

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."

Labour challenges Chancellor to use Budget to reverse Conservatives' abysmal house-building record

Ahead of the Budget tomorrow, Labour has revealed that no new 'starter homes' have been built in three years, despite the Conservatives' promise to build 200,000 of them.

'Starter homes' are a flagship Conservative commitment to first-time buyers, first announced in December 2014. In the Conservatives' 2015 manifesto, they promised to build 200,000 starter homes but none have so far been built.

In addition to the lack of progress on building starter homes, analysis from

Labour shows that the number of new low-cost homes to buy has halved since 2010. There are now 58,000 fewer affordable homes for first-time buyers than if building levels had continued at the level left by Labour.

Labour is challenging the Chancellor to use tomorrow's Budget to reverse this abysmal record on house-building and to ensure that promised homes are actually built.

John Healey MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Housing, said:

"If hot air built homes, Conservative Ministers would have fixed our housing crisis. Three years after they pledged a big new programme of 'starter homes' for first-time buyers, not a single one has been built.

"Meanwhile, the number of home-owners under 45 has fallen by 904,000 since 2010 and the number of low-cost homes to buy has halved.

"The Chancellor must use the Budget to reverse this abysmal record and ensure that the homes they pledge are actually built. No more broken promises.

"The next Labour government will build 100,000 genuinely affordable homes to rent and buy a year, and help first-time buyers with first-dibs on new homes for local people, a new generation of discounted FirstBuy Homes, and a cut in stamp duty on their first home."

Theresa May's weak leadership has left our country increasingly isolated and ignored – Thornberry

Emily Thornberry MP, Shadow Foreign Secretary, commenting on the UK losing its place on the International Court of Justice for the first time in its 71 year history, said:

"While we congratulate our friends in India on maintaining their place on the International Court of Justice, it remains a shocking indictment of Britain's declining international standing that, for the first time in the history of

the court, it will now be without a British judge. Theresa May and Boris Johnson like to proclaim their dream of a 'Global Britain', but here in the real world, her weak leadership and his repeated gaffes have left our country increasingly isolated and ignored.

"Only a Labour Government, which will restore values and principles to our foreign policy, and build bridges with our international partners, will allow us to recover our global influence, and re-take our rightful place as a leading player at the United Nations."

[John McDonnell comment on latest Public Sector Finance figures](#)

John McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, commenting

on Public Sector Finance figures published today by the ONS, which show borrowing has increased by £500 million to £8 billion from last year, and that £147.8 billion has been added to the national debt since October 2016, said:

"These figures are a reminder of the continued failure of both Philip Hammond and Theresa May over these past seven years. The deficit has still not been eliminated as they promised it would be by 2015, and the national debt continues to grow. The rise in the Government's deficit over October shows once again that seven years of Tory spending cuts have caused pain and misery for millions with little to show for it.

"It further highlights why it is so vital that we see a change of course in the Budget tomorrow, halting the growing emergency in our public services and ending their failed austerity policies.

"The next Labour government will set out a serious plan for the public finances with strategic investment underpinned by our Fiscal Credibility Rule, to help build a high-wage, high-skill economy for the many not the few."

Jonathan Ashworth responds to the decision to relocate the European Medicines Agency away from London

Jonathan

Ashworth MP, Labour's Shadow Health Secretary, responding to the European Council's decision to relocate the European Medicines Agency from London to Amsterdam, said:

"This decision is extremely disappointing. Labour has been clear all along that Britain should seek to maintain membership of the European Medicines Agency.

"Not only will this relocation see the loss of almost 900 jobs from London, but Britain's reputation as a world leader in the life sciences is under serious threat and patients will likely suffer from longer waits for new medicines.

"Ministers must urgently reassure the House that the UK will not become a second-tier market as a result of their reckless handling of Brexit, and that the best possible deal for patients and staff remains at the forefront of negotiations."