

There is a continuous need to modernise the police but caution is required with these plans – Diane Abbott

Diane Abbott MP, Labour's Shadow Home Secretary, commenting on new Government plans that would allow civilians to compete for chief constable jobs, said:

"Caution is required with these plans. There is a continuous need to modernise the police, making it more diverse and representative of society as a whole, but many able officers will now wonder whether their own career paths could be blocked.

"This Tory Government have already reduced officer numbers by over 20,000 and broken their pledge to protect police funding in real terms.

"Neither the police nor the public will want to see people recruited from outside the service simply because of their willingness to implement further swingeing cuts."

The Government must act to close the funding gap in local services so that people are able to travel freely and safely throughout their communities – Teresa Pearce

Teresa Pearce MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, commenting on an Asphalt Industry Alliance (AIA) report showing that one in six roads in England and Wales are in poor condition, said:

“Up and down the country, motorists, cyclists and passengers regularly have their safety compromised by dangerous and recurring potholes. Whilst councils are doing their utmost to repair these swiftly, huge cuts to local government budgets are making this ever more difficult.

“The Government must act to close the funding gap in local services so that people are able to travel freely and safely throughout their communities. And the utility companies who regularly dig up the roads must also be an active part of the solution to this problem.

“The Tories’ chaotic and cack-handed approach to local government funding is creating a system whereby councils can only afford to provide the bare minimum in statutory social care, safeguarding and homelessness services. Consequently, we are seeing everything else, from libraries to roads, suffer as a result.”

[Greater restrictions and rationing proposed today are a direct result of Theresa May’s underfunding of the NHS – Jonathan Ashworth](#)

Jonathan

Ashworth MP, Labour’s Shadow Health Secretary, commenting on reports that NHS England is to develop new guidelines in order to stop GPs from prescribing certain medicines, said:

“This Government has forced the NHS through the longest period of financial squeeze in its history. Indeed, hospital bosses have recently warned it will be ‘mission impossible’ to achieve the standards of care the public demand given the scale of the underfunding.

“We have long warned this underfunding would lead to greater rationing of services and treatments. Ministers need to explain what today’s restrictions will mean for those eligible for free prescriptions such as the elderly, pregnant and those on low incomes.

“Of course, NHS bosses are right to demand the best possible value for money from the

medicines they buy so that every penny can go towards patient care. But let's be clear: the greater restrictions and rationing proposed today are a direct result of Theresa May's underfunding of the NHS."

[Pat Glass responds to announcement First Group & MTR are to take over the South Western Franchise](#)

Pat Glass MP, Labour's Shadow Transport Minister,

commenting on the announcement that First Group and MTR are to take over the South Western Franchise, said:

"In an agreement made in January of last year, the Government announced that the South Western franchise around London was to be taken over by TfL at the end of the franchise period. It is therefore disappointing to see that it has now been handed over to a private operator which is partly owned by a foreign company. We are now in a ludicrous situation where 75 percent of our railways are now wholly or partly controlled by foreign states or foreign companies.

"It is also hugely disheartening to hear that bidders were required to include plans for Driver Only Operation. It is important that the new franchisee is aware of the safety critical role of the second member of staff on board and they should not seek to remove this. It seems that the Government is deliberately intent on spreading the disruption faced daily by commuters on Southern to commuters passengers using the South Western Network.

"First Group and MTR have promised more trains, more seats and a better service but now only time will tell as to whether they will deliver that."

[It is crucial that there is effective](#)

judicial oversight of the security services' access to encrypted messages – Abbott

Diane Abbott MP, Labour's Shadow Home Secretary, speaking in response to the controversy over encrypted messages in the wake of the terrorist attack at Westminster, said:

“Labour opposes an open access trawl of all messaging. Good counter-terrorism measures are nearly always intelligence led.

“In the cases of suspects or perpetrators of serious crime or terrorism, it is crucial that there is effective judicial oversight of the security services' access to encrypted messages.

“Amber Rudd will be keen to set out exactly how the Government will ensure that law-abiding citizens' privacy is not breached.

“Fighting terrorism is a serious business, and should not be used for political grandstanding.”