

The Government's botched business rate revaluation has created a huge and destabilising burden for many businesses – Long-Bailey

“Today many businesses across the country will see their business rates increase substantially. For some firms, it will seriously threaten their viability and continued existence. However, today it also transpires that the Government's inadequate measures to mitigate these effects are not even in place to help businesses. The support fund the Government promised is reportedly not even up and running and nor is the Government clear on how it will work.

“The Government's botched business rate revaluation has created a huge and destabilising burden for many businesses. Prior to the budget Labour announced its Five Point Plan for business rates, which promised to set up an Emergency Relief Fund, undo Tory restrictions on the appeals process, bring forward the shift from RPI to CPI indexation, and remove most categories of new plant and machinery from valuations, as well as a fundamental rethink of business rates in the longer term. Today the Government must rise to Labour's challenge by taking action to defuse the ticking time bomb of business rates and bringing forward additional transitional relief for small and medium sized firms.”

It appears the Justice Secretary is more concerned with grabbing headlines than sorting out the crisis in prisons her government created – Burgon

“It appears the Justice Secretary is more concerned with grabbing headlines than sorting out the crisis in prisons her government created.

“It's no wonder ministers refused to answer questions from Labour about exactly how many officers at each prison would benefit and by how much. They should do so

now.

“The Conservatives are playing politics with prison officers’ livelihoods. They deserve a decent wage and a fair deal. The Justice Secretary must apologise immediately.”

Today’s near-miss with a drone at Heathrow underlines why Government must step up measures – Richard Burden

Richard

Burden MP, Labour’s Shadow Aviation Minister, commenting on the recent near-miss between a passenger plane and a drone as it approached Heathrow Airport, said:

“Today’s incident underlines why Ministers must get a move on. There were 70 reported near-misses last year and the British Airline Pilots Association believe that the real number is likely to be even higher.

“Last year Labour urged the Government to take action this time last year but Ministers have been far too slow to act. By now they should be further towards making decisions on whether the UK should follow other countries by establishing a compulsory registration scheme and getting systematic geo-fencing in place to physically stop drones getting near airports and other places where they are a danger.

“Labour’s approach – highlighted by our amendment to the Government’s Vehicle Technology and Aviation Bill this month – is to get a strategy in place to both ensure safety, and protect innovation and the responsible use of drones, linking in with initiatives expected to come out of the European Aviation and Safety Agency shortly.”

John McDonnell responds to news of Google's tax bill only amounting to just £36.4 million

John

McDonnell MP Labour's Shadow Chancellor, responding to news of Google's tax bill

only amounting to just £36.4 million, said:

"This revelation only further proves that Philip Hammond and Theresa May are more interested in cutting Google's taxes, than making sure they are paying their fair share.

"It seems that the so called "successful" tax deal with Google that George Osborne boasted about last year has meant that they are still not paying their fair share under his successor Philip Hammond. We urgently need clarity on HMRC's relationship with Google and what reassurances have been provided to the company.

"It is a national disgrace that by paying just £36 million in tax Google could have an effective tax rate lower than many working families in our country. And it exposes the complacency at the heart of this Tory Government, which is allowing this to still continue despite last year's scandal.

"It's time that the Tories got a grip of big corporations not paying their way, instead of going ahead with £70 billion in tax giveaways to big business and the super-rich, while cutting in-work benefits for the low paid, and threatening to turn our country into a tax haven.

"The truth is that the Tories have no interest in standing up for working people, only Labour with our Tax Transparency and Enforcement Programme will bring in full, public, country-by-country reporting.

Government must be realistic about the

need for transitional arrangements for Brexit – Corbyn

Jeremy

Corbyn, Leader of the Labour Party, commenting on the European Council's draft negotiating guidelines, said:

"It's

welcome that Donald Tusk has softened the EU's opposition to talks on trade taking place before the terms of withdrawal are agreed.

"Both

sides must be realistic about the scale of the task ahead and the common need to avoid ending up without agreement. Securing a good deal for Britain's future

must be the Government's priority and we must be realistic about the need for transitional arrangements.

"The

European Council President has reiterated the need for a 'close partnership' in the future and it is essential to achieve that. But the Prime Minister's comments about trading off security cooperation and failing to guarantee the rights of EU citizens are not a good start.

"It's

unhelpful for either side to speculate over the scale of any payments. There are obligations on both sides, which must be fairly settled.

"Labour

is clear that we must fight for a deal which prioritises jobs, the economy and

workers' rights. And the Government must guarantee that dumping of regulations

covering environmental protections, social and employment rights will not happen. People didn't vote to live in a low wage tax haven which undercuts our

neighbours on standards and protections."

Ends