

Labour urges Government to support re-opening rail lines – Andy McDonald

Ahead of the Autumn Budget, Shadow Transport Secretary, Andy McDonald MP, is calling on the Government to match the Labour Party's commitment to boost investment in and expand the rail network by filling in the missing rail links.

Re-opening rail lines have local support, are positive for business and can boost areas of economic deprivation. They can also alleviate congestion, reduce social isolation and improve productivity.

Labour has identified the Skipton-Colne Rail line as one such high priority scheme that can help connect additional towns and cities and help to realise the benefits for the planned Crossrail for the North.

Andy McDonald MP, Labour's Shadow Transport Secretary, said:

"The social, economic and environmental case for expanding our rail network is clear, but the Tories have starved much of our country of the investment needed for our regions to reach their full potential.

"Under-investment in the regions is holding our economy back, particularly the absence of Northern East-West rail links, which is why there is such a strong case for reopening the line between Colne and Skipton and for greater investment throughout the country. The route is a vital link between East Lancashire and Yorkshire, and when completed would deliver 50 miles of electrified railway line from Leeds to Burnley.

"Reopening this line has the potential to be transformative for the area. It's exactly the type of scheme that needs exploring as part of a much more significant commitment to boost investment in the North and close regional funding divides."

Government must ring-fence mental health funding – Barbara Keeley MP

Barbara Keeley MP, Labour's Shadow Cabinet

Minister for Mental Health, commenting on remarks made to the Health Select Committee by the Children's Commissioner, Anne Longfield, and the CQC Chief Inspector of Mental Health Services, Dr Paul Lelliott, said:

"The scandal of children being

turned away from mental health treatment because they don't meet thresholds of mental ill health is a direct cause of the Tory Government's failure to protect mental health budgets.

"Even where children are able to access services, they can face unacceptably long delays: the CQC recently found some children waiting 18 months for treatment after referral.

"The Tory Government must ring-fence mental health funding in the upcoming Budget: anything less will prove that their pledges to make mental and physical health a priority are just empty words."

The Tories' decision to abolish Forensic Science Service looks like a catastrophic error of judgement – Louise Haigh

Louise Haigh MP, Labour's Shadow Policing Minister, commenting on the news that the manipulation of forensics data may have affected up to 10,000 cases, said:

"As the true scale of this scandal becomes apparent, the Tories' decision to abolish the Forensic Science Service is beginning to look like a catastrophic error of judgement.

"The lack of statutory powers to enforce standards in forensics has given private providers a green light to cut corners.

"It is utterly scandalous to think that decision-making in child safeguarding or criminal prosecutions may have been adversely affected by this alleged manipulation.

"Ministers need to urgently explain what will be done to ensure anyone affected is identified and what steps are being taken so nothing like this can happen again."

Government must listen to calls of Labour and councils across London and use tomorrow's Budget to cover cost of vital fire safety measures – Andrew Gwynne MP

Andrew Gwynne MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, commenting on BBC Radio London's research which reveals councils across the capital will be spending a total of about £383m to make social housing safer following the Grenfell fire, said:

"The Government must listen to the calls of Labour and councils across London and use tomorrow's Budget to keep its promise to help cover the cost of the vital fire safety measures needed to make homes safe.

"Forcing these costs onto councils, which have suffered from harsh cuts from the Tories, means that local people will have to foot the bill – and will place an even greater financial strain on our already over-burdened public services."

"The Grenfell Tower fire was an entirely avoidable human disaster that must never be repeated."

Government cannot be given a blank cheque to concentrate power in its own hands – Peter Dowd

Peter Dowd MP, Labour's Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury, responding to the Government's customs resolutions and the publication of the Taxation (Cross-border Trade) Bill:

"While Labour recognises the need for the Government to begin preparations for an independent customs and tariff regime, that does not mean giving the Government a blank cheque to concentrate power in its own hands.

"The publication of the Government's Bill on the establishment of the UK's

future customs and tariff regime is yet another example of Government legislation that gives large swathes of delegated powers to ministers with no reference to any meaningful parliamentary oversight. It is shocking the level of contempt this Conservative Government has for Parliament.

“Labour is committed to ensuring that any future changes to the UK’s customs and tariff regime face full parliamentary scrutiny and be considered on a similar footing to changes to the UK tax system. We therefore intend to amend the Taxation (Cross-border Trade) Bill to reflect that commitment.”