



This update focuses on the work I am doing in Westminster and also covers a number of topics in relation to both my constituency work and also as Shadow Secretary of State for Transport.



These have been difficult weeks domestically and internationally. We live in deeply worrying times.

I speak of course about the poisonings in Salisbury, the chemical attack in Douma and the response thereto of

the US, UK and France.

But the glimmer of hope on the world stage is in the breakthrough in relations between North and South Korea.

Those were really encouraging scenes on our televisions of the two leaders greeting each other and engaging in what seems to be positive conversations. I'm sure the world wishes them well and that their discussions took place in the Peace House is lost on no one. It would be so wonderful to see such hopeful signs replicated elsewhere in the world.

We've had the dreadful and painful issue of anti-Semitism to contend with in our own party and its wider manifestations. It is imperative that we make it abundantly clear that there is no place for such appalling discrimination in politics or anywhere in our society.

Windrush

We've also had the heart-breaking revelations of the Windrush scandal.

This is a moment of shame for our nation. It's impossible not to be moved by the stories we've all heard. Anyone who saw my friend David Lammy's speech and then the testimonies of those living with the threat of deportation will have been moved to tears.



These victims ARE BRITISH. Some of them are elderly, some of them frail and having given a lifetime of service to our country they have been unceremoniously thrown out or threatened with deportation.

This has to be one of the most shameful episodes in recent British history and the responsible politicians have to be held to account.

The hostile environment policy we were told was to hammer down on illegal immigration. The tone and spirit was vile of itself but it has prejudiced and hurt British citizens who are fully entitled to be in their own country.

I'm afraid that this is directly related to the ratcheting up over many many decades, principally by the print media but recycled elsewhere, of the hatred, fear and mistrust of our neighbours- anyone who can be marked out as "different" - anyone who can fit the bill whether accurately or not - "the other", the foreigner, the migrant.

Those of us who enjoy, and suffer, social media will have seen the montage of Daily Mail headlines denigrating migrants and whipping up antagonism with unerring regularity at every opportunity. "You reap what you sow" has never been more apt.

That the Windrush generation came to UK at our invitation only to be denied their basic rights fills us all with horror. The other great sadness in all of this is the poor state of democracy and the lack of accountability and responsibility.

We all remember the grotesque images of the billboard vans roaming the streets of London intimidating and frightening people and deliberately making the environment as hostile as possible. In years past a Home Secretary would have fallen on her or his sword for much less than this.

But this racist campaign hasn't happened by accident. It isn't a mistake, it's deliberate Government policy. That Amber Rudd denied the existence of deportation targets only for her to be forced to admit that they were prevalent in her department, means she has deliberately lied or is totally incompetent and not in control of her departments. I think it's the latter but either way her position is untenable.

The current and former Home Secretaries Amber Rudd and Theresa May should hang their heads in shame. Perhaps by the time you read this the current incumbent will have resigned.

Perhaps this presents us with an opportunity for renewal where we as a nation change the conversation about immigration and give full recognition of those people who have lawfully come to the UK and served our country so well.



Our country has been built on immigration and we will continue to need people coming to our islands to contribute to our economy and work in our public services. We should not be backward in saying so.

Syria

Across Syria, 500,000 people have already been tragically killed in this appalling and long running war



The vast majority of Syrian deaths have been caused by bullets and bombs and of course each and every death is an utter tragedy, but undoubtedly death by chemical poisoning has a particular heinous characteristic about it.

The arguments rage about what the response should have been and what should now happen but in my view we must have a full investigation by the UN and those who are responsible have to be brought to account for their crimes against humanity.

But it is now more urgent than ever before for the world to resolve to undertake meaningful negotiations to bring about peace and a political settlement in Syria. That requires real political leadership which is sadly lacking from the world stage right now.

This is a critical moment for the world. With Putin so wedded to - and who is the real power behind the murderous regime of Assad who is so reconciled to the mass slaughter of Syria's own citizens (whether by chemical attack or otherwise) and with a President of the United States who fills the world with fear and dread with his every tweet and utterance, the time for cool and rational heads has never been greater.

For our part in the UK, we have to proceed with the greatest care. This is not some sort of game where there is a prize for the most hawkish or bellicose nation.

The consequences of getting this wrong are beyond our worst nightmares. Jeremy Corbyn said very recently that all conflicts ultimately resolve with a political solution so why on earth do we not start with that objective.

Criticism of Israel should never spill over into anti-Semitism.

The Middle East is, as it has been for seemingly time immemorial, again the tinderbox of the world.

The interventions of other nations over many decades have done nothing to secure peace in the region and at this yet again critical moment, it seems to me to be entirely ludicrous to contemplate pouring petrol onto the fire given the inevitable explosive consequences.

And again in the Middle East, we have the sickening sight of unarmed Palestinian protesters being shot and killed in Gaza by the Israeli Army.

It is quite right that there be space for legitimate criticism of the Israeli Government in its treatment of the Palestinian people, but equally it is essential that any such criticism should never spill over into anti-Semitism.

Sadly that conflation happens far too often and we must speak out against anti-Semitism wherever it raises its ugly head and when it does we as a society, and we as a Labour Party, have to take all the necessary action to challenge and defeat anti-Semitism. It is a scourge and we must drive it out.

We have to do much better than has been the case hitherto. I am therefore delighted that Jennie Formby, our new General Secretary, has made tackling anti-Semitism her number one priority and that will include the full implementation of the recommendations of Chakrabarti report.

Europe



I have no doubt that the interests of everyone in the UK, are best served by making sure that we enjoy tariff free trade with the EU.

I fear that the alternative will be devastating to us in terms of jobs and our economy. Seemingly the Government are determined to reject the proposition.

As we leave the EU, we have to put jobs and the economy first and it is reckless in the extreme that the Government are hell bent on pursuing such an unnecessary fracturing of the trading relationship with the EU.

Transport

Alongside my role as constituency MP, most of you reading his will know that I'm also Labour's Shadow Transport Minister.

I gave a speech at the Labour Party Conference on 16th Sept 2016, and again last year, where I talked about the failed privatisation of our rail services and how the franchising model is neither improving services nor giving good value to passengers.

The Tories are hanging on to that model for purely ideological reasons as passengers and taxpayers are being made to pay an ever increasing price and accept a failing service. It is a familiar story.

Labour will take control of our railways with the same confidence as other countries have shown like the Netherlands, Germany and France.

We'll put an end to Britain's rip-off railways and, as private contracts expire, the routes will return to public ownership so profits can be re-invested to improve services and hold fares down because passengers, not profit, should be at the heart of Britain's railway.

But of course three times as many journeys are made by bus than are made by train.

On Thursday, 12th April I joined Jeremy Corby at the launch of a new policy to fund free bus travel for under 25 year olds across the country.



Buses are vital for easing road congestion and air pollution, but for too long, private bus companies have run our services for profit not people. The public purse already pays 42% of the costs of providing local bus services, but deregulated private companies choose to run only the profitable services and leave councils to plug the gaps left for non-profitable but vital routes.

Young people have had a raw deal in recent years and burdening them with expensive travel costs does nothing to help. That's why I've introduced this U25 policy and it is part of wider policy framework to ensure that our transport services, our communities and our businesses by providing affordable and accessible transport for all.

As Jeremy says, "Young people deserve a break. Nearly eight years of Tory austerity have hit their incomes, their chance to buy a house and their career opportunities.

"Labour wants to help young people make the most out of life by investing in them. Our policy provides help where it is most needed.

"Young people also tend to be in lower paid, more insecure work, and they spend a higher proportion of their income on travel. Giving them free bus travel will make a huge difference to their lives."

And we'll encourage local authorities to take back control of their buses so they can provide a better and more sustainable service to young and old alike, wherever they live.

Middlesbrough Council is currently considering franchising - and the possibility of setting routes, timetables and fares but the power to embrace this opportunity currently lies with the Tees Valley Combined Authority.

They have the chance now to bring back control of our bus services to our communities, restoring and enhancing routes while investing in both our urban and rural areas so people can get around our city region to get to work, to get to our hospitals, to go shopping and enjoy their leisure.



There is a much broader case for bringing back some current privately-run companies into public ownership and it is a topic that we are going to hear more about in the coming months and years, and in particular in the run-up to the next general election.



Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell has also promised to "take back" key public services that are currently run by private companies into public ownership and provide greater scope for worker cooperatives.

This is not just bold rhetoric but a reflection of growing public opinion, what Labour Party members, our colleagues in local government and voters are telling us.

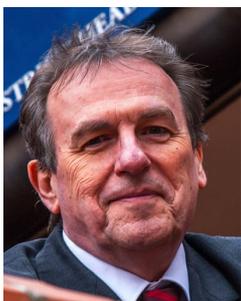
Privatisation has not, for much the greater part, brought about the benefits we were told to expect. The free-market, neo-liberal mantra of the last 30 years is being exposed for what it is, namely a device for the greedy to extract value from publicly owned assets and services to make the rich, both corporate and personal, richer. There's a better way.

Inequality



There is plenty of evidence that the gap between the rich and poor is growing. The widening gap is directly attributable to the policy choices made by the Tories in Government since 2010. These consequences are felt very much here in Middlesbrough and across the Tees Valley.

It is up to us in the Labour and Trade Union family across Tees Valley working with our Mayor and Council Leaders to press for and ensure that the Tees Valley Combined Authority utilises the powers and resources that are available to address the pressing needs of this area and make the right investments that make a real difference to local lives and livelihoods.



Cleveland Police Rated "Good"

Congratulations must go to Cleveland Police having been assessed as a "Good" Force for 2nd year running.

Barry Copping is doing a terrific job as our Police and Crime Commissioner despite the swingeing budget cuts.

How a Government thinks, and how the Tory MP from Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland thinks, that being 500 officers down isn't a problem that pushes our officers and staff to the limit and puts immense strain on our communities, is quite frankly beyond me.

And to add insult to injury Simon Clarke MP has the audacity to blame the Police for the consequence of his Government's underfunding. As they say, YCMIU!



So we currently have a police service doing a good job in all the circumstances and dedicated professional Fire Fighters tasked with dealing with the exceptional risks in our area both domestic and industrial, despite having to work with resources which are far too stretched.

Our local authorities are investing heavily in new infrastructure and projects, bringing in world class companies and quality jobs while looking ahead to improving prosperity for our citizens.

Labour wants to enable them to do that well and bridge the gaps the private sector is not best placed or incapable of doing.

Our health service, social care, our schools and children's services are struggling but this Government is simply in denial about what this means for people in their daily lives.

So, it is time for change and we need to prepare for a Labour government to look after the national interest with a fiscal and regulatory grip on vital public services and core industries, across the country and locally and in ways that, first and foremost, puts people before profits.

Whenever the Prime Minister calls the election we will be ready

Middlesbrough Railway Station Master Plan

The Middlesbrough Railway Station Master Plan is hugely significant for our town but it is also a symbol of Labour's ambitions locally as well as manifesting our vision for integrated public transport systems.



The new station complex and transport hub symbolises the importance of public transport and the need for investment in modern, safe and joined up transport links that move commuters, visitors, students and business users to where they need to be across the Tees Valley and further afield.

My belief is that those links will improve and provide better value for travellers as key routes are brought back into public ownership under the next Labour Government.

The Consultants BDP have done some stunning visionary work that not only sees the station restored to its 19th century splendour (including the southern Zetland Road elevation that I was pleased to re-open just a few days ago) and the improved usage of the concourse and booking hall - much as the architect originally intended when the station as first designed.

Transformationally, they present a 21st century northern European City façade out onto Bridge Street that fits entirely with our European City aspirations and opens out into the emerging cityscape of Middlehaven. It's an absolutely breathtakingly impressive proposal.



What the entire proposal presents is a 21st century transport hub that is fit for purpose. This will be a game changer for Middlesbrough and the wider Tees Valley economy.

So I heartily congratulate Middlesbrough Council, the Mayor Dave Budd his fellow Councillors and the superb officers who have joined with me in driving driven this initiative forward and for the commitment that the Council has made to secure the achievements to date.

Top 10 Small City Ranking for Middlesbrough

On another upbeat theme, Middlesbrough's ambitious approach to social and economic regeneration were boosted when listed in the top 10 of small cities in Europe in a report titled European Cities and Regions of the Future 2018/19.



The report was compiled by fDi magazine which looked at potential for long term foreign direct investment.

As Mayor Dave Budd said: "Middlesbrough has a rich history of industry, innovation and pioneering exploration, and we're building on that in the 21st Century with a booming city centre economy, burgeoning digital and creative sectors and a thriving university.

"This recognition further underpins our potential for global investment, and marks Middlesbrough out as a beacon of ambition, regeneration and prosperity".

He went on to say "It is great to see us now being recognised for our city-scale economic ambitions beyond the UK's borders".

As we head towards Brexit, that needs to be borne in mind.

MP SURGERIES DATES

My forthcoming surgeries for Middlesbrough

Constituents will be between **4pm and 6pm** on the following dates:

Friday, 11th May 2018

Friday, 8th June 2018

Friday, 13th July 2018

These will be held in the Constituency Office, Unit 4 Broadcasting House, Newport Road, Middlesbrough, TS1 5JA

Attendance is by appointment only at 15 minute intervals.



Please telephone **01642 246574** or email: **info@andymcdonaldmp.org** for an appointment.

Also note that I have a fully staffed office and it is very likely they can help you with an enquiry or problem so please ask to speak to a member of staff initially.

