

It is clear that the Tories' rigged economy simply isn't delivering for the majority of people in Britain – Rebecca Long-Bailey

Rebecca Long-Bailey MP, Labour's Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury, responding to GDP figures published today, said:

"While we welcome today's Q4 GDP figures, growth for 2016 as a whole is lower than 2015, and lower than forecast by the OBR just two months ago in the Autumn Statement. It is clear that the Tories' rigged economy simply isn't delivering for the majority of people in Britain. Prices are rising but earnings are still below where they were before the financial crash. As a result, we have extremely high levels of household debt as people struggle to make ends meet on incomes alone.

"Manufacturing is bumping along without proper support from government to power it through Brexit, even the Bank of England acknowledged recently that our economy was being driven by consumer spending rather than trade and export.

This is clearly not a Government serious about making sure that we support British industry and claim a prestigious place at the world's table as we leave the European Union.

"Labour will fix our rigged economy with a real living wage, expected to be £10 an hour by 2020, and the long-term, patient investment we need to make sure that businesses thrive and that nobody and no community is left behind."

It is our hope that this significant fine will mark one of the final settlements in a dark period in the

history of the banking sector – Jonathan Reynolds

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Reynolds MP, Labour's Shadow City Minister, responding to the further fines for RBS from its involvement in mis-selling US subprime mortgages in the run up to the financial crisis, said:

"It is our hope that this significant fine will mark one of the final settlements in a dark period in the history of the banking sector.

"We need a long-term plan: not just for RBS, which continues to face its own challenges, but to ensure that the culture and practices of our banking sector are centred on the customers they serve.

"Protecting the value of the taxpayers' stake in RBS has to be the top priority for the Chancellor, while also rebuilding the reputation of British banking which plays such a crucial role in our economy."

Chinese leaders extend Spring Festival greetings

President Xi Jinping, on behalf of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and the State Council, extended Spring Festival greetings to all Chinese Thursday at a reception in Beijing.



The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council hold a reception for the Spring Festival in Beijing, capital of China, Jan. 26, 2017. The Spring Festival, or the Chinese Lunar New Year, falls on Jan. 28 this year. (Xinhua/Zhang Duo)

Xi, also general secretary of the CPC Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, delivered a speech at the gathering at the Great Hall of the People, greeting all Chinese in the mainland, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and at abroad.

Li Keqiang, Zhang Dejiang, Yu Zhengsheng, Liu Yunshan, Wang Qishan and Zhang Gaoli were also present.

This year's Spring Festival, or Chinese Lunar New Year, falls on Jan. 28.

There's no need for the Government to prolong the suffering of Southern passengers any longer – Andy McDonald

Andy McDonald MP, Labour's Shadow Transport Secretary, responding to reports that the Government is considering taking direct control of Govia Thameslink, said:

"Reports suggest that the Government is finally recognising what Labour has been saying for over a year: that Southern is failing passengers and taxpayers and should

be stripped of their franchise.

"It is wrong that passenger fares and taxpayer subsidy that should be used to improve services and hold down prices are siphoned off to fill the coffers of train operating companies who are providing a disgraceful service.

"There's no need for the Government to prolong the suffering of Southern passengers any longer. Private rail isn't working: it's time for the Tories to admit defeat and take Southern back under public control as a public service."

Unregistered gas fitter fined

An unregistered gas fitter from Farnborough has been prosecuted for carrying out illegal gas work which was found to be unsafe.

Basingstoke Magistrates' court heard how Mr Leask, who also trades as Eldan Plumbing, had assured the homeowner that he was Gas Safe Registered. When he was unable to supply the gas safe certificate months after installing the boiler, the homeowner contacted Gas Safe, who confirmed Mr Leask was not gas safe registered. When inspected by the Gas Safe Register the boiler was found to be 'at risk', which indicates a risk to life or property.

Mr Leask pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 3(3) of the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998, for carrying out gas work without being gas safe registered and Regulation 3(7) for falsely pretending to be gas safe registered.

He was fined £1230 and ordered to pay costs of £350.

Notes to editors:

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. It aims to reduce work-related death, injury and ill health. It does so through research, information and advice, promoting training; new or revised regulations and codes of practice, and working with local authority partners by inspection, investigation and enforcement. hse.gov.uk
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: legislation.gov.uk/
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>

Journalists should approach HSE press office with any queries on regional press releases.