

Jeremy Corbyn speech at Labour's Make Homes Safe launch

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Jeremy Corbyn MP, Leader of the Labour Party, speaking at Labour's Make Homes Safe launch today, said:

We are here today less than 150 days after the country woke up to the devastating news of the fire at Grenfell Tower.

It was a fire that shocked the whole country.

A 24 storey tower block subsumed in flames. Whole families, adults and young children alike, trapped inside the tower with no chance of escape.

The scenes inside that tower would have been unimaginable hell.

Firefighters entered the burning building nonetheless at huge risk to themselves, saving many lives. But far too many, at least 80 people, were beyond rescue.

On the morning after the Grenfell Fire I visited the scene and I talked to those who lived in the tower and the surrounding area.

They were in shock and they were grieving. People simply did not believe that such a horrifying event could take place in 2017, in the UK's richest borough, in the 5th richest nation on earth.

But tragically it didn't happen by chance but because of shockingly avoidable political decisions, driven by a cruel and failed economic ideology.

The country was shocked and the local community was hurting but it was this shock and pain that prompted such an inspirational response from the local community in this part of West London.

It was a response
stirred by the shared grief of innocent adults and children having their
lives
taken from them in the fire.

Stirred by the pain of
seeing that burning building, knowing there were people trapped inside and
stirred by the anger of knowing that working class voices had been ignored
once
again; and that a tragedy of this shocking scale had been allowed to happen.

Although the local
council of Kensington and Chelsea has faced criticisms for its response to
the
fire, other local authorities, such as here in Hammersmith and Fulham,
deserve
to be acknowledged for their efforts to help those affected by the fire.

Whether it was running
fundraising events or directly offering the use of their own council services
and council officers free of charge, it was this council, along with others
including my own, that did what it could to help those in need.

Local organisations
and community groups have also played a huge part in the response. Queen's
Park
Rangers Football Club for instance managed to raise almost one million pounds
for legacy projects that will leave a lasting impact in the area around
Grenfell.

Combined with the
efforts of individuals, charities and local small businesses, this response
was
a heartening example of the unbreakable strength of communities and sense of
solidarity in this hugely diverse and multi-faith area of London.

On the morning that I
visited Grenfell I also had the chance to talk to some of the firefighters
who
battled that deadly inferno for hours.

Utterly exhausted,
these were the women and men who saved large numbers of people – adults
and children.

I asked them why they
did it? Why did they put themselves in such danger, saving the lives of
people
who they've never even met.

They answered without
any hesitation: "We do it because it's our job".

Because on that night,
firefighters of the London Fire Brigade did do their job.

Firefighters across
the country have faced the harsh reality of politically driven austerity.

Along with the other
emergency services across the UK they have been forced to deal with repeated
budget cuts since 2010.

In the last seven
years 10,000 frontline firefighter jobs have gone; equivalent to one in six
positions.

This is a staggering
figure and is compounded by the loss of fire stations, equipment and the loss
of almost a third of fire safety inspectors in the same period, with some
areas
such as West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue, which covers the city of Leeds,
having
lost as many as 70 per cent of its inspectors.

Indeed, because of the
continual loss of firefighters' jobs, if the fire at Grenfell had occurred
outside of London there would not have been enough firefighters in the
vicinity
to tackle a blaze of that size.

That is why Labour is
committed to recruiting 3,000 new firefighter jobs with a full review of
staffing levels.

This is essential if
we are to improve response times and ensure the fire and rescue service has
the
resources it needs to do the job – which they do with such professionalism
– of keeping us safe.

As firefighters
themselves say: if we are serious about reducing deaths and injuries from
fire,
we need a co-ordinated approach across government. We need a well-funded
fully
staffed fire and rescue service but what is also needed is a strong focus on
fire
prevention.

We must make sure that
nothing like the fire at Grenfell Tower can ever happen again.

But to make sure it
doesn't we need action and we need action now.

Of course we are all waiting for the result of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry but there is some action that we believe the government could, and should take immediately.

The retrofitting of sprinklers in all high rise social housing is something that could make a vital difference to people's safety.

The evidence is clear: where sprinkler systems have already been fitted, injuries sustained from fires have been cut by approximately 80 per cent and deaths from fires have almost been eliminated entirely.

But don't just take my word for it.

Take the word of the Chief Fire Officers Association. They support retrofitting because they recognise that sprinklers are both the most effective and the most efficient method to quell fires which occur in high rise buildings.

Take the word of the London Fire Brigade; the very people who risked their lives at Grenfell Tower and risk their lives every single day to put out other fires across this city, who have repeatedly called for retrofitting of sprinklers.

And take the word of the Coroner in its 2013 report after the fire at Lakanal House who recommended the retrofitting of sprinklers in all high rise residential buildings.

Two Conservative governments in succession have failed to act on that Coroner's report.

We said after that dreadful fire at Lakanal House in 2009 we would never allow anything similar to happen again, and yet here we are, eight years later, after an even worse avoidable fire.

The evidence is overwhelming. When almost every authoritative source on the matter is saying the same thing: that retrofitting of sprinklers is necessary in high rise housing.

This measure is just common sense and will protect thousands of lives.

It is our duty to listen to this clear and unambiguous advice.

Retrofitting of sprinklers is something that many Local Authorities know is necessary to ensure the safety of residents in high rise social housing. But with their budgets slashed by an average of 40 per cent since 2010 it is something that very few of them can afford.

A small number of Local Authorities such as the London Borough of Croydon have managed to find the funds to retrofit sprinklers. But of course on councils' shoe string budgets, doing this can mean cuts to other vital services.

That is why people across the country are now looking at central government to act.

The government tells us time and time again that there are difficult choices to be made. "We are all in this together" they used to say.

And yet while people are living in potential death-trap homes without essential safety protections such as sprinklers, it is an obscenity that we have super rich elites and major corporations who are allowed to avoid paying their taxes. There can be little disagreement. The government must get its act together, take on the tax avoiders and put the billions of pounds that is being taken from the pockets of the British people back into the public services and safe homes we all so desperately need.

Social housing in this country has been badly and dangerously neglected for far too long.

Deregulation imposed by successive governments has caused a shocking collapse in standards.

While luxury accommodation proliferates across our big cities far out of reach of the vast majority of the population, the poorest in our country are forced to live not just in dilapidated run-down housing, but also in dangerous housing.

Time and time again this government has shown itself to be callous and indifferent to working class concerns.

But now we are asking this government to do something positive for those who live in social housing.

With the budget approaching imminently the government has a genuine opportunity to make a

real

difference to people's lives by making available the government funds that local councils are crying out for to improve the safety of high rise residents.

It is the primary

responsibility of any government to ensure the safety of its citizens and we believe it is therefore the responsibility of the Prime Minister and the Chancellor to make this money available to local authorities and devolved administrations across the whole of the UK.

We must be serious

about people's safety and governments cannot protect people on the cheap.

We see ourselves as a

civilised society. We know that as a nation we should provide universal healthcare for the sick, decent pensions for the elderly, good quality education for every child to get on in life, but we also need to ensure that everybody has a home that is not just secure but also safe.

Funding retrofitting

of sprinklers is an immediate step that Theresa May can take in the Autumn Budget.

It will ensure that

high rise residents can sleep more safely in their beds.

That is why today,

Labour is launching our campaign to Make Homes Safe.

The campaign's aim is

for sprinklers to be fitted in all social housing throughout the country which is 30 metres or above – around ten or more storeys.

We are asking for the

public's support to make sure the government listens to the concerns that we share with tower block residents, the Fire and Rescue Service and other professionals.

Retrofitting of

sprinkler systems is a basic demand but it is one that will save lives if the government decides to make it happen.

Grenfell was an

avoidable tragedy. It did not have to happen and it would not have happened if adequate precautions, including sprinklers, were in place.

So please, sign our

letter and help us make sure that residents of high rise social housing can sleep safely in their beds, safe in the knowledge that they are being listened

to.

Thank you

ENDS

[Sue Hayman speech to the Northern Farming Conference](#)

Sue Hayman MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, speaking to the Northern Farming Conference, said:

Thank you for inviting me to speak to you today.

I've been Shadow Secretary for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs since February this year, since when I've been building relationships with farming and food organisations across the country.

For those of you who don't know me I'm the MP for Workington, a very large rural constituency with a lot of hill and livestock farming and many small food producers.

My number two in our team – the Shadow Minister for Farming – is David Drew, the very experienced MP for Stroud in Gloucestershire, also a large rural constituency but with different issues to my own.

So I believe that Labour has a strong team with a good working knowledge of rural issues and I know some of you believe that has not always been the case.

So I've become Shadow Secretary of State at this most critical time for our country's farming and food industries.

We really are at a crossroad, with so much hanging in the balance during the EU negotiations.

Everyone here will know that one of the most important industries that must be protected in these negotiations is our farming

industry. In a survey commissioned by the NFU, 85% of people said they believe that it is important that Britain has a productive and resilient farming industry.

That figure shows how important farming is to Britain. It is a key component of the economy, providing 475,000 jobs and driving growth in rural communities up and down the country. Not only is the industry a major part of our economy, it also provides 61% of Britain's food and farmers act as custodians for our environment, managing more than 70% of the UK landscape.

The Brexit negotiating team must step up to the plate and get the best deal for Britain. We have to have a plan that protects the rights of private citizens and also enables businesses to flourish and our industries to remain successful across the continent.

And food and farming must be a part of our trade talks from day one.

Brexit brings an opportunity to fundamentally review the objectives and design of the UK's long-term agricultural policy, shaping the future of British farming and food production for generations to come. And it has led to new, fresh thinking about the future of food and farming.

But as well as opportunity Brexit brings challenges and risks.

It is impossible to emphasise just how much is at stake for farming during and after the Brexit negotiations.

Agriculture has been more exposed to EU law-making over the past four decades than any other sector of the economy. 80% of all UK food legislation has been negotiated at EU level and many British farmers are heavily dependent on EU farm subsidies for survival.

- 40% of the entire EU's budget is related to agriculture and rural development

- About 80% of our agricultural exports currently go to the European Union

- 94% of farming imports and 97% of exports are with countries with which the EU has negotiated a free trade agreement

So we need to negotiate trade agreements that work for British farming, while recognising and protecting the high standards of food safety and animal welfare that consumers expect – frictionless, tariff-free trade and new markets that exploit this proud record of production standards.

Future trade deals should not undercut British farming in a race-to-the-bottom Brexit on food standards and animal welfare. We must not allow the UK to become swamped by imports of food produced to lower environmental, social and animal welfare standards than those of UK producers.

Food and farming should be a clear strategic priority for the Government, one of the cornerstones of a broad industrial strategy. There remains a clear need for a food and farming plan to grow more, buy more and sell more British food.

We have an opportunity to export even more, putting farming at the heart of our future as a great trading nation.

But the government's vision for the UK as a leading free-trade nation with low tariff barriers to the outside world does not sit easily with its declared commitment to high quality and welfare standards in British farming. Combining and delivering these two objectives will be a considerable challenge.

But what is at stake here if the UK gets this wrong is far more than the interests of one industry. It's our nation's food security, nutrition, environment and public health.

I was so pleased to lead Labour's celebration of Back British Farming Day earlier this year – celebrating and recognising the value and contribution of farming to the UK.

British farming provides jobs, driving rural growth both in food production and in diversified industries such as renewable energy and tourism.

And this really cannot be emphasised enough – that farming provides the bedrock for the UK's largest and most thriving manufacturing industry – the £108bn food and drink manufacturing sector.

I would like to assure you all

here today that my team and I are working hard to emphasise the importance of British food and farming and drive it up the Brexit agenda, to provide the prominence, attention and thinking time that it deserves.

Farming is an integral part of Labour's vision of a fairer society, one that tackles the increasing social ills of food poverty, poor diets, environmental degradation and inequality.

The creation of our new British agricultural policy must be ambitious. It should aim to establish a new deal with society – a consensus on what the modern-day farming industry can deliver for the economy, for rural communities, for consumers and for the environment.

Just as the Government must ensure the nation has a secure energy supply, it must ensure there is a safe, affordable supply of food in the long term. Change cannot be left to market forces alone, as farming is critical to our nation's food security and stewardship of the natural environment. It requires Government leadership and support.

And I believe that government needs to do more to help and encourage consumers to buy British food. The UK produces some of the best food in the world, with the highest standards of safety and animal welfare and we should celebrate that but currently only 61% of the food eaten in Britain is produced here.

But if we are going to encourage consumers to buy British better food labelling is vitally important. For our farmers to be able to compete fairly within any new trade deals product labelling must be clear and unambiguous so that people know exactly what they are buying – including the country of origin and method of production. And we can build trust by continuing to promote accreditation schemes such as Red Tractor, which will become increasingly important.

We should also do more to promote the wide range of regional and speciality food producers – both at home and abroad. In my home county of Cumbria we run the very successful 'Taste of Cumbria' food festivals and value is added to, for example, Lakeland Herdwick lamb by demonstrating its quality and authenticity in the labelling. We should look to develop this once we are out of the EU in order to promote our excellent products right across the globe.

Labour is committed to increasing the powers and remit of the Groceries Code Adjudicator, to reinstating a form of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers

Scheme

and to consider how future farming payments could be reconfigured around environmental and public good.

As a member of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Rural Business I met with other members to press the Minister that the review of the

GCA should increase her powers and remit.

We held sessions in parliament where farmers and producers could give evidence anonymously so as to not prejudice their businesses in any way.

The shared message that came from witnesses was that an extended GCA is necessary to:

- Support transparent trading relationships along the supply chain that give farmers predictability of income and the ability to make informed decisions about their businesses
- Prevent farmers bearing disproportionate risk, which can send a competent business bankrupt
- Support sustainable supply chains that produce high quality for the consumer

So the GCA needs to have the power to ensure that farmers are paid a fair price and tackle unfair trading, while at the same time ensuring that food is affordable. In many areas we seem to have lost the relationship between the price paid to the farmer and the price set by the retailer and this

situation is not helped by the volatility of the market in, for example, the dairy industry. I'm sure that consumers would not expect fresh produce to be sold at below the cost of production.

The issue of farm labour is critical and immediate. UK farmers and food processors and producers need to have access to the labour market in Europe. And labour that is properly qualified to do the job.

Findings from a recent NFU labour survey showed the number of seasonal workers coming to work on UK farms has dropped 17%, with more than 1,500 unfilled vacancies in one month alone.

Without access to this labour resource, both the agricultural sector and food manufacturers will face severe difficulties.

A lack of labour will lead to a number of consequences for UK agriculture, including produce left to waste, the movement of investment and operations out of the UK, and the likelihood of price inflation for consumers.

And we also need to invest in skills, training and the exchange of knowledge.

The CLA has argued for a focus on building a high-tech, efficient and resilient industry with opportunities for all, developing a future pipeline of talent. Young people are leaving the countryside; with the average age of a British farmer now at 59.

We need to examine freeing up the market to develop new lower-cost ways for a people from a wider range of ages and backgrounds to enter food growing and farming.

This is essential if we are to enable a new generation to enter farming affordably and create the pipeline of talent needed for a sustainable future for the sector.

I was delighted to attend the awards ceremony for agriculture and land management earlier this year at Newton Rigg College near Penrith and was really impressed with the students' achievements.

We need to look at what skills and training the different sectors need for the future and how we encourage on-going development amongst those already working in the industry and selling agriculture as an exciting and fulfilling career to the younger generation.

I'll now look at some of the challenges we face when considering what could replace the Common Agricultural Policy.

We know that in many cases the profitability of farms is too dependent on direct payments from the CAP. But, because of the huge diversity in farming and the volatility in many areas, we will need to consider how to support farms in becoming more resilient while at the same time mitigating against this volatility.

We are still developing our thinking and policy on what should replace the CAP, but we believe that a future payments system must broadly seek to do the following:

- We need to look at how we target support to farmers who provide the most amount of

public good but may struggle to compete in the market through no fault of their own – e.g. a Lakeland hill farmer

- Add

transparency – any future system must be transparent as well as relevant, easily accessible and cost-effective.

- Reward

environmentally sustainable practice and environmental stewardship – for example management of habitat, of natural resources, of the cultural and historical landscape for the benefit of all of us. We can promote tourism as part of this.

- Support

flood mitigation through land management – extreme rainfall has become significantly more serious over the last 20 years and we need to look at developing programmes which support farmers in slowing the flow of water through catchments, and for storing water in times of flood.

- Encourage

technological innovation. This is an area I've been discussing with the NFU looking at how investment could meet the broad aims of improving resource efficiency, improve animal health and welfare, manage disease and add value. It could also be used to encourage investment in machinery and software but at the same time there has to be a commitment to fully connect every business to a fast broadband network.

- Support

rural communities – farming is central to the economy and sustainability of our rural communities and the contribution that farming makes should be recognised.

We are still working on this in close collaboration with farmers, environmental stakeholders and local communities to develop our ideas so that any new system that we propose will enable profitable and sustainable farming businesses that support a dynamic rural economy.

I was interested to read the CLA's report that was launched earlier this week on how to improve the profitability of farming and forestry. It brings the kind of vision, determination and positive thinking that we need to see right across the sector.

The report is absolutely right in saying that productivity gains should not be at the expense of the environment. Farming practices that produce more in the short term but over time destroys its own assets – the land and soil – is not economic progress and leaves the industry less resilient to cope with challenges such as climate change and extreme weather.

Over the coming months the Labour shadow Defra team will be working closely with stakeholders in farming and agriculture to make sure we get our response to the government's Agriculture Bill right.

Farmers have been telling me that they need more certainty about the future and we will be doing all we can to help secure as much certainty and direction for the sector as possible to allow your forward planning.

And I hope that we can strengthen our relationship so that over the coming months we can work together.

With your expertise, your experience and your energy an ambitious and progressive vision for farming and food can be developed and taken to government.

Thank you.

[Simon Stevens has rightly set out the stark implications of failing to give the NHS the funding it needs – Jonathan Ashworth](#)

Jonathan Ashworth, Labour's Shadow Health Secretary, responding to NHS England Chief Executive Simon Stevens' speech to the NHS Providers Conference, said:

"Simon Stevens has rightly set out in the clearest terms the stark implications of failing to give the NHS the funding it needs on the eve of its 70th anniversary.

“Unless the Chancellor comes forward with an urgent and sustainable funding package, waiting lists will climb further to 5 million, and the 18 week target will potentially be permanently abandoned. Hospitals will fail to meet ambitions on staff retention and recruitment, while mental health services and cancer services will deteriorate.

“Theresa May simply cannot carry on ignoring the dismal consequences for patient care of refusing to properly fund the NHS.

“Theresa May and Philip Hammond must now take these heavyweight warnings seriously and in the upcoming Budget finally provide the investment our NHS now desperately needs.”

[The Prime Minister has at least four serious grounds to launch an investigation into breaches of the Ministerial Code by Priti Patel – Jon Trickett](#)

Jon

Trickett MP, Labour’s Shadow Minister for the Cabinet Office, commenting on further reports about Priti Patel’s secret meetings with members of a foreign Government, said:

“Tonight

Downing Street has confirmed that even after she was caught, Priti Patel was far from frank in her meeting with the Prime Minister yesterday about her secret meetings and discussions with members of a foreign Government.

“Incredibly,

Number 10 have confirmed that the first they knew that Priti Patel had discussed giving aid to a foreign army was when it was reported today by the BBC.

“The

Prime Minister has at least four serious grounds to launch an investigation into breaches of the Ministerial Code by Priti Patel.

“She should act now to launch an investigation of these serious breaches of the ministerial code or explain why even given this she believes that Priti Patel can stay in post.”

Jeremy Corbyn speech at the CBI Annual Conference

***CHECK
AGAINST DELIVERY***

Jeremy Corbyn MP, Leader of the Labour Party, speaking at the CBI Annual Conference today, said:

It's a pleasure to be with you here for the second year running.

And a good deal has changed since I came to your conference last year.

We've had a surprise General Election and to many people here, perhaps an even more surprising result. A result that returned a weak and divided Conservative Government and a Labour opposition stronger and more united than before.

We have also seen the terms of economic debate shift dramatically.

I put it to you last year that for too many people the economic system simply isn't working.

A system that has delivered rising inequality and falling living standards for the majority, when six million of those in work are earning less than the living wage.

It's a system in which large numbers of people have lost confidence.

And it's not hard to see why. The richest 10 per cent now own 900 times the wealth of the poorest 10 per cent and in recent years half of the increase in personal

wealth has gone to the top 10 per cent.

I put it to you this year that a crucial reason for the surprising election result; the biggest turnaround in polls during an election campaign in British history, is that Labour went to the country with a vision that offered hope and change.

Our manifesto, For the Many Not the Few, set out a fully costed programme to build an economy which gives everyone the chance of a secure and fulfilling life.

Since the General Election in June the political establishment has finally begun to catch up.

Calls to end austerity now come from all sides in parliament.

Senior cabinet members are taking their lead from Labour and pushing for more radical solutions to the housing and student debt crises.

Sajid Javid advocates £50 billion of borrowing for investment in housing.

Jeremy Hunt has broken ranks and called for an end to the public sector pay cap.

Few would have predicted this a year ago. And of course we've yet to see if they've convinced the Chancellor.

It is a measure of the essential pragmatism of business people that so many have changed their outlook too.

Business people across the country have expressed to me a growing awareness – and acceptance – that things need to change.

The London Chamber of Commerce recently called for councils to be allowed to borrow freely to build housing.

We all know an economic model that allows a few to grow very rich while the majority face falling incomes and rising indebtedness; that leaves too many people in unfulfilling and insecure work; that is overly reliant on one sector in one region of our country, is neither stable nor sustainable.

And in this Living Wage Week, of all weeks, we have to be clear that Britain needs a pay rise.

When too much of household income is going to pay debts or rent, that's less money for consumers to spend on productive businesses. That's why Labour backs a Real Living Wage and sensible controls on rents and debts.

Because it isn't good for business either.

We understand that Labour has changed and you have changed.

But there is one thing that hasn't changed.

A year ago, we were just five months on from the referendum vote to leave the European Union. The Government's sluggish response to which had already created unprecedented uncertainty for business.

A year on, Article 50 has been triggered, Brexit negotiations are underway but businesses feel no closer to having the clarity about the direction of travel they desperately need.

Indeed, watching chaos and confusion grow at the heart of Government and Brexit negotiations stuck in stalemate, many of you probably feel that the situation is more uncertain and precarious than ever.

Time is running out. We know, as you do, that firms are deciding now whether to continue to invest in the UK, and that guarantees in key areas are needed now to stop firms from cutting the UK out of their business models.

A few weeks ago, you joined forces with Britain's other major business organisations, the Engineering Employers Federation, the Chamber of Commerce, the Institute of Directors and the Federation of Small Business, to ask the Government to heed the needs of business as they negotiate our exit from the European Union.

We agree. We need a Brexit that puts jobs and living standards first and it is Labour that has common ground with you on putting the needs of the economy front and centre stage.

We have common ground on the need for transitional arrangements to be agreed immediately so that businesses know they won't face a cliff-edge Brexit when

the two year negotiating period is up.

Because

let me be clear: to delay a transition deal until a final deal is agreed as the Prime Minister says she wants to do, is simply not good enough.

The

prospect of sudden changes in the legal and regulatory environment in which people do business is affecting your decisions right now.

And

we have common ground on the threat of “no deal” which, contrary to the claims of the Secretary of State for International Trade, is potentially a nightmare scenario. One that involves tariffs on our food imports and our manufacturing exports, queues at our ports and a hard border in Northern Ireland with all the dangers that could bring.

The

fact that some in the cabinet want “no deal” to re-launch Britain as a race-to-the-bottom deregulated tax haven on the shores of Europe only adds to the risks.

And

we agree on the need to signal that the UK remains open to the rest of the world that Europe is not the “enemy” but our partner in a strong cooperative relationship for the future.

And

that EU citizens living in the UK are our friends and fellow workers, which is why the Government should immediately and unilaterally guarantee them full rights to remain here; in fact they should have done so months ago. And indeed Labour called for that in July of last year.

Like

you, we have always said that we respect the result of the referendum. Like you, we have always said that the economy, jobs and living standards should come first in the negotiations, which means it is crucial that the final deal maintains the benefits of the common market and the customs union.

I

promise you today between now and March 2019, we will use every opportunity we can find to put pressure on the Government to do the same.

But,

as Carolyn has so rightly pointed out, we mustn't use up all our energies on the Brexit negotiations – there is vital action to be taken at home too.

What

will be determined in the next two years is not just our relationship with the EU, but the kind of economy – and country – we want to live in.

A

bad Brexit deal risks exacerbating existing weaknesses in our economy – low investment, low productivity, low pay.

We

will be letting the country down if we don't seize on this period of change to tackle those weaknesses at their root causes by working together to give shape to a new economic model that will create a fairer, richer Britain for all.

I

believe we share a great deal of common ground over how this should be done.

Again,

I echo Carolyn; if we are to raise wages and living standards we must solve our productivity crisis.

And

it is a crisis.

It

continues to take a worker in Britain five days to produce what a worker in France or Germany produces in four.

If

the OBR decides that our recent dismal productivity performance is not an aberration but the new normal, and revises down their projections when they report to Parliament later this month it will take a huge toll on our public finances – as the Institute for Fiscal Studies has pointed out.

It

couldn't be clearer: our productivity crisis is making our country poorer.

The

answer to our productivity crisis lies in investment, in infrastructure, in new technologies and in people.

Business

investment is being held back by creaking infrastructure and a shortage of skilled workers. So Government must act first.

Yet under the Conservatives, crucial infrastructure investment has been delayed –

from rail electrification to the Swansea Tidal Lagoon; the adult skills

budget

has been slashed. They even went into the election promising to cut per pupil schools funding in real terms.

The

Chancellor should use his Autumn Budget to change direction, and invest for long-term growth.

That

is what Labour has already pledged to do.

With

a National Transformation Fund to upgrade our country's infrastructure and reverse years of under-investment in the regions; investing in transport, energy and digital infrastructure right across the country.

We

will establish a National Investment Bank with a network of regional development banks that will provide patient finance for firms wanting to adopt and implement existing innovations and to develop new ones. We are a very creative country.

And

we'll build a National Education Service to ensure that, when businesses create skilled jobs, there are people able to fill them. And when businesses adopt new technologies, there are employees who know how to use them.

These

policies will help create the conditions businesses need to invest... but they will only deliver the improvements our economy needs if they are backed up by a bold industrial strategy.

Again,

this Government is failing to act. We have heard a lot of warm words on industrial strategy, but we are still waiting to hear how they will take it forward.

Labour's

industrial strategy, built on national missions – for energy transition and to increase R&D spending to 3 per cent of GDP by 2030 – will lay down the challenges to business, and provide the foundations on which they can be met.

We

will invest £1.3bn on R&D in our first two years in Government, to galvanise private investment, set up two new catapult centres for retail and metals, centres of collaboration and innovation, to drive productivity improvement

and harness the £200bn spent by the public sector each year to boost local economies and supply chains, to bring prosperity to every region of the country.

This

is how we deliver properly funded public services in the long run, and ensure everyone earns enough to live on.

If

we get this right, it is not just our economy that will be stronger, but our political institutions and our social bonds as well.

We

will, as you know, raise some taxes to pay for it, to ensure that our spending plans fit within the constraints of our fiscal credibility rule.

But

when we do, we will be clear and open about our tax plans, as we were during the general election campaign. We won't do it by stealth.

And

we will seek to improve the functioning of business taxation wherever possible

by uprating business rates in line with CPI instead of RPI, moving to annual revaluations, and exempting new plant and machinery and by looking at staggering tax incentives for investment and innovation.

We

will do this because a fair and functional taxation system is the only way to deliver the investment in infrastructure and skills that are so desperately needed across the country.

I'm

sure everyone here will agree, providing good infrastructure and education is what responsible governments do.

And

it's not just government that has a duty to be responsible, business does too. From ensuring their

suppliers, often small businesses, are paid promptly, to ensuring they pay their taxes in full too.

The

shocking revelations from the Paradise Papers today, yet again of widespread tax avoidance and evasion on an industrial scale must lead to decisive action and real change.

It

is by no means all big businesses but these actions by a few undermine trust in all businesses.

And
businesses are the victim too, not just reputationally but financially.

Those
businesses that play by the rules and pay the taxes they owe are being
undercut
by those who don't.

The
vital revenues government needs to fund an industrial strategy, good
infrastructure
and the world class education system we aspire to; these things can only be
delivered by fair taxation.

So
while we mustn't tarnish all businesses by the actions of the few, we also
have
a duty to come down hard on those who are avoiding the responsibilities and
give HM Revenue & Customs the resources it needs.

As
our Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell has set out this morning, we need a full
public inquiry into tax avoidance and evasion, on and offshore, a
register of companies and trusts, and who benefits from them, and a new
tax enforcement unit in HMRC and an end to public contracts for companies
abusing the system.

And
we will look at using a withholding tax where individuals or companies are
involved in abusing the system and end public contracts for companies engaged
in abusive tax avoidance.

Please understand the public anger and consternation at
the scale of tax avoidance revealed yet again today. We are talking about
tens
of billions that are effectively being leached from our vital public services
by a super-rich elite that holds the taxation system and the rest of us in
contempt. We must take action now to put an end to this socially damaging and
extortionately costly scandal.

And
there's another area where we all have a duty to act – and act now.

Faced
with the ongoing revelations about sexual harassment we should make this a
turning point and a moment of real change. We must no longer allow anyone to
be
abused in the workplace.

Such
abuse, sexism and misogyny is, sadly, very far from being confined to
Hollywood

and the corridors of power, but is also widespread in our schools and universities, in our businesses and workplaces, in our newspapers and on our TV screens. It is all around us.

That must change and business has an essential role to play. All of you need to look hard at yourselves, as we in the Labour Party are doing ourselves, to see how your processes and procedures can be improved. How it can be made easier for women to speak out and for victims to get the support they have a right to expect.

Businesses can have a vital partner in rooting out injustice in the workplace – trade unions. They are crucial to taking on and rooting out sexual harassment and discrimination. And I would encourage each and every business serious about improving your workplace culture and tackling sexual discrimination at work to engage with trade unions.

Governments also have other responsibilities – enforcing a fair and transparent regulatory framework so that, for example, businesses aren't destroyed by the likes of RBS abusing their power, providing for the health of our citizens and, yes, in some cases, running essential public utilities.

Because every one of you in this room who knows what goes into seeing an idea brought to market or what it takes to survive the cut and thrust of consumer choice month to month, knows that privatised monopoly utilities are not real markets. Where's the pressure for efficiency and innovation if consumers cannot go elsewhere when they are dissatisfied?

I know some of you disagree and think that bringing some parts of the economy into public ownership won't be good for the reputation of business, but it's not good for the image of business when water companies pay out billions in dividend and interest payments through opaque financial arrangements, while households see their bills go up to pay for it.

It's not good for business people if their employees have to spend huge amounts of time and money getting to and from work each day on expensive and unreliable services.

It is not good for manufacturers to have among the most expensive energy in

Europe, or see energy transition held back because the necessary investments to transform our energy grid are not being made.

And, just as it wouldn't be good for business to be locked into inefficient funding arrangements that don't provide finance on the best terms available, or inflexible contracts that don't adapt to your needs, nor is it good for the public.

That's why we will end the Private Finance Initiative – because PFI contracts have over-charged the public to the tune of billions.

You wouldn't put up with it and neither will we.

But we won't let ending PFI hold up vital infrastructure investment. We'll end it to make sure that investment happens in a way that gives best value for money for the public, and in a way that better meets user needs.

This isn't about being anti-business, anti-enterprise, or about closing ourselves off to the rest of the world.

It is about deciding to attract business from across the world by creating world-class infrastructure that is efficiently funded, cheap and reliable energy, safe and efficient water and transport systems and a skilled and educated population.

Not by allowing a select few to make monopoly profits from our essential utilities.

This isn't a throwback to a bygone era; it's entirely in step with what is happening in the rest of the world. Some of the world's biggest economies – Germany, France, even the United States are deciding that key sectors such as energy and water are better off in public ownership. It's time for Britain to catch up.

Building an economy for the many will mean making some big changes.

But it will also mean an economy that is stronger, fairer and more stable and business people know more than anyone how important that is.

Common

ground on Brexit, common ground on investment, training and industrial strategy
and a government that embraces its responsibilities and carries them out for the common good.

That's
what Labour offers you. That's what Labour offers Britain.

Thank
you.

Ends