



Tata Steel Job Losses



The announcement by Tata Steel to cut 750 jobs at its plant in Port Talbot is a devastating blow to the workforce, their families and the wider town. On the day it was announced I called for the Secretary of State for Business, Skills and Innovation to answer an urgent question on the floor of the House and issued the following statement:

“I deeply regret today's announcement. The Port Talbot steel works is the beating heart of our economy, and of our community. Our thoughts are with those who will be most directly affected by this terrible news, and we must now do all we can to rally around them and their families.

I have been pressing the government for several months to roll up its sleeves and take action on the dumping of Chinese steel, the extortionate business rates and the unhelpful procurement policies that are major road-blocks for the steel industry. Unfortunately, all we have heard from the Secretary of State and his team are warm words and excuses.

It is now absolutely imperative that we see action. Those road blocks must be removed, and they must be removed swiftly.

Moreover, we also need a clear commitment from the government in terms of support to those who will be made redundant as a result of today's announcement. What measures will the Secretary of State be putting in place to ensure that they will be receiving adequate financial support, and also assistance in finding new jobs?

I will keep pressing the government on these points, and will also continue to support Community Union and Tata Steel, who are working closely together to ensure that the Port Talbot plant withstands this storm, and goes forward to a brighter future.”

Warm Words But Frozen Actions

In what was a big week for steel, albeit for the wrong reasons, I secured and opened a debate on the future of the UK steel industry in Westminster Hall.

The steelworks are the beating heart of the economy and the community in Port Talbot, and the job losses will affect not just those being made redundant, or those in connected industries, but their families, their friends and the entire community.

The debate was my opportunity to hold Government Ministers to account and put pressure on them to act immediately to support those who have lost their job and support the steel industry to prevent further job losses. They must act now.

I reiterated the calls I have been making all along: for changes in UK business rates, which are up to 10 times higher than those of many of our European competitors; compensation for energy-intensive industries which has still not materialised; introduce guidelines that properly recognise social issues, local value for money and local content in projects with a major steel component; action on dumping of Chinese steel on the British market, which is the greatest challenge facing the British steel industry; not to grant China market economy status; and the need for a long term industrial strategy.

The Government have talked a big game, but their warm words have been matched by frozen actions. If they do not act, my community will pay the price for generations to come. <http://bit.ly/1QoywQ2>





Urgent Action To Sustain A Steel Industry In Britain Is Of The Highest National Priority

Following the announcement of job losses an urgent debate was held in the House and I challenged the Secretary of State:

I assure the Minister that the people of my constituency are listening carefully to what is being said today. I also assure her that there is palpable anger and frustration among my constituents. The claimed action on energy has still not been implemented. The claimed action on procurement amounts to so-called open advertising, while Hinkley Point has no British steel. The Government use the EU as an excuse for delay, while being China's chief cheerleader in Europe.

Is it not clear to the Minister that urgent action to sustain a steel industry in Britain is of the highest national priority? No more excuses, dodges or delays. Will the Government confirm here and now that they will not support market economy status for China? Will the Government immediately establish a strong, long-term steel strategy with Tata and the unions? If they do that, there is a future; if they do not, there will be a wasteland. <http://bit.ly/1ZypBff>

Why it's time to pull together to safeguard 'truly iconic' Port Talbot steelworks

Western Mail

Anyone who's ever driven up or down the M4 between Cardiff and Swansea will have seen it – a vast industrial complex, with the two blast furnaces towering over the rest of the works, and the town of Port Talbot and the stunning Aberavon beach stretching off into the horizon.

The Port Talbot steelworks is truly iconic, representing as it does the past, present and future of the Welsh and British steel industries. Employing around 4,000 workers directly, and providing the basis for thousands more jobs through its supply chain and spin-off businesses, Port Talbot is the largest steel works in the UK, and it is no exaggeration to say that it's the beating heart of the economy in my constituency.

The men and women of the Port Talbot works make the finest steel that money can buy, steel that is used for everything from our roads, railways and bridges to our houses and cars, and to the armoured vehicles that play such an important part in supporting our armed forces.

It's also no exaggeration to say that the Port Talbot steelworks is facing huge challenges, and that the entire town is deeply concerned about the future.

The British steel industry has been hit hard by a perfect storm of the dumping of Chinese steel, crippling energy bills and the global economic down-turn. Add to this the fact that this Tory government has utterly failed to do its bit to stand up for steel, and you've got all the ingredients for a crisis. It is 10 minutes to midnight for the British steel industry, and for the Port Talbot works.

It's now time for Tata Steel, the workforce, the trade unions and the government to pull together, take the hard choices that have to be taken, and to come up with a turn-around plan.

It will be painful, but the alternatives are too terrible to contemplate. Families, households and entire communities across South Wales depend on the Port Talbot works.

This is about more than jobs and money, it's about the world-class skills and capabilities that will be lost forever unless all the key players dig deep and hold their nerve, so that we can build a better future, together.

<http://bit.ly/1ORRltH>



Potentially An Agenda About Dumping

Intervening in the Westminster Hall Debate I raised the prospect of an agenda to Chinese dumping:

'We understand, of course, that the Chinese economy needs to grow, and China has every right to do that, but does my hon. Friend agree that potentially there is an agenda about dumping? That agenda is to dump the steel, drag the price down, kill the British steel industry and, as soon as that has happened, move in and put the prices up: profits go back up and we are nowhere to be found.' <http://bit.ly/1nq4cJJ>

Commissioner To Stand Up For British Interests

In Parliament I called for the British Commissioner to stand up for British interests and make it absolutely clear that the British Government will not support market economy status for China.

<http://bit.ly/1nBmTtG>

Leave No Stone Unturned In Fight For Steel

I urged the Secretary of State for Wales to arrange an urgent cross party meeting with Sajid Javid to address the global headwinds affecting the steel industry in Wales, ensuring no stone is left unturned. <http://bit.ly/1l8ZSfM>

Steel Media Appearances

It has been a busy start to the year with the future of the steel industry leading the headlines. I have been raising the issues surrounding the Port Talbot plant on Sky News, Newsnight, Daily Politics, BBC Radio Wales, BBC Radio 2, ITV Wales and Channel 5.



Government Asleep At The Wheel

Problems in the steel industry have been long established but in the past four years we have seen a total absence of action from the Government. <http://bit.ly/1nBpwf8>

Steel Industry Is Asking For Level Playing Field

In the Opposition Day Debate I raised the issue of smart regulation and proactive Government intervention to help create a level playing field for the steel industry and combat Chinese dumping. <http://bit.ly/1WaReLx>

Government's Abject Failure To Tackle The Steel Crisis

Before Christmas the Business, Innovations and Skills committee released a [report](#) on its findings on how the Government responded to the steel crisis. I released the following statement:

'I welcome this Select Committee report, that is absolutely right in its assessment of the government's abject failure to tackle the steel crisis. It is a scandal that steel producers the length and breadth of the UK have been raising concerns for years, and but their words have been falling on deaf ears.

The recent announcement from the European Commission on state aid clearance for the Energy Intensive Industries Compensation package was certainly welcome, but it was also long overdue. The government acknowledged the need for compensation in 2011, so why on earth didn't it simply make the package available and secure state aid clearance retro-actively? Sajid Javid and Anna Soubry like to blame Brussels for all our troubles, but the fact is that every other EU government shoots first and answers questions later, so why don't we?

The same goes for dealing with the dumping of Chinese steel. The government of every other steel-producing country in the EU steps in to protect their industry from dumping, so why don't we? Why is the British government still blocking proposals to decrease the amount of time it takes to register a dumping case?

The answer is that this government is driven by a laissez-faire ideology, and a blind belief that 'the market is always right'. But sometimes the market fails, and when it does it's government's job to level the playing field. The truth is that the rot set in during the Coalition Government, and if anything things have worsened since May, as this report so rightly points out.'



News from the Commons

There Is No Such Thing As A Soft Brexit

I challenged the Attorney General on what an exit from the EU would look like in the chamber. It would not be a slow withdrawal but on announcing its intention to withdraw from the European Union, the withdrawing state will automatically be excluded from all meetings of the European Council and, if agreement is not reached within two years, the withdrawing state will be automatically excluded from the negotiated terms.

<http://bit.ly/1WbWGgY>

More Long-Termism Needs To Be Built Into The UK's Corporate Culture

I highlighted the need to use the attempted hostile foreign take-over of AstraZeneca by Pfizer's as a case for reform of the Companies Act 2006, so that we see far more long-termism built into the UK's corporate culture and a move towards investing in innovation, R and D, and skills.

<http://bit.ly/1OtLdV0>

Warm Words Will Not Stop Global Warming

When the Energy Bill returned to the Commons for the Lords I took the opportunity to raise with the Minister the damaging effect it's prevarication over granting approval was having on the Swansea Bay Lagoon project. <http://bit.ly/1lrm451>

I also spoke in the debate about how the measures in the Bill are creating uncertainty which is undermining our ability to reach our energy targets. We have seen uncertainty over the feed-in-tariffs for solar projects, axing the carbon capture and storage programme and now further uncertainty is being injected into the issue of carbon capture and storage and wind farms with the early closure of the renewable obligation. The Government is slashing vital support for clean energy.

The climate challenge cannot be met by the politics of now. It cannot be met by short-term thinking and internal party management. There has to be a collaborative approach between business and Government. At the heart of that, there has to be an environment of certainty. That is how we will secure investment and how we will secure jobs. Most importantly of all, it is how we will secure a sustainable future.

<http://bit.ly/1SwgjRX>

This Is An Abdication Of Responsibility

Women born in the 1950s have seen the goal posts moved for their state pension age. In 1995 the state pension age was increased to 65, bringing it inline with men, and many of these women ended up in a sliding scale of state pension ages. In 2011 the Government decided to speed up the process leaving some to wait an additional 18 months before they could access their state pensions but giving them little time to adequately plan for the changes.

During a debate in the House I called the Government's reluctance to put in place fair transitional arrangements an abdication of responsibility and called on the Government to bring a plan back to the House.

<http://bit.ly/1OPI5cC>

Access to Justice for Vulnerable People

I secured a Westminster Hall debate on the problems vulnerable people have accessing justice.

The Labour party recognises the importance of legal aid in making sure the state

does not infringe upon the liberty of its citizens, and we understand its crucial role as a tool for legal redress in family disputes. Those who traditionally benefit from legal aid—the poor and most vulnerable—have been marginalised by the policies of this Government.

The law is there to protect all citizens, and a robust justice system should make sure that justice should be afforded to all, not only those who can afford it. <http://bit.ly/1ODg7u5>





News from the Constituency

Cymmer Swimming Pool

Congratulations to Afan Valley Community Leisure on successfully putting together a plan to save Cymmer swimming pool. It was a tremendous effort from a group of dedicated local residents who have worked tirelessly to get to this point. I wish them all the best.

Constituents Reception

It was great to welcome Aberavon constituents, Gareth & Sharon Freeguard, Piotr Lesiak, Keith Priddle, Susanne Renkes and Mark Williams to Parliament for a reception with Shadow Welsh Secretary Nia Griffith MP.

On The Campaign Trail



It was great to join David Rees on the campaign trail, knocking doors in Aberavon.

Natwest Port Talbot

I recently toured the Port Talbot branch of Natwest and met with a number of local businesses who have been helped by the bank.

Surgery & Coffee Morning

I am holding my next advice surgery on Friday 5 February at 5:30pm in Bryn Village Hall. No appointment is necessary. Then on Saturday 27 February I am holding a coffee morning for residents living in Glyncorwg, Gwynfi and Cymmer at Noddfa Community Centre between 10am and 12noon.

Asylum Seeker Centre, Goytre

There has been much speculation in social media about the proposals for an asylum seeker centre in Goytre and I have raised the matter with the Secretary of State.

I have raised with him concerns over how the matter has been dealt with and a lack of local consultation. I also put the following written question to him:

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what risk assessment has been made of the proposed centre for destitute asylum seekers in Goytre.

Answered by: James Brokenshire, 14 January 2016

The premises in Goytre is one of a number of sites throughout the UK that the Home Office, along with its providers, has initially identified as potentially suitable for providing temporary reception facilities for asylum seekers. Initial assessments undertaken by the provider suggest that Goytre could meet the appropriate requirements laid out in Schedule 2 of the COMPASS contract. If the provider elects to progress this option, further appropriate assessments will be completed prior to any commercial agreements and utilisation of the site.

Funding Fair

Friday 29 January 2016, 10am-12noon
Aberavon Community Centre, Michna Street, SA12 6UH

Get funding advice from:



Hosted by **Stephen Kinnock MP**





Political Digest

Partners For A New Kind Of Growth

Before Christmas I wrote an article for Progress on the need for the Party to re-establish its pro-business credentials. This should be based on partnerships: government, business, finance and the trade union movement must work closely together, if we are to tackle the huge structural challenges facing the United Kingdom economy. <http://bit.ly/1TXVfBy>

Splits and Reshuffles—Lets Not Go There

Before Jeremy Corbyn decided to reshuffle the Shadow Cabinet I wrote an article for the Observe where I suggested now was not the time for a re-shuffle. Instead we need to concentrate on setting out our vision for the country, how we get this message across and concentrate our opposition on the Government benches. <http://bit.ly/202thbf>

Commission on Inequality in Education



Nick Clegg MP launched the Commission on Inequality in Education, which is an independent cross-party initiative that I am a Labour Commissioner on. It is examining the causes and effects of inequality in education at primary and secondary

levels in England and Wales. It will report its full findings early next year.

Initial research has revealed huge disparities in GCSE results between different regions across England and Wales – a postcode inequality.

Daily Politics

I was interviewed on the Daily Politics show on the global economic outlook. You can watch my interview here <https://t.co/N70o0U0Wvd>



Russia: A Genuine Reset

The Fabian Society published a pamphlet—Outward To The World—in December and it includes an article I have written on Russia and establishing a new relationship with them. In order to do this though we need to truly understand its history, culture, interests and foreign policy objectives.

Engaging with Russia as we would like it to be is not working, we must engage with Russia as it is if we are to achieve a transition from suspicion to comprehension, and from sabre-rattling to mutual respect. <http://bit.ly/1ZxOQno>

Launch of Labour Business



I launched 'Labour Business', the new name for Labour Finance and Industry Group (LFIG).

At the launch I spoke of the need to show that Labour is on the side of business, we are pro-business but not business as usual. In our manifesto we had many pro-business ideas—a commitment to cutting business rates, a British Investment Bank, the creation of a Small Business Administration, and resolutely pro-European—but the 'mood music' didn't work and we didn't build constructive relationships.

We must work and engage with business at a strategic level. As partners in forging a new kind of growth. <http://bit.ly/1SkMFio>

Trade Union Bill

Peers have voted for the Trade Union Bill to be considered by a Select Committee. It was a Labour motion but received Conservative and Liberal Democrat support.

Lady Smith, who led the debate said, "Our genuinely held concern is that this aspect of the bill will have a significant impact on the resources of one major political party - my party, the Labour Party.

"And in doing so, it will both disrupt the political balance in the UK and have a damaging effect on the electoral process and our democracy."