

For too long the bus industry has put profit before passengers. Labour will change that – Jeremy Corbyn

Labour

will overturn the Government's ban on council-owned bus companies as part of a wider strategy to put the public back into buses and deliver affordable, greener, and accessible transport.

Labour

unveiled its bus strategy to put people not private profit first after figures revealed that passenger journeys in England outside London have declined by 39 percent and by 53 per cent in English cities since 1986. But over the same period in London, which kept regulation of bus services, passenger journeys increased by 99 per cent.

Labour's

policy includes a commitment to low emissions vehicles, Wi-Fi enabled buses, improved joint and through ticketing schemes, mandatory disability and equality training, and a commitment to introduce a national strategy for local bus services, setting out objectives, targets and funding provisions, including considering concessionary fares for 16-19 year olds.

Jeremy

Corbyn MP, Leader of the Labour Party, said:

"Labour

will create the freedom for councils to run first class bus services which the public are proud of. The Tory legacy brought rising fares, plummeting passenger numbers and too many areas where pensioners have a bus pass but no bus.

"Labour

wants to see local communities empowered to determine their own priorities and reverse the decline in bus services. Labour will extend franchising powers to all areas that want them and will overturn the ban on new community bus companies, allowing Local Authorities to replicate the successes of the country's best performing operators.

"For

too long the bus industry has put profit before passengers. Labour will change

that.”

Andy

McDonald MP, Labour’s Shadow Transport Secretary, said:

“Buses are by far the most important mode of public transport, connecting communities, places of education and businesses like no other.

“In supporting local economies, combatting climate change, addressing air quality and tackling social exclusion, the importance of buses cannot be over-stated. Yet funding for buses across England and Wales has been cut by 33 per cent since 2010 and thousands of routes have been downgraded or cut altogether, meaning passengers across the country have to put up with sub-standard services.

“We want to see clean, hi-tech fleets of buses running accessible and reliable services that meet passengers’ needs. For this to happen, we need to give communities the power to reform bus services to make them work for passengers, as well as ensuring the funding and strategy is in place to ensure no communities are left behind.”

Labour’s policy would:

- Create freedom for local authorities to form their own bus companies by removing the Government’s ban.
- Extend the powers to re-regulate local bus services to all areas that want them – not just to combined authorities with an elected mayor.
- Require all new buses to meet the low-emission requirements set out by the Government-sponsored Office for Low Emission Vehicles.
- Require new vehicles to be equipped with Wi-Fi, and install Wi-Fi on existing buses.
- Introduce a national strategy for local bus services, setting out objectives, targets and funding provisions. This would include consideration of a reduced fare scheme for young people aged 16-19.
- Require all bus drivers and staff at bus terminals to complete approved

disability equality and awareness training, including mental and physical disabilities, by a specific date.

- Ensure bus services in England make adjustments for any disabled passenger on the bus including policies for priority wheelchair spaces.

Labour

leader Jeremy Corbyn and shadow transport secretary Andy McDonald are in Tees Valley today (Friday) promoting Labour's bus policy.

[Nia Griffith responds to reports Armed Forces are facing a £10bn funding shortfall](#)

Nia Griffith MP, Labour's Shadow Defence Secretary, commenting on reports our Armed Forces are facing a £10bn funding shortfall, said:

"This is deeply worrying, and the result of years of mistakes and poor decisions made under the Tories.

"The severe cuts imposed on the defence budget since 2010 has led to countless knee-jerk decisions, like scrapping the Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft, which has left us reliant on allies to track Russian subs off the UK coast.

"Last year we saw the Army shrink below 80,000 for the first time, far short of the Government's manifesto pledge to keep it above 82,000.

"Further cuts of £1bn each year, to make up for this mis-management of the defence budget, will do yet more severe damage to our Armed Forces. Reports that the Royal Marines could be further cut are particularly concerning.

"On the Today programme, the Defence Secretary kept referring to investment in equipment but he needs to be investing in our forces personnel to ensure that professional standards remain high, and that they are trained to be able to operate and maintain new kit. Our Armed Forces are driven

by the hard working men and women who serve and it's time the Tories recognised that.

"It simply isn't good enough for ministers to say they can't verify whether these reports are accurate. They urgently need to get a grip and explain where they intend these savings to come from."

[Barbara Keeley responds to CLG select committee social care report](#)

Barbara Keeley

MP, Labour's Shadow Cabinet Minister for Social Care, commenting on the CLG select committee report in to social care, said:

"This report is yet more evidence of government failure on social care.

"With less than 10 per cent of directors of adult social care confident they will be able to fulfil their statutory duty to provide care this coming year, it's clear that the Government simply has not done enough to give social care the funding it needs.

"The underfunding of social care is hitting the care work force with nearly half of all care staff on zero-hours contracts and hundreds of thousands of them scandalously earning less than the living wage. And as the cuts to budgets bite, we are seeing the number of people caring for family and friends unpaid going up faster than population growth. This is bad for the family carers and can put great strain on families.

"The Government should heed the recommendations from the committee and make sure that their upcoming Green Paper does not rule any future funding options out. We need social care to be put on a long term sustainable financial footing and we need an end to this on-going funding crisis."

Government are obsessing over arbitrary targets for apprenticeship starts but doing nothing to ensure the right outcomes for learners – Gordon Marsden

Gordon Marsden

MP, Labour's Shadow Skills Minister, commenting on a report from a sub-committee of the Education and Business Select Committee, claiming that the Government's apprenticeship levy lacks focus and targets the wrong industries, said:

"Today's report confirms what Labour have been saying all along, that while the Government are obsessing over reaching an arbitrary target for apprenticeship starts, they are doing nothing to ensure the right outcomes for learners.

"The fact that the Government's approach lacks focus and targets the wrong industries shows that they have failed to develop an industrial strategy worthy of the name, and can only offer headline chasing gimmicks instead.

"Closing the skills gap and giving young people and older learners the skills they need should be essential to securing our post-Brexit future, yet once again this Government have nothing serious to offer the country."

Plan confirms that May's Government has broken its promise by failing to give the NHS the funding it needs – Jonathan Ashworth

Jonathan

Ashworth MP, Labour's Shadow Health Secretary, responding to the publication of

NHS England's Next Steps on the NHS Five Year Forward View said:

"NHS

England's Five Year Forward View update contains welcome ambitions around mental health and cancer care that Labour endorses. However reading between the lines this plan confirms that Theresa May's Government has broken its promise by failing to give the NHS the funding it needs. The plan admits the public are 'concerned' for the future of the NHS and that the health service is under 'real pressure' to cope with rising demand within the current spending envelope.

"Labour has warned repeatedly that the NHS funding squeeze imposed by the Government is damaging standards of patient care. Now the Forward View confirms that the main 4 hour A&E target won't be met for at least the next year. Waiting lists are growing as a direct result of the financial crisis. The collapse in standards in the past year has been nothing short of astonishing.

"What's more the plan confirms more and more rationing of treatments is taking place across the NHS.

"One

of the biggest problems laid out by the new NHS plan is the massive workforce challenge for the health service. We welcome NHS England reinforcing Labour's calls for the Government to guarantee the status of European health staff as soon as possible. Sadly Jeremy Hunt has no plan whatsoever to help the NHS through the challenge of Brexit and is being enormously complacent about the impact for the NHS. The Government need to be much clearer about how they will guarantee there are enough staff in place in the health service to keep patients safe for the years to come."