

[Sharon Hodgson MP comment on the new Tobacco Control Plan](#)

Sharon

Hodgson MP, Labour's Shadow Minister for Public Health, commenting on the new Tobacco Control Plan, said:

"Labour have long campaigned for a new Tobacco Control Plan, including a commitment in our 2017 manifesto, while the Government have dithered and delayed for eighteen months. In the House of Commons this month, in response to my question about this, Ministers finally committed to publishing the plan this summer.

"Whilst the plan sets out a bold approach to creating a smoke-free society, with a shift from national action to local action, what it fails to do is recognise the deep cuts being inflicted upon local councils who are seeing their public health budgets slashed.

"This plan can only be effective if the right level of funding is found to implement it, otherwise it is doomed to fail. Ministers cannot go on any longer ignoring the implications of their short-sighted cuts to public health budgets, which are vital to improving our nation's and our NHS's health."

[Despite the headline fall in inflation, people throughout the country will be worse off yet again this month – Dowd](#)

Peter

Dowd MP, Labour's Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury, commenting on today's inflation figures, said:

"Despite the headline fall in inflation, people throughout the country will be worse off

yet again this month, as wages grow more slowly than prices. Real wages are still lower than they were when the Tories came to power in 2010.

“After seven years of Conservative failure on the economy, only a Labour government will tackle the scandal of falling living standards, beginning with a £10 per hour Real Living Wage and an end to the unfair public sector pay cap.”

[This Government has failed to address the root causes of knife crime – Diane Abbott](#)

Diane

Abbott MP, Labour’s Shadow Home Secretary, commenting on Government proposals to increase restrictions on the online sales of knives, said:

“Any and all sensible measures to prevent knife crime should be considered, but this measure is likely to be marginal at best.

“The truth is this Government has failed to address the root causes of knife crime. They have not mounted effective anti-knives campaigns in schools and colleges, the voluntary agreement signed with retailers just last year clearly has not worked, and they have repeatedly broken their promises on sentencing for knife possession

“Meanwhile, the police have lost over 20,000 officers since 2010 and cuts to local authority budgets have seen youth centres and services close across the country. All of this amounts to a record of failure by this Tory government.”

[The Conservative government’s handling](#)

of the HS2 project has not inspired confidence – Andy McDonald

Andy McDonald MP, Labour's Shadow

Secretary of State for Transport,

responding to the awarding of contracts to build the first phase of HS2, said:

"The last Labour government initiated High Speed 2 and we continue to support the project to increase network capacity and deliver economic benefits.

"Labour will press the Government to ensure that the route causes as little disruption as possible and those affected are appropriately compensated.

"The Conservative government's handling of the project has not inspired confidence, with independent experts already calculating cost over-runs of the initial section of almost twice the official figures. The Transport Secretary must reassure the public that there will be no repeat of the conflict of interest scandal between HS2 and CH2M. He must also clarify what steps he has taken to assure himself of the suitability of the decision to award contracts to Carillion, in light of the company's recent difficulties.

"HS2 must deliver value for money and retain public support, which means ensuring jobs and apprenticeships for the UK workforce and, crucially, securing the best deal for taxpayers by running services under public ownership, not for private profit."

Jeremy Corbyn asks Prime Minister to broaden Grenfell Inquiry team

Jeremy Corbyn has today written to Theresa May to request that the Grenfell Fire Inquiry team is broadened to improve confidence in the process and improve representation.

In the letter, Jeremy Corbyn writes: "The importance of residents and victims' families having full confidence in this inquiry cannot be underestimated."

He continues: "I urge you to consider broadening the inquiry team to a model more similar to that used in the McPherson Inquiry, including with representation from those from minority backgrounds, in order to support the judge leading this inquiry."

Labour has urged the Government to conduct a two-part inquiry in order to get answers to urgent questions about what happened at Grenfell, with the first part reporting back this summer to minimise further suffering of survivors.

Labour is asking for the second part of the inquiry to take a "wide-ranging" look at the issues thrown up by the disaster. As Jeremy Corbyn writes: "We would be disrespecting the memory of those who died in the Grenfell fire, and putting further lives at risk, if we fail to fully learn these lessons. It is therefore our view that an immediate inquiry into the proximate causes of Grenfell should be supplemented by a longer-term, more wide-ranging inquiry into the underlying causes of what went wrong at Grenfell and the extent to which they are replicated on a national scale."

The letter has been hand delivered today ahead of the closure of the consultation into the inquiry terms of reference.

Ends

The letter in full

Dear
Prime Minister,

I am writing to set out our response to your consultation on the Terms of Reference for the inquiry into the fire at Grenfell Tower.

I strongly welcomed your promise that 'no stone will be left unturned in this inquiry,' and what follows is our assessment of how to ensure that promise is fulfilled. As stated in earlier correspondence, we believe that the interests of both Grenfell Tower residents and the general public would be best served by a two stage inquiry, the first into the specific circumstances around the Grenfell Tower fire and the second into its national implications.

Stage one of the inquiry should focus on residents' urgent questions about what happened at Grenfell Tower itself, specifically to establish:

- What started the fire;

- Why it spread so rapidly and whether building regulations were contravened;

- Why residents' complaints about the condition of the building's fire safety features were repeatedly ignored;

- The priorities informing the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's funding and administrative decisions and what impact, if any, they had on the circumstances surrounding the fire;

- The soundness or otherwise of the advice given to residents during the fire;

- The support and advice given to those affected in relation to housing, mental health, benefits and immigration status after the incident and how effectively it was communicated and administered by the Council, the Tenant Management Organisation, task forces, Central Government and any other relevant organisations,

- Whether survivors have been treated reasonably and with due consideration since the tragedy;

- The nature of and reason for any constraints on the emergency service response to the fire;

- Whether existing building regulations are sufficiently clear, up-to-date and strong.

In addition, the early part of the public inquiry should examine what happened at Grenfell Tower in relation to the points of concern raised by the Coroners in rule 43 letters to the Government in 2013, namely: building regulations, the retrofitting of sprinklers, and advice and information to residents. Any early assessment of such aspects in light of the Grenfell Tower fire will enable necessary work to be started early rather than be delayed until after the final inquiry report.

There is widespread recognition that Grenfell Tower residents and victims' families

deserve rapid answers to these questions, and that any undue delay risks adding to the intolerable levels of suffering they have already experienced. We suggest that stage one of this inquiry seeks to answer these questions in a timely fashion, producing an initial report this summer. Enabling the inquiry to report back rapidly on this specific set of issues would be a major benefit from conducting it in two stages.

However, we are also concerned that the information already in the public domain points to a series of systemic failures that may extend from local to national government and beyond. We would be disrespecting the memory of those who died in the Grenfell Tower fire, and putting further lives at risk, if we fail to fully learn these lessons. It is therefore our view that an immediate inquiry into the proximate causes of the Grenfell Tower fire should be supplemented by a longer-term, more wide-ranging inquiry into the underlying causes of what went wrong and the extent to which they are replicated on a national scale.

Following the successful template of the Macpherson Inquiry, the rubric for this stage should be 'an inquiry into matters arising from the Grenfell Tower fire', that is broad enough to allow the inquiry to follow different avenues as and when they become relevant and appropriate. We anticipate that the issues covered would include, without being limited to, the following:

- The adequacy or otherwise of existing building regulations and their enforcement;
- Housing allocation policy;
- Levels of funding for local councils, housing associations and the fire service and its impact on the quality and quantity of services they are able to deliver;
- The use of outsourcing and subcontracting to deliver local government and housing responsibilities, including how widespread it is, why, and its impact on standards and accountability;
- The responsiveness of TMOs and councils to their tenants.

Finally, it is important to note that effective inquiries command confidence because of both what they examine and how they are conducted. With this in mind, I urge

you to consider broadening the inquiry team to a model more similar to that used in the McPherson Inquiry, including with representation from those from minority backgrounds, in order to support the judge leading this inquiry. In addition to the stated responsibilities to set out the Terms of Reference, the Inquiries Act 2005 outlines the responsibilities that government ministers have in making such appointments.

The importance of residents and victims' families having full confidence in this inquiry cannot be underestimated. As your own Justice Secretary recognised when he told Radio 4's 'Law in Action' programme on 27 June: 'after the experience with the Hillsborough families it's really important to make sure those who have been absolutely traumatically affected by this disaster have utter confidence that the inquiry will get to the truth.' Yet, as you will be aware, for a number of residents this confidence has so far been lacking. Choosing one of the options at your disposal to introduce a range of perspectives and experiences into the inquiry will help to both build trust and deliver justice.

As I set out in my letter dated 30 June, there is considerable concern among residents and others that the judge leading the inquiry has already been directed towards a narrowly defined Terms of Reference, which will not bring residents the answers they seek. I therefore urge you to give our suggestions in this letter the fullest consideration.

Given the importance of these issues, this letter will be made public.

Yours
sincerely,

Jeremy
Corbyn MP

Leader
of the Opposition