businesses aren't paying more because of how inflation is measured
3. Exclude new investment in plant and machinery from future business rates valuation
4. Introduce more regular valuations in law to stop businesses facing periodic, unmanageable hikes
5. Fundamental reform of the business rates system to ease the burden on traditional high streets and town centres in the age of online shopping; support the traditional fabric of our communities, including community pubs and incentivising free cash machines; and create a fairer system of business taxation.

Shadow Business Secretary, Rebecca Long-Bailey, Shadow Chancellor, John McDonnell, and Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Theresa Pearce, will hold an emergency roundtable on Monday with leading business organisations, including the Federation of Small Business, the British Retail Consortium, and the British Chamber of Commerce.

Shadow Business Secretary, Rebecca Long-Bailey, said:

“From delaying the revaluation to their failure to put adequate transitional arrangements in place, the Government have mishandled this whole process, and should provide immediate emergency relief to stop thousands of businesses going under.

“But the reality is that business rates are a ticking time bomb. It cannot be right for smaller, town centre retailers to be facing massive hikes while the Amazons and ASOS’s of this world have their business rates cut. Given our long-standing productivity problem, it is madness that we tax businesses’ plant and machinery.

“That’s why Labour are working closely with business to radically reform our business taxation system so it is fit for the 21st Century”

Mike Cherry, National Chairman at the Federation of Small Businesses, said: “Business rates are an outdated tax. FSB is keen for all political parties to help those small firms hardest hit by the current revaluation, and to start to focus on fundamental longer-term reform of business rates to make sure it’s fair for small firms. It is incredibly important to support small businesses and the self-employed so they don’t face shock tax rises, so we are delighted to take part in the roundtable.”

Andrew Silvester, Head of Campaigns & Deputy Director of Policy at the Institute of Directors said:

“It’s hugely important that politicians on all sides look for constructive ways to reform business rates. This is a 20th century system and in a 21st century economy it looks painfully out of date.”

Christopher Richards, Senior Business Environment Policy Adviser at the Engineering Employers Federation, said:

“Establishing the principle that plant and machinery has no place in the business rates system is an important first step for all political actors to take, this is the top priority action for industry. The inclusion of plant and machinery in business rates bills represents a tax on productive investment and undermines the international competitiveness of UK manufacturing. Excluding future investments from being taxed is therefore a significant step in the right direction, is consistent with the government’s industrial strategy aims and if enacted would give some confidence to manufacturers about the likely post-Brexit investment environment in the UK.”

Hammond can’t hide from disability cuts in the Budget

The Shadow Chancellor has today called on Philip Hammond not to go ahead with the £3.7bn worth of cuts to Personal Independence Payments (PIP) which will

hit 160,000 disabled people.

The announcement, which was sneaked out last week, will mean 160,000 disabled people could see a loss in their income as a direct effect of the changes made by the government to how PIP is awarded.

John McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, said:

"Theresa May has used the cover of the by-elections to sneak out this announcement hurting so many vulnerable disabled people.

"This is a return to the worst politics of spin that so tarnished our politics for so long. It is an act of immense bad faith. She is degrading politics and demeaning the role of Prime Minister.

"Next week the Tories will make out that the economy and the public finances are doing better, however, they are planning to go ahead with a £3.7 billion cut to the disabled.

"This time last year when the economy and public finances were not doing as well, and the then Chancellor George Osborne tried to cut PIP, Labour stopped him. And in his u-turn he claimed that he could "absorb" the cost of reversing this cut.

"Hammond can't hide from these PIP cuts in his Budget. He needs to explain why he can't absorb them like his predecessor while he is still going ahead with tax giveaways to the very wealthiest in our country."

[Jonathan Reynolds comment on RBS results](#)

Jonathan

Reynolds MP, Labour's Shadow City Minister, commenting on RBS's reported £7bn annual loss today, said:

"Today's results show RBS still has much to do to overcome the legacy of the financial crisis.

"Whilst the core banking business of RBS is improving, the financial burden caused by the errors of the past has generated a significant loss.

"British taxpayers have had to stump up huge support for RBS – they need to know that there has been a significant change in the regulation and culture of banking

to
prevent this happening again.

"The
scale of the taxpayers' support also means there needs to be a conversation
about what the long-term future of RBS should look like, to best protect the
public's money."

[To win power to rebuild and transform Britain, Labour will go further to reconnect with voters, and break with the failed political consensus – Corbyn](#)

Jeremy Corbyn MP, Leader of the Labour Party,
commenting on the Stoke-on-Trent Central and Copeland by-elections, said:

"Labour's victory in Stoke is a decisive rejection of UKIP's
politics of division and dishonesty. But our message was not enough to win
through in Copeland.

"In both campaigns, Labour listened to thousands of
voters on the doorstep. Both constituencies, like so many in Britain, have
been
let down by the political establishment.

"To win power to rebuild and transform Britain, Labour will go
further to reconnect with voters, and break with the failed political
consensus."

[Gareth Snell speech at Stoke-on-Trent Central by-election](#)

"I'd
like to begin by saying thank you to the returning officer and their staff
for

all their work in making sure this election runs smoothly.

“I also must thank my wife, Sophia, and our beautiful daughter, Hannah. Both are a constant source of strength, love and inspiration to me. Without their support, this campaign would not have been possible.

“Can I also thank the police for all that they have done today and throughout the campaign.

“For democracy to work it needs the support of dedicated public servants and here in Stoke-on-Trent we can be proud to have some of the most dedicated in the country.

“I’d also like to thank my agent George Sinnott, and the incredible team of Labour Party workers and volunteers who have sustained this campaign throughout. To see the energy and commitment that all of you have shown these last few weeks is a reminder of the incredible strength and passion of our movement.

“I feel profoundly humble to have been chosen by the people of Stoke-on-Trent Central to represent them in Parliament.

“My wife Sophia and I chose to make our life here and it was the best decision we ever made. I’m proud to call the Potteries my home, and I’m prouder still to have been given the opportunity to represent our city as your next MP.

“In recent weeks Stoke-on-Trent has found itself in the national spotlight. Our city has been the focus of a media which all too often prefers to dwell on our problems instead of highlighting our achievements.

“But over these last few weeks a city lazily dubbed by some as the capital of Brexit has once again proven to the world that we are so much more than that.

“We are a city of innovators and educators, artists and entrepreneurs. We pioneered the first industrial revolution and I believe that we have the potential to lead the next one.

“This city will not allow ourselves to be defined by last year’s referendum. And we will not allow ourselves to be divided by the result.

“Nor will we be divided by race, or faith, or creed. We will move

forward together to tackle the problems that we face and secure a brighter, more prosperous future for one another.

“So for those who have come to Stoke-on-Trent to sow hatred and division, and to try to turn us away from our friends and neighbours, I have one message – you have failed.

“Tonight the people of Stoke-on-Trent have chosen the politics of hope over the politics of fear. We have said with one voice that hatred and bigotry are not welcome here. This is a proud city and we stand together.

“This election is a victory for British values of tolerance and respect. But it is also a victory for the proud Labour values that are the hallmark of our city and its people.

“It is a message that the people of Stoke-on-Trent won’t just sit back while this Tory government cuts our National Health Service to the bone and puts the future of our public services at risk.

“It is a warning that we will not stand idly by while politicians in Westminster pour ever-money into London and the South East while the rest of the country is simply left to fend for itself.

“And it is a demand that the contribution our people have made to this country is respected and rewarded with the support and investment we deserve.

“Politics can be passionate – and there have been moments in this campaign that have polarised people.

“My job – and it is the job of all of us here – will be to put this campaign behind us – and work together.

“For those who voted for me in this election, thank you very much. But for those who did not, or who did not vote at all, I want you to know that I will be your representative as well.

“I will work every day to repay the trust that the people of Stoke-on-Trent have placed in me.

“I will be a strong, local voice that our city needs and I will always put the people of Stoke-on-Trent first. I have a plan for the Potteries, and that plan begins today.”