

Staggering that Grayling thinks the growing revolving door scandal around HS2 is 'not a massive issue' – McDonald

Andy

McDonald MP, Labour's Shadow Transport Secretary, commenting on the Government's refusal to set up an inquiry into the cancellation of HS2 Ltd's £170 million contract with engineering firm CH2M, said:

"I'm staggered Chris Grayling thinks the growing revolving door scandal over HS2 Ltd, CH2M and a £170m contract is 'not a massive issue.'

"The fact both HS2 Ltd's Chief Executive and his predecessor previously worked for CH2M and a former HS2 Chief of Staff worked on the winning bid for CH2M should have rung alarm bells at the Department for Transport

"Now HS2's Director General has resigned and Phase 2 could be delayed even further.

"This whole business stinks to high heaven, and the Department for Transport must urgently address the key questions. When did it know about these substantial conflicts of interest and what due diligence did it do on the bid?"

Ends

Brexit makes action on self-employment all the more urgent – John McDonnell

Brexit

makes action on self-employment all the more urgent, and Britain should lead the way in supporting the self-employed, says Labour

In the wake of the triggering of Article 50, Labour held a Self-Employment Summit

this morning to discuss the needs of the self-employed in the Brexit negotiations and beyond.

The Summit, the first held by Labour's Commission on Self-Employment, was hosted by the Federation of Small Business (FSB) and attended by key stakeholders, including the TUC, the GMB, the British Chamber of Commerce, and the Co-operative Party.

John McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, said:

"Labour's self-employment summit today looked at all aspects of self-employment and the gig economy, including how any changes to the tax system should be aligned with increasing support for the self-employed.

"With the number of self-employed people due to overtake public sector workers by 2018, we will develop a package of measures for self-employed people that will form a major part of Labour's offer at the next General Election. While the Tories are prepared to attack the living standards of the self-employed, Labour are listening and will act to address the real issues they are facing."

Mike Cherry, FSB National Chairman, said:

"The future success of the UK economy rests squarely on the shoulders of the UK's army of the self-employed. These are the entrepreneurs, the risk-takers, the freelancers, the strivers – and without them we simply wouldn't have a thriving economy, just as we face Brexit.

"FSB worked with the Labour frontbench and MPs from all parties to kill off the £2bn tax hike on the self-employed. We now need a proper policy debate about future support for this critical part of the UK economy."

Tim Roache, General Secretary of the GMB Union, said:

"Philip Hammond made a hash of his first Budget by completely failing to look the wide range of issues facing people currently classified as self-employed. This initiative from Labour comes at a crucial time when work in all its forms is increasingly unclear and uncertain.

"GMB has genuinely self-employed members but we also have plenty of members who are at a loss as to what their employment status

is
or have been wrongly told they are self-employed by employers hell-bent on shirking their legal and moral responsibilities.

“How many scandals and court cases do we have to see before government ministers and HMRC stop twiddling their thumbs and start taking their enforcement role seriously? It’s time that politicians grasped this nettle.”

[Sharon Hodgson responds to proposed sugar limits published by Public Health England](#)

Sharon Hodgson MP, Labour’s Shadow Health Minister, responding

to proposed sugar limits published by Public Health England, said:

“Labour supports action to tackle sugar consumption and with the refresh of the Five Year Forward View published this week there is a chance to set a really radical approach to obesity and children’s health. It should be a matter of shame that obesity affects so many children in the UK and that the circumstances of where you grow up can have such a long term effect on your health outcomes.

“There is clear clinical and public support for measures like sugar taxes which promote healthier living and can keep people fit and well for the years to come.

“Theresa May watered down the Government’s childhood obesity strategy but should be much bolder in supporting radical public health measures. Too often the Prime Minister seems happy to settle for second best for the nation’s wellbeing when she ought to position Britain at the front of the global drive for better public health.”

[There seems to have been a revolving](#)

door between CH2M and HS2 which must be investigated – Andy McDonald

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McDonald, Labour's Shadow Transport Secretary, commenting on reports that engineering firm CH2M has pulled out of a deal to provide rail lines for phase 2b of HS2, said:

"It's remarkable the Department of Transport failed to do proper due diligence on this multi-million pound bid.

"How could ministers not realise giving CH2M a £170m contract when HS2'S new chief executive and his predecessor both worked for the firm was a massive conflict of interest?

"There seems to have been a revolving door between CH2M and HS2 which must be investigated. This is just as big a mess as the Department of Transport's mishandling of the West Coast franchise bid.

"Chris Grayling must come to the House of Commons at the earliest opportunity to explain how this bidding process was allowed to derail. They chose to bury the bad news on Article 50 day. There must now be an inquiry into the serious errors surrounding this bid and the Government must get the construction of HS2, which Labour supports, back on track."

Cat Smith responds to Association of Young People's Health 2017 report

Cat

Smith MP, Labour's Shadow Minister for Voter Engagement and Youth Affairs, commenting on the Association of Young People's Health 2017 report, said:

"Labour welcomes this report showing positive downward trends in teenage pregnancy and substance use.

“However,
the Tories are short-changing young people when it comes to their mental health. It is completely unacceptable that only 0.7 per cent of NHS funding is spent on young people’s mental health while 11 per cent of the NHS budget is spent on mental health services overall.

“I
urge this Government to end their distorted austerity agenda, which is hitting young people disproportionately, and start promoting youth-friendly health services.”