

## The Government's Customs Bill is another attempt to run roughshod over the House of Commons – Peter Dowd

**Peter**

**Dowd MP, Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury**, commenting on the Lords Delegated Power and Regulatory Reform Committee report on the Taxation (Cross Border Trade) Bill said:

“The House of Lords report gives a damning verdict on the Government's Customs Bill, which hands vast sets of Henry VIII powers to the Treasury instead of to Parliament.

“The Bill is yet another attempt by the Government to run roughshod over the democratically elected House of Commons. Taken with the EU Withdrawal Bill and the Trade Bill, this is a centralisation of control not seen since the Second World War.

“The Prime Minister has no mandate to award her Government these powers.”

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## Owen Smith comment on announcement of new Northern Ireland talks

**Owen Smith MP, Labour's Shadow Northern Ireland Secretary**, commenting on the announcement that new talks aimed at restoring devolution in Northern Ireland will begin next week, said:

“Despite the new name over the door of the Northern Ireland Office, it sounds like more of the same in the talks planned for next week. Twelve months of secretive discussions between Sinn Fein and the DUP has failed and there is widespread scepticism that another round will break the deadlock.

“Karen Bradley must show that she has a clear plan to rebuild trust between the parties and restore power-sharing. This should start with enlisting an independent chair to help address concerns that she cannot be neutral given the Conservative Government is being propped up by the DUP.”

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## [A victory for everyone who has campaigned to protect live music – Tom Watson MP](#)

**Tom Watson MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport,**

commenting on changes to planning regulations around music venues, said:

"This is great news for music venues, artists and music lovers, and a victory for everyone who has campaigned to protect live music. John Spellar deserves huge credit for bringing his private members' bill forward and building such a broad coalition of support. The campaign mobilised the whole of the UK's music industry to call for change – and it won.

"I'm delighted that this policy from Labour's 2017 manifesto is being accepted by the Government. We must now all make sure that the commitments made today are carried forward as promised by Ministers, so that new building developments take the needs of existing music venues into account."

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## [Peter Dowd MP responds to National Audit Office report](#)

**Peter Dowd MP, Labour's Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury,** commenting on the NAO's report out today on the costs and benefits of the Public Finance Initiative (PFI), said:

"The National Audit Office confirms that, not only is there little evidence of the benefits of private finance procurement, but also that it "results in additional costs compared with publicly financed procurement".

"According to the NAO's analysis of a schools building project, costs under the Tories'

new PF2 schemes are 40% higher than through direct government funding.

“Worryingly, despite this and the Office for Budget Responsibility’s description of PFI as a “fiscal illusion”, it seems that the Treasury has actively decided against removing budgetary incentives which exist in favour of PFI.

“Today’s report only further demonstrates this Tory government’s continued commitment to fleecing tax payers for the benefit of large PFI firms. It also raises more questions over the use of PFI in a week in which the Carillion scandal has left many fearing for their jobs and standard of their public services.

“The next Labour government will draw a line under the failed PFI approach to public investment, and will replace it by a transparent and accountable approach, which will reduce the costs and deliver significant savings to the taxpayer.”

Ends

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## **100,000 stuck in ambulances this winter ‘entirely unacceptable’ – Jonathan Ashworth**

Labour’s analysis of the latest NHS England winter data reveals that over 100,000 patients have been stuck in the back of ambulances this winter.

Labour’s analysis further reveals that almost 25,000 patients have been forced to wait longer than one hour. The recommended ambulance handover time according to NHS Improvement is 15 minutes.

**Jonathan Ashworth MP, Labour’s Shadow Health Secretary**, responding to Labour’s analysis of ambulance delays, said:

“Despite the brilliant efforts of our NHS staff, these findings reveal the uncomfortable

reality for many patients this winter. It is unacceptable that over 100,000 patients have been stuck in the back of ambulances for over 30 minutes, a waiting time which is more than double the recommendation of NHS Improvement.

“Under

the Tories bed numbers have been cut by over 14,000, and as a result bed occupancy has remained at dangerously high levels this winter. Last week it was

94.9 per cent, which is nearly 10 per cent higher than the recommended safe level.

“Labour

will give our health service the funding it needs to remain a world class service for all.”

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