

News story: Royal Marines to be restructured in line with growing Royal Navy

With billions being invested into a growing Royal Navy, the Royal Marines have decided to restructure to better balance skills across the force.

The move comes as part of the Navy's regular review of its structure to ensure that it suits the operational demands of the 21st century, and is appropriately balanced for the future with 400 more personnel, more ships, new aircraft carriers and submarines entering front line service.

Around half of the 200 roles being repurposed are backroom function roles, like drivers and administrative staff. Freeing these up to be carried out by Reservists and civilians will enable skills to be used more appropriately across the Navy.

The other half of the restructure comes as part of plans developed by 3 Commando Brigade, who are responsible for the deployment of the Marines, who decided it would be beneficial to the Corps to make 42 Commando a specialised Maritime Operations unit.

A Royal Marines Commando performs roles ranging from maritime operations like countering piracy and protecting our trade routes across the globe, to land-based operations like warfighting and peace-keeping. Under this re-balancing, 42 Commando will become the specialised, go-to unit for maritime operations – meaning some of their posts, like heavy weapons specialists, can be reallocated across the Navy.

No Royal Marines will be made redundant as a result of today's news – when those in the roles which have been identified for repurposing leave, their position will simply transfer to a different area of the Navy.

The First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Philip Jones, said:

As someone who has worked with Royal Marines at every stage of my career, most notably when commanding the Amphibious Task Group from RM Stonehouse, I know how vital their role is as the UK's premier high readiness contingency force. However, as First Sea Lord, I also know we must adapt to meet the challenges of a dangerous and uncertain world.

The Government is investing in a new generation of ships, submarines and aircraft. As we introduce these capabilities into Service, we must ensure we have the right mix of skills across each of the Navy's Fighting Arms to optimise how we use them, and the Commandant General and I have sought to find the right balance between sailors and marines in responding to this challenge.

The Royal Marines remain bound in to every part of the Royal Navy's future, from conducting sophisticated operations from the sea, at a variety of scales and against a range of threats, using our new aircraft carriers as a base, to leading the Service's development of information warfare. They will continue to be as vital to the Defence of the Realm in the years ahead as they have been for the past 350.

Commandant General Royal Marines, Major Robert Magowan, said:

As Royal Marines, we pride ourselves in being the first to understand, the first to adapt and the first to overcome. So as we confront a changing and unstable security environment, we are defining an exciting future for our Corps, which will ensure that we remain as relevant tomorrow as we do today.

With a £178 billion equipment plan backed by a rising defence budget, this year sees the first of two giant 65,000-tonne Queen Elizabeth Class Aircraft Carriers arrive in Portsmouth, the first of the Navy's five next generation patrol ships begin her sea trials and the fourth Astute Class submarine enter the water.

A computer generated image (CGI) of one of the two new Royal Navy aircraft carriers. Crown Copyright.

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A computer generated image (CGI) of one of the two new Royal Navy aircraft carriers. Crown Copyright.

Jeremy Corbyn's speech to the Federation of Small Businesses

—
CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY-

Jeremy Corbyn, Leader of the Labour Party, in a speech to the FSB in London today, said:

"I want to start by saying thank you. Thank you for inviting me here today and for that introduction.

But,

most of all, to thank you all the Federation of Small Businesses for the role you are playing in holding the government to account. Not least in forcing the retreat last month, when, for now at least, they had to drop their 22 percent increase in the National Insurance rate for the self-employed.

You are respected on all sides of politics because you speak with the authority of your members; the sole traders, the entrepreneurs, the small businesses and you are effective, because you reflect the views of those members.

Like the best trade unions, when you say something, people listen and if they don't? Well, just ask the Chancellor.

Labour does not believe that extra tax burdens should be falling on low and middle income workers, whether self-employed or directly employed.

And we also believe that if we are to restore faith in politics, then politicians have to stick by their word.

That means not breaking a clear manifesto pledge the Conservatives made that they would not increase National Insurance.

The Government's decision to push a £2 billion tax rise on low and middle-earner self-employed broke that pledge. They hoped no one would notice. Well, we noticed. You noticed.

And what we have also noticed is that, while most of us have had to swallow seven years of austerity, some are being given hand-outs on an extraordinary scale.

George Osborne, and now Philip Hammond, have given the term 'welfare state' a whole new meaning – welfare for the wealthiest.

The Tories have cut the corporation tax rate for bigger companies, from 28 per cent in 2010 to 17 per cent by 2020.

Over the six years from 2016 to 2022, the total giveaway, the total revenue lost to the public purse, will be £63.8 billion, according to the government's own

figures.

And

let's be clear, all of that giveaway will go to big companies.

Remember,

the corporation tax rate for small companies in 2010 was already, under the previous Labour Government, set at 21 per cent.

That

means that by 2020, big companies will have had an 11 percentage point decrease

in corporation tax, while the rate for small companies will have been cut by only four percentage points.

And

the differential between big and small companies will have been eliminated completely, with both on 17 per cent.

So,

there has clearly been a bias here in the approach of the Government.

A

bias against small business.

A

bias that was evident in the attempt to increase national insurance for the self-employed.

A

bias that holds back hard working people who want to make a living independently.

A

bias against entrepreneurs who want to start and build new businesses; creating jobs, innovating and helping to make Britain richer. Not for the very rich few, but for the many.

Labour

will have a different bias.

Yesterday

we reaffirmed our commitment to a Real Living Wage.

Low

pay and in-work poverty don't just hurt those directly affected, they mean more

public money going on in-work benefits instead of investing in our future.

And

they mean fewer pounds going to your businesses.

We know that some of you will struggle to pay your staff more. That's why we have promised additional support for your businesses, and are looking at expanding and reforming the Employment Allowance.

We will support those striving to make a living through self-employment and in small businesses, not just because it is the right and fair thing to do, but because millions of jobs and the future of our country depends on it.

Labour's business team, our shadow Business Secretary, Rebecca Long Bailey, and our Shadow Minister for Small Business, Bill Esterson, have been working hard on this.

They, and the Shadow Chancellor, John McDonnell, tell me how important their relationship is with you, how valued your voice and insights are.

So, I want to share with you today the approach that will guide our relationship and then explain how I see it working in practice.

Firstly, Labour believes in fair taxation. So our policies will follow two cast-iron principles forged in our values:

Any tax rises will fall most heavily on those with the broadest shoulders and will be a something-for-something deal. When we ask for more contributions we'll be clear about what you're getting in return.

Secondly, we want to level the playing field to ensure that no one is being held back due to unfair advantages of the economically and politically powerful using their entrenched positions to hold back the enterprise of others.

And, finally, we will invest to give you the best platform to succeed, with world-leading infrastructure: digital, transport and energy, as well as better access to growth capital, whether it is through loans or equity.

Let me look at those points in more detail.

When I say any tax rises will fall on the broadest shoulders, I want to make it clear today that we will not raise the small business corporation tax rate.

What

we cannot accept, however, is that it is right or necessary for big companies to have been given a 40 per cent cut in their corporation tax rate, at a time when others are suffering austerity and the budget deficit remains out of control.

Britain

has the lowest corporation tax in the G7, now by quite some distance.

So,

corporation tax for bigger companies will move closer to the levels of other major economies.

But

it will be a something-for-something deal, we will use that extra revenue to invest in skills.

Employers

are telling us that they need a more skilled workforce and that they struggle to recruit.

Which

is hardly surprising when, in the last seven years, the further education budget has been cut by one-seventh, or when the adult skills budget has been cut in half

And

last year, as student maintenance grants were abolished, university applications fell.

We

need a highly skilled workforce, and a state that can re-train and re-skill people as the economy evolves.

That's

why Labour has set out a vision for a National Education Service, from early years to lifelong learning.

Because

we know that education matters, whether it's high quality universal childcare that allows you the time and space to start and develop your business.

Or

whether it's the chance to re-train later in life; opportunity needs to be there for everyone.

And

today too many people and too many businesses are being held back by the lack of investment in training.

Which

leads me to the second element of our approach, a level playing field.

What

people running small businesses tell me is that they are fed up with there being one rule for them and another for big business.

Whether

it's tax avoidance, late payment to suppliers or business rates – giant companies seem to be privileged and sometimes a law unto themselves.

No

one likes paying tax. We don't wake up in the morning thinking, "Oh, I really must pay some more tax today". But most of us know that taxes are essential to a civilised society and a successful economy.

Business

needs skilled workers and good infrastructure. People who run businesses also have families who need the health and caring services their taxes fund.

So

most of us play by the rules. We do our tax returns, as you know, mine seems to attract more attention than most but that's okay, transparency is important.

But

some people don't play by the rules, they use all sorts of elaborate ruses like shell companies or tax havens or offshore trusts to side step the rules.

My

local independent coffee shop can't spend thousands on accountants to avoid paying tax but a big chain of coffee shops can and does.

And

small businesses can't make sweetheart deals with the tax authorities like Google or Vodafone seemingly manage to.

So

when we say we will clamp down hard on tax avoidance and legislate to close loopholes, that's not anti-business, it's anti-cheating.

So

we will give HM Revenue & Customs more powers and more resources and I can announce today we'll save them one onerous burden, and I hope it's one you'll approve of too.

In

last week's budget, the chancellor bowed to pressure by delaying the implementation of quarterly reporting for small businesses by one year.

That's

not good enough; Labour is against small businesses having to report quarterly.

It's a burden, a distraction, that will hold entrepreneurs back.

Labour

will scrap year quarterly reporting for small businesses with a turnover of less than £83,000, to help you focus on growing your business.

And

we will tackle another problem that I know is a burning issue and overdue for attention.

Small

businesses are owed £26 billion in late payments.

Cash

is king for any business and big companies are managing their cash by borrowing

– interest free – from their suppliers.

Some

of the biggest names in business are holding huge cash piles that don't actually belong to them.

And

I'm going to name some names based on the reports of a reputable credit agency:

Marks

and Spencer pays its suppliers 72 days over terms

E.ON

– the German energy provider, currently pays 78 days over terms

Capita

– a major player in the public sector, pays 82 days over terms

Vodafone

– 84 days over terms

BT

Group – pays 89 days

National

Grid – a whopping 119 days

And

I could go on.

But

note this is 'over terms' and the terms they impose could be 45 days or 60 days

to start with. So, we're talking about big companies paying their suppliers, in

some cases, six months or more after they have done the work or delivered the goods.

It's
a national scandal.

And
it's not just late payment.

There
was also the case of Premier Foods charging companies to be on their supplier
list

And
of John Lewis demanding a 'rebate' from suppliers when their products sold
well, a kind of penalty for success.

And
I gather from what you have told me there are many instances of big companies
refusing to pay an invoice in full and then saying 'sue me' as if small
businesses have the time and money to fight legal battles against the
commercial giants.

We
will look at all of this because late payment and the other practices I've
mentioned are stopping businesses from growing and causing thousands to go
bust
every year.

Late
payment kills jobs and holds back economic growth.

Bill
Esterson has been doggedly pursuing this issue in Parliament and I am keen
that
we work with you to tackle this issue

There
are different options to assess.

Government,
through procurement, can ensure that anyone bidding for a contract pays its
own
suppliers within 30 days. It's normal now to ask for accounts and credit
checks, so this would involve no extra paperwork.

For
the private sector, we've been looking at the Australian system that involves
binding arbitration and fines for persistent late payers.

It
needs to be a system with teeth. A system that delivers a fair deal for small
suppliers

And
we want to work with you to get this right.

No
small business owner should have to go begging to the banks, or even
re-mortgaging their homes, just because a customer considers themselves too
big
and too important to pay on time.

But
let me send a clear message to the captains of industry today, a Labour
Government will declare war on late payment.

Alongside
that, Labour will introduce a radical reform of business rates.

The
Government's piecemeal concessions fall far short of what's needed.

And
so, in consultation with business, Labour set out five points that will
guide
our policies in government:

.
there
will be no "cliff edge" increases in rates and a fair and transparent appeals
process

.
we
will bring forward CPI indexation so that businesses aren't paying more
because
of how inflation is measured

.
we
will exclude new investment in plant and machinery from future business rates
valuation. We want to encourage, not discourage, business
investment.

.
we
will introduce more regular valuations to stop businesses facing periodic and
unmanageable hikes

.
Also,
we need fundamental reform of the business rates system ... to ease the burden
on
traditional high streets and town centres in the age of online shopping and
to
create a fairer system of business taxation.

And
that brings me to the third theme of our approach to small business namely,

investment.

Britain's infrastructure is second rate and falling even further behind other major economies.

And, frankly, this government has an abysmal record. They have failed to modernise the economy, whether it's in broadband, energy, transport or housing.

And, at the same time, they have not done enough to finance growth in the small business sector.

That's why Labour is committed to establishing a National Investment Bank with regional investment banks for every region of England.

This year, the Welsh Labour government is creating the Development Bank for Wales.

Its purpose will be to create and safeguard over 5,500 jobs a year by 2022 by providing more than £1 billion of investment support to Welsh business over that period.

This has not come out of the blue. Labour in Wales has nearly two decades' experience of working with the FSB and other business organisations.

It has taken on board your feedback about the forerunner to the development bank, Finance Wales.

And my business team at Westminster will take a keen interest in the launch of the Development Bank for Wales, and the work it does to generate growth and jobs.

The prime minister regularly accuses me of wanting to bankrupt Britain by borrowing money to fund investment.

But as every businessperson knows there is a world of difference between borrowing for capital spending and borrowing to fund the payroll and day to day trading or service delivery.

The risk of bankruptcy comes not when you borrow to invest in projects that will

deliver growth but when you give unfair tax breaks to big companies and the wealthy, when you have a big deficit and not enough money to run public services.

Labour's vision is of a richer Britain, a Britain in which hard working people are not held back.

Britain has more than five million small to medium sized businesses employing more than 15 million people; sixty per cent of the private sector workforce.

Labour is committed to creating an environment in which you can grow, through fair taxation, tough action to level the playing field, including on late payment, and through investment in skills and infrastructure.

The only thing we ask of you, as part of this deal, is social responsibility in the way you operate. Fairness in employment, attention to health and safety, safeguards for the environment, high service and product standards for your consumers.

The economy under the Conservatives is being held back by low investment, low skills, low productivity and low wages.

They believe the way for Britain to succeed is to win the race to the bottom. To become a tax dodgers' paradise, content with rising poverty, falling social mobility and the next generation worse off than the last. It's gone too far.

A productive economy requires government to have a partnership with business. Building the platform for you to succeed. While guaranteeing fairness for all.

This is a virtuous circle; good investment by government, good practice by business, good public services, funded by a productive, growing economy with fair taxation.

Your businesses suffer when public services are in crisis.

When people have to take time off to care for ill or elderly relatives, because social care is in crisis.

When
people are in too much pain to work, but still waiting for an operation.

When
our schools and colleges aren't delivering enough skilled workers.

I've
set out Labour's three principles; fair taxation, a level playing field and investment.

And
I want to add one final principle, to listen and engage with people like you, the experts in their area.

I
think we need more experts, not fewer, informing our policy and politics.

I
started by saying that I saw the FSB as a trade union; standing up for your members.

The
Party I lead, the Labour Party, is as the name suggests, a party of workers. But we're also the party of co-operatives, of entrepreneurs, of owner managers who work hard in their businesses.

And
that's why it's been a privilege to address you today.

Thank
you."

[News story: Baroness Anelay comments on Amnesty's Death Penalty report](#)

It is encouraging that there was a reported decrease in the number of executions in 2016. I welcome the fact that compared with the previous year, fewer countries imposed death sentences and carried out executions. The Government's opposition to the death penalty is clear; we condemn it in all circumstances.

It is concerning that Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have reportedly carried out 87% of the world's executions. It is also deeply troubling that the report indicates that China continues to execute in the thousands. I urge those countries – and all countries that continue to impose the death penalty

– to reconsider its use and to acknowledge its ineffectiveness as a deterrent and its inhumanity.

The global trajectory is towards abolition, with countries that retain the death penalty becoming an increasingly isolated minority. The UK supports this trend and is funding projects in a wide range of countries to promote abolition. UK Ministers and diplomats raise our objection to the death penalty and support for reform at every appropriate opportunity. The UK will continue to support the UN global moratorium on use of the death penalty as a first step towards ultimate abolition.

[Press release: UK House Price Index \(HPI\) for February 2017](#)

The February data shows an annual price increase of 5.8% which takes the average property value in the UK to £217,502. Monthly house prices have risen by 0.6% since January 2017. The monthly index figure for the UK was 114.1.

In England, the February data shows an annual price increase of 6.3% which takes the average property value to £234,466. Monthly house prices have risen by 0.8% since January 2017.

Wales shows an annual price increase of 1.8% which takes the average property value to £145,293. Monthly house prices have fallen by 0.9% since January 2017.

London shows an annual price increase of 3.7% which takes the average property value to £474,704. Monthly house prices have fallen by 0.9% since January 2017.

The UK [Property Transaction statistics](#) showed that in February 2017 the total number of seasonally adjusted property transactions completed in the UK with value of £40,000 or above decreased by 1.9% compared with February 2016. See [the economic statement](#).

Sales during December 2016, the most up-to-date HM Land Registry figures available, show that:

1. The UK House Price Index (HPI) is published on the second or third Tuesday of each month with Northern Ireland figures updated quarterly. The March 2017 UK HPI will be published at 9.30am on 16 May 2017. A [calendar of release dates](#) is available.
2. Data for the UK HPI is provided by HM Land Registry, Registers of Scotland,

Land & Property Services/Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency and the Valuation Office Agency.

3. The UK HPI is calculated by the Office for National Statistics and Land & Property Services/Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. It applies a hedonic regression model that uses the various sources of data on property price, in particular HM Land Registry's Price Paid Dataset, and attributes to produce estimates of the change in house prices each month. Find out more about the methodology used from [ONS](#) and [Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency](#).
4. The first estimate for new build average price (April 2016 report) was based on a small sample which can cause volatility. A three month moving average has been applied to the latest estimate to remove some of this volatility.
5. Work has been taking place since 2014 to develop a single, official HPI that reflects the final transaction price for sales of residential property in the UK. Using the geometric mean, it covers purchases at market value for owner-occupation and buy-to-let, excluding those purchases not at market value (such as re-mortgages), where the 'price' represents a valuation.
6. Information on residential property transactions for England and Wales, collected as part of the official registration process, is provided by HM Land Registry for properties that are sold for full market value.
7. The HM Land Registry dataset contains the sale price of the property, the date when the sale was completed, full address details, the type of property (detached, semi-detached, terraced or flat), if it is a newly built property or an established residential building and a variable to indicate if the property has been purchased as a financed transaction (using a mortgage) or as a non-financed transaction (cash purchase).
8. Repossession data is based on the number of transactions lodged with HM Land Registry by lenders exercising their power of sale.
9. For England this is shown as volumes of repossessions recorded by Government Office Region. For Wales there is a headline figure for the number of repossessions recorded in Wales.
10. The data can be downloaded as a .csv file. Repossession data prior to April 2016 is not available. Find out more information about [repossessions](#).
11. Background tables of the raw and cleansed aggregated data, in Excel and CSV formats, are also published monthly although Northern Ireland is on a quarterly basis. They are available for free use and re-use under the Open

Government Licence.

12. As a government department established in 1862, executive agency and trading fund responsible to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, HM Land Registry keeps and maintains the Land Register for England and Wales. The Land Register has been open to public inspection since 1990.
13. With the largest transactional database of its kind detailing more than 24 million titles, HM Land Registry underpins the economy by safeguarding ownership of many billions of pounds worth of property.
14. For further information about HM Land Registry visit www.gov.uk/land-registry.
15. Follow us on Twitter [@LandRegGov](https://twitter.com/LandRegGov), our [blog](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#).