

Andy McDonald response to the publication of the Gibb report into Southern Rail

Andy McDonald MP,
Labour's Shadow Transport Secretary, responding to the publication of the Gibb report into Southern Rail, said:

"Ultimately, the buck stops with the Government. Tory ministers, who designed and awarded the franchise, are responsible for the shambolic delivery of enhancement works and have directed this unnecessary industrial dispute.

"The Gibb report paints a picture of a chaotic relationship between Network Rail, the Department for Transport and Govia Thameslink Railway – none of which have sufficient oversight or responsibility.

"The report contains some sensible proposals for how to improve services, but without ending the industrial dispute and bringing the franchise to an end, passengers will continue to suffer.

"It is within Chris Grayling's power to end the industrial dispute tomorrow by calling off his plans to expand Driver Only Operation, which poses risks to passengers and severely restricts accessibility for those with disabilities. Similar disputes elsewhere on the network have been resolved and there's no good reason for this to drag on any longer.

"A Labour Government would stand up for the interest of passengers rather than train companies, taking Southern back into public ownership and creating a new body to have strategic oversight for the railway, thereby avoiding the chaos and fragmentation that has plagued Southern passengers for too long."

Today's High Court decision is a further demonstration of the failure

of this government's austerity agenda – Jeremy Corbyn and Debbie Abrahams

Jeremy Corbyn MP,

Leader of the Labour Party, commenting on today's High Court judgement that the Benefit

Cap unlawfully discriminates against single parents with children aged two or under, said:

"Today's High Court decision is a further demonstration of the failure of this government's austerity agenda. It is failing in its own terms, it's failing our communities, and it's failing the most vulnerable in our country – including the victims of domestic violence and those facing homelessness.

"Labour has stood against the benefit cap, its discrimination against parents with children and the government's cruel austerity programme.

"Our Shadow Foreign Secretary, Emily Thornberry MP, tabled an amendment to the Benefit Cap legislation to exclude families with children under two from the cap when it came before parliament.

"The Government should have listened to Labour then, but I am pleased the High Court has listened to these courageous campaigners now.

"The Prime Minister should accept the High Court's judgement and end this discrimination against parents and children."

Debbie Abrahams MP,

Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary, commenting on the judgement, said:

"I welcome the court's decision on the Benefit Cap today, and commend the brave campaigners who took this case against the Government on behalf of the 17,000 families affected.

"This is another damaging blow to the Government's failing austerity agenda. While many families have struggled to make ends meet, this Government has given hand-outs to some of the richest in our society.

"The social security system should be there for us all in our time of need.

"For too long this Government has pushed children into poverty, as punishment for their parent's

circumstances.

“I therefore welcome the High Court’s judgement that this policy is unlawful, which marks another blow in their failing austerity agenda.

“Labour will transform the social security system so that, like the NHS, it is there for us all in our time of need.”

Jeremy Corbyn response to the Prime Minister’s Grenfell Tower statement

Jeremy Corbyn MP, Leader of the Labour Party, responding to the Prime Minister’s statement to the House on Grenfell Tower, said:

Can I start by expressing my disappointment to the Prime Minister at the lack of advance sight of her statement.

I met with the survivors of Grenfell Tower and those inspiring volunteers co-ordinating the relief effort for families who had lost so much. I hope the whole House will join with me in commending the community spirit and public support which helped so many traumatised families.

Our love, our condolences and our solidarity goes out to those families again today and in the difficult days and weeks ahead.

They were, as the Prime Minister said yesterday, let down: both in the immediate aftermath and so cruelly beforehand. And the public inquiry must establish the extent and by whom.

At least 79 people are dead. It is both a tragedy and an outrage because every single one of those deaths could have been avoided.

The Grenfell Tower residents themselves had raised concerns about the lack of fire safety in their block.

The Grenfell Action Group had warned, and I quote, “It is a truly terrifying thought but the Grenfell Action Group firmly believes that only a catastrophic event will expose the ineptitude and incompetence of our landlord, the Kensington & Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation”.

The Prime Minister said “It is right that the CEO of Kensington &

Chelsea has now resigned". It may be, but why aren't the political leaders taking responsibility too?

From Hillsborough, to the child sex abuse scandal, to Grenfell Tower the pattern is consistent. Working class people's voices are ignored, their concerns dismissed, by those in power.

The Grenfell Tower residents and north Kensington community deserve answers and thousands of people living in tower blocks around the country need urgent reassurance.

Our brave firefighters must never have to deal with such a horrific incident again.

Those of us with over 30 years' experience in this House would have struggled under the pressure generated by an incident of this scale. So as I said yesterday, my Honourable Friend for Kensington deserves praise for the tireless and diligent way she has stood up for her constituents.

They need answers and the public inquiry must address:

The apparent failure of the fire alarms at Grenfell Tower, which meant many residents reported they were only alerted to the fire by the screams of their neighbours.

Whether the advice given to tenants to stay in their homes was correct and what advice should be given to the people living in the 4,000 other tower blocks around our country.

Why sprinklers were not installed and whether they now should be retrofitted into all tower blocks.

Whether the cladding used was illegal, as the Chancellor has suggested, and whether it should be banned entirely and what wider changes must be made to building regulations and to fire prevention regulations, including the frequency and enforcement of fire safety checks.

Whether tenant management organisations are responsive enough to their tenants and what greater powers tenants need.

Whether survivors and people evacuated from adjacent properties were rehoused promptly and adequately and whether they will all be rehoused within the borough with no increase in their rent.

The resources available to the Fire & Rescue Service, and whether response times and capacity are adequate in all areas of the country, since the number of wards in which response time targets are not being met has increased tenfold since 2011.

Lessons must be learned in the public inquiry and a disaster that never should have happened must never happen again.

The Government must delay no longer and now implement the recommendations of the 2013 inquiry report following the Lakanal House fire.

The public inquiry into Grenfell Tower must also establish whether lives could have been saved if those recommendations had have been implemented in full and if the recommendations of the All-Party Parliamentary Group had been heeded by government.

Fire safety measures cannot be left to a postcode lottery so I ask the government make available emergency funds as my Honourable Friend for Leeds West also asked yesterday, so that councils can carry out fire safety checks and install sprinklers, and the timetable for that made known to residents.

Will the Prime Minister also ensure that counselling and mental health services are available to all the residents of Grenfell Tower and those who witnessed it unfold on the Lancaster West Estate, including the emergency services who responded.

Mr Speaker, the public inquiry must report as soon as possible and changes that can and should have been made already must now be made without delay.

[These figures reveal the scale of the crisis the Tories have created for our schools – Angela Rayner](#)

Angela Rayner MP, Labour's Shadow Education

Secretary, commenting on the

release of the Schools Workforce statistics showing that more teachers are leaving the profession than joining, said:

“These figures reveal the scale of the crisis the Tories have created for our schools.

“The Government's responsibility is to ensure our schools have the resources they need to train enough teachers. The Tories have failed to do so.

“This is a damning verdict on seven years of failure from Conservative governments,

and

without urgent action on teacher recruitment and retention, a generation of children will pay the price for that failure.”

[The silence on prisons and probation in this Queen’s Speech is deafening – Richard Burgon](#)

Richard

Burgon MP, Labour’s Shadow Secretary of State for Justice, commenting on the Tories’

decision to drop plans for prison reform from the Queen’s Speech, said:

“The silence on prisons and probation in this Queen’s Speech is deafening.

“Clearly, the Tories have no intention of fixing the mess they’ve created.

“Labour is committed to the reform needed to ensure the public are protected and offenders have a chance to turn their lives around.”