

[Despite this U-turn the Government is still not doing enough to unleash the potential of SMEs – Rebecca Long-Bailey](#)

Rebecca Long-Bailey MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, commenting on the Government's U-turn on their Making Tax Digital policy, said:

"Today's Government U-turn is a victory for small businesses across the country. As recognised by the Federation of Small Businesses, the Labour Party has consistently called on the Government to rethink their Making Tax Digital policy; the Labour Manifesto committed to scrapping quarterly reporting for companies under the VAT threshold.

"Despite this U-turn the Government is still not doing enough to unleash the potential of SMEs. The promised transitional business rates relief has still not materialised and they are failing to take meaningful action on the scourge of late payments.

"Only Labour has a clear plan to support the UK's small businesses including improved access to finance for SMEs, radically reforming business rates and declaring war on late payments."

[In Liu Xiaobo the world has lost a fearless champion of human rights and democracy – Emily Thornberry](#)

Emily Thornberry MP, Labour's Shadow Foreign Secretary, following news of the death of Liu Xiaobo, said:

"In Liu Xiaobo the world has lost a fearless champion of human rights and

democracy, whose non-violent campaigning was an inspiration to many millions in China around the world.

“It is tragic and deeply regrettable that he spent so many of his final years in prison, and that as his health deteriorated he was unable to seek medical treatment overseas or to share his final hours with those closest to him.

“He will be sorely missed, and his courage, compassion and unyielding belief in universal rights will live on.”

[Labour has extended the hand of partnership for a new relationship with Europe – Jeremy Corbyn](#)

Jeremy Corbyn MP, Leader of the Labour Party, following today’s meeting with EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier in Brussels, said:

“I’m pleased to have had a friendly and constructive meeting with Michel Barnier today.

“Keir Starmer, Diane Abbott and I had a frank and informative conversation with the EU’s chief negotiator and exchanged views about how we see the Brexit process working.

“Labour has extended the hand of partnership for a new relationship with Europe and we outlined how our goal of a jobs-first Brexit deal would protect our mutual trading interests.

“We set out Labour’s Brexit priorities in contrast to the race-to-the-bottom tax haven threatened by the Conservatives.

“The General Election result has clearly changed the context for the Brexit talks and means the Government will have to listen to Parliament and will not be able to have it all its own way.

“Labour respects the EU referendum result, and we will be taking every opportunity to try and achieve a Brexit which puts jobs, living standards and environmental protection at its heart.”

[Andy McDonald response to Southern Rail fine](#)

Andy

McDonald MP, Labour’s Shadow Transport Secretary, responding to the fine given to Southern Rail today, said:

“It has taken over a year for the Transport Secretary to reach this decision. Long-suffering passengers should not have to resort to crowdfunding for legal action to seek accountability, and the Secretary of State should not have to be dragged kicking and screaming by the High Court to do the job he was appointed to do.

“Today’s fine is small change compared with the £1.2 billion Govia is paid to run passenger services and, with crucial parts of the Gibb report redacted and a lack of detail on today’s decision, the management of the Southern rail fiasco continues to lack transparency.

“Ultimately, the buck stops with the Government. Tory ministers, who designed and awarded the franchise, have been ducking their responsibility for Southern’s abysmal service and for directing this unnecessary industrial dispute.

“A Labour government would stand up for the interests of passengers rather than train companies, taking Southern back into public ownership and creating a new body to have strategic oversight for the railway to end the chaos and fragmentation that has plagued Southern.”

The biggest risk to the UK economy is Theresa May's Government – John McDonnell

John

McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, commenting on the Office for Budget Responsibility's (OBR) Fiscal Risks report this morning, said:

"The

Tories want to blame Brexit for their failures on the economy, but what this report really reveals is that one of the biggest risks to our economy is Theresa May's weak government, and the last seven years of Tory economic failure.

"Given

recent poor economic news, showing a lost decade of productivity growth and falling real earnings, the risks highlighted today by the OBR of slower productivity growth, a persistent current account deficit, high level of household debt, and weak business investment are extremely worrying.

"The

OBR have today put the final nail in the coffin of Tory economic credibility. They have confirmed health spending has been falling under the Tories, social care is in crisis and local authority budgets have been stripped to the bone. Rather than invest in our public services, the OBR notes this government's shambolic 'periodic policy reversals' while at the same time giving away billions in tax breaks to the super rich.

"It

is a dereliction of duty of this government that the OBR can claim that after seven years of austerity, the British economy, and working people, are less prepared for the 50/50 risk of a recession in the next five years.

"Only

a Labour Government will negotiate a sensible jobs-first Brexit which does not risk long-term damage to our economy and has set out a serious plan for the public finances. Labour's strategic investment will be underpinned by our Fiscal Credibility Rule, to help build the high wage, high skill economy of the future for the many not the few."