

## New statistics show the Conservatives haven't given enough attention to social housing – John Healey

**John**

**Healey MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Housing,** commenting on new statistics

showing the number of new social rented homes has fallen to the lowest level since records began, said:

"After

the Grenfell Tower fire Theresa May admitted the Conservatives haven't given enough attention to social housing. These shocking figures show she was right.

"The

number of new social rented homes being built is now at the lowest level on record, and the number of new low-cost homes to buy is at just half the level it was under Labour.

"After

seven years of failure on housing the Chancellor must use the Budget to tackle the housing crisis."

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## Our steel industry could be fatally compromised if the government fails to act – Barry Gardiner

**Barry Gardiner MP,**

**Shadow International Trade Secretary,** responding to concerns from the steel industry over the government's Trade Bill, said:

"There is a real

danger that our steel industry could be fatally compromised if the government fails to deal with unfair trading practices by other countries. Proper structures must be put in place as our exit from the European Union is planned.

"Labour is

committed to a robust and comprehensive trade remedies regime that will ensure we can defend British manufacturing jobs from unfair competition.

"We understand the fears expressed by industry and trade unions at the prospect of job losses in such an important sector. A Labour government would act. This government must not stand idly by."

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## Jeremy Corbyn speech at Labour's Make Homes Safe launch

**\*\*\*CHECK AGAINST  
DELIVERY\*\*\***

**Jeremy Corbyn MP,  
Leader of the Labour Party**, speaking at Labour's Make Homes Safe launch today, said:

We are here today less than 150 days after the country woke up to the devastating news of the fire at Grenfell Tower.

It was a fire that shocked the whole country.

A 24 storey tower block subsumed in flames. Whole families, adults and young children alike, trapped inside the tower with no chance of escape.

The scenes inside that tower would have been unimaginable hell.

Firefighters entered the burning building nonetheless at huge risk to themselves, saving many lives. But far too many, at least 80 people, were beyond rescue.

On the morning after the Grenfell Fire I visited the scene and I talked to those who lived in the tower and the surrounding area.

They were in shock and they were grieving. People simply did not believe that such a horrifying

event

could take place in 2017, in the UK's richest borough, in the 5<sup>th</sup> richest nation on earth.

But tragically it

didn't happen by chance but because of shockingly avoidable political decisions, driven by a cruel and failed economic ideology.

The country was

shocked and the local community was hurting but it was this shock and pain that

prompted such an inspirational response from the local community in this part of West London.

It was a response

stirred by the shared grief of innocent adults and children having their lives

taken from them in the fire.

Stirred by the pain of

seeing that burning building, knowing there were people trapped inside and stirred by the anger of knowing that working class voices had been ignored once

again; and that a tragedy of this shocking scale had been allowed to happen.

Although the local

council of Kensington and Chelsea has faced criticisms for its response to the

fire, other local authorities, such as here in Hammersmith and Fulham, deserve

to be acknowledged for their efforts to help those affected by the fire.

Whether it was running

fundraising events or directly offering the use of their own council services and council officers free of charge, it was this council, along with others including my own, that did what it could to help those in need.

Local organisations

and community groups have also played a huge part in the response. Queen's Park

Rangers Football Club for instance managed to raise almost one million pounds for legacy projects that will leave a lasting impact in the area around Grenfell.

Combined with the

efforts of individuals, charities and local small businesses, this response was

a heartening example of the unbreakable strength of communities and sense of solidarity in this hugely diverse and multi-faith area of London.

On the morning that I

visited Grenfell I also had the chance to talk to some of the firefighters

who  
battled that deadly inferno for hours.

Utterly exhausted,  
these were the women and men who saved large numbers of people – adults  
and children.

I asked them why they  
did it? Why did they put themselves in such danger, saving the lives of  
people  
who they've never even met.

They answered without  
any hesitation: "We do it because it's our job".

Because on that night,  
firefighters of the London Fire Brigade did do their job.

Firefighters across  
the country have faced the harsh reality of politically driven austerity.

Along with the other  
emergency services across the UK they have been forced to deal with repeated  
budget cuts since 2010.

In the last seven  
years 10,000 frontline firefighter jobs have gone; equivalent to one in six  
positions.

This is a staggering  
figure and is compounded by the loss of fire stations, equipment and the loss  
of almost a third of fire safety inspectors in the same period, with some  
areas  
such as West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue, which covers the city of Leeds,  
having  
lost as many as 70 per cent of its inspectors.

Indeed, because of the  
continual loss of firefighters' jobs, if the fire at Grenfell had occurred  
outside of London there would not have been enough firefighters in the  
vicinity  
to tackle a blaze of that size.

That is why Labour is  
committed to recruiting 3,000 new firefighter jobs with a full review of  
staffing levels.

This is essential if  
we are to improve response times and ensure the fire and rescue service has  
the  
resources it needs to do the job – which they do with such professionalism  
– of keeping us safe.

As firefighters themselves say: if we are serious about reducing deaths and injuries from fire, we need a co-ordinated approach across government. We need a well-funded fully staffed fire and rescue service but what is also needed is a strong focus on fire prevention.

We must make sure that nothing like the fire at Grenfell Tower can ever happen again.

But to make sure it doesn't we need action and we need action now.

Of course we are all waiting for the result of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry but there is some action that we believe the government could, and should take immediately.

The retrofitting of sprinklers in all high rise social housing is something that could make a vital difference to people's safety.

The evidence is clear: where sprinkler systems have already been fitted, injuries sustained from fires have been cut by approximately 80 per cent and deaths from fires have almost been eliminated entirely.

But don't just take my word for it.

Take the word of the Chief Fire Officers Association. They support retrofitting because they recognise that sprinklers are both the most effective and the most efficient method to quell fires which occur in high rise buildings.

Take the word of the London Fire Brigade; the very people who risked their lives at Grenfell Tower and risk their lives every single day to put out other fires across this city, who have repeatedly called for retrofitting of sprinklers.

And take the word of the Coroner in its 2013 report after the fire at Lakanal House who recommended the retrofitting of sprinklers in all high rise residential buildings.

Two Conservative governments in succession have failed to act on that Coroner's report.

We said after that

dreadful fire at Lakanal House in 2009 we would never allow anything similar to happen again, and yet here we are, eight years later, after an even worse avoidable fire.

The evidence is overwhelming. When almost every authoritative source on the matter is saying the same thing: that retrofitting of sprinklers is necessary in high rise housing.

This measure is just common sense and will protect thousands of lives.

It is our duty to listen to this clear and unambiguous advice.

Retrofitting of sprinklers is something that many Local Authorities know is necessary to ensure the safety of residents in high rise social housing. But with their budgets slashed by an average of 40 per cent since 2010 it is something that very few of them can afford.

A small number of Local Authorities such as the London Borough of Croydon have managed to find the funds to retrofit sprinklers. But of course on councils' shoe string budgets, doing this can mean cuts to other vital services.

That is why people across the country are now looking at central government to act.

The government tells us time and time again that there are difficult choices to be made. "We are all in this together" they used to say.

And yet while people are living in potential death-trap homes without essential safety protections such as sprinklers, it is an obscenity that we have super rich elites and major corporations who are allowed to avoid paying their taxes. There can be little disagreement. The government must get its act together, take on the tax avoiders and put the billions of pounds that is being taken from the pockets of the British people back into the public services and safe homes we all so desperately need.

Social housing in this country has been badly and dangerously neglected for far too long.

Deregulation imposed by successive governments has caused a shocking collapse in standards.

While luxury accommodation proliferates across our big cities far out of reach of the vast majority of the population, the poorest in our country are forced to live not just in dilapidated run-down housing, but also in dangerous housing.

Time and time again this government has shown itself to be callous and indifferent to working class concerns.

But now we are asking this government to do something positive for those who live in social housing.

With the budget approaching imminently the government has a genuine opportunity to make a real difference to people's lives by making available the government funds that local councils are crying out for to improve the safety of high rise residents.

It is the primary responsibility of any government to ensure the safety of its citizens and we believe it is therefore the responsibility of the Prime Minister and the Chancellor to make this money available to local authorities and devolved administrations across the whole of the UK.

We must be serious about people's safety and governments cannot protect people on the cheap.

We see ourselves as a civilised society. We know that as a nation we should provide universal healthcare for the sick, decent pensions for the elderly, good quality education for every child to get on in life, but we also need to ensure that everybody has a home that is not just secure but also safe.

Funding retrofitting of sprinklers is an immediate step that Theresa May can take in the Autumn Budget.

It will ensure that high rise residents can sleep more safely in their beds.

That is why today, Labour is launching our campaign to Make Homes Safe.

The campaign's aim is for sprinklers to be fitted in all social housing throughout the country which is 30 metres or above – around ten or more storeys.

We are asking for the public's support to make sure the government listens to the concerns that we

share with tower block residents, the Fire and Rescue Service and other professionals.

Retrofitting of sprinkler systems is a basic demand but it is one that will save lives if the government decides to make it happen.

Grenfell was an avoidable tragedy. It did not have to happen and it would not have happened if adequate precautions, including sprinklers, were in place.

So please, sign our letter and help us make sure that residents of high rise social housing can sleep safely in their beds, safe in the knowledge that they are being listened to.

Thank you

ENDS

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## [Sue Hayman speech to the Northern Farming Conference](#)

**Sue**

**Hayman MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**, speaking to the Northern Farming Conference, said:

Thank you for inviting me to speak to you today.

I've been Shadow Secretary for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs since February this year, since when I've been building relationships with farming and food organisations across the country.

For those of you who don't know me I'm the MP for Workington, a very large rural constituency with a lot of hill and livestock farming and many small food producers.

My number two in our team – the Shadow Minister for Farming – is David Drew, the very experienced MP for Stroud in Gloucestershire, also a large rural



constituency but with different issues to my own.

So

I believe that Labour has a strong team with a good working knowledge of rural issues and I know some of you believe that has not always been the case.

So

I've become Shadow Secretary of State at this most critical time for our country's farming and food industries.

We

really are at a crossroad, with so much hanging in the balance during the EU negotiations.

Everyone here will know that one of the most important industries that must be protected in these negotiations is our farming industry. In a survey commissioned by the NFU, 85% of people said they believe that it is important that Britain has a productive and resilient farming industry.

That figure shows how important farming is to Britain. It is a key component of the economy, providing 475,000 jobs and driving growth in rural communities up and down the country. Not only is the industry a major part of our economy, it also provides 61% of Britain's food and farmers act as custodians for our environment, managing more than 70% of the UK landscape.

The Brexit negotiating team must step up to the plate and get the best deal for Britain. We have to have a plan that protects the rights of private citizens and also enables businesses to flourish and our industries to remain successful across the continent.

And

food and farming must be a part of our trade talks from day one.

Brexit brings an opportunity to fundamentally review the objectives and design of the UK's long-term agricultural policy, shaping the future of British farming and food production for generations to come. And it has led to new, fresh thinking about the future of food and farming.

But as well as opportunity Brexit brings challenges and risks.

It is impossible to emphasise just how much is at stake for farming during and after the Brexit negotiations.

Agriculture has been more exposed to EU law-making over the past four decades than any other sector of the economy.

80% of all UK food legislation has been negotiated at EU level and many British farmers are heavily dependent on EU farm subsidies for survival.

- 40% of the entire EU's budget is related to agriculture and rural development

- About 80% of our agricultural exports currently go to the European Union

- 94% of farming imports and 97% of exports are with countries with which the EU has negotiated a free trade agreement

So we need to negotiate trade agreements that work for British farming, while recognising and protecting the high standards of food safety and animal welfare that consumers expect – frictionless, tariff-free trade and new markets that exploit this proud record of production standards.

Future trade deals should not undercut British farming in a race-to-the-bottom Brexit on food standards and animal welfare. We must not allow the UK to become swamped by imports of food produced to lower environmental, social and animal welfare standards than those of UK producers.

Food and farming should be a clear strategic priority for the Government, one of the cornerstones of a broad industrial strategy. There remains a clear need for a food and farming plan to grow more, buy more and sell more British food.

We have an opportunity to export even more, putting farming at the heart of our future as a great trading nation.

But the government's vision for the UK as a leading free-trade nation with low tariff barriers to the outside world does not sit easily with its declared commitment to high quality and welfare standards in British farming. Combining and delivering these two objectives will be a considerable challenge.

But what is at stake here if the UK gets this wrong is far more than the interests of one industry. It's our nation's food security, nutrition, environment and public health.

I was so pleased to

lead Labour's celebration of Back British Farming Day earlier this year – celebrating and recognising the value and contribution of farming to the UK.

British farming provides jobs, driving rural growth both in food production and in diversified industries such as renewable energy and tourism.

And this really cannot be emphasised enough – that farming provides the bedrock for the UK's largest and most thriving manufacturing industry – the £108bn food and drink manufacturing sector.

I would like to assure you all here today that my team and I are working hard to emphasise the importance of British food and farming and drive it up the Brexit agenda, to provide the prominence, attention and thinking time that it deserves.

Farming is an integral part of Labour's vision of a fairer society, one that tackles the increasing social ills of food poverty, poor diets, environmental degradation and inequality.

The creation of our new British agricultural policy must be ambitious. It should aim to establish a new deal with society – a consensus on what the modern-day farming industry can deliver for the economy, for rural communities, for consumers and for the environment.

Just as the Government must ensure the nation has a secure energy supply, it must ensure there is a safe, affordable supply of food in the long term. Change cannot be left to market forces alone, as farming is critical to our nation's food security and stewardship of the natural environment. It requires Government leadership and support.

And I believe that government needs to do more to help and encourage consumers to buy British food. The UK produces some of the best food in the world, with the highest standards of safety and animal welfare and we should celebrate that but currently only 61% of the food eaten in Britain is produced here.

But if we are going to encourage consumers to buy British better food labelling is vitally important. For our farmers to be able to compete fairly within any new trade deals product labelling must be clear and unambiguous so that people

know

exactly what they are buying – including the country of origin and method of production. And we can build trust by continuing to promote accreditation schemes such as Red Tractor, which will become increasingly important.

We

should also do more to promote the wide range of regional and speciality food producers – both at home and abroad. In my home county of Cumbria we run the very successful ‘Taste of Cumbria’ food festivals and value is added to, for example, Lakeland Herdwick lamb by demonstrating its quality and authenticity in the labelling. We should look to develop this once we are out of the EU in order to promote our excellent products right across the globe.

Labour

is committed to increasing the powers and remit of the Groceries Code Adjudicator, to reinstating a form of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme

and to consider how future farming payments could be reconfigured around environmental and public good.

As a member of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Rural Business I met with other members to press the Minister that the review of the

GCA should increase her powers and remit.

We held sessions in parliament where farmers and producers could give evidence anonymously so as to not prejudice their businesses in any way.

The shared message that came from witnesses was that an extended GCA is necessary to:

- Support transparent trading relationships along the supply chain that give farmers predictability of income and the ability to make informed decisions about their businesses
- Prevent farmers bearing disproportionate risk, which can send a competent business bankrupt
- Support sustainable supply chains that produce high quality for the consumer

So the GCA needs to have the power to ensure that farmers are paid a fair price and tackle unfair trading, while at the same time ensuring that food is affordable. In many areas we seem to have lost the relationship between the price paid to the farmer and the price set by the retailer and this

situation is not helped by the volatility of the market in, for example, the dairy industry. I’m sure that consumers would not expect fresh produce to be sold at below the cost of production.

The issue of farm labour is critical and immediate. UK farmers and food processors and producers need to have access to the labour market in Europe. And labour that is properly qualified to do the job.

Findings from a recent NFU labour survey showed the number of seasonal workers coming to work on UK farms has dropped 17%, with more than 1,500 unfilled vacancies in one month alone.

Without access to this labour resource, both the agricultural sector and food manufacturers will face severe difficulties.

A lack of labour will lead to a number of consequences for UK agriculture, including produce left to waste, the movement of investment and operations out of the UK, and the likelihood of price inflation for consumers.

And we also need to invest in skills, training and the exchange of knowledge.

The CLA has argued for a focus on building a high-tech, efficient and resilient industry with opportunities for all, developing a future pipeline of talent. Young people are leaving the countryside; with the average age of a British farmer now at 59.

We need to examine freeing up the market to develop new lower-cost ways for a people from a wider range of ages and backgrounds to enter food growing and farming.

This is essential if we are to enable a new generation to enter farming affordably and create the pipeline of talent needed for a sustainable future for the sector.

I was delighted to attend the awards ceremony for agriculture and land management earlier this year at Newton Rigg College near Penrith and was really impressed with the students' achievements.

We need to look at what skills and training the different sectors need for the future and how we encourage on-going development amongst those already working in the industry and selling agriculture as an exciting and fulfilling career to the younger generation.

I'll now look at some of the challenges we face when considering what could replace the Common Agricultural Policy.

We

know that in many cases the profitability of farms is too dependent on direct payments from the CAP. But, because of the huge diversity in farming and the volatility in many areas, we will need to consider how to support farms in becoming more resilient while at the same time mitigating against this volatility.

We are still developing our thinking and policy on what should replace the CAP, but we believe that a future payments system must broadly seek to do the following:

- We need to look at how we target support to farmers who provide the most amount of public good but may struggle to compete in the market through no fault of their own – e.g. a Lakeland hill farmer

- Add transparency – any future system must be transparent as well as relevant, easily accessible and cost-effective.

- Reward environmentally sustainable practice and environmental stewardship – for example management of habitat, of natural resources, of the cultural and historical landscape for the benefit of all of us. We can promote tourism as part of this.

- Support flood mitigation through land management – extreme rainfall has become significantly more serious over the last 20 years and we need to look at developing programmes which support farmers in slowing the flow of water through catchments, and for storing water in times of flood.

- Encourage technological innovation. This is an area I've been discussing with the NFU looking at how investment could meet the broad aims of improving resource efficiency, improve animal health and welfare, manage disease and add value. It could also be used to encourage investment in machinery and software but at the same time there has to be a commitment to fully connect every business to a fast broadband network.

- Support rural communities – farming is central to the economy and sustainability of our rural communities and the contribution that farming makes should be recognised.

We are still working on this in close collaboration with farmers, environmental

stakeholders and local communities to develop our ideas so that any new system that we propose will enable profitable and sustainable farming businesses that support a dynamic rural economy.

I was interested to read the CLA's report that was launched earlier this week on how to improve the profitability of farming and forestry. It brings the kind of vision, determination and positive thinking that we need to see right across the sector.

The report is absolutely right in saying that productivity gains should not be at the expense of the environment. Farming practices that produce more in the short term but over time destroys its own assets – the land and soil – is not economic progress and leaves the industry less resilient to cope with challenges such as climate change and extreme weather.

Over the coming months the Labour shadow Defra team will be working closely with stakeholders in farming and agriculture to make sure we get our response to the government's Agriculture Bill right.

Farmers have been telling me that they need more certainty about the future and we will be doing all we can to help secure as much certainty and direction for the sector as possible to allow your forward planning.

And I hope that we can strengthen our relationship so that over the coming months we can work together.

With your expertise, your experience and your energy an ambitious and progressive vision for farming and food can be developed and taken to government.

Thank you.

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# Simon Stevens has rightly set out the stark implications of failing to give the NHS the funding it needs – Jonathan Ashworth

**Jonathan**

**Ashworth, Labour's Shadow Health Secretary**, responding to NHS England Chief Executive Simon

Stevens' speech to the NHS Providers Conference, said:

"Simon

Stevens has rightly set out in the clearest terms the stark implications of failing to give the NHS the funding it needs on the eve of its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

"Unless the

Chancellor comes forward with an urgent and sustainable funding package, waiting lists will climb further to 5 million, and the 18 week target will potentially be permanently abandoned. Hospitals will fail to meet ambitions on

staff retention and recruitment, while mental health services and cancer services will deteriorate.

"Theresa

May simply cannot carry on ignoring the dismal consequences for patient care of

refusing to properly fund the NHS.

"Theresa

May and Philip Hammond must now take these heavyweight warnings seriously and in the upcoming Budget finally provide the investment our NHS now desperately needs."