

John McDonnell responds to the IFS Green Budget

John

McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, responding to the publication of the IFS Green

Budget today, which reveals that the Tories are going ahead with £34bn in additional austerity at a time when the NHS is in crisis following the slowest

growth in health spending since the 1950s, said:

"This

report from the IFS is damning of the seven wasted years of Tory economic failure. Rather than learning the lessons of his predecessor, Philip Hammond is

pursuing an austerity agenda that will make matters in our NHS and social care

system even worse.

"The Chancellor who has been at the heart of government since 2010 must take his share of responsibility, especially as the IFS is now cutting growth forecasts with the national debt at its highest as a fraction of national income since England won the World Cup, and with the tax burden at its

highest in thirty years.

"The fact the NHS is seeing its slowest growth in funding since the 1950s proves you cannot trust the Tories with our health service. And the social care

crisis is only set to get even worse as the Tories refuse to provide the funding needed, continuing to let elderly people in our communities down.

"Rather

than going ahead with £34 billion of austerity while our public services are already stretched, which as the IFS say have under the Tories seen the longest

fall in funding on record, it is time for the Chancellor to truly change direction.

"Labour would call for a serious boost to investment, underpinned by our Fiscal Credibility Rule, which would help bring an end to a Tory economy rigged

against working people; sort out the public finances; and get the national debt

under control."

Central authorities handle over 90 pct suggestions, proposals

The central authorities handled 11,735 suggestions and proposals submitted by legislators and political advisors in 2016, over 90 percent of all of those submitted.

Xi Yanchun, spokeswoman with the State Council Information Office said at a press conference on Tuesday that State Council departments had responded to 7,873 suggestions raised by deputies to the National People's Congress and 3,862 proposals put forward by members of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference during the annual sessions of the two bodies held in March 2016.

This means that 91.5 percent of the national legislators' suggestions and 90.9 percent of political advisors' proposals put forward during the two sessions were handled by the central authorities, Xi said.

More than 3,000 suggestions and proposals had been adopted by State Council departments and over 1,300 policies and measures have been introduced accordingly, Xi said, adding that the process had improved the quality of government decision-making.

The Ministry of Education (MOE), which handled 1,023 legislators' suggestions and 805 political advisors' proposals, introduced 81 new policies in 2016, most of which were inspired by the suggestions and proposals, according to Shen Xiaoming, vice minister of the MOE, at the briefing.

Issues of top concern last year included student life, educational equality and development of higher education, Shen said.

Inspired by the suggestions and proposals, the National Health and Family Planning Commission issued a guideline on what it calls "Healthy China," with more than 20 other authorities, and launched an action plan to improve medical services, according to Cui Li, deputy director of the commission, at the briefing.

The measures announced so far in Theresa May's long-promised housing white paper are feeble beyond belief –

Healey

Commenting on further detail on the content of the government's white paper on housing, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Housing John Healey MP said:

"The measures announced so far in Theresa May's long-promised housing white paper are feeble beyond belief.

"After seven years of failure and a thousand housing announcements, the housing crisis is getting worse not better.

"There are 200,000 fewer home-owners, homelessness has doubled, and affordable house-building has slumped to a 24 year low

"Ministers should be setting out clear plans to deal with these problems, but all Theresa May's Ministers have delivered so far is hot air.

"The government should instead back Labour's plan to fix the housing crisis – thousands more affordable homes to rent and buy, a charter of renters' rights and action to end to rough sleeping homelessness."

ENDS

- The government's announcements on housing to date:
https://www.gov.uk/government/announcements?keywords=&announcement_filter_option=all&topics%5B%5D=housing&departments%5B%5D=all&world_locations%5B%5D=all&from_date=06%2F05%2F2010&to_date=

- The government's record:
 - The number of households who own their own home has fallen by 200,000, with the number of under-35 households owning a home down by 344,000.
 - There are over 900,000 more households renting from a private landlord than in 2010 including one in four families with dependent children, but rents have risen faster than incomes.
 - Despite 13 separate cuts to housing benefit, including the bedroom tax, the housing benefit bill is £4bn higher each year in cash terms.
 - There are 143,000 fewer council homes than in 2010, with only one home in every six sold under the right to buy replaced, despite promises of 'one for one' replacement. Measures in the recent housing and planning act are set to mean the loss of 23,503 council houses a year according to the housing charity Shelter.
 - According to the Government-commissioned Local Plan Expert Group it is now taking councils almost a year (306 days) longer to adopt vital local plans for housing than in 2009. Among the main reasons are: "a lack of political will and commitment", "a lack of clarity on key issues", "too many changes...

of policy”, and “a lack of guidance, support and resources”. We’ve had constant chop and change but no improvement, despite six piece of planning legislation in six years under the Tories.

[Beijing arrests 77 in crackdown against prostitution](#)

Beijing police announced Tuesday that 77 suspects had been arrested in connection to organized prostitution.

After a raid on Dec. 23, 2016 at three alleged brothels that were operating as entertainment venues, the police submitted an arrest request to the procuratorate so that those linked to organized prostitution could be detained for questioning.

The arrest warrant was approved on Jan. 26, 2017, and the investigation continues.

[The Sustainable Drainage System \(SuDS\) Strategy](#)

Wokingham Borough Council has adopted a new strategy to ensure new developments have appropriate sustainable drainage systems to manage the risk of flooding, improve water quality, and biodiversity. Please find below their press release:

Suds now part of major builds

Wokingham Borough Council has adopted a new strategy to ensure new developments have appropriate sustainable drainage systems to manage the risk of flooding, improve water quality, and biodiversity.

The Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) Strategy, approved by the borough council’s decision-making executive, is a blueprint based on national standards for developers and civic planning officers when designing developments ranging in size from minor schemes up to the scale of Strategic Development Locations.

SuDS mimic nature, dealing with rainfall where it falls; allowing it to evaporate or soak into the ground. Any remaining water is then drained to the nearest traditional watercourse or sewer at the same rate and volume that would have happened naturally before the new development was built.

"A healthy and safe water environment is fundamental," said Cllr Angus Ross, executive member for environment.

"There are areas in our borough with increased risk of flooding, and some of our watercourses have poor water quality. This strategy shows how SuDS address these. SuDS use cost effective solutions with low environmental impact. They're designed to be easy to manage, resilient, needing in some cases only sunlight to work, and are aesthetically attractive."

SuDS are increasingly being used to counter the problems of flooding caused urbanization where natural surfaces and vegetation are replaced by concrete, asphalt, or roofed structures. Where this happens heavy rainfall cannot easily be absorbed back into the environment without overloading more conventional drainage systems, creating flooding, contaminating drinking water sources, and harming wildlife and the environment.

Examples of SuDS include basins (shallow landscape depressions that are dry most of the time when it's not raining), rain-gardens (shallow landscape depressions with shrub or herbaceous plants), swales (shallow normally-dry, wide-based ditches), filter drains (gravel-filled trenches), bio retention basins (shallow depressions with gravel and/or sand layers), reed beds and other wetland habitats that collect, store, and filter dirty water along with providing a habitat for wildlife.

A consultation last summer into the borough's SuDS Strategy was carried out, and the majority of those taking part were very supportive of it. Now that the new SuDS strategy has been adopted by Wokingham Borough Council, planning applications for developments will need to meet the requirements of the local standards set out in it. Planning application approval, if granted, will then need to include clear instructions on how the SuDS for that development will be maintained.

Further information: More from Cllr Angus Ross, executive member for environment at email: angus.ross@wokingham.gov.uk