

Crossrail for the North will become the foundations for a transformed Northern economy – McDonnell

Labour

will invest to transform the economy of the North – McDonnell commits Labour to delivering Crossrail for the North

Today the

Shadow Chancellor has committed Labour to delivering on “Crossrail for the North”, a series of major rail improvements across existing west-east links in the North of England.

Labour

will commit to reversing decades of underinvestment in Northern transport infrastructure that has undermined the economic potential of the north of England and help deliver 850,000 new jobs by 2050.

The

current Tory Government has failed to invest in essential electrification of Hull to Selby and other lines, and delayed electrification of the critical Manchester-Leeds Transpennine route, which is not now due for completion until

at least 2022. Labour will commit to fight alongside its mayoral candidates and

local authorities to demand that the Westminster Government brings forward the

resources needed to help unlock the £97bn of economic potential in the North.

John

McDonnell MP, Labour’s Shadow Chancellor, is expected to say:

“Labour

is absolutely committed to delivering HS3, a Crossrail for the North, starting

right here in Liverpool and connecting the great cities of the north of England.

“There is

so much potential here currently squandered by underinvestment, delays and a lack of real commitment from Whitehall.

“So with

our mayoral candidates in Manchester and Liverpool, and councils across the north, Labour will be pushing for this government to deliver.

“It’s at least a £10bn commitment from Labour to invest in the north.

“It means the journey from Manchester to Leeds will take just 25 minutes, instead of close to an hour.

“Or you could get from Liverpool to Manchester in 25 minutes.

“Crossrail for the North will become the foundations for a transformed Northern economy.”

Ends

[Press release: Capacity Market confirms guaranteed electricity security for next winter at low cost](#)

From:

First published:

3 February 2017

Part of:

Auction closes at a low price to consumers and ensures that homes and businesses have a reliable electricity supply all year round

With the conclusion of the latest round of the Capacity Market this Government continues to guarantee homes and businesses have a reliable electricity supply all year round.

The auction closed today at the low final price of £6.95kW, providing guaranteed electricity capacity at a low cost to bill payers. Having capacity guaranteed in advance protects bill payers from increases in their electricity bills.

This Government has set out exactly how electricity capacity will be guaranteed for the entirety of this Parliament. We are also making progress in decarbonising the energy system in a way that is affordable for households and businesses. Following the Government’s proposals to phase out unabated coal power generation by 2025 there is a significant reduction in the role that it will play in the Capacity Market year on year; with over 30% less

coal capacity winning agreements for 2021 than for 2018.

We are also seeing more innovative, low carbon technologies coming into the capacity mix, such as battery storage.

Energy Minister Jesse Norman said:

“Reliable power supplies are essential for businesses to thrive and succeed. Thanks to this auction, homes and businesses can have confidence in the availability of that electricity at the lowest possible cost.

“More widely, the composition of the UK’s electricity supply is now clear beyond the end of this Parliament.”

The Capacity Market auction ensures that extra electricity capacity is available in case of unexpected power station outages or peaks in demand. Agreements won in this week’s auction run from the start of winter 2017 to the beginning of winter 2018, at which point agreements already secured in previous auctions will commence to provide electricity capacity in the years up to and including 2021.

[Provisional results report](#)

Notes to Editors

- Within two working days of the Capacity Market closing, the Auction Monitor must report to the Secretary of State on whether the procedures in the Rules and Action Guidelines have been properly followed.
- The Secretary of State decides whether the auction results should stand based on the Auction Monitor’s report. Unless instructed otherwise by the Secretary of State, National Grid will then make public the Final Auction Results within eight working days of the Capacity Auction concluding.
- National Grid will then issue capacity agreement notices to those awarded a Capacity agreement within 20 working days of the auction results day.

[Speech: A Clear and Secure Democracy:](#) **[Chris Skidmore speech](#)**

Firstly, my thanks to the Electoral Commission and the National Police

Chiefs' Council for arranging and hosting today's event and inviting me to attend and speak. I am pleased to have the opportunity to outline my vision for improving electoral integrity to those who find themselves at the front line when allegations of impropriety are made.

The delivery of fair and inclusive elections in this country relies on people trusting them and participating in them. In recognition of the work you do to support and engender that trust, I am eager to start and develop conversations with you about how we can best provide support to you in your important work, to ensure the integrity of polls.

Elections and referendums, as you know, are already complex in terms of both legislation and delivery. We have been through a period of change with the recent introduction of individual electoral registration, but there is further work on registration processes ahead, and we are faced with further change in new parliamentary boundaries, implementing the recommendations from Sir Eric Pickles' review, and in preparing for the significant combination in May 2020.

I am committed to making sure that government and all of our key partners have the tools that we need to successfully meet these challenges. To ensure electors have the utmost confidence in the integrity of our democratic processes, we need to work together to address areas of vulnerability and build upon our resilient foundations.

My aim to ensure that our democracy works for everyone rests on four key pillars, which I would like to outline briefly here. The creation of equal seats will ensure that everyone's vote is treated equally, by bringing our historic Parliamentary constituencies up to date.

The government is committed to providing British citizens living overseas with Votes for Life, which is founded on the important principle that, no matter how far you travel or when you left, participating in the democratic process remains a fundamental part of being British.

I will also ensure that, across each part of the UK, Every Voice Matters. With more citizens than ever before registered to vote, I have been visiting the length and breadth of Britain to identify the barriers that stop many people from exercising their democratic right to participate. I will continue to encourage under-registered groups to engage in the democratic process.

The final key pillar that upholds the principle of a democracy that works for everyone is our commitment to building a clear and secure democracy. I think it is important to the integrity of elections in the UK that we are clear about who can vote, and that the systems used both to deliver and to participate are robust and reliable, and that area is the focus of this round table today.

I am committed to strengthening our electoral processes and enhancing public confidence in the rigour of our democracy. In doing so, I think it is important that we recognise that perceptions of fraud can have just as corrosive an impact on the robustness and reputation of our democratic

processes as evidence that illegal or corrupt practices have actually taken place.

Data recently published by the commission showed that almost a third of voters believe that electoral fraud is a problem in the UK. As Sir Eric noted in his review, "perceptions can play as big a part in undermining the system as well as actual proof of fraud".

Recognising this fact, the government's approach to tackling electoral fraud will focus on tackling illegal acts where they are (and where there is potential for them to be) committed, as well as the vulnerabilities that can give rise to the perception that our system is susceptible to fraud.

This approach is particularly important in the context of the Tower Hamlets case, the details of which I know will be familiar to all of you. This case played a large role in sparking off Sir Eric's review.

As Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government at the time of the scandal, Sir Eric was able to bring his valuable experience to his review. I agree that this case illustrates the vital importance of not taking our democracy for granted.

Tower Hamlets exposed a number of flaws and gaps in the system, and the government remains aware that the case has significant implications for local authorities across the country, across multiple areas of the electoral process.

It is sadly true to say that the alarming state of affairs witnessed in this case have not been unique. In the judgement of the election court held in Birmingham in 2004, Richard Mawrey QC said that the evidence of electoral fraud he had examined would "disgrace a banana republic".

Sir Eric was clear that the abuses seen in these cases were made possible by weaknesses that feature in the systems used throughout Great Britain. The government's response outlines a plan for addressing these vulnerabilities comprehensively, across the country.

The reforms and changes that the government will look to bring forward under this pillar are especially relevant to our meeting today, and today I would like to address the details of this pillar specifically.

The government's response to Sir Eric Pickles' review of electoral fraud was, I believe, an important first step towards the achievement of the objective of a clear, secure democracy that works for everyone. It sets out a comprehensive, challenging programme of work for strengthening our democratic processes.

The government is keen to work closely with the commission, the AEA, SOLACE, and other partners to determine how and when work will be taken forward on Sir Eric's recommendations.

I have made clear my view that fraudulent electoral activity is unacceptable on any level. We have responded positively to the large majority of Sir

Eric's recommendations. In doing so, I believe we have set out some direct and proportionate steps for addressing the vulnerabilities in our system.

Sir Eric identified areas where electoral controls could be tightened. We will look to bring forward work to make sure that voters are protected against the risks of intimidation by campaigners and activists, inside and outside of the polling station; we will seek opportunities for ending the dubious practice of postal vote harvesting by political supporters; and we will give careful consideration to the practicalities involved in using data, such as on nationality, to address fraudulent actions.

A cornerstone of the overall package, the response outlines the government's intentions to run a number of pilot schemes to test how asking voters to present a form of identification before taking their ballot paper impacts on the way elections work. We aim to run the pilots at local government elections in 2018.

We are interested in piloting both photographic and non-photographic forms of identification, which could include passports, driving licences, local travel passes, utility bills, or documents that bear voters' signatures. This will ensure that every voice can be heard.

I don't agree with the suggestion that there is a trade-off between security and turnout. Northern Ireland has successfully operated ID for over a decade, having been introduced under a Labour government.

Indeed, a lot of people wrongly believe that they can't vote without their polling card at present. If electors realise that they can vote just by turning up with some ID, it could encourage more people to vote on election day.

Our intention in introducing these pilot schemes is to close down those avenues and opportunities for fraud that can still be used by unscrupulous individuals to subvert our elections. In his review, Sir Eric noted that the absence of a requirement that voters present identification before they vote remains "a significant vulnerability" in the eyes of expert organisations; I understand that 101 cases of alleged fraud in polling stations were reported in 2016. In its December 2015 report, Briefing on electoral fraud vulnerabilities at polling stations, the Commission concluded that there "are few checks available at polling stations to prevent someone claiming to be an elector and voting in their name".

I was particularly interested to read about the case of personation in Scotland at last year's referendum; the crime was only reported because of the vigilance of a polling clerk, who recognised that an elector had already voted earlier in the day. We do not know how often this type of fraud goes unnoticed. The government takes the view that this vulnerability should be addressed and explored further, through the pilot schemes.

Tackling perceptions, as I have said, is also a key motivator for government in introducing these schemes. I agree strongly with the view that the absence of a significant amount of evidence does not mean that fraudulent practices

are not taking place.

I was pleased to read that the commission has reported a fall in 2016 in the number of alleged cases of fraud, compared to the previous year. But the true extent of fraud in Great Britain is still, largely, unknown, and we should remain wary of complacency. Voter identification measures, if explored thoroughly, can enhance public confidence in the integrity of our elections, and the schemes we intend to run are an important step to achieving this.

I am of course aware that the Electoral Commission and a number of other organisations, such as the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, have previously called for the introduction of an electoral identity card, similar to the card introduced in Northern Ireland in 2003.

We have given consideration to the commission's useful report on voter identification, which gives estimates for the cost of introducing a proof of identity scheme to UK elections, and a comparative look at the current Northern Irish system.

But we are not minded, at present, to bring forward proposals for a new, bespoke electoral identity card. Our view is that the financial and logistical obstacles outweigh the benefits of trying to pilot such a scheme in time for the 2018 local government elections. We are also conscious of the decision made in the last parliament to scrap the Labour government's plans for a national identity card.

This government has not taken any decisions on where pilots will take place, or which measures will actually be piloted. The response referred to the 18 local authority areas identified by the Commission as being most at risk of allegations of electoral fraud.

Although I recognise that some of these areas may be interested in running a pilot, in referring to them we have not, as such, earmarked them. Indeed, some of these areas will not be holding polls in 2018.

The detail of the schemes will be worked through in the coming weeks and months. We will be working hard, along with the Commission, to make sure that the approach and methodology for the pilot schemes is measured and clear, and strikes the right balance between accessibility and integrity.

It is encouraging that, in Northern Ireland, there has been no level of evidence that voters have been disenfranchised as a result of the voter identification measures adopted to increase security. And I'm sure there is a great deal that we can learn from the experiences of many other democracies around the world, including Austria, Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands, where forms of voter identification to combat fraud and strengthen integrity have already been successfully adopted.

It is vital that the pilots present government with all the information it needs so that the right decisions about the suitability of voter identification in Great Britain as a whole can be made. Our aim is to close

opportunities for fraudulent activity, and ensure that the views of legitimate voters are protected. I believe the pilots we intend to bring forward offer us an opportunity to identify proportionate safeguards against the risk of personation and other types of fraud.

I am keen to emphasise today that the pilot schemes outlined in our response, which have been the focus of much media attention in recent weeks, are just one element of a programme for electoral reform that is far wider in scope.

The government also has plans to bring forward work on recommendations that Sir Eric made in other areas, including postal voting, polling stations, registration, and legal challenges and offences.

Sir Eric drew attention to instances of intimidation and undue influence outside some polling stations in the UK. In extreme cases, such as Tower Hamlets, some voters were too intimidated to enter the polling station and exercise their democratic right.

I'm sure we all agree that such behaviour is unacceptable. The government therefore intends to explore the practical implications of strengthening the existing powers of returning officers and the police, so that such activity can be dealt with appropriately.

The response also addresses the concerns of respondents to the review about the potential for fraud around postal voting. Practical steps have recently been taken to explore how these concerns can be addressed. Ahead of the polls in May 2015, funding was made available to the local authority areas that the commission had designated as being at higher risk of fraud allegations, to support the trialling of initiatives for tackling electoral fraud. These included exploring how the secret, personal nature of the postal ballot could be enforced.

The government is confident that the current system is robust and secure; personal identifiers were introduced in 2007 and, coupled with the introduction of individual electoral registration, opportunities for large scale organised fraud in this area are largely unavailable. However, we should not be complacent, and I recognise that some aspects still need to be tightened.

Specifically, the government is keen to look at how we can stop political activists from handling complete postal ballot packs. In some elections, campaigners go round knocking on doors 'harvesting' postal votes and pressuring people to hand them over. This opens the door for unscrupulous campaigners to tamper with legitimately cast votes or apply undue pressure. Postal vote harvesting must be banned – it is a threat to free and fair elections.

Sir Eric also heard evidence that pressure had been put on vulnerable members of certain communities to cast their postal vote according to the wishes of family members. This was heard to take place most often in places where the right to vote in secrecy and independently were not respected. We cannot just ignore this because of politically correct sensibilities.

To address this issue, the government will look to extend the secrecy provisions to postal voting that already exist for voting in person, and will work closely with you to establish how this can be implemented effectively. Offences and the legal challenge process are also areas where the government is keen to bring forward reforms.

Our response agreed with Sir Eric that the maximum penalties for electoral fraud offences should be increased, and agreed to consider rewriting these offences in more readily understandable terms, to address concerns raised by many that, currently, they are not sufficiently robust or widely understood. I am confident that this is something that will assist those of you here whose job it is to apply these offences both in policing and in prosecution.

I would say, however, that many have rightly questioned why there were no criminal prosecutions in Tower Hamlets following the Election Court judgment in 2015. The court resulted in findings of corrupt and illegal practices to a criminal standard of proof, following extensive scrutiny and cross-examination in the Royal Courts of Justice.

Despite the removal of the then elected mayor for corruption, fraud remains a real threat in Tower Hamlets. Government appointed officials still administer some of the councils' functions. Indeed, following reports that the ex-mayor is to re-launch his political party, I have today written to the Electoral Commission asking them to undertake a forensic review of any application to register as a party.

The Tower Hamlets election court case only took place thanks to the brave decision of the petitioners to put their personal finances on the line. The election petitions process, which Sir Eric noted has remained largely unchanged since 1868, is also a target for our reform package.

We are minded, where possible, to bring forward changes to legislation in this area to make sure that the barriers to bringing petitions are not unduly high, and that everyone who has a legitimate interest in using the system is able to access it. We want to make sure that the democratic process is working for everyone.

In the coming weeks and months, we will outline precisely the nature and the timing of the overall programme of work we will look to bring forward. I recognise that this reform package presents a challenge, particularly in the context of the run up to May 2020. There is a clear need to avoid any adverse impacts on legitimate electors. I am eager to be inclusive in making plans for its implementation.

I think it is also important that, when discussing plans with its key electoral partners, the Government is open and honest about what can be achieved, and it is clear that we won't have legislative time to introduce a discrete electoral bill.

In the response, we have clearly outlined where, in order to bring forward change to address recommendations that need primary legislation, we will be exploring opportunities to identify an appropriate legislative vehicle. In

the response, we also outline where some of Sir Eric's recommendations can be brought forward through reinforced or stronger guidance.

I am eager to work closely with the commission on this, and have noted the helpful comments it has made on the guidance it provides in its response to our report. I am aware that the commission has already started work on this area ahead of polls in May 2017.

As I have already noted, we are all expecting 2020 to be a uniquely busy electoral year. But ahead of 2020, we have polls in the intervening years, including local elections in areas where we have previously experienced fraudulent activity and high levels of allegations.

We need to address those issues as a matter of importance. Working collaboratively with the people round this table to take forward Sir Eric's recommendations and to identify solutions will be essential so that we can ensure we have a clear and secure democracy.

Press release: Planned roadworks in Kent and Sussex: weekly summary for Monday 6 February to Sunday 12 February 2017

The following summary of planned new and ongoing road improvements over the coming week is correct as of 2 February but could be subject to change due to weather conditions or unforeseen circumstances. All our improvement work is carried out with the aim of causing as little disruption as possible.

M20 junction 4, Maidstone, Kent: junction improvement

Work by Kent County Council to improve journeys by adding an additional lane to the roundabout continues this week.

There will be full carriageway closures in both directions at the junction on Monday 6 February for 2 nights, between 9pm and 5am. A clearly signed diversion will be in place via the exit and entry slip roads at the junction.

For further information on the project, [visit Kent County Council's website.](#)

M20 junctions 3 – 5, Kent: smart motorway surveys

Work to improve journeys continue this week on the M20 between junctions 3 & 5. There will be various lane closures in both directions on Monday 6 February for 5 nights, between 8pm and 6am. Surveys are scheduled to be complete in April 2017.

M20 junctions 5 – 10, Kent: litter & gully clearance

Work to improve journeys take place this week on the M20 between junctions 5 & 10.

There will be a full closure of the junction 5 entry slip eastbound overnight on Monday 6 February between 8pm and 6am. There will be a clearly signed diversion in place via junction 4 of the motorway.

There will be a full closure of the junction 6 entry slip eastbound overnight on Tuesday 7 February between 8pm and 6am. A clearly signed diversion will be in place via junction 5 of the motorway.

There will be a full closure of the junction 6 exit slip eastbound overnight on Wednesday 8 February between 8pm and 6am. A clearly signed diversion will be in place via junction 7 of the motorway.

There will be a full closure of the junction 7 entry slip eastbound overnight on Thursday 9 February between 8pm and 6am. A clearly signed diversion will be in place via junction 8 of the motorway.

There will be a lane 2 closure on the junction 8 exit slip eastbound overnight on Friday 10 February between 8pm and 6am.

There will be a full closure of the junction 8 entry slip eastbound overnight on Saturday 11 February between 8pm and 6am. A clearly signed diversion will be in place via junction 7 of the motorway.

There will be a full closure of the junction 10 entry slip eastbound overnight on Sunday 12 February between 8pm and 6am. A clearly signed diversion will be in place via junction 9 of the motorway.

M23 Junctions 8 – 10a, South Nutfield to Crawley: smart motorway surveys

Work to improve journeys continue this week on the M23 between junctions 8 & 10a. There will be various lane closures in place in both directions overnight on Monday 6 February for 5 nights, between 8pm and 6am. Surveys are scheduled to be complete in April 2017.

A2 Darenth to Bean, Kent: carriageway resurfacing

Work to improve journeys continue this week on the A2. There will be a full closure of the eastbound carriageway at the junction of Darenth A282 on Monday 6 February for 5 nights between 10pm and 6am. There will be a clearly signed diversion route via the exit and entry slip roads. Works are scheduled to be complete in early March 2017.

A21 Tonbridge to Pembury, Kent: major improvement

Work to improve journeys on the A21 between Tonbridge and Pembury continues this week. A 40mph speed limit remains in place 24/7 between the Vauxhall interchange and the A228.

A full closure will be in place overnight between 8pm and 6am on Thursday 9 February on the southbound carriageway between Quarry Hill and Longfield roundabout and on the northbound carriageway between Longfield roundabout and Vauxhall interchange. In addition Longfield Road will be closed in both directions between Longfield roundabout and Knights Park roundabout. A clearly signed diversion will be in place via the A26, A2014, A26 and the A228.

Two way traffic lights will be in place on the A21 overnight between 8pm and 6am from Monday 6 February for three nights and overnight on Friday 10 February.

Tonbridge Road will remain closed after Pembury Hospital up to and including Longfield Road roundabout until Spring 2017. A clearly signed diversion route will be in place via the A228 and the A21.

The scheme is due to be completed in Summer 2017.

For further information [visit the scheme website](#).

A27 Pevensey, East Sussex: resurfacing works

Work to improve journeys commence this week on the A27 between the Polegate bypass, and the A259 Pevensey junction. The eastbound carriageway will be closed overnight between Monday 6 February for 5 nights, between 8pm and 6am. There will be a clearly signed diversion via the A22, A2290 and A259. Works are expected to be completed by the end of February.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[News story: Local public health intelligence online community](#)

From:

First published:

3 February 2017

Keep up to date with local health intelligence, join our community on Knowledge Hub.

Public Health England (PHE) is piloting an online space on [Knowledge Hub](#) to share information about local knowledge and intelligence products and services. Our Local Knowledge and Intelligence Service (LKIS) will run the space.

Knowledge Hub gives PHE in each geographical PHE Centre location, a way to make it easier for local partners to keep up to date with the relevant health intelligence relating to their area, and to take part in discussions.

The initial phase, focussing on knowledge and intelligence, is based on user needs identified as part of the transition work on legacy Public Health Observatory (PHO) websites.

The content includes:

- information about our local knowledge and intelligence service
- discussion forums for people working in local public health
- links to the content from old PHO websites on national archives

We have also improved content on GOV.UK about [PHE centres](#), the local presence of PHE.

If you want to join Knowledge Hub, you'll need to [open an account first](#) then find and register with your local group below:

The old local PHO websites will be:

- closed
- redirected to Knowledge Hub
- a snapshot will be on National Archives

We will be undertaking further work about transitioning national health intelligence content on the old PHO websites such as health economics, mental health, cardiovascular and child and maternal health.