



AN ECONOMIC LENS TO RECLAIMING THE HEARTLANDS

100 YEARS SINCE LABOUR'S FIRST GOVERNMENT



CHIEF EDITOR: AMARVIR SINGH-BAL
SUPPORTING LEAD: CHRIS WONGSOSAPUTRO
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR: HELEN CLARKE
FOREWORD BY GORDON BROWN, TULIP SIDDIQ AND PAT MCFADDEN



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London SW1H 9EU
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To find out more about the Fabian Society, the Young Fabians, the Fabian Women's Network and our local societies, please visit our website at www.fabians.org.uk

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FOREWORDS

GORDON BROWN

If the last election was the Brexit election, the next is going to be won or lost on the economy. How could anything else be more important, when British people are suffering the steepest fall in living standards for fifty years and the highest burden of taxes since the 1950s? When Families face child poverty rising inexorably to 5m, damaging the living chances of one in every three of children. When public services are deteriorating so much that 5m are in waiting lists for NHS treatment.

The hard truth facing all politicians today is this. Since the financial crisis, Britain has failed to generate the economic growth and wealth we need to fund the public services and rising living standards the British people deserve. When Labour was last in power, Britain's economy grew at an average of around 3% - enough to increase opportunities for all and pay for a generational investment in public services; over the last decade it has been less than 2%. In a time of inflation we have not been able to make the productivity gains needed to increase real working incomes.

As this timely report so rightly spotlights, a principal reason for Britain's slow growth is that the potential of its regions, cities and towns is underdeveloped and the contribution they could make to UK-wide growth too limited and constrained. This has the added result that living standards outside the South East are much lower and inequalities between our regions greater in Britain than in any other comparable European country. All the UK's communities suffer because of an unbalanced economy

with depopulation, forced emigration and deprivation in some parts of the country and congestion, overheating, escalating house prices and inflationary pressures in other parts.

And over the last decade this has only worsened as successive Tory governments have pursued a failed economic model, in which the interests of finance are put above the interests of industry and working people and where the role of government is to be a passive observer of market forces rather than an active participant in shaping them. Purporting to Level Up the country whilst decommissioning Industrial Policy is yet another example of a Tory government focussed more on headlines than breadlines.

That is why the opportunity for Labour to offer something different on the economy is so important. To reject the status quo economic narrative and make it clear to the British people that tomorrow need not look like a version of today. Britain has huge strengths – in finance, science, culture, and education – that can be the foundations of our success in the 21st Century if better stewarded by a Labour government working with devolved and local governments. As this paper so rigorously shows, we are a party and a country bursting with ideas about what we can do together to fuel growth and get Britain firing on all cylinders again.

The prize available to the British people from economic renewal is enormous – better jobs from growing industries of the future; more demand stimulating new investment in high streets and housing

up and down our country; and a greater ability to invest in a new workforce for Britain's caring economy and public services. The ideas in this paper represent several eye-catching opportunities to grasp that

prize, and I commend the Young Fabians for their diligence in commissioning and publishing it.



Gordon Brown

Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and Leader of the Labour Party (2007 to 2010) and former Chancellor of the Exchequer (1997 to 2007)

TULIP SIDDIQ MP

The next Labour government needs to be one that delivers for all of the UK's nations and regions, by raising living standards and providing decent jobs and pay through a combination of state and private investment. This means restoring basic infrastructure and services across Britain, but also providing the crucial investment needed for the green transition. A radical, green economic strategy is needed to boost wages, productivity and growth, whilst reducing energy bills for consumers. This strategy will require an economic model that harnesses the unique strengths of each area. In doing this, we will have an offer that can see Labour win again across all parts of Britain. This paper is bursting with ideas to do just that.

What is particularly enlightening in reading this pamphlet, is how we can meet the diverse needs of each geography with a clear set of bold but achievable policies. Our offer needs to recognise the different strengths and needs between nations, and between cities, towns and rural areas across the country.

The paper sets out how transport and broadband infrastructure needs are particularly acute in the North West, Yorkshire and the Humber, West Midlands, South West and Wales. In Scotland, the South East and London in particular, the paper suggests ways to improve the prospects of high-tech SMEs. In the South West, there

are interesting suggestions around legal public transport targets, investment in agritech and a food security programme.

Labour recognises the need to support business and create the conditions and environment in which it can thrive. It is only by doing this that we can achieve prosperity for everyone. Our plan is in stark contrast to the failed economic model of the Conservatives, who have ushered in a period of low growth, low productivity and high taxes, and in recent months, have abandoned working people and businesses to struggle with rampant inflation and the worst cost-of-living crisis in decades. We want to create a UK of equal opportunity regardless of background or geography. We will back this up not with the empty rhetoric of "levelling-up" but with carefully designed and costed policies that voters will find both appealing and credible.

The last 12 years have been tough for the Labour movement and the country, but armed with the right ideas and the political will, Labour can lead this country to a brighter future by unlocking the economic potential of the UK and its constituent parts.

I look forward to the Labour Party working with the Fabians and other affiliates, industry, stakeholder groups, unions and the wider public to firm up these and other ideas into a concrete, clear and appealing programme for government for the whole of the UK.



Tulip Siddiq MP

Shadow Economic Secretary to the Treasury (City Minister)
and Member of Parliament for Hampstead and Kilburn

PAT MCFADDEN MP

Elections are won or lost in the battle of ideas.

What are the big challenges facing the country? What are Labour's answers to those challenges? How do they fit with our values? Why are our answers better than the Conservatives'? And who best captures the future?

These are the kinds of questions that a winning party has to answer. Each moment of victory Labour has enjoyed – and there have been far too few in our history – it is when we have had better answers to those questions.

The answers do not come easily. They require hard work. They require us to be tough with ourselves, to be honest in our assessment of both our opponents and our own shortcomings. And to be disciplined in our thinking.

One such set of tests revolves around how to help the economy grow and how to be trusted with people's money. Helping the economy grow is a genuine challenge for the country. Since the global financial crisis the UK has enjoyed only anaemic economic growth. It has left us less prosperous as a country. It has left people's incomes lagging behind. And it has put pressure on taxes to rise.

The Tories have become the party of high taxation because they are the party of low growth. Their neglect of economic growth and descent into nationalism and culture wars is paid for by people whose incomes have not kept pace with the rising cost of living.

For Labour, prosperity is essential. We want to support the wealth creators, to foster innovation, to see the economy grow, to put the economy once again at the centre of our national project. If we succeed, the country becomes more prosperous, households become more prosperous and the pressure on taxes eases.

And we want to do this in a way that is responsible with the public finances. Governments are charged with the stewardship of people's hard earned money. They expect us to be careful with it. People will support well-funded public services – a well maintained public square in the interests of the whole community - but quite understandably they will not support the reckless waste and fraud we have seen the Tories preside over in the past couple of years.

Careful stewardship of public money is not only right in itself. It is also an electoral necessity. There is no path to election victory that does not pass the public test of trust with public money. If we fail that test we don't win, and all our hopes for change come to nothing. That's why we take this test so seriously.

This pamphlet puts forward a number of ideas concerned with economic growth and the public finances. They are not Labour policy but rather contributions to debate and it is through the debating of ideas, through the honing of our thinking that we can work through the questions we have to answer. I hope you enjoy reading the contributions.



Pat McFadden MP

Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury and Labour Member of Parliament for Wolverhampton South East

INTRODUCTION

AMARVIR SINGH-BAL **HEAD AUTHOR AND CHIEF EDITOR**



Amarvir is a City Economist and acts as the Senior Economist within the Economy and Finance Network. His area of expertise includes general equilibrium modelling as well as orchestrating a multitude of macro- and socio-economic impact assessments across multiple sectors.

Amarvir has also attained a first-class degree in Economic, Politics and History from Durham University and published several academic journals within economics ranging from econometrics to bilateral trade relations.

Based in Stoke-on-Trent, Amarvir is a staunch trade union activist and operates as a delegate for Unite the Union. He currently holds the position as the Constituency Labour Party Secretary for Stoke-on-Trent North.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: 100 YEARS ON

Socialism makes war upon a system, not upon a class. This pamphlet honours this commitment, echoing James Keir Hardie's battle cry to provide the economic blueprint against an unjust economic system, whilst providing a template for 'a new socialism fit for a new century'. The policies in this publication are supplied by Young Fabians that live and work in the places they analyse whilst offering an unparalleled, in-depth insight into the complex regions that make up the Heartlands of our country – and provide data-backed policy recommendations about how we can win them back.

One hundred years before the next General Election, the first Labour government took power under Ramsey MacDonald without a majority. The seats which led Labour into Downing Street relied on votes secured from communities that took advantage of their newly given electoral franchise scattered across Scotland, Wales, and the North. Often, these have been ascribed the term as "Red Wall" (or "tartan wall" above Hadrian's industrial Central Belt); however, the term Heartland is more suited, given such geographies first helped to provide the blood flow of trade union members by the thousands through its arteries and veins,

culminating into the Party we have today.

Ramsey's government lasted only a few months but pushed through mass economic reforms based on Fabian pamphlet proposals, ranging from housing to unemployment and education. The stint in office provided the working class a glimpse of what a truly socialist revolution may bring. This pamphlet offers a continuation of those Fabian ideals which helped the then emergence – and now re-emergence - of such a party which now recovers from its worst election defeat since MacDonald's second government back in 1935. In the wake of this loss, the authors of this pamphlet write within a new political map of Britain, one that is frightening in its simplicity, as working-class areas have rejected the Labour movement, and now also suffocating in its implications towards an ever-increasing divided country.

Labour is the only chance we have of a united Britain. The economic roots of both Welsh and Scottish nationalism lie in the same long-term trends, industrial decline and insecurity that have bred anti-establishment rebellions across the global West. The authors of this pamphlet provide at least one solution to help bridge this divide.

HEARTS AND MINDS: ECONOMIC POLICIES TO REGAIN TRUST

The first lesson of economics is the concept of scarcity. The Garden of Eden was not an economy, as there was an infinite abundance of produce; and Britain, despite its green and pleasant land, is far from this utopia. The first lesson of politics, however, is to forget this first lesson of economics. The Left have often been charged with this crime of being incompetent at understanding the realities of trade-offs and opportunity costs, and it's necessary for those in policymaking position to grasp this; otherwise, the consequences are stark. People starve and suffer. They cannot prevail over illness, are left without the light of learning, and they lose faith. But when politics succeeds, people live and strive; the uneducated are enlightened; the sick are nurtured; and all are emboldened to make the most of their talents. And politics, based on economic credibility, can offer not just buzzwords of promise but the means to make that hope real - to help bridge the chasm between what millions of people are and what they have it in themselves to become.

Economic justice is at the heart of the Labour movement, and the diverse spectrum of authors within this publication remind us of this. The team behind this pamphlet

have identified key voter trends, analysed some of the most substantial challenges faced by our communities and generated policy ideas to tackle how Labour can win back hearts and minds ahead of the next General Election. To put this pamphlet into context, the policies proposed here are an extension of a longer journey for economic justice continued since Peterloo in 1819, the Chartist demands of 1848, the industrial agitation in the aftermath of the Second World War, and after 1979. And, in the halls of Parliament, the local community groups tucked away in northern townships across the Humber, down the Weir and up the boatyards which funnel through the Clyde. The policies brought forward here are essential to help our front bench in an ongoing struggle which is occurring in this moment in time by those who continue to fight as union delegates, suffragists, bus drivers, bin men, student activists, waves of immigrants and LGBTQ+ activists armed with nothing more than placards, hand-written leaflets, and walking shoes. Our movement is at its best when we come up with ideas to help our party back into power where it belongs.

THE NEW ECONOMIC REVOLUTION

Time and time again, our countrymen discover that they have merely betrayed themselves into the hands of yet another demagogue, who, the public believed, was necessary to put in Downing Street, as they were the most competent to piece this increasingly divided country together. The realists exclaim such actions can be excused as we on the Left have failed to provide expedient economic solutions to reclaiming such Heartlands as our own. But at the bottom of my heart, I believe we socialists can be better than this and can bear a great burden. Once we discover that the burden is reality and arrive where reality is, our Party's resurgence can begin.

For all those that have lost their battles to explain the need for restoring faith within our movement's economic credentials inside our constituency meetings, our trade unions and on campaign doorsteps please remember comrade that this country is your home. Do not feel despondent. Do not become driven from it; great women and men have done great things here,

and will again, and we can make Britain what Britain must become. It will be hard. Remember, we share more than divides us. Regardless of whichever region or nation we as comrades have evolved from a shared story which matches each other's, a knot to bind our experiences together: a hope for a Better Britain.

We live in an age of economic revolution much more distinct from those discussed from Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, ranging from savagery to barbarism, from agricultural feudalism to commercial civilisation – one which cries out for sustainable economic growth amidst a lack of social injustice. The imminent General Election will be one hundred years since our first ever Labour government. An economic vision is necessary to restore faith across all our Heartlands. Not for the sake of policymaking but because the future of our country rests upon it. The vision in this pamphlet is part of a wider socialist turning point within our history. The future is ours.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The economy has consistently featured as one of the top issues ahead of the 2019 General Election – 25% of the electorate ranked the economy as one of the most important issues facing the UK, behind Brexit, healthcare and crime.¹ Although YouGov November 2019 polling indicated broad support for Labour’s economic policies, 53% of those polled believed that Labour’s spending priorities will not be affordable and 57% believed that the UK would get into a recession with Labour in power.²

Our writers therefore seek to explore credible economic policy proposals which Labour can put forward as key messages for the next General Election summarised in Figure 1:

	East Midlands	Greater London	North East	North West	South East	South West	West Midlands	Yorks + Humber	Scotland	Wales	Green voters	Middle England
Asset based community development							✓					
Devolution			✓			✓					✓	
Digital infrastructure		✓									✓	
Environment	✓		✓									✓
Fiscal responsibility							✓	✓				✓
Food agriculture and rural affairs							✓					
Housing					✓	✓						
Inwards direct investment				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			
Labour market	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓			
Local business		✓			✓				✓	✓		✓
Public transport	✓			✓		✓		✓		✓		

Figure 1: Summary of policy proposals by Heartland

- 1. Alleviating the cost-of-living crisis amid the high inflation rates of 10.1% at the time of writing:** Labour should push forward with scrapping VAT on residential energy bills, to be funded by windfall (excess profit) tax on North Sea energy producers (**Middle England; Scotland**) which Shadow Chancellor Rachel Reeves has outlined post-2022 Spring Statement. The latter policy on windfall tax is in the process of being implemented by the Conservative government at the time of writing in late-May 2022.

There is a looming energy crisis facing the UK with the energy price cap for the average household nearly doubling from £1,971 to £3,549 from October 2022 and projected to exceed £5,600 by early 2023 and £7,600 by April 2023 at the time of writing³. Labour's policy proposals therefore need to provide targeted (financial) aid for segments of society struggling with their energy bills.

- 2. Maintaining a commitment towards fiscal responsibility:** Investing more on tax auditors and random spot checks as well as cracking down on tax avoidance loopholes by working with tax havens and reforming the non-domicile status in an effort to minimise the £36bn tax gap between actual and expected tax collections (**Middle England**). Labour can also commit towards minimising wastage in public spending which happened under

the Conservatives such as the NHS Test and Trace which was criticised by the Public Accounts Committee⁴

- 3. Addressing the Conservatives' U-turns on the HS2 Eastern leg and Northern Powerhouse Route:** Labour needs to present alternative transport options and address the historic transport under-spend, prioritising investment into local transport, its ecological impacts and transparency on funding as well as environmental and health & safety safeguards. Labour must also abide by the same principles should the party win the next General Election and opt to continue with the HS2 Western leg. (**North West; Yorkshire & Humber; West Midlands**) Doing so will contribute towards countering the Conservatives' 'Levelling Up' mantra
- 4. Outlining a commitment towards business aspirations and SMEs:** Ensuring that SMEs are protected from the impacts of Labour's policy proposal to increase **Digital Services Tax** from 2% to 12% by offering some financial reliefs for those impacted by the add-on costs from international marketplaces such as Amazon. There is a need to support SMEs transitioning towards digitalisation by offering digital marketing courses and funding to create online operations. Labour has made a commitment to make business rates fairer⁵ which can start with aligning the rates to property valuation (**Middle England; Greater**

London) and can go further by facilitating low interest rate loans to SMEs (**Scotland**)

5. Ensuring the next Manifesto addresses the priorities of the rural community (South West): Labour can propose a new Rural Sustainable Futures Act which will include:

- **Legal Rural Public Transport Targets** for all buses to be net-zero by 2035 and reducing the number of journeys by car in rural areas to just 40% of travel by 2030
- **Local Food Security Programme** to support a more localised and sustainable food system and increasing access to nutritious food for those in need
- **National Nature Service** to provide employment opportunities in nature recovery and countryside
- **National Institute for Agroecology Development** to offer free, independent advice, research and a subsidiary Development Bank to assist rural small businesses and farms in transitioning food, fuel and fibre production to a green economy

6. Enhancing vocational and skills training at a local level: This can be achieved through community-based programmes such as digital retraining, employer mentoring, one-to-one skills enhancement classes, retraining sessions, local career information sessions for students and local apprenticeship

schemes (**North West; Yorkshire & Humber; Scotland**). Labour can play a pivotal role by boosting the relationships between universities and industries where universities will perform R&D and organise student apprenticeships in exchange for research grants too (**West Midlands**). In the case of the **South East**, there should be a focus on key sectors in the region such as IT, biotech, pharmaceuticals and engineering.

- 7. Providing secure, sustainable jobs:** Strengthening the regulation of zero hours contracts and pushing for collective bargaining including closing the gender and ethnicity pay gap (**South East**)
- 8. Focusing on housing:** Going beyond proposing to build more houses and ensure public involvement in the planning process for house building by establishing Community Councils at local level (**South East**)
- 9. Facilitating the Green Energy transition:** Offering workers re-training opportunities and investing locally to create new jobs (e.g. via home retrofits or installations of Electronic Vehicle charging and maintenance infrastructure) while providing income support for those impacted by the energy transition. Labour can also propose investor-friendly policies for green energy production by offering incentives such as tax breaks, R&D and innovation grants, state-backed loans and forming public-private partnerships (**Green;**

East Midlands; North East; Scotland; South East)

10. **Enhancing broadband connectivity:** Including this pledge in the General Election manifesto to ensure all facets of society can benefit from digitalisation as some areas including the Black Country have <10% broadband fibre coverage (**West Midlands**)
11. **Offering further devolution of power:** Facilitating asset-based community development (**West Midlands**) and genuine devolution of powers (i.e. bottom-up approach) in transport, health, housing and education and skills in a further shift from a top-down approach, to be supported by the funding to do so. Campaigns at a local level will also need to account for local issues (**North East**). In the case of **Greater London**, the devolved adult education budget will allow Labour to fulfil its commitment to continuous learning by creating a coherent system of post-16 technical and vocational education and training
12. **Supporting the agenda of Mark Drakeford's government:** Following their re-election in 2021, the Welsh Labour government has started implementing programmes such as national remote working policy, the rejuvenation of local economies via high streets and SMEs and the enhancement of transport connectivity which the UK Labour Party needs to back financially and non-financially (**Wales**)

As the next General Election approaches, Labour needs to go beyond criticising the Government on issues such as the cost-of-living crisis and low productivity growth. Instead, Labour needs to constantly act as a Government-In-Waiting by stepping up its policy proposals publicity which Keir Starmer did in his Facebook page on 24 April 2022.⁶

Criticisms of the Government's approach must be accompanied by Labour's own fully costed, constructive proposals so that voters can answer the question of 'What does Labour stand for' by themselves and alleviate concerns of Labour only being interested in bringing down the Government - this needs to be done by the Shadow Cabinet, Labour Mayors, MPs, Councillors (and other elected officials) and activists on media appearances, social media postings, campaign publications and doorsteps amongst others. This can be done by ensuring that Labour politicians and members get regular communications (e.g. e-mails) on the party's latest policies. Labour can also step up its use of the 'On your side' messaging in a similar way to messaging on crime.

Ultimately, the messaging Labour needs to send is that Labour is the party for you if you are aspirational and work hard.

We would like to thank all our writers for their hard work in making this pamphlet happen and would in particular like to highlight the contributions of our female writers, editors and MPs, mayors, and members from the Senedd who made up nearly half of our pamphlet contributors.

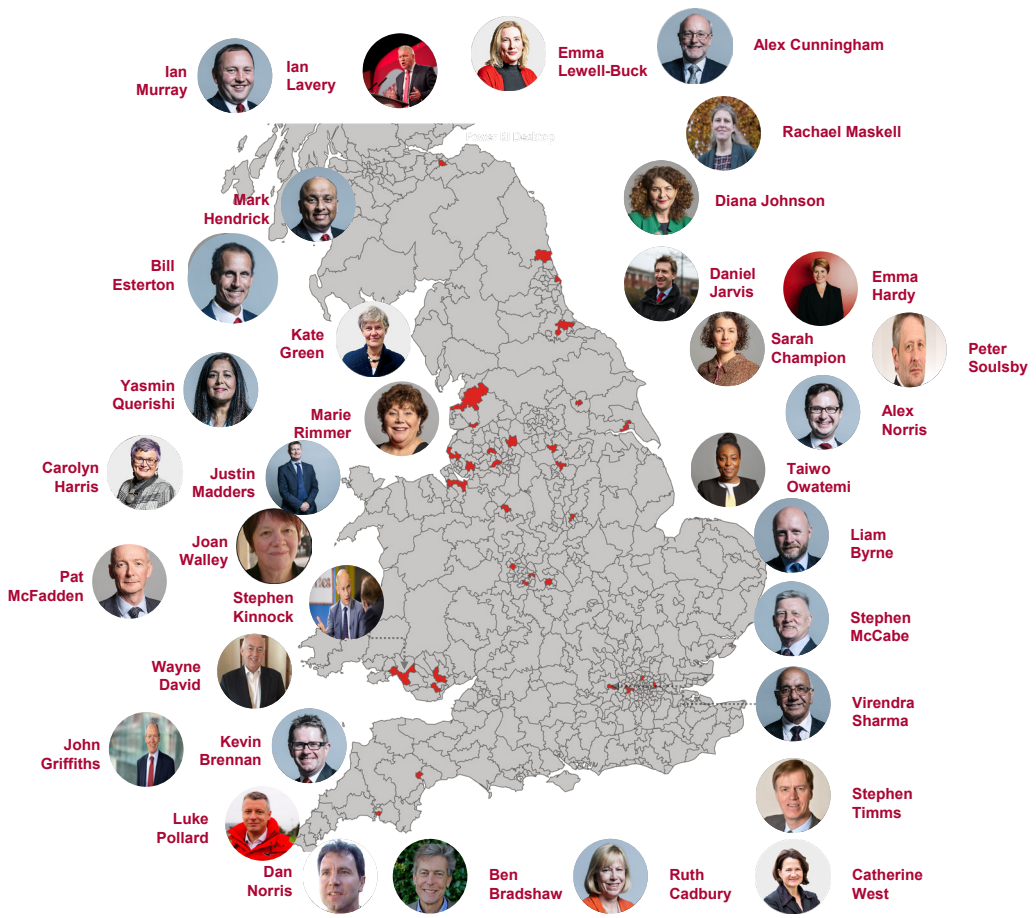


Figure 2: Contributions from Members of Parliament, mayors and Members of the Senedd



Christopher Wongsosaputro - Supporting Lead

Chris is a former Co-Chair of the Young Fabians Economy & Finance Network and published regular economic updates and participated in podcasts during his term as Co-Chair. He has also attained a degree in Economics and Statistics from UCL.

Chris currently works as a Strategy Consultant.

Based in Vauxhall CLP, Chris is an active Labour activist and regularly campaigns on the doorsteps of his CLP and elsewhere.



Helen Clarke - Contributing Editor

Helen Clarke is a member of the North West Young Fabians and having worked within Marketing & Communications for 2 of the largest education providers in the UK, is now leading a marketing department for a FE provider. She is a mentor for Labour in Communications, and this will be the 3rd Young Fabian pamphlet she is contributing to.

**GEOGRAPHIC
HEARTLANDS:
NATIONS**

SCOTLAND



"This report by the Young Fabians contains a number of interesting proposals for how Labour can transform the Scottish economy after more than a decade of SNP and Tory incompetence. With the lowest growth, highest taxing Tory chancellor in 70 years and an SNP government not interested in business, the Labour Party has a lot to offer to fill these voids. Across the UK, we are regaining our economic credibility under the leadership of Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves. As we look to the General Election, we have been clear that every penny of taxpayers money will be well-spent, including on economic development, not wasted on cronyism or dodgy contracts, either in Holyrood or at Westminster."

Ian Murray MP

Edinburgh South; Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland

INTRODUCTION

This piece proposes an economic strategy for the Labour Party aimed at reclaiming Scotland ahead of the next General Election. This policy note examines Labour's performance in Scotland in the 2019 election, and proposes economic

policies to be adopted by the party ahead of the General Election at a local level. It also looks at the work needed within the party's manifesto in the 2024 General Election, aimed at regaining Scottish voters' trust.

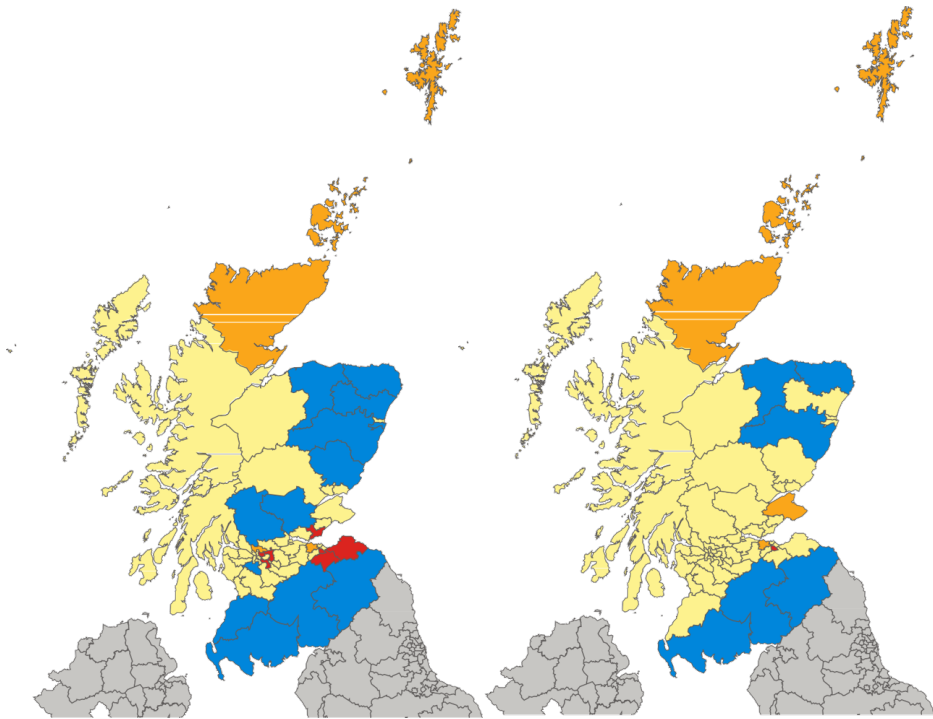


Figure 3: Decline in Labour share of seats (2017 left, 2019 right)

The first section of this paper will provide an overview of the 2019 General Election. It will show that the Labour Party failed to adequately address the most important issues to Scottish voters: Brexit, and the question of Scottish independence. In the second section, the paper will outline localised policies which focus on Scotland's most disadvantaged local authorities, proposing community engagement and training opportunities to involve students and those in the labour market who are keen to upskill. At a local level, other policies include business loans for SMEs

in the hospitality and tourism industries, prevalent in the aforementioned areas. The final section of the paper will outline a General Election economic policy, aimed at establishing Scotland as the European leader for renewable energy, strengthening trade relationships with the European Union, whilst also responding to Scotland's remain vote in the Brexit referendum. The policy will also focus on helping small and medium enterprises to engage in the national transition to low carbon usage.

2019: WHY DID LABOUR LOSE THIS HEARTLAND?

In the 2019 election, Labour failed to address the issues most important to Scottish voters. As seen in Figure 4, Brexit and the question of Scottish Independence represented the most pressing concerns for Scottish voters in that year, and the lack of a clear stance from the Labour Party led to the loss of 6 seats in the nation. These seats

were primarily acquired by the SNP who, on the other hand, adopted a definite position on both matters. Labour could regain the confidence of Scottish voters by outlining defined proposals which demonstrate the party's willingness to adopt a localised approach, no longer neglecting the needs and concerns of Scottish voters.

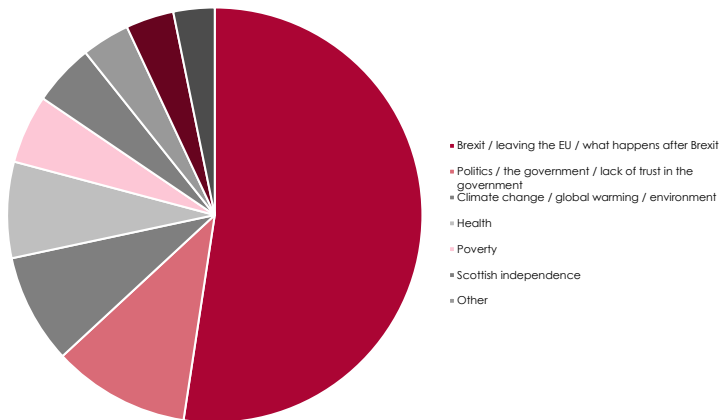


Figure 4: Single most important issue affecting the nation according to Scottish voters, 2019 General Election¹

Just as in the ‘Red Wall’ within England, it would be accurate to describe the Labour Party as becoming unjustifiably complacent in Scotland. The old adage goes that Labour’s votes in Glasgow were weighed rather than counted. The same downward trend in Labour support since 2001 experienced across the UK has occurred in Scotland, as seen in Figure 5. A report of focus groups in 2017 with voters who had switched from Labour to the SNP, gained responses that were “scathing in its assessment of the Labour Party” from being a “shambles”, to “totally duplicitous”; a

“shower of career politicians,” who “have lost their way” and no longer represent the “working class”.² This was precipitated by much of the same negative reaction to Labour’s term in power between 1997 and 2010, although it was perhaps quicker. Labour’s lacklustre performance in Scotland over the past two decades calls for new proposals to regain this Heartland, which could enhance the trust of Scottish voters in Labour leadership by outlining clear economic benefits to the nation.

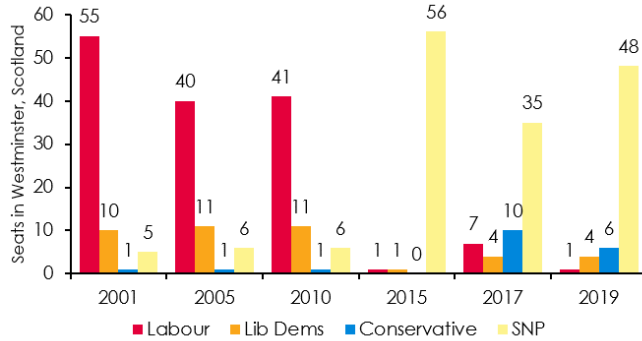


Figure 4: Seats won by party, 2001-2019

2022-2023: WHAT CAN LABOUR ACHIEVE IN OPPOSITION TO GAIN TRUST EN ROUTE TO THE GENERAL ELECTION?

The current unique socio-economic climate, created by unprecedented events such as the Scottish vote for independence, the Brexit Referendum, and the pandemic, calls for pragmatic and easily achievable policy proposals tailored to the needs of the Scottish nation. Both this and the subsequent sections provide the strategic case for Labour to propose economic policies which have a universal focus that affects

all demographic and geographical areas within Scotland; but which also concentrate on the most disadvantaged local authorities in Scotland, (identified as East Ayrshire, Inverclyde, South Ayrshire, Renfrewshire, South Lanarkshire, Dundee City, North Ayrshire, Midlothian, and Glasgow City as outlined within the yellow quadrant in Figure 6).

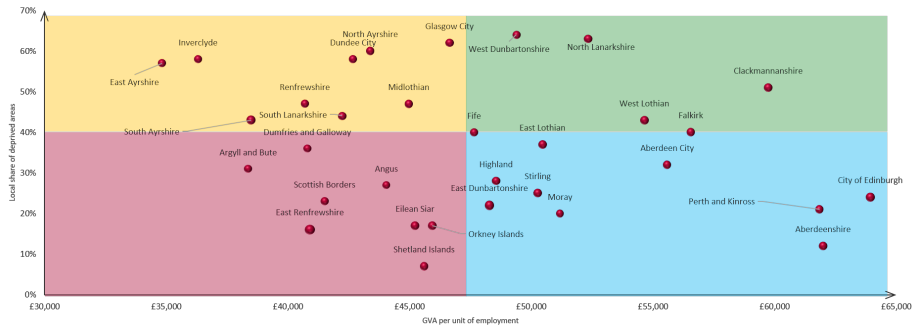


Figure 6: Geographical areas of deprivation and low productivity³

Albeit affecting all corners of Scotland, the following proposals in this section focus on how Labour, at a localised level, can own the economic agenda to tackle economic downturn within the most deprived areas. If successful, this allows such “left behind” areas to have a greater role within the Scottish economy through a boost in productivity, whilst also illustrating Labour is successful at controlling the economic agenda at a grassroots level. Doing so will

present Labour with the opportunity to win back power, by regaining the trust of the Scottish voters who felt they were taken for granted during the New Labour era. The main two policies to boost productivity in such areas are enhancing vocational training and skills within local education authority districts, and seeking to support small and medium enterprises through low interest business loans.

ENHANCING VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND SKILLS

The pandemic significantly reduced classroom time for students and led pupils to lose structure and contact with adults and peers which has had detrimental effects on students' mental health. With school closures, the responsibility of children's education is now falling on parents and guardians, and this could create new inequalities of access and opportunity, as well as deepen existing ones. For instance, parents and guardians may not have a sufficient educational background to assist their children, they may have additional caring and working responsibilities, or lack adequate access to the internet or other technology.⁴ It is fundamental to propose a policy aimed at increasing training opportunities for young people to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to be part of the local economy.

SUPPORTING SMES

Besides Dundee City and Midlothian, all the most deprived areas can be found in the Western Region of Scotland, surrounding Glasgow City, where public administration, health, distribution, and hospitality are the key industries. The latter was disproportionately hit by the pandemic.⁶ Small businesses in these areas, that are particularly reliant on tourism and hospitality, are more likely to benefit from councils which provide cheap interest rate loans for small and medium enterprises. The loans may be granted to businesses that are financially viable but are struggling to access funding from private lenders, and can provide opportunities for job creation in the council area, benefitting the local economy. This strategy could foster a timely recovery within the short term, and mitigate these local authorities' economies to be

Such grassroots policies to enhance vocational training and skills could be achieved through community-based programmes such as employer mentoring and one-to-one skills enhancement classes.⁵ Labour could push for these programmes by encouraging local party groups to organise information sessions for students on career options, or facilitating more apprenticeship schemes within the local authority districts. The programmes would help young people gain the confidence and the skills to pursue further education, employment, or volunteering opportunities, and to be actively involved in their local areas. Additionally, the schemes could also be available to people seeking work and existing workers for upskilling and enabling them to switch to a different role or industry.

disproportionately affected by the economic downturn caused by the pandemic.

Labour-run councils have greater scope to introduce low interest rate loans to small businesses. The benefits of this are four-fold:

- first, it ensures that councils may receive more revenue in the medium term through interest rate payments;
- secondly, it allows small businesses - particularly those affected by COVID-19 - to stay afloat and invest in growing their business;
- the third benefit is that it is anticipated that small businesses which receive such a loan would grow their business to the extent that they are then eligible to pay business rates, hence ensuring greater revenue for the council in the long term;
- the fourth benefit is that more

businesses are likely to receive this loan compared to a standard grant because the eligibility will be wider. Providing this loan might mean the Council having to use some of its budget, especially if the UK Government does not offer any funding.

However, the loans would be a great use of funding as they will create long term revenue to be reinvested back into the local community. A good example of this low interest rate loan can be seen within Greater Manchester, where a number of businesses have benefited from this policy, with the local council making £100m worth

of investment across different sectors.⁷

In the long term, however, local Labour councillors, within their efforts to upskill and retrain the labour market, can also ensure that local businesses are trained to digitalise. The initial cost of this scheme will be recouped by the national digital tax that was agreed to be established within the 2021 G7 summit,⁸ alongside the North Sea windfall tax outlined below.

Labour should push for an economic strategy at a grassroots level in Scotland that combines these two policies aimed at increasing economic productivity in the aftermath of such an unprecedented crisis.

2024: WHICH GENERAL ELECTION POLICY CAN LABOUR PROPOSE TO REGAIN THIS HEARTLAND?

With the targeted policies leading to higher productivity and lower economic disparities in the most disadvantaged areas of Scotland, the nation would be in a better place to promote greater industry specialisation and development for the Scottish economy, and strengthen trading relations with the European Union.

Projections in Figure 7 reveal that the fastest growing sector in Scotland's economy is the electricity, gas, steam, and air industry. Labour's General Election policy should focus on promoting greater specialisation and development for these industries.

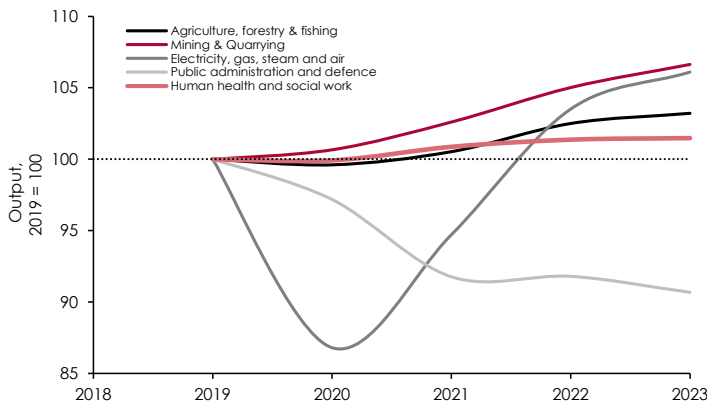


Figure 7: Scotland's economic projections by sector⁹

Scotland should be promoted as the driver for the shift to low carbon and renewable energy, given its geographical advantages: strong winds, long coastline, and low population density, which could be further employed to produce renewable energy mainly through onshore wind plants. The major shift to renewable energy in Scotland, from just over 27% in 2009 to 97.4% in 2020,¹⁰ demonstrates the country's capacity to become a European leader in renewables.

However, unlike oil or coal, which can be shipped and transported across countries, renewable power and electricity require an extensive network and infrastructure to be traded. Labour could propose an ambitious policy which would exponentially increase Scotland's renewable energy exports. The UK is currently working on Viking Link, connecting renewable powers in England and in Denmark.¹¹ A similar proposal could be put forward for Scotland, creating a network linking

the nation directly to the EU, increasing the trade relationship between the two actors and establishing Scotland as the leader for renewables in Europe.

At a national level, the increased community engagement and training opportunities outlined in section 2 could further promote industry specialisation, by providing targeted training opportunities for the renewable industry sectors, both to improve existing workers' skills to equip them for the shift to low carbon industry, and for potential workers, to include them in this developed industry.

At a smaller scale, the General Election proposal could focus on increasing small and medium enterprises' engagement with the national shift to a low carbon economy, as they account for more than half of commercial energy use in the UK.¹² This could be done by identifying energy needs and capacity across same sector enterprises, as applied in the case of hospitality and

tourism for the local authorities in the West of Scotland identified in section 2, and proposing energy efficient policies suited to the industry's specific needs. This would allow for more effective energy requirement policy, rather than a national blanket energy efficiency policy, as currently found in the UK.¹³

In light of the high energy prices at the time of writing in 2022, there is also a case to push for the windfall tax based on prior investment (which the Conservative government is in the process of implementing as of late-May 2022) - windfall tax entails increasing North Sea oil profit tax from the existing 40% to 62%, as former Chancellor George Osborne did in 2011. A Financial Times analysis indicated that higher tax and oil prices provide scope to boost North Sea 2022 - 2023 revenue from £2.5bn projected in Autumn Statement 2021 to more than £10bn.¹⁴

CONCLUSION

This General Election proposal could become a milestone for Scotland's fight against climate change, which represented the third most important issue for Scottish

voters in the 2019 Election, as well as strengthening Scotland's relationship with the EU.



Sabrina Sforza

Sabrina Sforza is a postgraduate student in Data Science for Politics and Policymaking at the University of Strathclyde. Her interests include environmental politics and policy in the European Union, on which she wrote her undergraduate dissertation. In her studies, she is also focusing on feminist data science.

Sabrina is originally from Italy so, of course, she loves cooking. Sabrina is also a competitive volleyball player and an avid reader.

WALES

“Without a robust backing from Westminster, the Welsh Labour Government cannot succeed under the devolved nation structure. Labour therefore needs to have a General Election manifesto in Wales which aligns with and supports the plans of Mark Drakeford’s Labour government. Some examples highlighted in this pamphlet piece include funding to realise the Metro plans by Transport for Wales and to further expand local workspaces across Wales as we navigate the post-COVID era.”

**Carolyn Harris MP, Swansea East
Deputy Leader of Welsh Labour**

“The Labour party has strong roots in Wales, but the loss of six seats in the 2019 General election was a major setback. The key now is to build on the outstanding success of the 2021 Senedd elections, so that together we can deliver a Labour victory at the next General Election.

To achieve this we must focus on winning back the towns and communities that we lost in 2019 by demonstrating that are committed to building a resilient Britain that can stand more firmly on its own two feet, restoring pride, prosperity, and security by supporting UK manufacturing and rejuvenating town centres.

The Party must also relentlessly promote its core identity as the Party of working people - and of good jobs, you can raise a family on.

And Labour must also show how every penny it invests will save money in frontline services, preventing the need for future spending.

This excellent pamphlet makes a number of proposals that will enable us to win the next General Election, and begin to heal the wounds that have been inflicted on our country by twelve years of Conservative government.”

**Stephen Kinnock MP, Aberavon
Shadow Minister for Immigration**

"Labour's record in Wales of winning the most seats in every national election for a century is remarkable. In the devolved era the development of Welsh Labour as a distinct home grown political brand, in tune with the people of Wales, has helped to maintain that record. This includes the most recent Senedd election where the party equalled its best ever performance. But Labour cannot be complacent in Wales. The loss of seats to the Tories in 2019, particularly in the towns of North Wales is a reminder of that. This piece rightly focuses on the need for a Labour economic plan to win back support that was lost following the Brexit referendum, and provides a very useful contribution to Labour policy thinking ahead of the next General Election."

**Kevin Brennan MP, Cardiff West
Minister of State for Further Education, Skills, Apprenticeships and Consumer
Affairs (2009 - 2010); Minister of State for the Third Sector (2008 - 2009); Lord
Commissioner of the Treasury (2006 - 2007)**

"Wales has been Labour for 100 years. But in the General Election of 2019, Labour lost nearly all its North Wales seats, and although its vote held up relatively well in the South Wales valleys, Labour's vote across Wales, as a whole, fell dramatically. In response, UK Labour needs to develop policies which have real appeal and relevance. This needs to be done against the backdrop of a Welsh Labour administration in Cardiff Bay which is already pursuing policies which are proving to be successful. This pamphlet shows how a new economic partnership between the Welsh Government and a Labour central government is vital to Wales' future."

**Wayne David MP, Caerphilly
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales 2008-10. Government Whip
2007-08. Opposition frontbencher 2010-2021. Former MEP for South Wales and
South Wales Central**

"In the era of devolution Labour in Wales have succeeded in winning and retaining power in the Welsh Assembly now Parliament throughout the 23 years. It is a record built on socialist policies and a strong Welsh identity, chiming with the values and beliefs of the communities we serve. Never becoming complacent, always striving to do more and do better. Producing First Ministers of the calibre of Rhodri Morgan, Carwyn Jones and now Mark Drakeford, widely recognised for his leadership during the pandemic. "Facing the current cost of living crisis, Welsh Government has set in place a bespoke package of support. Analysis shows that nearly twice as much will go to households in the bottom half of the income distribution compared to those in the top half and three times as much to those in the bottom fifth compared to those in the top fifth. "Welsh values are Labour values and Labour values are Welsh values – and that's why our successes at last year's Senedd elections were no accident."

**John Griffiths MS, Newport East
Wales Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development (2011 – 2013)**

INTRODUCTION

Wales has historically been a Labour stronghold. In the landslide victory of 1997, 34 out of the 40 Welsh constituencies went to Labour, while the Conservative Party won zero seats.¹ However, over the last two decades, Labour's dominance in Wales has slipped. By 2017, Labour secured 28 seats compared to the Tories' eight.² At the most recent election in 2019, Labour lost a further six constituencies to

the Conservative Party; four in the North-east, one from the Southeast coast, and the island of Ynys Mon/Anglesey.³

This result of 22 seats is the worst General Election outcome for the Labour Party in Wales since 1983. Reversing this trend is critical to securing a majority in the House of Commons.

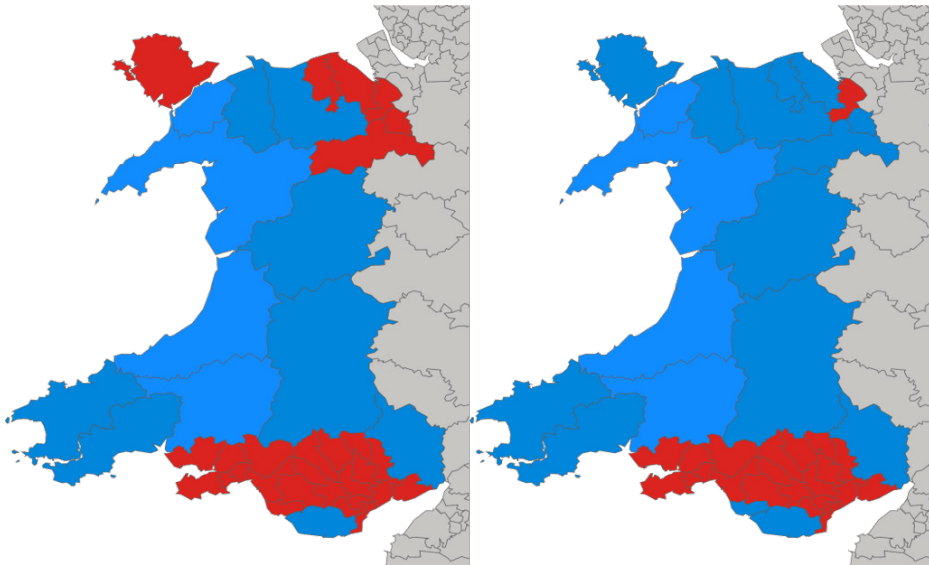


Figure 8: Decline in Labour share of seats (2017 left, 2019 right)

This article explores the cause of this loss in confidence in the Labour Party, particularly in Welsh towns, followed by proposing policies Labour can implement to regain support through its powers in local councils and the Senedd. The article con-

cludes more specifically by putting forward the economic policies Labour can utilise to win back these parliamentary seats in the subsequent General Election.

The first segment of this article assesses how a strong preference for Britain to

leave the EU contributed to Labour's loss of support across Wales (where 52.5% voted Leave⁴). Secondly, this piece outlines how local councils and the Senedd, particularly after Labour's victory in the 2021 Senedd Election, can enable Labour to regain the hearts and minds of Welsh people by supporting communities across Wales. This can be done by attracting higher paid remote

workers and rejuvenating town centres to boost local economies, both of which are in the midst of being implemented by Mark Drakeford's government. Finally, this article proposes a General Election campaign policy to replace lost EU funding to improve infrastructure, reconnecting Welsh towns and turning them into Labour supporting constituencies again.

2019: WHY DID LABOUR LOSE THIS HEARTLAND?

Across the six seats Labour lost in 2019, the vote dropped by an average of 10.2% of the total vote share, whilst the Conservatives gained a modest 2.9%. The Brexit Party and the Liberal Democrats received most of the other lost Labour votes.

This shows that the Conservatives gained six seats not because they significantly improved their offering to voters, but because the Labour vote collapsed and shifted to other parties.

Constituency	Labour	Cons	Brexit	Lib Dem
Bridgend	-10.40%	3.30%	4.30%	3.50%
Clwyd South	-9.40%	5.60%	4.00%	2.10%
Delyn	-10.80%	2.60%	5.10%	3.50%
Vale of Clwyd	-8.70%	2.30%	4.00%	2.30%
Wrexham	-9.90%	1.60%	3.60%	1.80%
Ynys Mon	-11.80%	7.70%	6.00%	N/A
Average from six lost seats	-10.20%	2.90%	4.50%	2.60%
Wales average swing	-8.00%	2.50%	5.40%	1.50%
UK average swing	-7.80%	1.20%	2%	4.20%

Table 1: Change in vote share between 2017 and 2019 General Elections. Note: The above presents the six seats Labour lost in 2019. Under the new Parliamentary boundary proposals, Bridgend, Clwyd South, and Vale of Clwyd will possibly disappear as their own constituencies.⁵

THE IMPORTANCE OF BREXIT

Figure 9 reveals the results of a poll identifying the most important issues of voters in Wales on 1st December 2019, only 11 days before the General Election.⁶ Clearly, much of the electorate was inclined to vote at the General Election based on a party's stance on Brexit. The Conservatives and The Brexit Party benefited from Leave voters, the former benefitting from their 'Get

Brexit Done' campaign slogan. On the other hand, the Liberal Democrats campaigned clearly for a second referendum and re-joining the EU, resulting in more Remainers supporting their party. Labour went into the 2019 General Election with an ambiguous stance, thereby costing the party support from both sides of the Brexit debate.

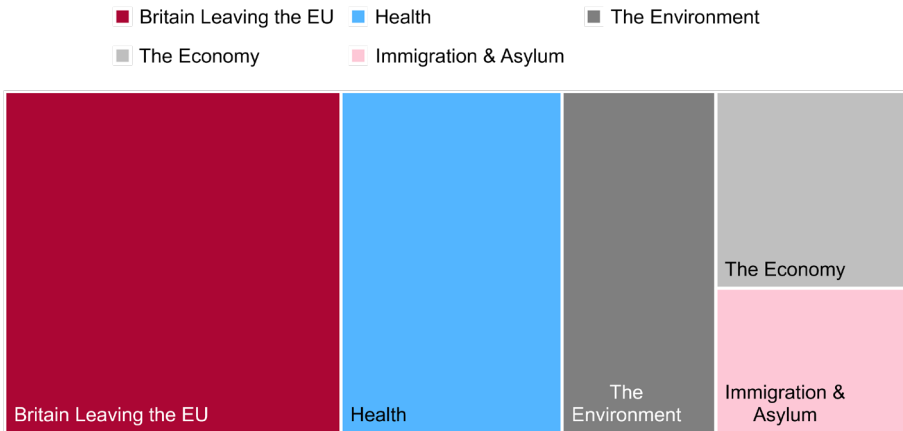


Figure 9: *The most important issues to voters in Wales 11 days before the 2019 General Election*

While the polling boundaries for the 2016 EU referendum do not overlap perfectly with the constituencies in the 2019 General Election, there is a correlation between the six seats that switched from Labour and those with a higher Leave vote. This includes 59% in Wrexham, between 54-56% across Northeast Wales and Bridgend, and a lower 50.9% in Anglesey (Ynys Mon). Except for Ynys Mon (Anglesey) which had a 50.9% Leave vote, this is meaningfully higher than the 52.5% av-

erage across Wales and the 51.9% Leave vote across the UK as a whole.

Overall, the loss of Labour seats in Wales is largely attributed to an unclear message on Brexit, which caused both Leave and Remain voters to shift their support to pro-Brexit and pro-second referendum parties respectively. Ultimately, en route to the next General Election, hearts and minds must be won at the local level that Labour did not manage in 2019.

2022-2023: WHAT CAN LABOUR ACHIEVE IN OPPOSITION TO GAIN TRUST EN ROUTE TO THE GENERAL ELECTION?

Labour needs to focus its energy on re-gaining trust in medium and large towns across Wales. The North and South Coasts and Mid-Wales, once Labour Heartlands (i.e. Labour-supporting areas) based on coal mining and tourism (the latter area also having a substantial slate-quarrying industry), are now left-behind areas seeing an increase in low-paid jobs. ONS 2019 statistics indicated 19.1% of jobs in Wales were considered 'low-paid', slightly higher than the UK average of 16.2%,⁷ (2019 figures are the latest released at the time of writing).

This chapter first provides an overview that, since 2019, the Welsh economy is the most salient issue for voters, followed by an illustration that this is driven by modest earnings and humbler social grading. To address these issues, two main policy areas have been recommended: further promotion of remote working; and the rejuvenation of local high streets and SMEs.

It is worth noting that Mark Drakeford's

Welsh Government has started implementing programmes such as national remote working policy and the rejuvenation of local economies via high streets and SMEs (measures elaborated in greater details below) which the national Labour Party needs to back financially and non-financially (e.g. facilitating inter-region collaborations and exchange of technical know-how). After all, the UK Government provides funding to the Welsh Government within the UK's funding parameters, including the Barnett Formula, so it is important for Labour to provide fair, equitable funding to the Welsh Government if elected into power.

Table 2 summarises the most recent important issues for voters in Wales. While it's not surprising that health is the most important issue in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is one major divergence between Wales and the rest of the UK: the 47% who selected the economy as a top issue, compared to just 38% elsewhere.⁸

Issue	% of respondents selecting the issue as one of their top three	
	Wales	UK
Health	52%	52%
The economy	47%	38%
Immigration & asylum	36%	36%
The environment	34%	31%
Britain leaving the EU	24%	25%

Table 2: The most important issues for voters in Wales and the UK, 5th December 2021

Compared to other issues, for Welsh voters, the importance of the economy emanates from two main aspects. The first stems from the relatively lower household income in Wales compared to the wider population.⁹ For instance, in terms of gross annual earnings, Wales is the third lowest compared to the eleven other regions and nations of the UK. Second, the relatively low income is likely to have an interdependent relationship with the type of occupations of the nation's workforce. As seen in Figure 4,

Wales has fewer people working in white collar industries, whilst also accounting for a larger proportion of the workforce in the lower social grades. Policies to address this will allow Labour to directly target the underlying socio-economic issues which perpetuate the feelings of Welsh people that they are being left behind. As stated above, Mark Drakeford's government has started implementing these policies, so the national Labour Party needs to complement the Welsh government's programme.

	Higher & intermediate managerial, administrative, professional occupations	Supervisory, clerical & junior managerial, administrative, professional occupations	Skilled manual occupations	Semi-skilled & unskilled manual occupations, Unemployed and lowest grade occupations
England	23%	31%	21%	26%
Wales	18%	29%	23%	30%

Table 3: Social Grade Data comparing England and Wales.¹⁰

REMOTE WORKING

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, many businesses are offering staff the opportunity to work remotely, either permanently or for part of the week. This is a massive opportunity to attract professionals to move to Wales, as such movements have the potential to support the local economy. While their employer would still be based in larger cities, staff could receive the same pay but live in more affordable towns such as Wrexham, Rhyl or Bridgend. Wales also offers beaches and mountain ranges in close proximity, lower air pollution and other benefits likely to be attractive to young professionals, especially those looking to start a family.

In order to attract more professionals to move to Wales and realise its full benefits

to the local economy, there is a need to enhance Welsh infrastructure, including transport and digital infrastructure, elaborated on in a later section. Another important consideration is to ensure that the relocation of households will lead to more money being spent in local communities as such movements can result in an increase in online shopping or spending in large superstores in the nearest Welsh cities instead - we will discuss considerations of boosting Welsh high streets below. At the time of writing, we have been unable to find any studies quantifying the correlation between movements to Wales and an increase in High Street or online spend, excluding the impacts of lockdown.

One type of infrastructure supporting

newcomers is a local remote working hub. The Welsh Government under Mark Drakeford has outlined a remote working strategy with the aim of having up to 30% of the workforce consistently working at or close to home. As part of the strategy, they have established local workspaces and plan to rollout more sites.¹¹

Therefore, the national Labour Party needs to support such an initiative both financially and non-financially. An example of the latter is a UK-wide advertising

campaign, in collaboration with the Wales Tourism Alliance (WTA), on the benefits of working remotely from Wales to encourage many high paid workers to consider making Wales their first or second home. The Tourism Barometer statistics released by Visit Wales in December 2021 indicates c.40% of operators have served more customers vis-a-vis pre-pandemic.¹² Further support to the WTA is needed to maintain this positive momentum as the pandemic recedes.

REJUVENATING LOCAL ECONOMIES THROUGH HIGH STREETS AND SMES

If Wales is to be successful in attracting talent to work remotely from its many towns, it is critical that these new incomes benefit local businesses and communities. Otherwise, there is a risk that the influx of talent simply pushes up house prices further, increasing the disparity between highly paid remote workers versus locals who don't engage or interact with each other.

Labour councils can boost local economies that are inclusive through the restoration of high streets consisting of independent businesses. One low-cost solution is pedestrianisation, closing roads off to cars and allowing cafes and restaurants to expand tables into the street. This was trialled in many towns across Wales during the pandemic,¹³ but some towns such as Rhyl are reversing these changes.¹⁴ Councils should therefore advocate for these changes to be made permanent where possible, especially in cases where alternative traffic flows can be configured. On top of pedestrianisation, there are examples of initiatives at a council-level such as Bridgend, which have constructed twenty eight new flats together with a multi-storey car park,¹⁵

thereby increasing the number of people living in the town centre and potentially boosting retail footfall.

Another important aspect is to ensure accessible parking spaces and electric vehicle charging points. For the former, the Federation of Small Businesses recommended Welsh local authorities to trial parking discounts for shoppers shopping from SMEs, in return for the possibility of increasing footfall and thus business in the High Streets.¹⁶

Furthermore, Labour councillors and activists should engage with key stakeholders including residents and step up anonymised digital data collection to understand what would attract them to spend more time on their local high street. The Welsh Government has initiated this process by providing 600 Police Community Support Officers to assist in local policing, and engage with residents who are concerned with drug problems, anti-social behaviour, and homelessness amongst others.¹⁷ Additionally, three out of four Police and Crime Commissioners in Wales are held by Labour, and the Welsh

Government has set up a Police Board with representatives from all stakeholders with the aim of boosting the quality of life for people in Welsh communities.¹⁸ Therefore, the national Labour Party should provide financial and non-financial support to further these initiatives by the Welsh Government.

In an age of online shopping, a rejuvenated high street of the future may look very different to the high streets that residents remember from the past. Empty shops could be converted into remote working hubs, small gyms or health centres and other experiences beyond traditional retail. Councils should remove any planning or zoning restrictions that might narrow the possibilities of what can be offered without compromising on standards such as Health

and Safety.

Finally, Labour councils can also lobby the UK and Welsh governments to align business rates with the latest rental levels,¹⁹ and increase digital tax for online retailers who have so far enjoyed relatively lower taxes than their brick and mortar counterparts. Doing so will create a more level playing field for High Street and SMEs while also maintaining workers' livelihoods. Should online marketplaces such as Amazon decide to pass the digital tax onto retailers, Labour can ensure SMEs are not disproportionately disadvantaged by providing grants to qualifying SMEs for some time to offset the higher costs.

2024: WHICH GENERAL ELECTION POLICY CAN LABOUR PROPOSE TO REGAIN THIS HEARTLAND?

Longer-lasting, sustainable policies are required to address the underlying socio-economic issues identified in the previous section. Albeit important, localised policies that further encourage remote working and highstreets are quick wins, mitigating these issues in the short term only. However, such a localised approach must be reinforced by establishing more concrete, deep-rooted policies that will require a Labour government with a public-backed mandate. Infrastructural change is required to support Wales' economic

TRANSPORT CONNECTIVITY

The Welsh economy can be supported through faster, more reliable and affordable rail transport. At the time of writing, rail fares are due to rise up to 3.8% at a time of high inflation and a cost of living crisis. Typically, fares are set based on RPI (Retail Price Index), which is likely to be high in the coming years as the economy opens up post-pandemic. The next Labour government can find a new way to price railway services to support commuters and connect people in remote communities with cities in need of more workers.

Rail journeys in Wales can be slow. For example, a 180-mile journey from Cardiff in South Wales to Bangor in North Wales takes nearly 5 hours by train, passing through Chester in England, while a road journey takes 4.5 hours by road based on Google Maps. Meanwhile, a similar 176 mile journey from Birmingham in the Midlands to Penrith in North West England takes 2.5 hours by train and at most

growth towards high wage, white-collared occupations. The most critical improvement can be made to transport infrastructure, connecting Welsh communities with the economic opportunities available in larger towns and cities across the UK. As outlined below, the Labour Welsh Government under Mark Drakeford has initiated improvements towards transport connectivity which the national Labour Party should support financially and non-financially.

3h 40m by car (via the M6). The time discrepancies here highlight the need to boost connectivity within Wales, not only to attract investment and remote workers but also to enhance productivity and mobility for the local population.

Rural railways can be improved through electrification and newer rolling stock. Having more frequent and reliable services to cities across the UK, as well as more carriages with WiFi access, would further enable remote workers to work during an occasional commute to the office. Furthermore, there is also a need to improve point-to-point, direct connections within Wales where possible, considering that transportation in Wales needs to account for navigation of geographical features such as valleys, mountains and rivers. Many employers are likely to offer a hybrid approach to work, allowing employees to work remotely most of the time with the need to visit the central office once a week,

once a month, or for specific important events. Fast, reliable and affordable transport between Welsh towns and larger cities will therefore make moving to Wales more attractive for workers and investors alike.

Transport for Wales has outlined plans to invest £738m to electrify 172km of track as well as plans to operate 285 (29%) more services from Monday to Wednesday by end-2023, including the North Wales metro and new trips between Cardiff and Liverpool, passing by Wrexham. The investments are expected to generate more than 600 employment opportunities.²⁰ Detailed plans can also be found at regional levels, namely the South Wales Metro, Swansea Bay and west Wales Metro as well as the North Wales Metro, which aim to connect transport options including bus, railway, cycling and walking.²¹ Specifically, the plans for trains set out by Dr Mark Berry include enhancing existing and building new railway lines, investing on quicker, more environmentally-friendly train journeys and increasing frequency of train journeys. Meanwhile, the plans for buses involve enhancing the pace and reliability of services as well as using hydrogen buses.²²

Besides the above, there is also a long-term Mersey Dee Alliance which seeks to better road and train connections between north Wales and Merseyside, the latter via electrification and investment into train stations (there are also programmes to upskill, advance digital connections and promote

sustainable growth).²³ The Welsh Government is also building a global centre of rail excellence in south Wales.²⁴ Therefore, these are examples of the Welsh Government programmes which the national Labour Party should fully support financially and non-financially.

Central government funding is required to facilitate these infrastructural improvements. One option for HM Treasury to fund this policy is via the additional receipts stemming from the forecast rise in corporation tax. It is expected that HM Treasury will raise £57.8 billion in 2021-22, £5.4 billion (10.4%) higher than in 2020-21, rising to £94.1 billion by 2026-27 despite the large cost of the capital allowance super-deduction measure that took effect from April 2021 (ending in March 2023²⁵). Receipts in 2021-22 have been revised up by £7.4 billion (15.2%) from the OBR's October 2021 forecast.²⁶ The additional forecast funding from corporation tax can be partially used gradually over the lifetime of the increase period to fund this transport policy at a sustainable pace, balancing the need for stronger transport links within Wales with fiscal responsibility. The overall impact of this would demonstrate the fiscal expediency of the Labour Party to fund such large-scale projects, whilst at the same time securing tangible long-lasting benefits to the Welsh economy by improving connectivity within and outside the nation.

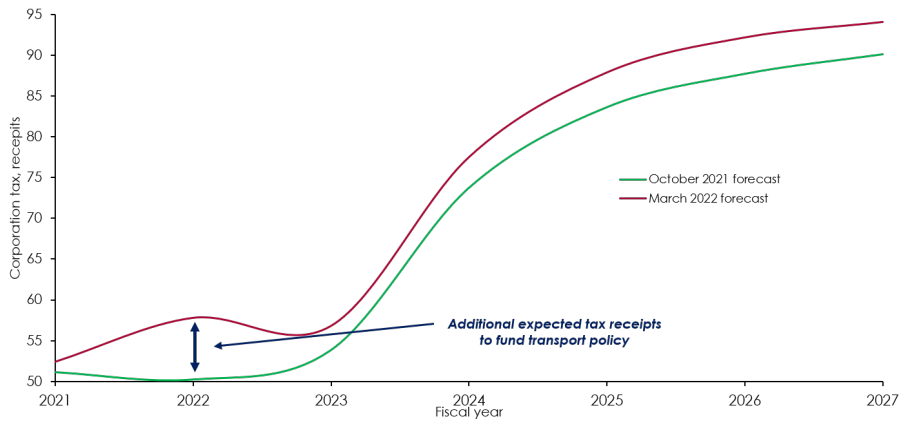


Figure 10: Funding of transport policy stemming from the expected rise in corporation tax²⁷

CONCLUSION

Based on the above, it is clear that the Welsh Labour government is in the midst of implementing programmes to expand the remote working policy, rejuvenate local economies via the High Streets and SMEs and boost transport connectivity.

Therefore, the national Labour Party needs to fully complement these programmes to regain the trust of ex-Labour Welsh voters. The 2021 Senedd election victory by Mark Drakeford shows that Labour has the potential to win back the

support of former Labour voters and implement policies such as the Social Partnership and Public Procurement Bill thereafter - the Bill puts responsibility on public bodies to examine sustainable development with trade unions and confirm their compliance annually as well as on Welsh ministers and public purchasing practices to advocate fair work objectives amongst others.²⁸

Winning back the trust of ex-Labour Welsh voters is the key to reclaiming this heartland.



Amy Swain

Amy Swain grew up in North Wales and studied French and Italian at the University of Warwick before moving to London where she currently works for King's College London Business School.

She is involved with the Young Fabians as well as the Welsh Fabians and has an interest in higher education policy. Outside of work she enjoys sport and travel.



Jack Parker

Jack Parker is a professional conference producer, working mainly in the construction sector. He was formerly the Networks Coordinator of the Young Fabians and Chair of the Young Fabian Environment Network.

**GEOGRAPHIC
HEARTLANDS:
ENGLAND**

EAST MIDLANDS



"There's no region in England that better demonstrates Labour's challenge in the years ahead than the East Midlands. We have a proud industrial heritage; Labour must champion and own our proud industrial future in new industries."

Alex Norris MP
Nottingham North, Shadow Minister for Levelling Up

"A compelling long-term vision is imperative to a shared self-confidence about our future – we must build on the achievements and record of investing and supporting people at a local level with quality homes, jobs, transport, education for our children and care for the elderly to demonstrate Labour's commitment of advancing equality and defending those in greatest need whilst adopting greener policies."

Peter Soulsby
Leicester City Mayor

INTRODUCTION

Bassetlaw in North Nottinghamshire elected its first Labour MP in 1929. A rich industrial heritage, born out of the Nottinghamshire coalfields, meant that Bassetlaw continually voted for the party at every General Election from 1935 – almost always with large majorities.¹ Growing up

in Bassetlaw and working for its previous Labour MP, John Mann, the 2019 General Election result seemed almost unthinkable: a decisive rejection of Labour with the largest swing against the party anywhere in the UK, with the Conservative candidate securing a majority of 14,000.²

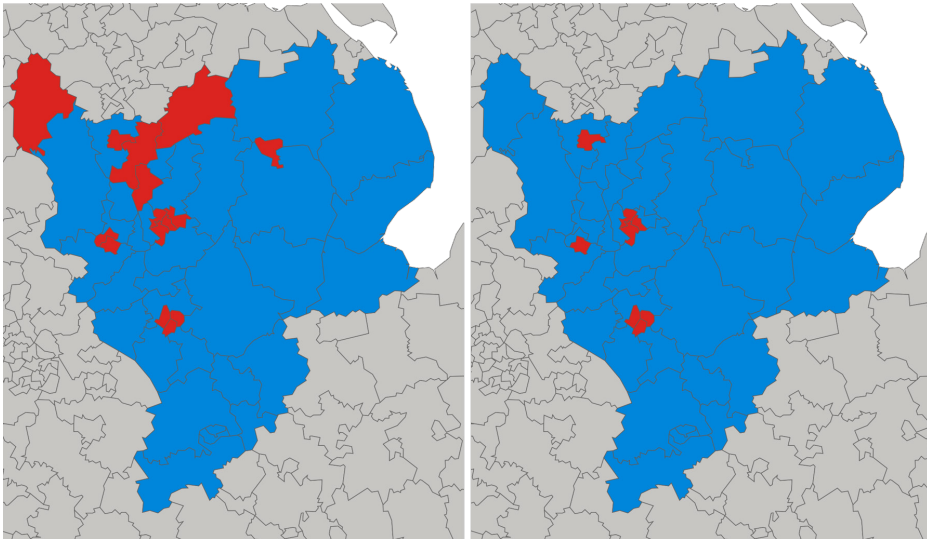


Figure 11: Decline in Labour share of seats (2017 left, 2019 right)

This was no anomaly. Bassetlaw was one of forty-three seats lost by Labour across the 'Red Wall' spanning the Midlands and the North in the 2019 election. Its electoral trend reflects consistent retreat for Labour in the East Midlands. It now holds just nine

seats (all in urban areas), whilst at the time of writing the Conservatives have gained a further seven seats since re-entering government in 2010. Meanwhile, previously Labour seats have swung more to the Conservatives since changing hands.³

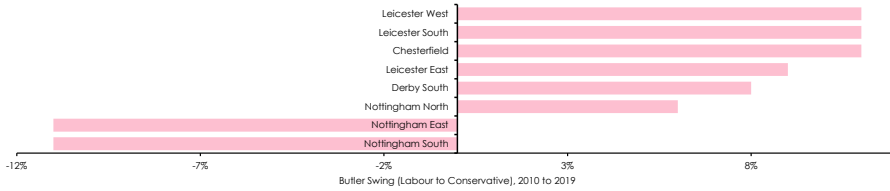


Figure 12: Two-party swing from Labour to the Conservatives, 2010 to 2019 for East Midlands seats Labour held continuously since 2010. (A positive sign indicates a swing from Labour to Conservative while a negative sign indicates a swing from Conservative to Labour)⁴

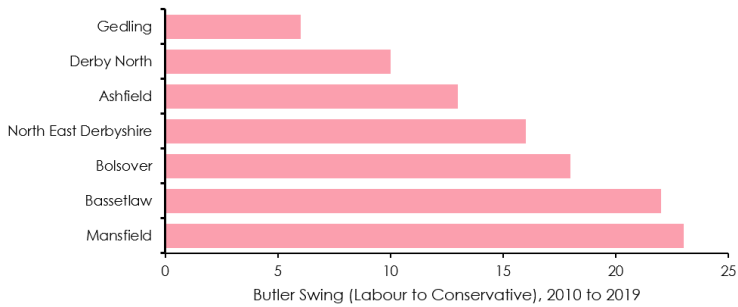


Figure 13: Two-party swing from Labour to the Conservatives, 2010 to 2019 for East Midlands seats Labour held in 2010 but since lost to the Conservatives⁵

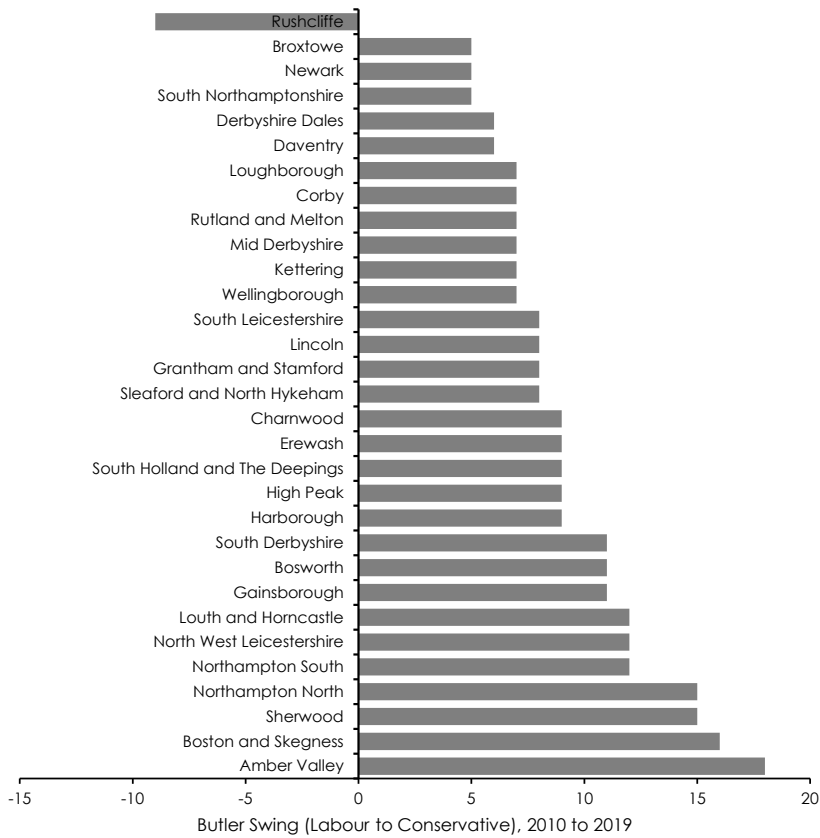


Figure 14: *Two-party swing from Labour to the Conservatives, 2010 to 2019 for East Midlands seats Labour held at any point prior to 2010 but are now Conservative held. (A positive sign indicates a swing from Labour to Conservative while a negative sign indicates a swing from Conservative to Labour)⁶*

This policy note explores the reasons for this retreat in the region and argues that, by advocating a Green New Deal as part of the recovery from COVID-19, the party can align a national environmental agenda with an ambitious growth plan for this for-

mer Heartland; helping it earn the opportunity to re-enter government in 2024. But to even be considered by voters, Labour must understand why it lost the East Midlands so decisively.

2019: WHY DID LABOUR LOSE THIS HEARTLAND?

Analysis of the 2019 General Election highlights several factors specific to this election, including the Conservative party pledge to “Get Brexit Done” with Labour’s indecisiveness. This is exemplified by quotes from voters in a focus group held in the aftermath of Labour’s defeat: “Labour wanted another referendum, I want to leave the EU, I want it finished.”⁷

However, these factors should not be overstated when compared to long-running trends. Labour’s decline in the region was

strongest among traditional working class voters; more of these voters backed the Conservatives than Labour for the first time in 2019.⁸ However, Labour’s traditional hold over these voters had been weakening from 1997 onwards.⁹ They felt keenly the relative economic decline of the East Midlands region, whilst UK-wide economic activity had grown 48% since 1998, (powered by 80% growth in London whilst the East Midlands lagged behind.)

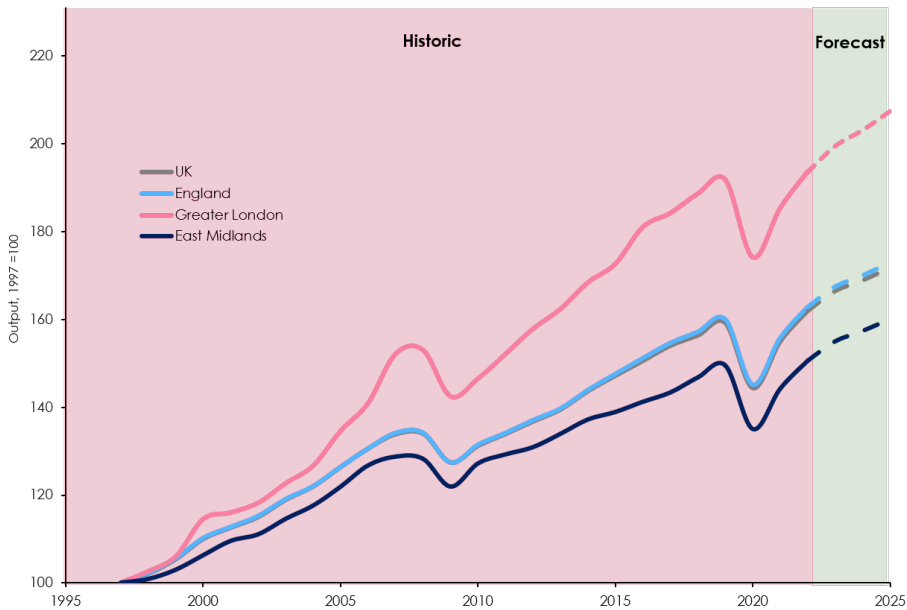


Figure 15: Relative Economic Performance of the East Midlands, 1997 to 2025 (1997 = 100)¹⁰

Regional wage data highlights the impact of this disparity for those living in the East Midlands. Employees working in Bassetlaw were paid a gross average wage of £489 per week at the end of 2019, £100 per week lower than the national UK average.¹¹ A lower local skill base (16% of residents hold NVQ Level 4 or above, compared to the English average of 40%), and the unavailability of skilled work (just 29% are in managerial professional or technical occupations), limits opportunities for progression.¹² Against this backdrop, it is unsurprising that many feel “left behind”, making the 2019 Conservative pledge to

“level up” particularly attractive in areas such as Bassetlaw and the East Midlands.¹³

Solving this relative regional decline must now be Labour’s cause if it is to win back the East Midlands. Labour must demonstrate that it has a compelling vision to strengthen the economy of the region that will translate into well paid jobs and a better quality of life. The Green New Deal provides the basis for such a vision, offering an opportunity for Labour to deliver economically in local government first and then translate it into a national offer.

2022-2023: WHAT CAN LABOUR ACHIEVE IN OPPOSITION TO GAIN TRUST EN ROUTE TO THE GENERAL ELECTION?

Labour can make this argument – and start to deliver – despite being out of government in Westminster. In the East Midlands, Labour still retains control of several seats of government that can allow it to demonstrate the potential of the Green New Deal. These (at the time of writing) include city councils in Leicester and Nottingham, the directly elected mayoralty in Mansfield, and district councils in Bassetlaw, Bolsover, Broxtowe, Chesterfield, Gedling, High Peak, and Lincoln.¹⁴ There are two key ways that local councillors, MPs, and party members can make this argument. First, by advocating for accelerating green economic policies at national level via a Green New Deal. Secondly, and most importantly, by demonstrating the benefits of the Green New Deal in action, with a drive for household energy efficiency, an integrated local public transport network and accelerating the Electric Vehicle

Transition in the region.

At the most basic level, Labour representatives and members must fearlessly make the case that a Green New Deal can create good jobs and sustainable economic growth. The party should be assured on this point. A recent study from IPPR outlined how the UK’s economic recovery from COVID-19, already acknowledged by both main parties to require significant state spending, could be focused on the environmental benefits and create 1.6 million jobs.¹⁵ With this paper identifying the East Midlands as the UK region most exposed to manufacturing-related job losses from COVID-19, the need to act to secure good jobs is clear. Labour can also be confident that such a move would be popular, including via voters in the East Midlands. Centre for Towns data demonstrates that whilst the majority of voters in “Red Wall” areas are concerned about the environment, most

view it as too long-term an issue to support policy measures today. Yet, when the argument is made about the economic opportunity of a Green New Deal, two thirds of voters surveyed say they are in favour.¹⁶ The Biden presidential campaign was a beneficiary of similar trends in the United States, winning back former Heartlands in Pennsylvania and Wisconsin whilst demonstrating the potential for “good union jobs” to result from a clean economic recovery focussed on green growth.¹⁷ This model could be replicated in the East Midlands.

Advocacy can only go so far however, and Labour leaders in local government must demonstrate the benefits of a Green New Deal in action.

One particularly powerful way of doing so would be via a drive for household energy efficiency, which has the potential to create new jobs and improve residents’ living conditions. Just 29% of UK households meet the EPC Standard C required to reach Net Zero, with the government having pledged that all must do so by 2035.¹⁸ Meanwhile, across the East Midlands, 283,000 households (14% of all households) are classed as ‘fuel poor’.¹⁹

Nottingham City Homes has already seen the potential of home retrofits, having piloted the *Energiesprung* approach to create Net Zero homes with new insulation, solar panels, and energy management systems.²⁰ The early evidence is compelling – household bills have been cut by around 60%, saving families around £200 per year. For an up-front cost of £31 m, Nottingham City Council could roll these renovations out to the 770 social rented homes it places in the lowest two categories for energy efficiency.²¹ With 170,000 homes owned by local authorities across the East Midlands, the potential for a size-

able impact via new jobs, lower emissions, and more money back in poorer families’ pockets is clear.

At the 2021 Labour Party Conference, Shadow Chancellor Rachel Reeves committed Labour to spend £28bn a year on tackling the climate crisis as part of a Green Investment Deal. Given the benefits of job creation and household standards of living, home retrofitting schemes such as this could be prime candidates for such investments - with the costs of implementing falling with scale.²²

Transport is another area where a Labour-led local government can begin to deliver a Green New Deal. From my home town of Retford in Bassetlaw, an hourly intercity train travels the 160 miles to London in just 80 minutes, yet connections to important local economic centres such as Nottingham and Leeds are less frequent, often indirect and can take much longer.²³ Meanwhile, bus services to local villages are hamstrung by infrequent services, poor reliability, clunky payment infrastructure and limited connections to longer-distance destinations. Investing in an integrated local public transport network by linking bus services to train stations and aligning timings, introducing smart ticketing and payment systems, and increasing the frequency and convenience of connections, could take cars off the road and facilitate access for workers to skilled jobs in nearby towns and cities.

With almost thirty billion miles driven by motorists annually in the East Midlands,²⁴ Labour leaders in local government can also seek to be at the forefront of the Electric Vehicle transition. Local authorities could lead the way in installing charging and maintenance infrastructure, helping motorists outside of major cities to take

advantage of government subsidies for electric vehicle ownership, and creating new local jobs in support of a growing new industry. Installing such infrastructure in municipal car parks and subsidising usage could also align with efforts to attract visitors to town centres, increasing footfall to local businesses in the process.

Together, these measures show how Labour members and representatives in the East Midlands need not wait for the next General Election to press ahead with plans for a Green New Deal and can enhance Labour's electoral prospects in the region by doing so.

2024: WHICH GENERAL ELECTION POLICY CAN LABOUR PROPOSE TO REGAIN THIS HEARTLAND?

However firmly Labour can advocate and lead by example at a local level, national government of course remains the most powerful potential lever to affect change and deliver a Green New Deal. Going into the next General Election, Labour can make a compelling offer to the East Midlands by putting the Green New Deal at the heart of the programme it proposes for government in the 2024 manifesto. It must do so by tackling head on concerns around a just transition, by promoting a national energy policy, and industrial strategy that accelerates electrification and using public investment to help industries in the East Midlands to realise the opportunities of green growth.

To ensure that Labour is able to credibly argue for a Green New Deal, it must use its 2024 manifesto to set out economic policies that adequately address concerns around a Just Transition, including the creation of new skilled jobs and re-skilling workers who have previously depended on high-emitting industries. This is particularly important in the East Midlands. For example, within the region the 2GW coal-fired power plant at West Burton which employs 250 skilled local people will be decom-

missioned after 55 years of service ahead of the government phase-out date for coal power.²⁵ The benefits of helping local workers to find jobs in new green industries are significant. Forty miles away from West Burton on the Lincolnshire coast, the former fishing port of Grimsby has transformed into a hub for Britain's offshore wind revolution, creating sustainable and well-paid employment for local people.²⁶ As Labour makes the case that it can deliver on the Net Zero targets and secure a Green New Deal, putting skills and new jobs at the forefront will be crucial to winning voters' trust.

Labour's manifesto for 2024 should also include a pledge to accelerate the generation of renewables and develop Green Manufacturing. The need for such policies and the new jobs they will secure is particularly acute in the East Midlands. For instance, data from the Midlands Energy Hub shows that the region lags behind the UK as a whole for low carbon environmental goods and services,²⁷ whilst the region's manufacturing sector is significantly exposed to job losses in the aftermath of the pandemic.²⁸ To tackle this, an incoming Labour government should promote a na-

tional energy policy and industrial strategy that rapidly accelerates electrification, by accelerating the roll out of new renewable generation capacity, and investing in the grid infrastructure needed to manage the peaks and troughs of renewable power. Progress in the UK has already been strong: coal was used for almost 30% of electricity generation when Labour left office in 2010, yet is due to be phased out entirely by 2024.²⁹

However, there is still scope to go further with 36% of the UK's electricity still generated by gas. Whilst renewable energy often has higher capital expenditure requirements than traditional power, estimates from the Levelised Cost of Energy from UK wind and solar projects commissioned in 2025 are significantly below those for gas power. For instance, onshore wind power can be generated for £46/MWh, which is almost half the £85/MWh for new gas power.³⁰ This demonstrates the strong case for public investment in such projects, which have clear environmental and economical benefits, and can create new jobs. Likewise, electrifying key sectors such as mobility and manufacturing can further aid decarbonisation by reducing primary energy generation on site, and enhancing storage capacity in the grid. With many leading industrial companies based in the East Midlands, the region can be at the forefront of this national strategy. With strong economic benefits to accelerating renewable energy generation and green manufacturing including the potential to secure new jobs in the East Midlands,

Labour can be confident that such a policy can play a role in winning back the East Midlands in 2024.

Labour's 2024 manifesto must also offer support to existing industries to realise the opportunities of green growth with state backed loans and guarantees playing a key role. Investment cases in green technologies such as battery manufacturing and renewable energy generation have positive financial returns but can be less attractive due to high up-front capital investment costs and long term payback periods. State-backed loans or guarantees can lower the cost of capital for such industries, and support the private sector to make the required transition. The recently-announced National Infrastructure Bank shows potential here, with crucially, carefully screened proposals to ensure that they fit its mandate and are economically viable. However, a Labour government should look to scale up further. The Bank can loan £12bn in liabilities and £10bn in guarantees over the next five years,³¹ as the most ambitious banks in other countries have far greater reach. For instance, Germany's national KfW bank, founded for post-war reconstruction, held assets totalling approximately 15% of GDP in 2020,³² and has invested significantly in industrial projects in the country. With many large manufacturing sites in the East Midlands needing to decarbonise, offering state-backed support will be crucial for a Labour government to reach Net Zero and for voters in the region to see that a Green New Deal can create and protect jobs.

CONCLUSION

The potential to tie the clear economic benefits of a Green New Deal to the daunting but necessary task of regaining Labour's Heartlands in the East Midlands, should embolden Labour to advocate for the Green New Deal. Out of government in Westminster, the Labour party can lobby for more ambitious policies whilst leading

by example in local government through local Labour councillors, particularly on housing and transport. Doing so will prepare the ground for Labour to go to the public in 2024 with an offer for a transformative government focussed on securing a just transition and transforming the energy and industrial sectors.



Sam Sherburn

Sam Sherburn is a Labour Party & Fabian Society member based in London, and who grew up in Bassetlaw in Nottinghamshire. The first in his family to attend university, he studied PPE at the University of Oxford. Sam worked as Parliamentary Researcher to John Mann, Labour MP for Bassetlaw, and a prominent member of the Treasury Select Committee. He now works as a consultant, focussing on climate and the environment. He writes in a personal capacity.



Ashveer Bal

Ashveer Bal is a Labour Party member. She is in her final year at Loughborough university, studying Politics and International Relations. Part time, Ashveer works as a civil servant in Loughborough in the Ministry of Justice.

GREATER LONDON

"More than a decade of Tory Government is taking its toll on our communities, with a cost of living crisis, derelict high streets, insecure work and a lack of investment blighting our towns and cities. Alongside a revival in the North, the Midlands, and in Scotland there are seats across London where Labour must have a compelling vision in the next General Election."

**Catherine West MP,
Hornsey and Wood Green; Shadow Minister for Asia and the Pacific**

"The pandemic has had a huge impact on London, and on our economy. While Labour-led councils in London have been providing free school meals and building more council homes, they are being let down by an out of touch Government. To win a majority in the next election the Labour Party needs to win seats in London we've never held before - these seats can be won with a clear economic message which shows that Labour is on Londoners' side."

**Ruth Cadbury MP
Brentford & Isleworth; Shadow Minister for International Trade**

"Labour in London has stood up robustly for hard-pressed residents. In an economy creating opportunities, it has been a successful political strategy. We need to renew the strategy in London, and help the party achieve comparable success elsewhere."

**Stephen Timms MP
East Ham; Chair of the Work and Pensions Select Committee; Chief Secretary to
the Treasury (2006-7)**

INTRODUCTION

Despite the catastrophic reverses elsewhere in Britain on 12 December 2019, voters in Greater London renewed their support for Labour. It was the only region across the four nations which saw a net increase in Labour seats. The party won 48.1% of the votes cast – 16% higher

than the national result. On a night when 60 seats were lost nationally, in London the party retained the 48 seats it won in 2017 and claimed Labour's only gain of the night in Putney.¹ Nearly a quarter of Labour MPs in the Parliamentary Labour Party now represent a London constituency.²

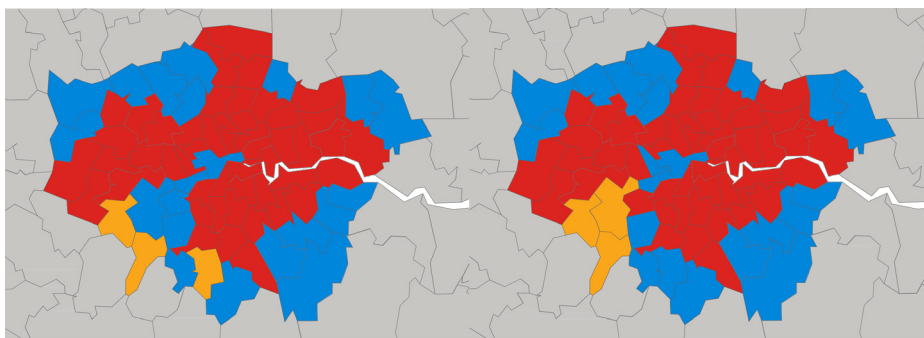


Figure 16: *Decline in Labour share of seats (2017 left, 2019 right)*

The May 2021 Mayoral and GLA elections provide further evidence of Labour's apparent electoral dominance in Greater London. Sadiq Khan has been elected Mayor of London twice, each time with more than 55% of the vote.³ This enviable position should not be mistaken for a permanent Labour dominance in the capital, nor should it be taken for granted that London will remain a 'Labour city'. Labour's current position of ascendancy in London has been a long time in the making.

In December 2019, the Tory Party secured its largest parliamentary majority since 1987. Three decades on from the high point of Thatcherism, in the 2017 Gen-

eral Election, Bilal Mahmood increased Labour's vote by 15.3% within the constituency of Chingford & Woodford Green (CWG). The blue ribbon seat of Norman Tebbit and Iain Duncan Smith had been reduced to a marginal. Iain Duncan Smith was re-elected in 2010 with a majority of 12,963. His majority was reduced by one-third to 8,386 in 2015. In 2017 it was slashed by three-quarters to just 2,438. Over the same period, Labour's share of the vote increased from 22.7% to 43.9% in 2017 representing a swing of 12.5% from the Tories to Labour.

Despite these foundations, and with significantly increased resources and

hundreds of volunteers canvassing, the Party still lost in 2019, although achieving a swing of 1.3% in CWG largely down to the Green Party stepping aside.⁴ With the long-term collapse of Labour's position in Scotland from 2015,⁵ and the erosion in Labour Heartlands in the North East, Yorkshire, and the Midlands,⁶ Labour's path to power must lead through marginal seats like CWG.⁷

Unlike many of the seats discussed in this pamphlet, Labour has never won Chingford & Woodford Green, although it has come increasingly close to doing so in the previous three General Elections. Labour's economic policies, and the credibility with which they are regarded by the electorate, will be central to winning the support of voters in CWG and putting the party in a position to form a government in 2024 (or earlier).

En route to the next General Election, Labour has to address key factors when

writing economic policies for London. These factors are based on CWG's experience, which can translate to the rest of Greater London. These factors include:

- a. The median gender pay gap
- b. The ethnicity pay gap - the largest in the UK
- c. Income deprivation - CWG had one of the highest rates of people living below the living wage in the country
- d. The decline of high streets and town centres as business is lost to online retailers.

These are the economic issues that are most relevant to residents in the constituency, and which the party needs to develop credible policies to address them, as we approach the next General Election.

WHY HAVE LABOUR NEVER WON IN CONSTITUENCIES SUCH AS CWG?

CWG reflects many outer London constituencies: themselves a microcosm of the great inequality across the UK. Understanding these constituencies goes a long way to understanding many communities around the country that are dissatisfied, and feel unheard by political parties. This section proposes that the party fell short on developing practical solutions to alleviate poverty, gender and ethnicity pay gaps that gained the trust of the electorate. Winning CWG requires a formula that could unlock similar constituencies throughout Middle England, based on raising living standards and reducing inequality.

Admittedly, the 2019 Manifesto touched on these points, however, it was insufficiently defined to cut through to voters.

Winning in CWG requires practical, credible solutions to alleviate poverty and generate wealth. Recent analysis of income deprivation in 2019 by the Office for National Statistics shows that in Waltham Forest – the borough where 6 of CWG's 8 wards are located – 26 neighbourhoods were among the 20% most income-deprived in England.⁸ Overall income-deprivation in Waltham Forest is 15.2%, placing the borough 76th out of 316 local authorities. In the Woodford Green, part of the

constituency, which is in Redbridge, the overall income-deprivation rate is 12.1%, placing it 131st out of all English local authorities. CWG contains both the extremes of income-deprivation, in wards like Valley and Larkswood, as well as some of the least deprived areas in Greater London, within wards such as Chingford Green and Monkams. It is a constituency of stark differences, from golf courses to food banks. Reflecting on the 2019 General Election, Labour could have proposed economic policies appealing to both sets of voters to win seats.

In 2019, we could have focused on another bread-and-butter issue, fairness, through the prism of alleviating gender and ethnicity pay gaps. Despite being the party with the largest proportion of both female and ethnic representatives, we failed to do so. In recent years, the median gender pay gap in London has increased dramatically. In 2019 female employees in London were found to be earning 30.4% less than their male counterparts. Nationally, the gender pay gap in 2019 was 17.9%.⁹ Female staff working in London earned an average of

£8,303 less than their male counterparts in 2018.¹⁰ As the Equality & Human Rights Commission has found, women not only earn less than men overall, but they are also more likely to be paid a lower hourly rate. In 2014, the Commission found 20.4% of men earned less than £8 per hour, compared to 30.3% of women.¹¹

Regarding the ethnicity pay gap, London has the highest gap in the UK - 23.8%.¹² This has a particular impact on areas like CWG, where workers from Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Caribbean heritage earn significantly below the median hourly pay of £12.40 for white British workers.¹³

Labour failed to win in constituencies such as CWG because the party's message did not focus on addressing core issues such as poverty alleviation, as well as tackling gender and ethnicity pay gaps, in a convincing way which resonated with constituents. These are issues which must be given attention. Our next section focuses on potential solutions Labour can offer to voters between now and the next General Election.

2022-2023: WHAT CAN LABOUR ACHIEVE IN OPPOSITION TO GAIN TRUST EN ROUTE TO THE GENERAL ELECTION?

It is essential to gain the electorate's trust across constituencies in the Greater London region. To win, the Labour Party must develop tangible localised policies to regenerate town centres and high streets. This section focuses on the idea that Labour councils are well placed to engage with local businesses and support entrepreneurs. In particular, this section proposes that the party should assist brick and mortar high

street business owners to adapt to digitalisation. This would enable them to compete with existing and larger competitors.

CWG has a rich history of locally owned, multi-generational businesses. Over the years, these have diminished, losing footfall to neighbouring developments such as the Westfield Shopping Centre in Stratford and the acceleration of online shopping. Research by Savills estate agents

highlighted the scale of the problems facing the UK high streets, where vacancies increased from 6.9% in June 2020 to 11.7% in June, 2021.¹⁴ Business owners are feeling increasingly frustrated with the loss of custom and what they regard as an unfair advantage enjoyed by online retailers. The impact of the decline of high streets is a national issue, with local consequences for communities such as CWG and many other high streets in Greater London. The pandemic has exacerbated the pressures facing local businesses, and at the same time provided the party with a unique opportunity to own the economic debate locally and regain trust.

Moreover, Labour can also advocate for policies to support high street business owners in adapting to digitalisation. This can be done via offering the relevant shop owners' courses such as digital marketing, as well as funding to set up online operations. This initiative become part of Waltham Forest Council's Economic Recovery Plan,¹⁵ which was launched in 2020. The plan included rate relief for local businesses and the investment of £47m in

small business grants, as well as long-term capital and local transport programmes.¹⁶

Further policies Labour can propose to enhance the high streets include ensuring that business rates are kept at a level that small and medium sized businesses can continue to trade. Making sure that the shops can still operate will boost the local economy through tax generation and could attract investment into the area.

COVID-19 has forced many businesses to pivot their business strategy, with some completely changing their operational style. A thriving local economy, including vibrant town centres and high streets are crucial in reconnecting local people to their area, to creating a sense of belonging, and granting many a stable livelihood. The Labour Party can demonstrate their capability to govern by providing the necessary investment for high street businesses, and levelling the playing fields with online retailers. Apart from the high streets, Labour can also focus on tackling pay gaps and low pay, which we will elaborate on in the next section.

2024: WHICH GENERAL ELECTION POLICY CAN LABOUR PROPOSE TO REGAIN THIS HEARTLAND?

Besides reviving the high streets, Labour can also focus its national campaign on addressing the issues of low pay and gender and ethnicity pay gaps identified in the first section of this article. Labour can draw upon its success of increasing and enforcing the minimum wage via the 1998 National Minimum Wage Act while in government. Moreover, Labour has already run a successful campaign to raise awareness of the 48.3% of workers in

Chingford & Woodford Green who were being paid less than the living wage. This campaign could be replicated on a larger scale to gain public interest nationally.

There is a greater impetus to focus on the gender and ethnicity pay gaps in CWG given the demographic shift. The constituency has seen a growth in the number of young families, single professionals, and BAME individuals. In particular, the BAME community as a percentage of the Red-

bridge Borough's population has increased from 36.5% in 2001 to 57.3% in 2011, while a similar trend is also observed in Waltham Forest Borough with a rise from 35.5% to 47.9%.¹⁷ Election messaging should therefore be calibrated to appeal to the desire for opportunity and financial security within these communities.

To address the issues above, the *Skills for Londoners Strategy (SfLS)*¹⁸ provides an example of how a London-wide approach to addressing skills shortages and widening employment opportunities can shape the economic response to the COVID-19 pandemic. For the first time, the adult education budget is being devolved to London and the strategy seeks to create a coherent system of post-16 technical and vocational education and training opportunities across the region. Labour should therefore be pushing for policies advocating the upskilling opportunities such as the SfLS to demonstrate its commitment towards continuous learning, which is especially relevant in the digital era. Besides helping participants find more stable and secure jobs, the SfLS also facilitates the narrowing of gender and ethnicity pay gaps.

On a national level, Labour can also work towards providing employees with secure, sustainable jobs by strengthening the regulation of zero hours contracts. Doing so will help avoid worker exploitation and

increase job security. Shadow Chancellor Rachel Reeves has called for a national strategy for good work to improve pay in traditionally low-paying areas like retail and social care.¹⁹ This is a policy Labour can adopt on its election platform alongside raising the minimum and living wages further.

Labour can further push the agenda of granting workers secure, sustainable jobs by working with unions such as the GMB who achieved an historic court victory for workers in the Gig Economy.²⁰ Increased collective bargaining, including closing the gender and ethnicity pay gap, must be part of Labour's approach to raising wages and securing long-term improvements in working conditions.

As a way of reducing gender and ethnicity pay gaps, Labour can propose a law requiring companies to publish the gender and ethnicity pay gaps in their statutory financial reporting, starting with publicly listed companies. Doing so will bring more transparency to the pay gaps and provide an impetus for companies to narrow the gaps if the data is publicly available. As part of the policy proposal, the Government can offer grants and help for companies to offer leadership programmes targeting women and people of colour to help bridge the pay gaps.

CONCLUSION

With the above policies, we believe that Labour can generate workable solutions to tackle the issues of gender and ethnicity pay gaps while also providing sustainable, secure jobs that pay the living wage. Labour must provide an optimistic economic agenda for local communities, where the impact of Tory austerity policies has been profound, and the COVID-19 pandemic and cost of living crisis has

highlighted the widening fissures between opportunity & security, and deprivation & insecurity.

As Francis O'Grady has said, we need: "a society that provides decent jobs for those who can work and decent security for those who can't". Labour must be the vehicle to make this happen.



Neil Weeks

Neil Weeks has been a key campaigning member of Chingford and Woodford Green for over a decade. He was instrumental in developing campaign ideas in both 2015 and 2017 General Elections. A public servant in Hackney for 20 years, Neil first worked for the Education Department of Hackney Council and then, from its inception, for the Hackney Learning Trust. In that time he worked in the Research & Statistics and the Strategy, Policy & Governance teams. In 2009, he worked with the Children's Services Network – part of the Local Government Information Unit – to produce: Fitter for the Future: The New Accountability Framework, evaluating the Government's Comprehensive Area Assessment system. In the 2022 local elections, Neil was a Labour candidate for Valley Ward in Waltham Forest, one of the most marginal part of Chingford & Woodford Green.



Bilal Mahmood

In 2015 and 2017 Bilal Mahmood stood as the Parliamentary Candidate against Sir Iain Duncan Smith. Bilal narrowed the electoral gap from 12,000 to 2,400 achieving a huge 21% swing over two elections. Together with local campaigners, he transformed the safe Conservative seat formerly held by Norman Tebbit and Winston Churchill into a key marginal using the power of community-based campaigns. A banking and finance solicitor for over 10 years, he is Senior Legal Counsel at the Royal Bank of Canada having previously practiced at Allen & Overy LLP. He is a former Director of the East London Credit Union, a co-operative providing fair financial services to the local community. He was also a Trustee of the English-Speaking Union, an educational and international charity focused on empowering youth through public speaking. Bilal has written articles for the Independent, the New Statesmen, Labourlist and Open Labour. He is currently dad of two and Council Candidate in Larkswood Ward in Chingford.

NORTH EAST



“The myth of levelling up is now being exposed for what it is – with the measures needed to address the huge inequalities in the North East few and far between. Everyone agrees levelling up is needed – but if it is ever going to be achieved in a fair and equitable way, we will need a Labour Government. We have a long way to go – we mustn’t pretend that we’re once again the favourites of working people and even the more vulnerable in our society because we are not. We have to demonstrate we can deliver better for the North East, for our children and families – and then persuade the people – many of whom have stopped voting or never voted in their lives - to vote Labour.”

Alex Cunningham MP
Stockton North, Shadow Minister for Courts and Sentencing

“The General Election in 2019 sent shockwaves across the nation as it was revealed just how disconnected so many people in the Labour Party’s traditional Heartlands had become disillusioned with the direction the party had taken.

Namely, the position the party had taken on the issue of Brexit. By committing to a second referendum many people living in held back communities justifiably felt like we had ignored their anger and concerns at the direction of British politics in recent decades and for that we paid the price.

This is the culmination of successive governments allowing these communities to be held back, leaving them at the mercy of global market forces and harsh austerity that have left regions a shell of what they once were both economically and socially. These people were screaming at us to listen to them, and to win back their trust and support that is what we now must do.

As we emerge from a global pandemic we have a unique opportunity to offer a bold and transformational program to rebalance the shift of power and wealth in this country along the lines of the traditional values of the Labour Party – Cooperation, mutualism, social justice and solidarity – challenging the empty rhetoric of levelling up with concrete plans to restore pride and prosperity to a region held back for far too long.”

Ian Lavery MP
Wansbeck, Party Chair (2017-2020)

"It's never been enough to just listen to our communities. Proper engagement and action on their wishes matters. Clear, consistent messaging also matters. In the North East our voters know the damage the Tories are doing but when it comes to voting they need positive and realistic ideas from Labour about our economy, employment and essential public services."

Emma Lewell-Buck MP
South Shields

"Far from levelling up, many in this country – especially in the North East – are struggling to keep up. The cost-of-living crisis means that people are choosing between heating and eating. Foodbank use is rife. Inequality is widening. The Government's levelling up mantra is a hollow replacement for real policies. Labour needs to offer voters a vision of real, genuine change."

Grahame Morris MP
Easington

INTRODUCTION

The North East's (NE) 2021 local election results make for grim reading. The vote share and loss of seats and councils shows that the 2019 general election result was not a one-off. It is clear to see that Labour's core relationship with its NE Heartland voters has been very seriously damaged. This relationship, forged over a century of working for and with local people, will not be repaired by just installing a new leader. It will only be repaired by an authentic and visible change of the character and purpose of the Labour Party, showing it is once more for the people of Britain and the NE and can once more make their lives better.

This pamphlet section provides several policy proposals to help ensure that the region's economy can be strengthened, whilst also winning back the votes of those within this Heartland area. En route to the next general election, devolution will provide the platform for constituents to have more autonomy and power to bring change locally. This should enable the party to build a platform to bring about impactful change, while supporting the transition to a Net Zero economy which is both the single biggest opportunity for the NE to resolve historic issues forced upon it by Conservative de-industrialisation.

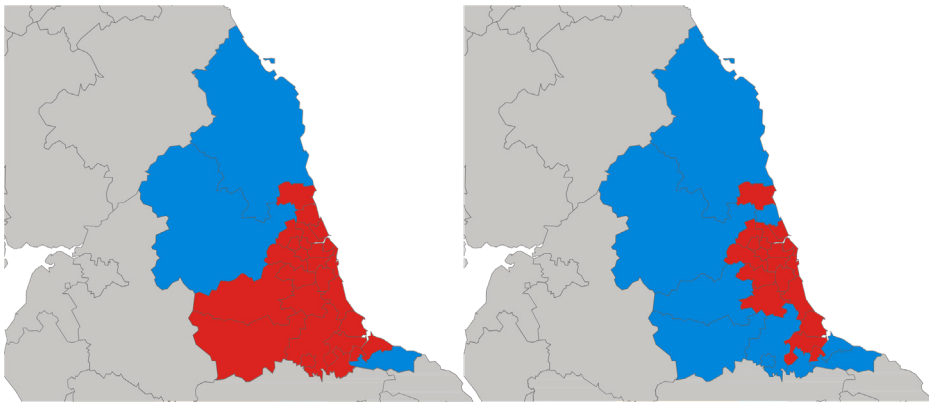


Figure 17: Decline in Labour share of seats (2017 left, 2019 right)

2019: WHY DID LABOUR LOSE THIS HEARTLAND?

The NE, with a rich industrial and working-class history, has long been a traditional Labour Heartland. Yet 2019 saw the party's NE vote share drop to its lowest level since 1935 and a loss of over 13% of its 2017 voter total. The Hartlepool by-election and Tees Valley mayoral election defeats as well as trends away from Labour in Durham and the Blyth Valley in the 2021 local elections suggest a continuation of this downward trend at the time of writing. There were also local factors at play in the Tees Valley, as the sitting mayor succeeded with his mass publicity machine to convince the electorate he had delivered on his promises particularly around the Teesside International Airport (there were

signs of recovery at the time of writing with Labour gaining the Redhill council seat in Sunderland from UKIP following a March 2022 by-election).

North Easterners are proud of their region. Indeed, a 2018 YouGov poll suggests that the NE has the strongest sense of regional identity in the whole of England, with 74% of people in the NE saying that their sense of regional identity was 'very strong' or 'strong.'¹ Key aspects of the Labour Party's 2019 election promise contributed to a narrative which seemed to shun the NE and what its people cared about: respecting the EU referendum results and having realistic manifesto pledges with clear funding plans.

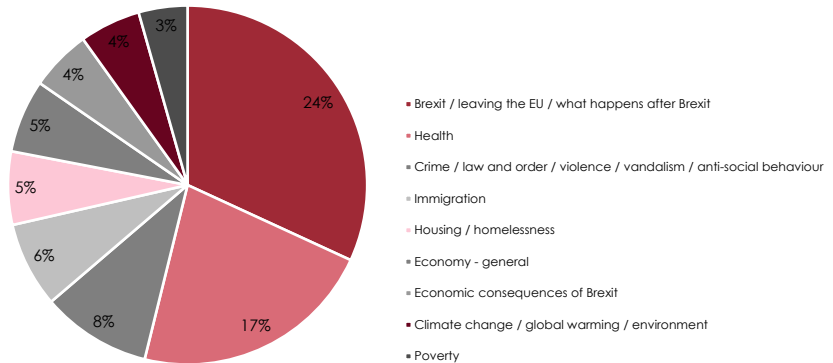


Figure 18: Single most important issue affecting the nation according to North East voters, 2019 General Election²

BREXIT

Brexit was the primary factor influencing voters in the region, according to the British Election Study.³ 24% of NE voters ranked Brexit as their number one issue ahead of the 2019 General Election, ahead of health, crime, and immigration. The Labour Party's Brexit policy was seen as indecisive. For remainers, Labour did not go far enough to prevent Brexit or a hard Brexit deal. While for Brexit voters,

comprising 58% of the NE's electorate, the promise of a second referendum reinforced the impression that Labour were not listening to the will of the people. In the North as a whole, 37% of people agreed that Brexit dominating the election was a key reason for Labour's defeat. Labour's unclear stance was further exposed by the Conservative Party's pledge, 'Get Brexit Done'.

POLICIES

Underpinning this sense of mistrust was Labour's manifesto. NE voters did not believe that Labour could deliver on its promises and the policies were not seen as economically credible. The extensive manifesto appeared to 'throw in the kitchen sink' when it came to economic and social issues. Furthermore, voters could not identify policies that would help them and the issues they cared about - namely health,

crime and financial security. According to Lord Ashcroft's poll, 31% of Northern voters agreed that an 'extremely important reason' for Labour's defeat was its unbelievable election promises.

The Tories had therefore broken into this historic Heartland due to a combination of Labour's position on Brexit and its core policy offerings.

2022-2023: WHAT CAN LABOUR ACHIEVE IN OPPOSITION TO GAIN TRUST EN ROUTE TO THE GENERAL ELECTION?

In opposition, with no power nationally, it is incredibly difficult to show voters the Labour party will deliver. The party, and Starmer, face the added complication that Labour has not and does not celebrate its many successes in government. Due to this, and a perception that Labour caused the 2008 financial crash, the party is often blamed for the devastating impacts of the Conservatives' austerity policies. Regionally, due to this austerity, the average council in the NE saw a reduction in spending power of 34%,⁴ the people of most NE towns and cities have seen a regression in services,⁵ and a worsening in key measures of social wellbeing such as child poverty,⁶ crime,⁷ and health inequality.⁸ Therefore, they feel as if their towns, families and communities have been forgotten. Devolution provides a potential solution to this.

Conversely, Boris Johnson on the back of Brexit, has portrayed the Conservatives as a new 'Red Wall' focused party, breaking any ties to the failures of their past while also focusing on 'levelling up' rhetoric and allowing people to 'return' to the days of feeling valued and having their fair share. Regionally Labour needs to challenge this image and provide a realistic, aspirational and deliverable policy agenda, which offers tangible benefits to communities and individuals in the NE ahead of the next General Election. The policy that offers the Labour party the vehicle to do these things before the next election is further English devolution. In the NE this means full and meaningful devolution of transport, health,

housing and education and skills.

The Northern Powerhouse Partnership has shown in recent research that the public are backing devolution and even backing Metro Mayors more than their respective party brands.⁹ Increasing voter turnout from the May 2021 elections shows that the public are understanding Devolution and its many benefits. More and more people also support devolution, because it will provide them with more say over local matters, which can improve engagement with democracy. This argument is backed by Centre for Cities, showing with independent polling, the huge support metro mayors have achieved.¹⁰

The economic case for devolution is solid, well-argued and the results are being seen across the country. Steve Rotheram, Andy Burnham and Dan Norris are all cross-party examples of Metro Mayors bringing in inward investment and driving the local economy forward.

NE voters would also benefit from proper skills and education devolution with a budget that could help address achievement in schools, adult illiteracy and unemployment. Transport powers and a huge increase in transport funding could create a fully integrated transport system, as Andy Burnham and Steve Rotheram are creating in their city regions.

Devolution would also allow the NE to build its brand and offer, reaching far past the boundaries of its technical powers. The NE could lead on Net Zero and become a true powerhouse again - with devolution. A

devolved local government will allow a local administration to have power to deliver greener, sustainable growth.

With the implementation of devolution, Labour needs to be aware of the pitfall in having to implement Tory agendas, such as austerity at a local level in the 2010s. Should Labour-led local authorities find themselves in such a scenario, there is a

need to communicate to the electorate the steps Labour are taking to secure more funding for their local areas and subsequent successes. A recent example of this communication can be found in Andy Burnham's communication around securing c.£1.1bn in additional transport funding for Greater Manchester.¹¹

2024: WHICH GENERAL ELECTION ECONOMIC POLICY CAN LABOUR PROPOSE TO REGAIN THE NORTH EAST HEARTLAND?

Labour, when at its best, is forward-looking and provides a positive vision for the future that is pragmatic yet transformative and importantly has relevance to the current economic picture. Labour must not condescend or focus on ideals and perfectionism but offer a concrete, credible and deliverable alternative to the current political and economic situation, with benefits to people and society that are identifiable, easy to understand and well communicated.

We have done it before and when we do it, we win. Developing and owning a bold economic plan to reach the UK's legally binding Net Zero targets, whilst building jobs and economic opportunities in the ex-industrial (Red Wall) areas, outside of London will allow us to achieve this once more. By focusing the heart of these efforts in the NE, we can provide a huge boost to the economy of the NE, and combined with the power of devolution, we can re-forge relationships with forgotten and left-behind towns and communities who have voted for the Conservatives since 2010.

The transition to a Net Zero economy is both the single biggest opportunity for the

NE to resolve historic issues forced upon it by Conservative de-industrialisation. However, the NE is among the regions with the most to lose if the transition to Net Zero is not managed or 'just'. The region still suffers from the effects of an uncontrolled Tory deindustrialization with generational unemployment,¹² alongside a scarcity of retraining and reskilling. The serious lack of opportunities for young people, land left desolate for generations after being abandoned by heavy industry and under-used, underfunded town and village centres, has led to communities feeling forgotten and left behind. These communities feel that they have no control over political decision making – leading to the desire to take back control over their economic future in a localised way.

Within the North East alone, there are c.12,900 jobs in carbon heavy industries (mining, quarrying, electricity, gas, steam and air).¹³ The 'Getting to Zero' study by the Onward think tank identifies Houghton & Sunderland, as the constituency with the most carbon heavy jobs in the country, rating 100 in their score. Meanwhile, the second highest constituency hit only 79.1

and only two other constituencies reached a rating over 60. The lowest score in the country by comparison is Poplar and Limehouse in London with a score of 0.0. If there is not a just and managed transition in the NE where 'brown' jobs are converted to green and the lost carbon heavy jobs are not replaced by new green industry, then the NE will face the devastation of de-industrialisation once more. However, the region will also be hit by the triple whammy of being underfunded for a decade with soaring unemployment and huge inequality.

It is up to Labour to ensure that the positives and opportunities of Net Zero are

emphasised and realised in the region. Labour can, with strong devolved leadership, develop and own an agenda that would use this opportunity to develop a better NE with increasing employment and a thriving circular economy attracting inward investment and R&D spend. This will allow the NE to finally reach its full potential and drive down its key measures of deprivation, while increasing measures of prosperity. The effect of these policies on the region's macroeconomy are clear.

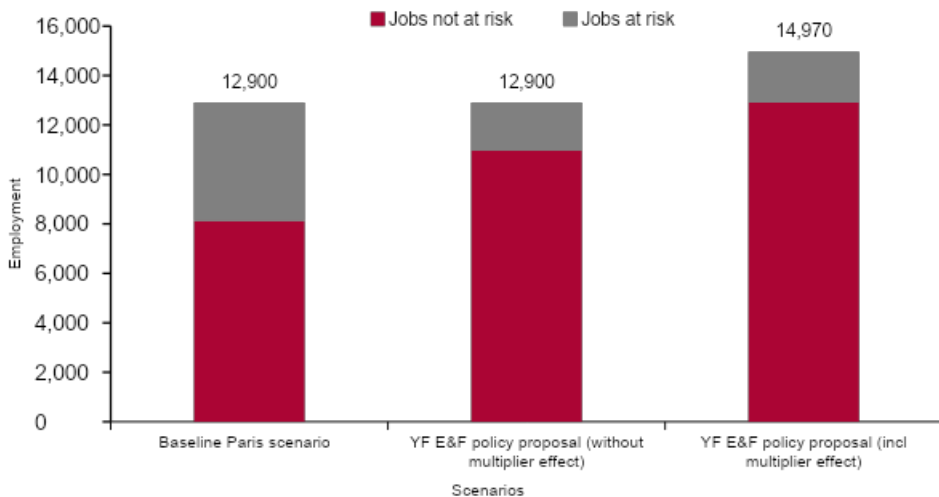


Figure 19: Brown jobs pre- and post- Fabian policy intervention¹⁴

Other similar policies which can be achieved include an implementation of the Net Zero Northern Powerhouse Partnership. This is intended to connect the Northern Powerhouse's science assets, skills providers, and businesses to forge a green recovery from Covid. It will put the UK, in particular the North East, at the forefront of the global drive for Net Zero

carbon.¹⁵ Apportioning an initial £300m investment across other regions, such as the North West as well as the Yorkshire and the Humber, is intended to bring several benefits, which include: upskilling the workforce through Net Zero training delivered by Further Education colleges in towns, cities and rural locations; as well as a c.20% reduction in carbon emissions in

the region by 2030, which is required to put the region on track to achieve Net Zero by 2050. The estimated direct and indirect effect of the initial investment is expected

to bolster the economy of the region by a direct GVA impact of £440m, as well as indirect GVA benefits £140m via supply chain multipliers (Figure 20).

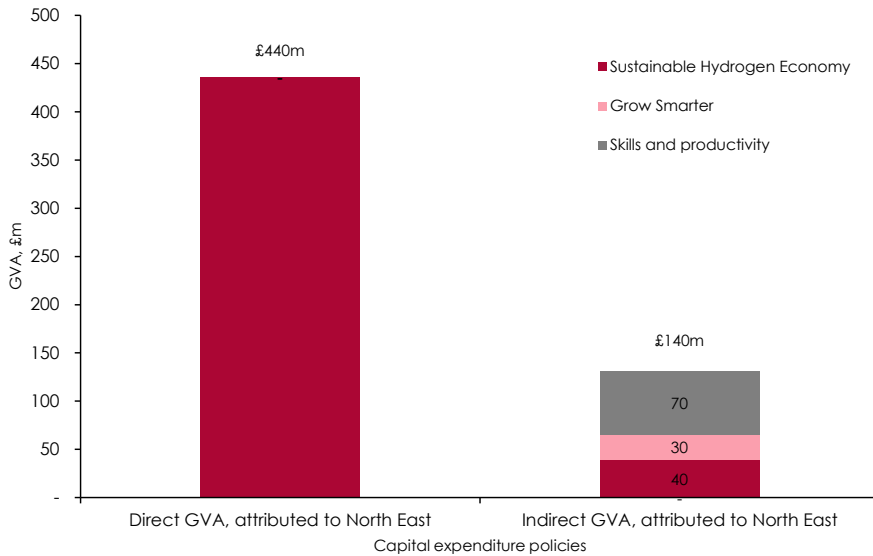


Figure 20: Economic impact of Northern Power homes, a green recovery plan to decarbonise Homes in the North¹⁶

Many regions across the UK will claim to be the heart of the previous industrial revolution or that they are uniquely placed to be the heart of the Net Zero revolution. The North West, East of England and West Midlands are all investing serious time and capital into this idea. The claim of each of these regions is true to a large extent, and the proposal for the NE to be the heart of the transition to Net Zero is by no means suggesting other areas should not create thriving Net Zero economies. If areas can lead and innovate, Labour should support them to do so. The NE is, however, primed to be the heart of the green industrial revolution and this policy offers Labour its best

chance to regain the North East Heartland.

There are three core reasons for this. The first is the region's highly skilled, productive workforce stuck in carbon heavy industries including 82,000 workers in engineering and a further 116,000 in the manufacturing sector.¹⁷ They, alongside the massive numbers of unemployed workers, could develop into the country's core green workforce with skills in retrofit, energy production and green manufacturing with the right skills investments.

The NE also boasts both green and grey infrastructure that allows it a prime position to lead on the green agenda, including the dogger bank wind farm 140km off the NE

coast, the largest forestry and managed woodland in England, developing gigafactories, heat networks and five top universities with over 110,000 students, over half studying STEM subjects, and industry with developing offers in leading R&D. Furthermore, the NE can also leverage on its status as being the site of Britishvolt battery cell Gigafactory,¹⁸ and the UK's first offshore wind farm,¹⁹ based in Blyth (built in 2000),

to spearhead the UK's push for green energy production.

Finally, the NE is the soul of Labour's lost Heartlands. Developing a progressive offer that allows for local leadership to deliver a bold economic strategy and create jobs and investment in forgotten towns allows Labour its best chance to re-connect and win again.

CONCLUSION

Labour should champion local control and use further devolution to end talk of Brexit taking back control, the superficial attempts at levelling up and stop pork barrel politics by offering a progressive and exciting vision backed by a strong and communicated economic offer.

Labour also needs to ensure its general election campaign at a local level is tailored to address local factors which might inevitably influence election outcomes, including countering the huge and expensive social media presence achieved by elected Mayors, with Tees Valley being an example. There is also a need for greater scrutiny of existing administrations to hold councils and other elected officials more

robustly to account – for example the operation of the Teesside International Airport which, despite being publicly owned, is not transparent in its operations. A more robust scrutiny will ensure that people understand what is and what is not being delivered.

With a policy of devolution and making the NE the heart of the UK's green industrial revolution, we can own the agenda and not play to the Tories. When we own the agenda, we can win. Winning back the NE means winning in 2024 and electing a Labour Government to take forward these plans. We will, for the first time since 2010, have a Government genuinely delivering for the people of the NE!



Owen Stratford

Owen Stratford works at the Public Affairs firm Infrastructure Matters as an Account Manager and formerly worked at DevoConnect as a Public Affairs Executive. Before joining DevoConnect Owen worked on Political campaigns across the North East after graduating from Newcastle University in History and Archaeology. Owen was also the former secretary and chair of the North East Young Fabians.



Molly Hall

Molly Hall grew up in Newcastle Upon Tyne, studied French at the University of Oxford, and now works in corporate communications in London. She is the Secretary of the North East Young Fabians branch.

NORTH WEST

"The North West, like everywhere, is not a homogenous area but like much of the North and Midlands has seen a steady decline in Labour support for over a decade. It does however retain a healthy level of Labour MPs with the potential for it to be added significantly to at the next general election. The voters who will be key to that might be portrayed as being divided on many issues but the reality is that their main concerns are shared, be it public services, crime, transport, job security or economic opportunities, and all of these are issues that the Labour Party should be well placed to provide a clear and compelling alternative at the next election."

Justin Madders MP

Ellesmere Port and Neston; Shadow Minister for Employment Rights

"Labour's strength in the north was based on trust generated in the common identity of northern communities, and the core belief that our programmes offered hope for their collective future. Today's electorate is more diverse, and rightly more questioning if distrustful of politicians. Rebuilding the trust we've lost can only be done with policies which look credible to people's experience. That's why, across the north, a fair share of national R&D investment, training and retaining a highly skilled workforce and building an infrastructure that connects and includes all our communities are vital. It's about validating our justified regional pride by giving hope, but a hope that can really be achieved."

Tony Lloyd MP

**Rochdale; Mayor of Greater Manchester (2015-7);
Minister of State for Foreign Affairs (1997-9)**

"A fifth of the lost Labour seats in 2019 were in the North West. Labour's way back into Government and the opportunity to improve people's lives is therefore reliant on regaining the trust of these voters. This pamphlet makes the compelling case for a Labour policy platform that seeks to enhance vocational training and skills and empowerment of local communities. This vision for a better connected North West, both intra-region and inter-region, would be good for the region and the nation as a whole. It is only through policies that have a tangible impact on the day-to-day lives of ordinary people that we can bring meaning to the emaciated 'levelling-up' slogan the Tories relentlessly repeat."

Cat Smith MP, Lancaster and Fleetwood

Shadow Secretary of State for Young People and Democracy (2016-21)

"The North West has long been a traditional Labour stronghold, but social and economic change puts this at risk. This important chapter shows how we can retain and grow Labour support by drawing on our pride in our industrial heritage and history of innovation, our excellent educational institutions, and by investing in our transport infrastructure. Offering a better future to the young people of the North West is important for their life ambitions, for the regional economy, and for Labour's electoral success."

Kate Green MP

Stretford and Urmston; Shadow Secretary of State for Education (2020 - 2021)

"The North West has long been considered Labour Heartlands, yet as the last few years have shown us, nothing can be taken for granted. Over the coming years, the transition to a green economy is a necessary one, but it needs to be done in a way that protects jobs, particularly in manufacturing. Many parts of the North West are still suffering from the economic devastation caused by the collapse of industrial sectors decades ago. Any future Labour offering needs to recognise this and ensure that investment and high-skill jobs are not constrained to the golden triangle. The people of the North West are proud. Proud of their country, proud of their towns and cities and proud of their history. But they will not be conned by gimmicks or buzzwords like 'levelling up'. Any investment must be real and it must make a difference."

Marie Rimmer MP

St Helens South and Whiston; Shadow Minister for Disabled People (2017)

"It is clear that the way to win back the hearts and minds of voters in the North West at the next General Election is to connect our proud industrial past toward a viable green economy that creates jobs and opportunities. It is imperative that we keep our brightest minds in the region by investing heavily in research and development and providing better transport links between our towns and cities. A clear and ambitious economic strategy is vital to re-invigorate our region and regain our Labour Heartlands."

Sir Mark Phillip Hendrick MP

Preston

"Labour's path to power, and changing lives, will always run through our proud communities and places across the North West. Key to this challenge will be a credible, coherent policy offer that addresses the big challenges facing our cities, towns and villages; including widening access to the skills, training and opportunities our people need to get on; creating good, well-paid local jobs; improving public services; promoting dignity in work; championing an equitable green transition; and ensuring first-class public transport for all. I welcome this Young Fabian pamphlet which makes a valuable contribution to this task of developing ideas and policies that will help Labour win the next election. Conor McGinn MP, St Helens North; Shadow Minister without Portfolio, and Labour Party Deputy National Campaign Coordinator"

Conor McGinn MP

St Helens North

INTRODUCTION

The North West is a historic stronghold region for the Labour Party, particularly in cities such as Liverpool and Manchester. Yet the electorate has seen this support falter and fall flat in recent elections. If Labour is to form a majority government again, it is crucial for the party to reclaim this region as a Labour Heartland once again. As such, it is imperative that we analyse how Labour can solidify our support here. The party needs to convince the voters across the region that Labour is the party that represents their interests, fights for them and is best-placed to lead the United Kingdom through a post-Covid recovery and beyond.

The North West is the archetypical Labour region. It contains our safest seats, returns Labour Mayors, and this has been the case for quite some time. Yet behind the

thriving Labour Heartlands of metropolitan Manchester and Merseyside, Labour's grip is much more tenuous. We are not enjoying the same levels of support that we once did. Communities do not feel as connected to the party. Like the North East in 2019 and Scotland before, the North West contains seats and voters that we have held for decades but are now losing or have already lost. In the catastrophic defeat of 2019, a fifth of the lost Labour seats were in the North West (Figure 21).¹ Though it remains one of our strongest regions, support is eroding quickly, with a very large swing away from Labour and towards the Conservatives.² Additionally, the North West is not a monolith and there have always been pockets of strong Conservative support, and these cannot be ignored.

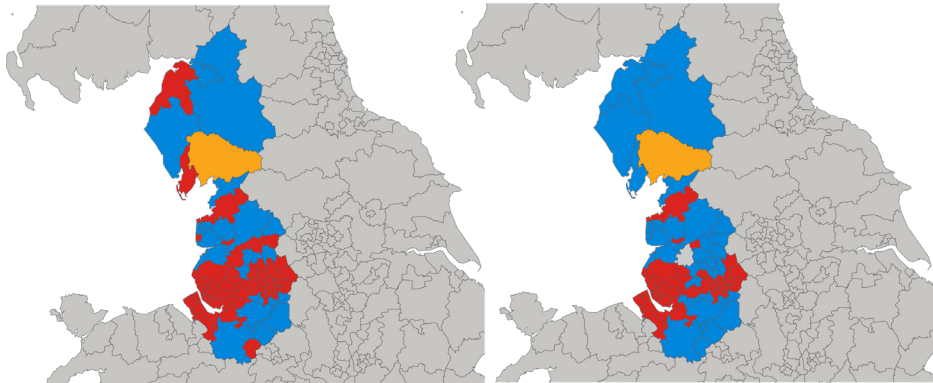


Figure 21: Decline in Labour share of seats (2017 left, 2019 right)

2019: WHY DID LABOUR LOSE THIS HEARTLAND?

The North West is not an exception to the rule; many of the national trends were replicated here. Before the 2019 election Labour held 54 seats in the region and we were left with 41 after the election. However, this is perhaps the only Heartland where it becomes unclear if we have really ‘lost’ it. With the exception of London, the North West is Labour’s strongest region and most of the party’s safe seats can be found here. Yet 13 seats in one election renders it important to analyse why Labour’s support is waning here and what the party can do about it. To ignore these trends risks losing this Heartland entirely and it is very difficult to see Labour winning nationally without the Heartland of the North West.

It is worth noting that the region voted 53.7% to Leave.³ The strong link between voting Leave and voting Conservative with Labour occupying a much more nuanced position, suggests that Brexit has a clear part to play in why Labour lost this Heartland. This view is corroborated by the fact that Brexit was the single biggest issue

for voters in the region (Figure 22). 2019 was not an election that marked a sudden erosion of Labour support, and many of these safe seats saw swings to the Tories over several elections. However, the clear Brexit position of the Tories during the 2019 election did seem to have an impact, and accelerated the erosion of Labour support. As previously referred to, the issues that affected Labour across the country were clearly felt here too. In the Remain-voting cities, the Labour vote remained largely stable in 2019, having grown in 2017, further suggesting that it was Labour’s more nuanced position that impacted their support in this election. Therefore, Leave-voting towns fell conclusively to the Conservatives. This also reflects the pattern of Labour support in the region, as we enjoy very concentrated support here with Labour incredibly strong in urban areas but being decimated in suburbs and rural areas. Perhaps this reflects a longer-term issue of Labour being seen as the party of the cities and metropolitan elite.

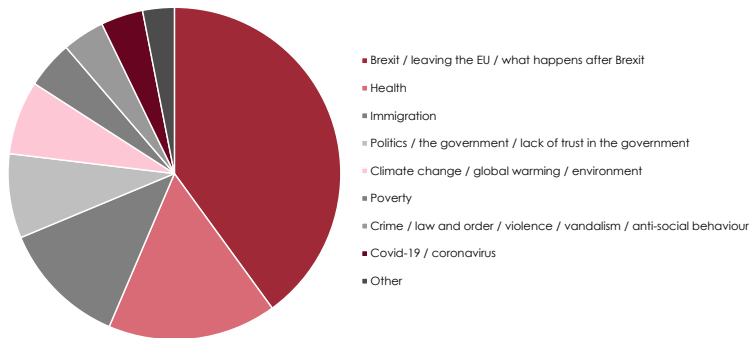


Figure 22: Single most important issue facing voters in 2019⁴

Conventional marginals, such as the two Bury seats, inched into the Conservative column, whilst previously safe Labour seats such as Leigh saw their majorities collapse and a Tory MP returned. Much of this can likely be attributed specifically to Brexit, with many North Western seats having long been host to a strong challenge from UKIP (which came within several hundred votes of victory in Heywood and Middleton in a by-election in 2014), and the British National Party (which won 10% of the vote in Burnley in 2005).^{5,6} In 2019, both of these parties stood far fewer candidates, and received negligible vote totals where they did.⁷ Thus, their vote share was transferred to the Conservatives. Brexit, there-

fore, seems to have been a very important sticking point for many voters.

Given that immigration was a salient issue during Brexit, it is likely that this was also a factor. Labour needs to refocus their campaigning around immigration and end this myth that immigration leads to unemployment, and a failing economy. Until it is common knowledge that immigration leads to economic growth and more jobs, we will lack appeal to those who see immigration as a key issue for them. This has historically been a significant proportion of voters in the region, which demonstrates the power of UKIP and Conservative campaigns given that immigration to the region has been fairly low.⁸

2022-2023: WHAT CAN LABOUR ACHIEVE IN OPPOSITION TO GAIN TRUST EN ROUTE TO THE GENERAL ELECTION?

Labour cannot wait till the next General Election to try to win back this Heartland. The work needs to start now to win voters over. The party needs to be seen to be advocating a positive and hopeful vision for the North West. Labour is in power in combined authorities, district councils and town councils across the region and we can do an immense amount of good here while in opposition nationally. This is key as it can give people living under Labour councils, a glimpse of what Labour can do when in power to benefit their communities. We can support the retention of young people in the region, boost green skills programmes and support community wealth building.⁹

Encouraging young people to remain in the region could have the benefit of incentivising companies and firms to relocate their property, plants, and equipment, as well as

firms within the North West to benefit from the high-skilled labour. This could lead to a growth in high-skilled jobs through graduate schemes and apprenticeships. We can encourage this through local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) and ensuring that towns and cities in the North bid for national competitions, such as becoming the HQ for Great British Railways. Once they have opened up offices or HQs in the region, we can encourage them to join community wealth building initiatives, so that the profit from these companies doesn't flow back to London or to a global headquarters, but that much of the profit from these companies stays in the region and can be reinvested in local communities.

Historically, within the North West, much of the party's traditional support came from heavy industry communities and the

associated unions. Thus, many have seen Labour’s support for coal mines closing and newer green technologies and energy growing as a betrayal of this.

Localised policies are required to firstly, ensure that those working in ‘brown’ industries are protected during the transition to a green economy, and secondly, that highly skilled individuals stay within the region, to mitigate the ongoing net outflow of young people. The green transition is something that should be at the heart of the party’s priorities. However, there are many jobs in the region in ‘brown’ industries and it is important that we offer these workers an opportunity to retrain in green skills so that they will benefit from this green transition. Local Labour city and county councils can certainly support this by boosting skills programmes. Ensuring that people do not lose their jobs and livelihoods as a result of addressing climate change is key in gaining support for our policies and making sure that we do not leave regions behind. This could also help us to undo the damage done to traditional manufacturing areas by boosting green skills and jobs.

In order to strengthen Labour’s image as a strong proponent of the North West’s industries, the party can implement grassroots policies to enhance vocational train-

ing and skills. This can be achieved through community-based programmes such as employer mentoring and one-to-one skills enhancement classes.¹⁰ Within the region, Labour councillors and MPs must push for these programmes by supporting local information sessions for students on career options, or facilitating greater apprenticeship schemes within the local authority districts, including providing the relevant funding to do so. Labour councils can also amplify other third-sector careers events. The programmes would help young people gain the confidence and the skills to pursue further education, employment, or volunteering opportunities, and to be actively involved in their local areas. Additionally, the schemes could also be available to people seeking work and existing workers looking to upskill or switch to a different role or industry, including labourers whose jobs may be affected by the green transition.

Such localised grassroots policies aimed at the labour market could seek to create the image that the party can be resourceful in making profound changes with little resource. This is especially important to address as public expenditure on research and development (R&D) per person within the region is minimal as seen in Figure 23.

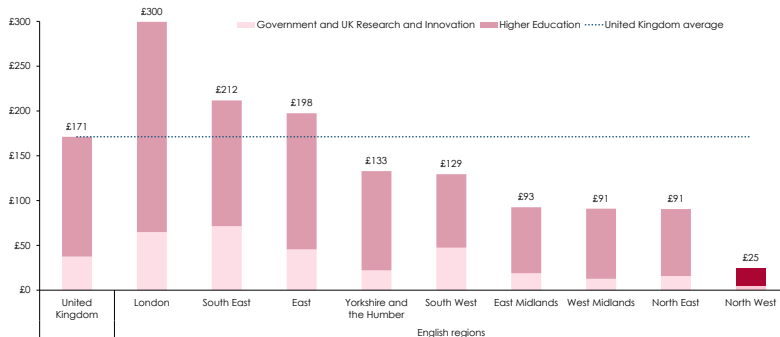


Figure 23: Government and higher education expenditure on R&D is the lowest in the North West, 2018 (2020-2021 figures)¹¹

By ensuring greater occupational mobility within the region, this should incentivise companies and firms to relocate their property, plants, and equipment as well as firms within the North West to benefit from such high skilled labour. This localised labour market policy is especially pertinent, given that currently, skilled labourers from the North West are able to receive faster salary increases if they move out of the region, compared to London (Figure 24). Circumventing this via the localised policies

outlined in this section will help to mitigate such significant losses of potential GVA via the net outward migration of the younger workforce. The schemes can be tailored to prevent a net talent outflow when Labour works hand in hand with the private sector in the North West region to fund the programmes. If young people are provided with enough opportunities to progress and develop, they will see less of a need to move down to London for their career progression.

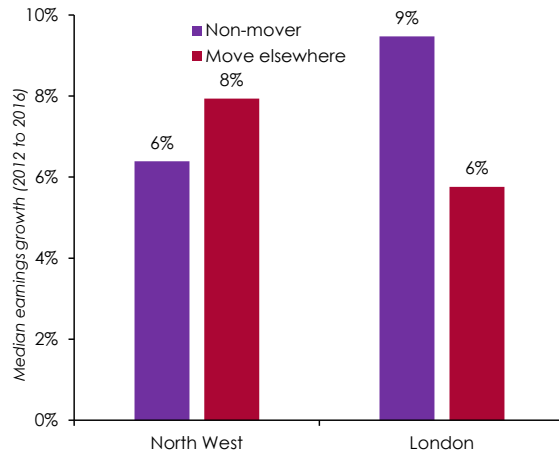


Figure 24: Skilled labourers from the North West are able to receive faster salary increases if they move out of the region, compared to London¹²

Having discussed what Labour can do locally to help push for an economic strategy at a grassroots level, a robust, long-term infrastructural change is required in the manifesto to achieve longer lasting change within the region. Once in Government,

Labour within the North West must then tackle transport which will boost the supply side infrastructural capability of the region. This is a central pain point for people in the region and one that will win us much satisfaction among voters.

2024: WHICH GENERAL ELECTION POLICY CAN LABOUR PROPOSE TO REGAIN THIS HEARTLAND?

Increased connectivity within and across the region will also boost investment and growth here too. This section proposes that during the 2024 General Election, Labour must provide an economic plan to encourage enterprise in the North West, with improving transport links being the primary step.

Transport, especially rail, has long been a real pain point for people in the region.

By comparing average travel times to the closest train station and other key services, connectivity in the North West lags far behind that of London and is even longer in the more deprived parts of the region.¹³ Furthermore, transport investment is dramatically lower than in Greater London (Figure 25). With many rail lines in the region still not even electrified and pacer trains still a common sight.

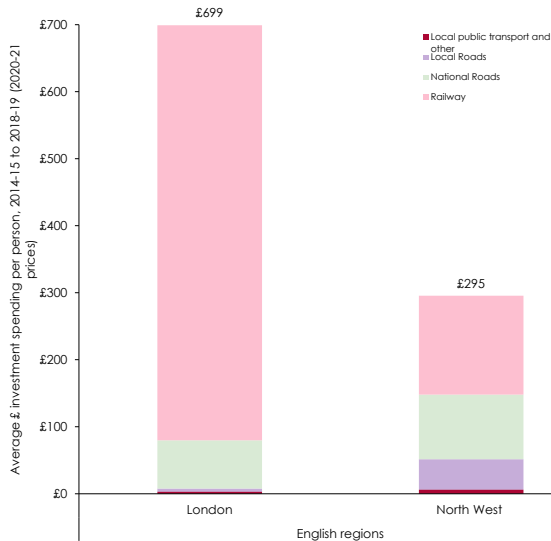


Figure 25: Average £ investment spending per person, 2014-15 to 2018-19 (2020-21 figures)¹⁴

Without fixing this, a more economically integrated - and thus prosperous North is out of reach. Additionally, for too long transport policy has focused on connecting different parts of the north with London, neglecting the option to connect northern communities with each other. It can be as

quick to get to London as it is to travel to much closer parts of the North by public transport. A general election policy aimed at interconnecting the region is the solution. Labour should also not be afraid to consider geography when allocating spending or tax breaks. Allowing people to live where

they want is of crucial economic value, and developing the North West is of long-term strategic importance. Labour should, therefore, allow the Treasury to formally value reducing regional inequality and promoting regional development when assessing projects' return on investment.

The Conservatives' U-turn on HS2 Eastern leg and "Northern Powerhouse (NPR)" route from Leeds to Manchester via Bradford,¹⁵ presents Labour with the perfect opportunity to be a proponent of better connectivity within and between the North West and other UK regions and present an alternative plan to the Conservatives'. According to Mott MacDonald, the Government's proposals following their U-turn will not boost existing links from a) the Midlands to Leeds and North East England, b) cities such as York and Newcastle to Birmingham and c) Leeds to London or Birmingham. Therefore, Labour's response to the Conservative's proposals (some suggestions in the reference link) will need to address these shortcomings.¹⁶ Ultimately, Labour's transport policy will need to consider the need for equal prioritisation of investing into local transport, ecological impacts of the plans and transparency on environmental and health & safety safeguards as well as finance amongst others.

Oct to Dec 2021 passenger journeys in Northern Trains, a major railway line in the North West, had recovered to 66.9% of Oct-Dec 2019 levels, a significantly higher percentage than a low of 26.9% in Oct-Dec 2020. At the time of writing, these

figures from the Office of Rail and Road suggest there might be further scope of recovery and thus demand (as the pandemic recedes) to merit further investments into transport.¹⁷

The development seen in recent decades in the region's largest cities has embedded private enterprise. Liverpool's role as 2008 'Capital of Culture', a European initiative, saw revitalisation of previously abandoned former dockland areas. This sort of investment has transformed the city's economic prospects, attracting private capital in a seemingly permanent and powerful forward step in the region's development. The same sort of thinking needs to be applied to the North West's smaller towns, many of which are not well-connected to the major cities and see little in the way of government or private investment. It is important to expand our support out of these key urban areas and into the historic Conservative-held rural areas. Greater empowerment of local communities is a great way to do this and the success of the Preston Model and community wealth building under the Labour council should not be ignored. This case is even more stark, considering that in Figure 26, the number of patents approved is strongly correlated with access to public transport. A clear indication that connectivity leads to the external economies of scale required to achieve enhanced innovation and inventions from the region, bolstering the image of the North West being a powerhouse.

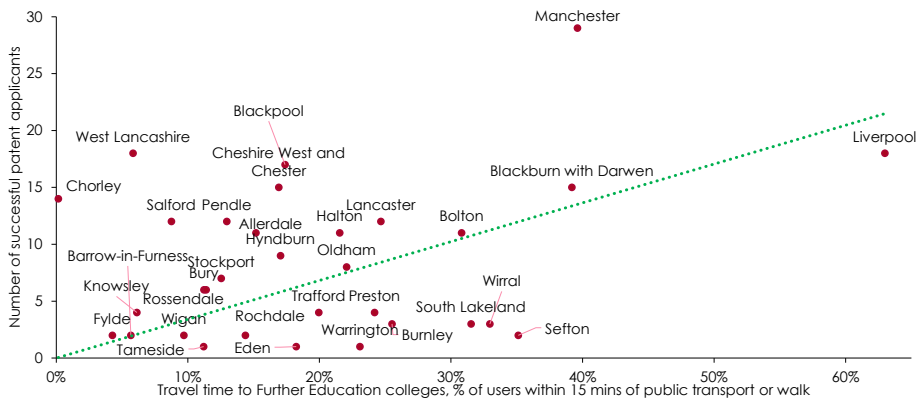


Figure 26: *Innovation within the region is correlated with greater access to public transport¹⁸*

Successful historic development in cities and potential future development in towns in the future should seek to create economic ‘hubs.’ A better connected North West could see workers commuting from Manchester to Bury and Bolton, as well as the other way. This could expand the effective workforce of each area, creating ‘agglomeration benefits’ – the economic advantages of large cities in the North to rival metropolises like London and Paris. Since

it is dramatically cheaper to run a business in the North West than London, this could lower the average production costs for UK industry if the transport bottlenecks in the region can be unlocked.

This need not be a redistribution of production from London to the North West, but rather an overall improvement in international competitiveness, raising the output of all regions.

CONCLUSION

Politically, the case for economic development is not straightforward. In her 2019 book, 'Beyond the Red Wall', Deborah Mattinson interviewed people from the 'Red Wall', including several seats in the North West such as Hyndburn.¹⁹ Voters talked frequently about 'the north-south divide' – a very common refrain in the North – but expressed a thoroughly zero-sum attitude to it. As much as Boris Johnson may wish to convince voters that it's possible to 'level up' the North without harming prosperity in the South, Mattinson's research suggested that they are sceptical. Evidently, this is a political minefield for Labour as well; we cannot afford to promise development in the North to the detriment of swing voters in the South and London. Mattinson, however, also notes that many 'Red Wall' voters maintain pride about the former industrial output of their towns. Using the language of industrialisation, therefore, but with newer industries, may be key to making the case for Labour's economic strategy. Through investment in education, both for young people and adults, regional excellence in life-sciences, software, or Artificial Intelligence, could easily take on the role of the mines or mills of the 1970s.

To deliver this, both private and public

sector investment in research and development, skills, and education, as well as better connectivity for the region are needed. Research from the House of Commons Library shows that the North enjoys less than half of the R&D spending of London, despite the North West's thriving Higher Education sector. Indeed, graduates are disproportionately likely to leave the North West, generating a steady 'brain drain' effect.²⁰ This is beneficial for no-one, separating young graduates from their family and friends, and depriving a potential technological powerhouse of much of its valuable human talent.

Ultimately, Labour cannot afford to lose the North West. Without a healthy contingent of MPs from the region, we can never return to government. Furthermore, the difference in fortunes for Labour in North Western cities as compared to towns is striking, and represents a microcosm of the country at large. As a result, the problems facing Labour in our region mirror the problems facing it everywhere, and the solutions – an active economic strategy, efficient public services, and long-term investment, are vital for a Labour electoral victory.



Amy Dwyer

Amy Dwyer is the Young Fabians Network Coordinator and works as a transport policy advisor. She is also an ambassador for 50:50 Parliament and a policy officer for the Young Fabian's International Network.

SOUTH EAST



“South East England has never been a Labour stronghold, with the party winning 22 out of 83 seats at its peak in 1997 and currently 8 out of 84. However, recent wins in Canterbury and a shifting trend from the Conservatives to Labour in seats such as Wycombe demonstrate Labour’s potential to do better. The policies outlined in this piece, including harnessing the potential of industries in the South East, ranging from IT and engineering to pharma will help Labour increase voters’ trust and contribute towards lifting the UK’s low productivity growth under the Conservatives.”

Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi MP
Slough; Shadow Minister for Rail

INTRODUCTION

The South East of England has consistently voted Conservative since 1918. There are only a few exceptional seats to this rule – namely the constituencies of Slough, Brighton Kempdown, Hove, Southampton Test and Oxford East.¹ New Labour made some minimal gains in the region under Blair’s premiership in Reading West, Crawley, Dartford, Dover, Portsmouth

North and Hastings & Rye. These gains can be mainly ascribed to the younger median ages and higher levels of urbanisation in these areas.² However, this section explores how Labour lost their economic credibility and thus these middle-income voters over time (see Fig. 1, 2) and what the party can do to overcome this issue.

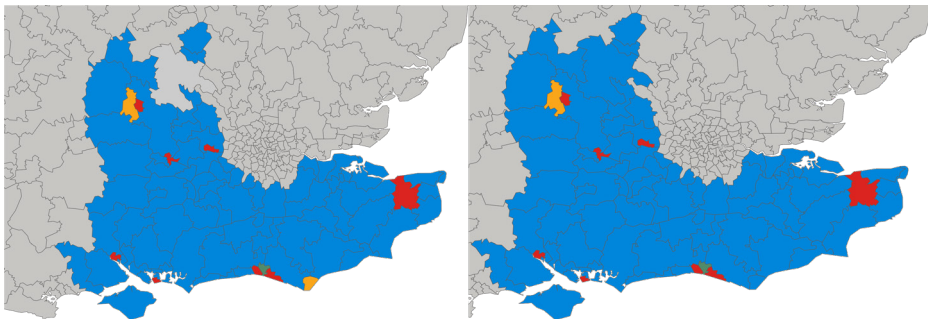


Figure 27: Decline in Labour share of seats (2017 left, 2019 right)

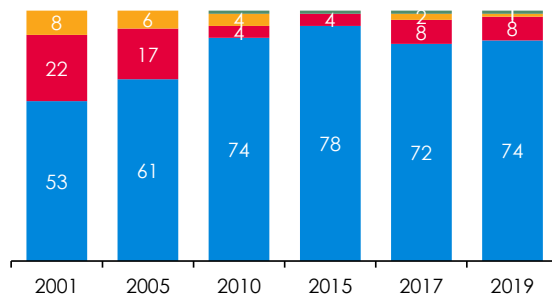


Figure 28: Fall in Labour seats across the South East over time³

On the whole, the South East predominantly remains a Blue Heartland. No previous examination has been undertaken to determine why this is the case, which has led to limited strategising for Labour's presence in the region. This piece is distinct amongst the existing literature as it aims to address this by arguing the following; a) the South East has never traditionally voted for Labour due to it being an affluent region with a diversified and resilient economy, b) Labour can formulate effective opposition by vowing to further protect and develop these varied industries and c) Labour can

do so by emphasising the importance of these sectors as key strategic drivers in tackling climate change while also enhancing economic development. To achieve this, this chapter explores the General Election policies that have the potential to create growth and green jobs in these sectors, in addition to building sufficient housing required to support these new jobs. The subsequent rise in employment and reduced house prices due to the rise in supply will lower wealth inequality in the region, whilst enabling more to get onto the property ladder, hence being a vote winner.

2019: WHY DOES LABOUR NEVER WIN THE SOUTH EAST?

Labour has historically lacked a strong base in the South East Heartland due to three reasons; the role of class voting, fear of progressive taxation and public opinion on the effectiveness of Conservative business and economic policies.

The Conservative stronghold in the South East can be mainly attributed to the region's affluence. Compared to the North, the South East never industrialised and so never experienced the wide scale economic losses caused by deindustrialisation from the 1980s. As a result, the region maintained the relatively high level of support for the Tories.⁴ Given that the region was not reliant on coal mining and steel manufacturing industries, the local economy diversified into the service sectors, allowing it to become more prosperous,⁵ as the main sectors of IT, engineering and pharmaceuticals,⁶ are more resilient to socioeconomic changes than non-service sectors. This can be seen clearly when considering the effects of COVID-19 on the region; whilst there has been inevitable econom-

ic damage and suffering in the labour market (contraction of 2.6% in Q1 (year on year), 2020), the South East is still set to outpace the national average in growth, with employment expected to expand 0.1% between 2021 and 2022 and the IT sector expected to grow 0.4% per year.⁷ Such a service-based and diversified economy has led many in the region to fall under the demographic of the technical middle class (ABC1) whilst other regions remain more traditionally working class. Class voting, in particular for the ABC1 voting bloc, is therefore a huge reason for Conservative support, as evidenced by 45% of the ABC1 social class category voting Conservative in 2019 compared to 31% who voted for Labour.⁸

Additionally, the uneven development that resulted from industrialisation has been furthered by the South East's geographical proximity to London, having benefited from the most investment in infrastructure and private equity,⁹ to develop the commuter belt. This means the UK's economic activity

is concentrated in London and the South East, with the South East having the second largest regional economy with an output of over £300bn per year.¹⁰ As a result, salaries in the South East are significantly higher than the national average,¹¹ meaning people who live in the region are less likely to vote for Labour's economic policies which promote progressive taxation.¹² There are also many SMEs in the region (930,500),¹² whose owners may be unlikely to vote for Labour due to the persisting perception that its policies are not business-friendly and are worse for Britain's economy than Conservative

policies.¹³ This is despite research on economic performance by parties suggesting the contrary.¹⁴ The primary issues for South East voters in the 2019 election (see Fig. 3) reflect these perceptions, as the Leave campaign positioned Brexit as beneficial for the economy and therefore in the voter's self-interest. Similarly, the prevalence of rising house prices in the South East is an issue of economic importance, as those already in the housing market have seen their wealth vastly increase.¹⁵ As such, the region's historic and continued great economic situation can explain its sustained support for the Tory government.

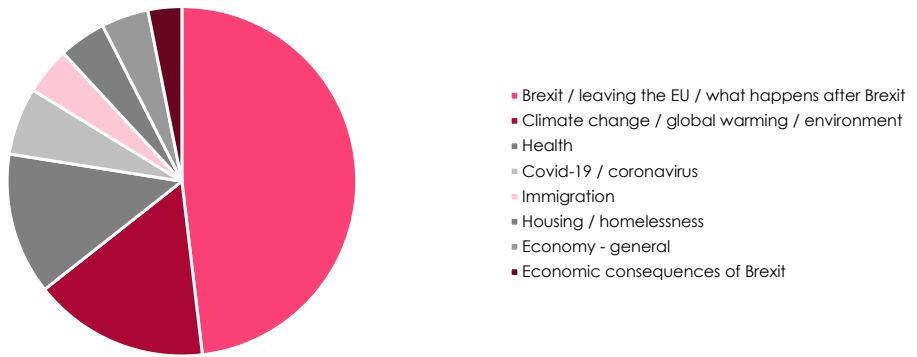


Figure 29: Most important issues in South East, in 2019 election¹⁶

2022-2023: WHAT CAN LABOUR ACHIEVE IN OPPOSITION TO GAIN TRUST EN ROUTE TO THE GENERAL ELECTION?

It is essential for the party to win over voters in the region ahead of the next General Election. To achieve this, Labour must build its image as reputable for economic decision-making in opposition at the local council/parish district level, along with advocating credible national economic policies, to gain the trust of the South East electorate. In particular, this subsection focuses on the role Labour can play to strengthen the labour market for the region's main industries en route to the subsequent General Election.

Whilst the South East can be regarded as prosperous compared to other regions of the UK, there still exists significant wealth inequality and pockets of poverty within the region. Labour should focus on targeted support for these certain areas ahead of the General Election. There are 14 constituencies that contain at least 5 local authorities within the most deprived decile of the UK, namely concentrated in coastal areas such as Hastings & Rye, Portsmouth and Southampton.¹⁷ Within these areas most deprived of support, Labour councillors can work with local councils to secure more investment from central Government, granted in line with levelling up strategies which currently leave behind the pockets of deprivation surrounded by affluence in the South East.¹⁸

In particular, Labour can facilitate the development of green jobs by securing funding for training, such as by applying for grants like the National Skills Fund,¹⁹ and Kickstart Scheme as a gateway.²⁰ Upskilling for work in sustainable industries would

tackle the seasonal unemployment which afflicts these areas, as coastal constituencies contain land with the most potential for work in nature restoration projects,²¹ and training individuals for work in the energy sector ensures continuous employment irrespective of the season.²² Specifically targeted policies for the environment are disproportionately able to benefit deprived local authority districts in the coastal areas because it requires a highly localised approach; for example, the development of the low-carbon ferry service in Portsmouth creates more jobs in the maritime sector as the constituency contains a port, whereas the Thanet wind farm is more appropriate for the geography of Kent.²⁴ Supporting the local labour market to work in the sustainable economy will allow the party to be seen as credible for channelling the appropriate investment into these areas, thus securing votes as they become seen as a party of action and not simply a party of advocacy. This green-job centred economic policy will also support the continued development of the wider region as a whole, as well as appeal to the growing base of young, cosmopolitan graduate voters who prioritise climate change in its voting patterns (see *Introduction* and *Fig. 3*). Labour could valuably target these types of areas, such as Winchester, Milton Keynes and Kent by focusing on green strategies like improving air quality in cities (where voters are based) to tackle climate change (for the new voter base) while also supporting local economic development.

Within the wider region and less de-

prived areas, it is paramount that Labour focuses on boosting the growth of the key existing sectors, identified in the region as IT, biotech, pharmaceuticals, and engineering. Protecting these industries is key due to the vital role they play in the green economic recovery, for which there is an emerging skills gap within these prominent sectors.^{1, 24} To address this gap, Labour councillors should focus on securing the same grants for courses to enhance the IT skills in the region, such as for innovation for climate modelling, or engineering skills to support the automotive industry's transition to electric vehicle manufacturing. The upskilling opportunity should be applicable to not only young people but also adults already in the workforce, as this will reduce frictional unemployment while also supporting occupational mobility. Besides upskilling, Labour councillors can also allocate research grants for the bioengineering and pharmaceutical sector to leverage upon its expected growth between now and the subsequent General Election, as well as propose policies to enhance funding to improve the R&D infrastructure in the region. By setting up more dedicated R&D zones, similar to the hub in Reading, high quality research could be conducted which is geared toward climate resilience. These strategies would allow the South East to meet its full economic potential in its focus

industries.

Labour can therefore implement localised policies to retrain and upskill the labour market to both facilitate job creation in new green industries within deprived areas and support the expansion of existing industries for sustainable activity within the wider region. This policy will increase employment and tackle inequality as a whole, whilst also safeguarding the job security of those already employed in a higher-income bracket. However, to ensure these sectors thrive, Labour must push for the provision of the necessary infrastructure to complement the new jobs and hubs in the region, such as better transport links and broadband connections. In particular, more affordable housing is desperately needed to support continued wealth generation and flow of workers into the South East. Increasing the supply of housing will ensure a cheaper standard of living across all households and help many in the region to fulfil their home ownership aspirations. Moreover, addressing the housing issue will allow Labour to continue making gains with the young, middle-class regional voters, as the rising house prices have resulted in great generational inequality in the South East.²³ This will be the focus of the following section.

2024: WHICH POLICY CAN LABOUR PROPOSE TO WIN OVER THE SOUTH EAST AND SECURE THIS AS A POTENTIAL HEARTLAND?

In addition to the policies enacted locally to enhance the quality of labour supply in the South East, the party must also create policies that improve the standard of life for the aspirational working and middle class families in the region by facilitating home ownership.

The South East has the highest house prices outside of Greater London, leaving many prospective homeowners priced out of purchasing their own house. Current

house prices are disproportionately high, at 9.57 times the regional median average income.²⁴ Hence within the subsequent general election manifesto, Labour should consider building more houses to reduce the general housing price across the region. This policy is gaining popularity, as there has been a growing proportion of households which supported the idea of more homes being built across the region during the last decade (see Fig. 4).

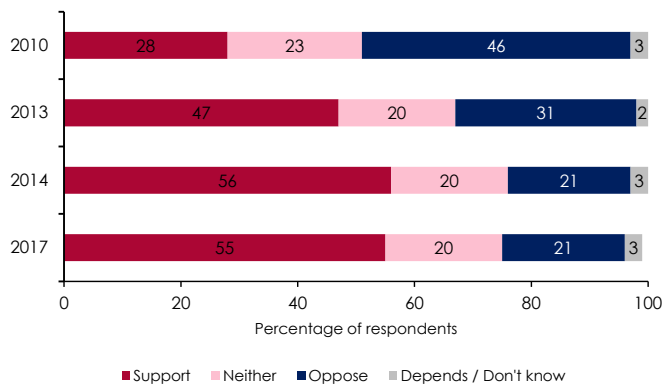


Figure 30: More people support more homes being built in the region²⁵

However, the policy of simply increasing the housing stock is not sufficient in isolation, as the value the Labour Party can bring is enforcing legislation to ensure public involvement is required in the planning process for building. As Labour values community needs and engenders bottom-up decision making, the party is well-placed to ensure local residents and businesses are included in the decision process for creating more affordable

houses and that their green spaces are not subsequently eroded. To allow for a community-based decision on planning processes for housing developments, the general election manifesto should propose that each local authority set up a Community Council. These councils lend themselves to a longer-term policy approach which helps overcome the short-termist, myopic 'tragedy of the common' aspect whereby housing developers build only to gain quick

profits, at the expense of the environment and local population. Such an approach also tackles the negative perception related to more housing and allows developers to build with less adverse risk to the local environment.

With the median price of houses within the region being £325,000, a 1% increase in the supply of houses is expected to reduce the average price of houses by £6,500.²⁶ As illustrated in Fig. 5, it is estimated that local authorities which will experience the largest decrease in house prices will be Elmbridge (c.£12,000), Mole Valley (c.£10,000) and Windsor and

Maidenhead (c.£10,000). These non-deprived regions are not previously identified as those in need of more targeted support, showing Labour can make additional gains across more traditionally wealthy, blue constituencies with clear communication of the benefits of building more houses. A further economic incentive for these specific voters to support this policy is that high regional housing costs reduce movement to economically prosperous places,²⁵ so growth could otherwise be compromised in the region if the housing crisis is not addressed in this way.

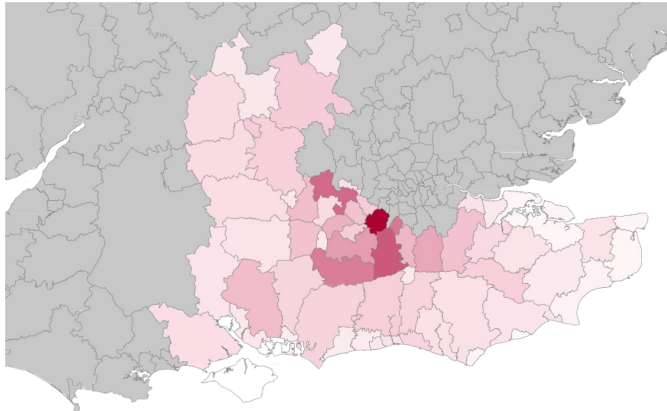


Figure 31: Largest decrease in house prices from policy intervention

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the South East has not typically voted Labour due to the region's diversified economic affluence and negative perceptions of Labour's economic policies. However, the party now has the opportunity to address the emerging skills gap within the region's prominent sectors to ensure a smooth transition to a sustainable economy, with these retraining policies set to especially improve employment within the more deprived areas of the region. Whilst these policies provide Labour with economic credibility, the party should build on this further by advocating to increase more housing within its general election manifesto, as more housing is required to support the new jobs and reduce house prices as a way of increasing home own-

ership in the region. The benefit of reducing house prices is that Labour will mitigate the chasm between home ownership and local community needs. Appealing to the growing voter base which supports house building in the region, the young cosmopolitan voters who prioritise generational equality and environmental protection, and the more affluent voters who will no longer be priced out of the housing market while also encouraging economic growth. Therefore, Labour can win the South East by working to create and upskill jobs in vital green industries and proposing to build more affordable housing, as these policies will facilitate equality of opportunity as well as economic opportunity for growth.



Eleanor Bruce

Eleanor Bruce works as a tax and finance Policy Advisor in the transport decarbonisation field, having previously worked in regulatory policy within the Civil Service. She has a research background in sustainable finance, ESG and fintech. Currently acting as Women's Officer of the Economy and Finance Network, her interests lie in ecological economics, trends in global economic inequality and how this translates to social and environmental policy.

SOUTH WEST



"If the Labour Party is going to win the next General Election it must succeed in swathes of seats across the whole of the United Kingdom, including in the South West, and I welcome this valuable contribution to the discussion. Victories like Jake Bonetta's in Honiton St Michael's last year show that Labour can win in more rural areas and seats like Truro and Falmouth, Swindon South and Stroud can, with hard work, turn red."

Ben Bradshaw MP
Exeter; Minister for the South West (2007 - 2009)

"This report is timely and welcome. Labour has a mountain to climb to win the next election and there is no route to power without a strong policy offer that can unite people across cultural and geographic lines. But this isn't a matter of policy alone. As my election has shown, if Labour speaks about areas like the West of England positively, sincerely and proudly, with strong policies to match, we can and will win for the sake of our party, our rural communities, and our country"

Dan Norris, Metro Mayor of the West of England (2021 - Current)
MP for Wansdyke (1997 - 2010); Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for
Rural Affairs and Environment (2009 - 2010)

INTRODUCTION

Beyond Bristol, the South West has not naturally been a Heartland for Labour, which currently holds only six South West seats. The South West is the most rural region in England, with 30% of its population living in rural areas which lie outside of the party's traditional urban strongholds.¹ It offers much land and coastline, and with this comes an opportunity to become one of the first green and sustainable regions in the UK. Through implementing a regional land commission under the current Metro Mayor for the West of England and introducing a 'Rural Sustainable Futures Act' in government, Labour can provide the tools to allow the South West to make the most of its rural character.

Labour has repeatedly failed in a number of General Elections (GE) to listen to rural

South West communities (April 2022 polling done by Survation on behalf of the Country Land and Business Association suggests 36% of voters in rural areas including Cornwall are planning to vote for Labour vs 38% for the Conservatives, a 7.5% swing to Labour which suggests an opening for Labour²). This article seeks to encourage Labour to pay attention to the needs and values of rural communities and the economy in the South West. This chapter informs the party on how to give rural communities a voice, tools and at the 2024 GE a radical new 'Rural Sustainable Futures Act' that will provide the framework and resources for these communities to develop an accessible, diverse, and sustainable future for all.

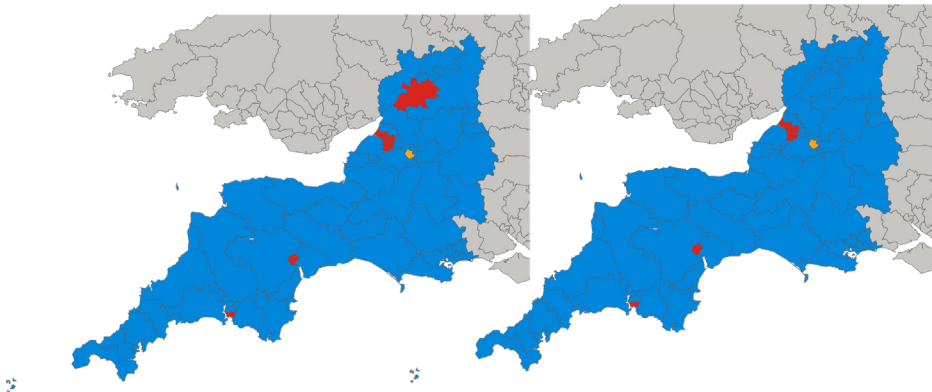


Figure 32: Decline in Labour share of seats (2017 left, 2019 right)

2019: WHY DOES LABOUR CONTINUALLY FAIL TO WIN THE SOUTH WEST?

For the past decade, the South West has not been seen as an area that Labour can win. Whilst the region is heavily rural and the Conservatives have repeatedly been perceived as the party for rural communities, Labour's own approach has not produced a positive response. Too often it is the small things, whether it's focusing solely on animal rights as a rural issue, or developing policy programmes that make little specific mention of rural communities; Labour has been left out in the cold in these areas. Ultimately these communities want representatives who take care of local issues that matter to them.

Rural Labour activists have frequently failed to appreciate the character of their constituencies. This has partly been driven by the lack of rural specific policy commitments by the Labour Party, especially in 2019 when a large segment of the rural policies previously put forward in the 2017 manifesto were removed. Labour's 2017 manifesto mentioned how 'Labour will invest[...] to create jobs and ensure that the nation's prosperity is felt beyond our large towns and cities',³ but this was not reiterated in 2019. This change was demonstrated when Labour lost the predominantly rural constituency of Stroud in the South West, with the party losing 5% of the vote, despite having gained the seat in 2017.⁴ Activists have simply reiterated nationally focused policies that for many rural voters appear to mainly benefit urban areas with large populations and economic output. This has reinforced the city-centric perception of the Labour Party for voters in

rural areas. Ultimately, South West voters were left with vague policies, such as "rural councils deliver public services differently... this needs to be reflected in funding allocation mechanisms"⁵ and this led to a feeling amongst voters that they were irrelevant.

Though animal rights commitments have been in Labour's manifestos for a number of General Elections, they have been limited in helping make much-needed gains for Labour in rural constituencies. This has contributed to the idea that manifestos are shopping lists that parties have to tick-off, with no clear benefit to voters. Labour needs to gain over 104 seats in towns and rural constituencies, including at least 8 seats in the South West to win the 2024 GE.⁶ Those who support animal rights, still vote on wider issues including their own economic livelihoods. Animal rights commitments often deter those whose livelihoods depend on animals and their opinions carry weight in the community. This can be seen in the case of the badger cull which heavily affects the South West.⁷ The Farming Community Network (FCN) reported that farmers in the South West spoke of bovine TB causing them 'pressure on [their] marriages, with children picking up tension and friction...and psychological stress when young calves are shot'. They also reported that it was 'financially devastating' leading them to support the cull.⁸ Furthermore, as can be seen in Figure 33, it has been economically costly to the region, for both government and farmers and reduces support for Labour.

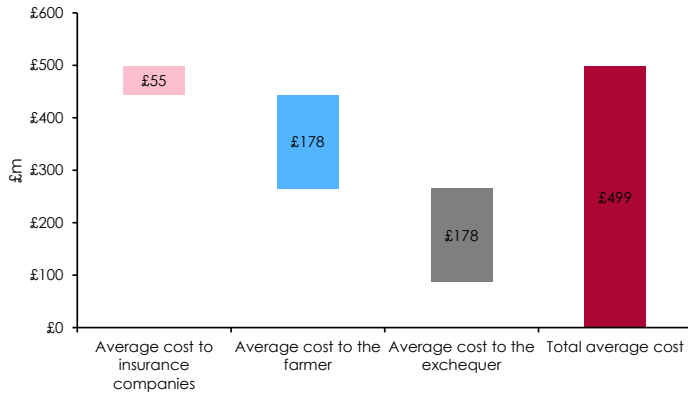


Figure 33: Economic costs of Bovine TB, South West, 2021 prices

Labour’s previous persistence of politicising the badger cull has caused distress and actively affects the economic livelihoods of these communities. Highlighting animal welfare, as opposed to rights, is far more effective, especially in the face of concerns for trade deals that could open the floodgates to highly-exploitative industrial livestock farms, with this supporting people who act responsibly and humanely in working and managing animals. These issues should not distract and prevent the real change people need, particularly in rural areas.

For rural communities, the Green New Deal also seemed too urbanised. Policies

that were proposed to tackle the climate crisis have too often been rooted in helping urban communities, whether it's more green jobs, cheaper renewable energy, or less air pollution. This has to change. We need to heal the rural and urban divide, connecting wider rural concerns with rural specific solutions to the climate crisis. Polling from 2019, as seen in Figure 34, highlights that the five main issues concerning rural communities are; hospitals and healthcare, local transport, affordable housing, internet connectivity, and the impact of the climate crisis.

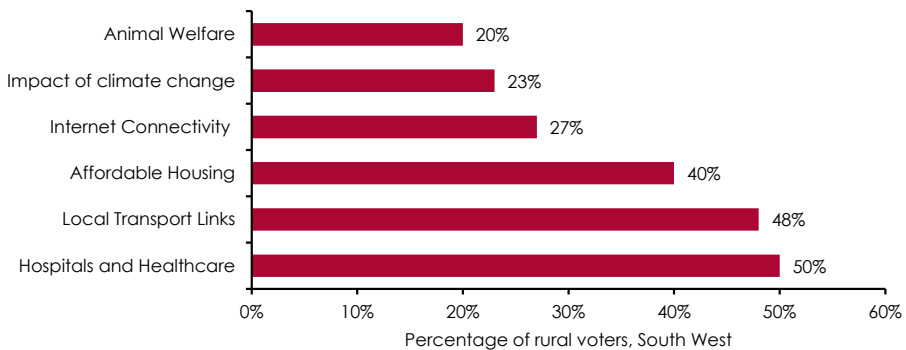


Figure 34: Three main issues for political parties to address in the rural South West

2022-2023: WHAT CAN LABOUR ACHIEVE IN OPPOSITION TO GAIN TRUST EN ROUTE TO THE GENERAL ELECTION?

This section provides suggestions on what Labour can implement locally within the region to regain the confidence of the electorate in economic affairs ahead of the 2024 party. The party needs to take advantage of having a Labour based Mayor of the West of England Combined Authority. It is pivotal to regain the trust of voters within the region by implementing achievable local-based policies such as a regional Land Use Commission.

Dan Norris, Mayor of the West of England Combined Authority, has the greatest opportunity to demonstrate the impact of Labour in power, especially in local authorities. As Metro Mayor, he has the power to review the way in which land is used within the Combined Authority in order to build more homes. A regional Land Use Commission (RLUC) would enable the Combined Authority to review how land is used and owned across the region. Furthermore, it could liaise with neighbouring authorities to the West of England such as Gloucestershire and Somerset, allowing for a complete regional land commission.

Such a commission would allow for opportunities in expanding house-building in the region to be developed alongside the possibility of considering the impact of second-home ownership on the region, plus expanding public access to the countryside in the form of 'right to roam'. The Right to Roam is crucial as "an ancient custom that allows anyone to wander in open countryside, whether the land is privately or publicly owned", especially since under the current CRoW Act, only 10% of

land is publicly accessible in England.¹⁰ In assessing land-use, particular focus needs to be given to balancing the development of more sustainable food production, increased nature recovery, and also consideration for offering greater access to land for marginalised groups. The latter would address the need for more sites for Gypsy, Romani and Traveller (GRT) communities, helping them to avoid hostilities prevalent in rural areas. This would reduce the perceived demand for such communities to trespass on agricultural land. This policy, therefore, also has the benefit of curbing and reducing the number of rural communities who are hostile and can quash "fears of occupation" of public land, alongside accusations of anti-social behaviour. Over the next ten years approximately 468 new pitches need to be found across the South West for new GRT households.¹¹ The commission should cost just under £500,000 annually.¹²

Liverpool City Region has already implemented a new regional land commission. This presents an opportunity that even in opposition, with just 9% of the MPs in the South West, Labour can be perceived as a party of action, and can bring about tangible change. This is essential for gaining the trust of constituents and communities across the region.

Having gained an assessment of land-use and ownership within the South West from a regional Land Use Commission, Labour should be in a position to promote a social/council house first-approach for new housing in rural areas. The commission

should consider the possibility of greater restrictions on second-home ownership and the detrimental impact of pricing out local residents, especially within National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Currently, in the South West second homes are being used as holiday homes and Airbnbs, depriving local key workers with limited housing options within tourist areas. These homes should face much higher council taxation and these funds should provide alternative housing provisions for local residents. The Cotswold District, which lies in the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the South West, is “the most deprived district in Gloucestershire for barriers to housing and services.”¹³ Yet 72 people per 1,000 residents have a second-home in the Cotswold District.¹⁴

The South West region has the most second-homes in England, with 52,314.¹⁵ It also has the 4th highest house-prices after London, the East of England and the South East, restricting the ability for local low to middle income earners to purchase a house.¹⁶

The Commission will recognise the significance of land in the region, enabling one of the region’s main assets to be placed at greater disposal to communities. This will address the community priorities of housing and tackling the current climate crisis. In doing so, this will demonstrate Labour’s values and crucially, its placing of people and nature at the centre of the economy. This will provide a platform for the party to build on.

2024: WHICH GENERAL ELECTION POLICY CAN LABOUR PROPOSE TO WIN OVER THE SOUTH WEST?

As highlighted earlier, Labour needs to offer specific policies aimed at rural communities which need to be included as part of the next General Election manifesto.

The Green New Deal appeared too city-centric, but rural communities are concerned about the climate and ecological crisis alongside the need for transport, access to healthcare and housing. A regional land-use commission, as set out in the previous section, can help confront the housing crisis and the need for affordable housing within the region, but there is also a real need for wider investment and tools for rural communities to sustain their future. Through offering an inclusive and sustainable future, Labour can seek to gain important votes in rural communities. Luke Pollard, former Shadow Environment Secretary and MP for Plymouth Sutton

and Devonport, has already recognised that at Labour’s height in 1997, the party represented over 150 seats classed as rural or semi-rural, now we have only 17 nation-wide and 0 in the South West.¹⁷ With the South West being the most rural region in England, failure to gain any of these constituencies is a brutal realisation of Labour’s lack of connection with rural voters and communities.

This section provides the Labour Party with a credible set of radical yet practical policies that drive access, diversity, and sustainability in rural communities within the region. Ultimately it offers an inclusive and sustainable future for these communities.

A new Rural Sustainable Futures Act¹⁸ would offer rural communities in the South West a legislative promise that not only reflects that “rural councils deliver public

services differently” and introduces a “rural-proofing process that all laws, policies, and programmes consider their impact on rural communities”,¹⁹ but also specifically delivers reform in these key areas:

1. Legal Rural Public Transport

Targets - A commitment from national government and local authorities to achieve targets including all buses on the road to be net-zero by 2035,²⁰ and reducing the number of journeys made by car in rural areas to just 40% of travel by 2030. Other targets need to include building up local authority funding and technical capacity to operate public transport networks. Currently, travel by public transport or walking needs to be enhanced, because 43% of users living in rural areas do not have access to their nearest hospital within an hour’s travel time, compared to 6% in urban areas.²¹

2. Local Food Security Programme²²

- Connecting local food producers with those in need of nutritious and affordable food through accessible local food markets (ALFMs) and supplementary food vouchers, (accompanying wider increases in welfare and rent controls) for low-income families. Through the programme, local authorities in the South West would be able to support the development of a more localised and sustainable food system, boosting the regional economy whilst increasing access to nutritious food for those in need. Food bank use has increased 61.4% in the South West since 2013,²³ and

many small farms and food businesses are struggling. While total income for farming in the South West has decreased by 43% between 2015 and 2020,²⁴ around 80% of this income has been dependent on subsidies from the government²⁵ which are being reduced by up to 75% between now and 2028. Price squeezing by supermarkets is also negatively impacting South West food producers.²⁶ Local food businesses need support through provision of local markets, marketing, and incentives to the public in order to build sustainable systems.²⁷ This would also help town centres to become community spaces and important hubs for the food system. Funding would be operated through local authorities or combined authorities.

Funds will be raised from:

- a. Market stall fees (estimated £10.5m per year)
- b. Supermarket levy on supermarkets over 3,000 sqft (estimated at £577m)

These funds will go towards:

- c. Monthly £10 vouchers per person for 4million people (£480m annually)
- d. Councils providing financial support for local food infrastructure, ALFMs, and publicising the new food system. This includes the possible expansion of city market gardens, local food processing facilities, and food delivery services for vulnerable individuals (£107.5m)

In the long term, this policy should become sustainable, and funds from the supermarket levy may be diverted towards wider policies focused on preventative healthcare and social care.

1. National Nature Service - This will be a policy aimed at providing skilled employment for young people (and others with an interest in the industry), to support nature recovery and provide sustainable skilled jobs in the countryside. These jobs would include ecologists, forestry workers, and land managers. Such jobs will provide skilled employment, offering long-term opportunities for those involved to remain in their communities, and contribute to tackling the climate and ecological crisis. They would help reduce the “lower share of employment in higher-skilled occupations (outside Exeter)” named by the South West Local Economic Partnership. It would also tackle the loss of skilled workers “through commuting” as the 2011 Census suggests.²⁸ Currently the South West is one of the lowest-paying regions, with wages decreasing by 1% during the pandemic and 14% of those employed being furloughed.²⁹ Therefore, the policy aims to increase the supply of better-paying, secure jobs, while also providing the opportunity for people to upskill.

2. National Institute for Agroecology Development (NIAD) - This will provide free-independent advice, research,³⁰ and a subsidiary Development Bank³¹ providing

‘Shared Prosperity Funds’ and loans for rural small businesses and farms to transition food, fuel and fibre production to a green economy. Regional NIAD offices would combine farmer-to-farmer and whole-farm business advice with access to grants and loans. A sustainable economy is needed in the region to offset the loss of an average of £175million in EU regional development and social funding (2014-20),³² it received. There is a need to increase, with advice and funding, the number and diversity of people in farming, and reduce the current burden of debt preventing the sector from transitioning to a green economy. Estimated total farm debt in the UK is £20bn.³³ Initial capital for NIAD is estimated at £1 billion, alongside start-up costs of £21 million.

The policies combined would put more money in the pockets of individuals and families in the South West each year. Such investment through new tools and frameworks will demonstrate Labour’s priority of placing people and nature at the centre of the economy. The Rural Sustainable Futures Act would prove commitment to building inclusive and sustainable rural communities, and in doing so, give Labour a new place in rural constituencies.

CONCLUSION

Rural communities across the South West have felt neglected for decades and this has been compounded by the austerity regime since 2010 and the ever-growing divide between rural and urban communities. Rural communities have been driven to exclusivity and isolation, as well as economic irrelevance. No community wants this. There is a clear demand and need from both rural and urban communities in the South West for rural areas to be more diverse, accessible, and sustainable.

It's time to move beyond simply politicising unnecessary issues for rural communities such as the badger cull. These are often a political liability, reinforcing wider concerns about Labour not appearing to offer rural-focused policies, and in turn approaching rural areas with city-centric priorities.

In the face of the current Conservative government, the Labour Party must take this moment to reassess its approach to rural communities. In doing so it needs to assess and develop plans to shift major regional assets such as land towards the priorities of communities.

By 2024, Labour must offer rural communities across the South West a specific programme of change that will tackle the climate and ecological crisis, while addressing the wider concerns of these communities. This requires a radical 'Rural Sustainable Futures Act', which will place rural communities at the heart of government decision-making and consideration. Most importantly, it will provide the framework and tools for rural communities to face the climate and ecological crisis on their own terms.

Through regionally devolved policies such as the Local Food Security Programme, it will ensure these communities are not neglected. The implementation of a National Nature Service, an Agroecology and Rural Development Bank, and legal rural public transport targets, will make rural communities and their economy more relevant in society; especially in its response to the climate and ecological crisis. Through making these communities more relevant, the Rural Sustainable Futures Act will give South West rural communities the ability to become truly diverse, accessible, and sustainable in the future.



George Richmond

George Richmond is Rural Affairs Officer for the South West Young Fabians. Having grown up on an organic dairy farm in Gloucestershire, George is passionate about rural affairs and food policy. Access and opportunities in rural communities are particularly important for George with his own experience of living on a farm with physical disabilities. He joined the Labour Party in January 2020 following a period of political disillusionment and a realisation that many of the problems we face are systemic. George is currently studying History at university and has written a number of articles on rural communities' need for change and a better food system.

WEST MIDLANDS

"For Labour to continue to earn the trust of voters in the West Midlands, the party should continue to offer alternative visions from the Conservatives by facilitating asset-based community development. Labour policy must draw upon local research and university hubs of technological innovation to inform their policies. In a world of increasing digitalisation, Labour can also focus on enhancing 5G infrastructure and digital upskilling which this pamphlet suggests."

Taiwo Owatemi MP
Coventry North West, Shadow Minister for Women and Equalities

"Labour has to put forward a bold plan for good jobs at the next election. That's the only way to rebuild a sense of security for the region and the region's families that's sorely missing today. That means building wealth from the bottom up, making the most of the amazing assets we have, and harnessing our universities, 5G and advanced manufacturing base to become the green workshop of the world. This pamphlet is a really welcome contribution to how we turn those ideas into action."

Liam Byrne MP
Birmingham, Hodge Hill,
Minister of State West Midlands Regional Affairs (2007-8)

"The West Midlands will be crucial for Labour's efforts to return to government. This well-argued piece makes clear that part of our problem, like Scotland, is that Labour may have taken the region for granted. I totally support the idea that we should concentrate on developing political infrastructure and localised wealth building initiatives if we're to succeed in winning over new voters and winning back former supporters. It will involve Labour representatives, at all levels, acting as leaders and advocates for their community and doing far more than simply opposing or criticising. This chapter offers several useful ideas which signpost a way forward for those willing to adopt a fresh approach."

Steve McCabe MP
Birmingham, Selly Oak, Lord Commissioner of the Treasury (2007-10)

INTRODUCTION

Whilst the national political landscape undoubtedly had an impact on Labour losing the West Midlands, there are also specifically regional issues at play. We argue that the key factors are the decline of political infrastructure, weakening communal and tribal bonds, and the changing manufacturing landscape in the West Midlands. Labour must not wait until it is back in government to address these

issues - as we note later in this piece, much can be done on a local government and constituency level to make amends.

The 2019 General Election saw Labour lose nine seats to the Conservatives in the West Midlands, with many other previously Labour strongholds, such as Coventry North West and Birmingham Erdington becoming marginal seats.

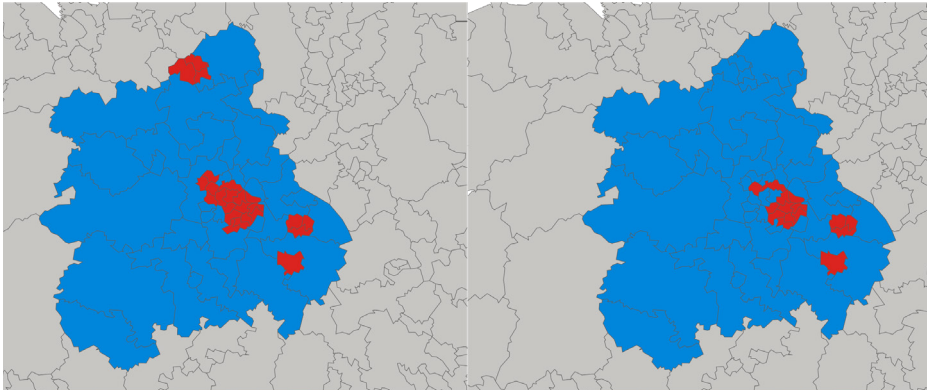


Figure 35: Decline in Labour share of seats (2017 left, 2019 right)

Too often, discussions surrounding Labour's electoral woes are centred upon reductive themes of Brexit and Corbyn's Leadership. Our hope for this pamphlet chapter is to break beyond those confines, generating strategies for future successes, rather than rehashing yesterday's arguments.

In reality there are a variety of reasons why Labour lost the West Midlands. Firstly, Labour's political infrastructure was inadequate. Secondly, the electorate crossed the political tribal lines that Labour had taken for granted for many years. In addition, shifting demographics in seats

caused problems for the Labour Party, given age, education levels and place,¹ are now stronger predictors of voting behaviour than class.² To explore these issues into Labour's declining support in the region, this chapter argues that solutions at a local level, such as community wealth building (CWB) and Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), can then function as a platform to implement a more wide-ranging policy proposal in the 2024 General Election, that focuses on seizing the West Midlands economic engine and placemaking.

2019: WHY DID LABOUR LOSE THIS HEARTLAND?

1. DECLINE OF POLITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Since 1983, 31.4% of core Labour seats in England and Wales that have been lost to the Tories are in the West Midlands.³ For decades, shifting patterns in voting behaviour have signalled a change in the appeal of the main political parties to their traditional core demographics. Class dealignment has intensified since the 1970s, in part due to deindustrialisation.⁴ Before this, 62% of working class voters opted for Labour, with 66% of middle class voters aligning with the Tories. Analysis of the 2019 election results by class shows a stark dealignment. 42% of working-class voters opted for the Tories, compared to 33% who voted Labour.⁵ Growing working-class Conservative support has been evident in the last three elections. Labour's failure to recognise this and adapt their strategy is partially responsible for the 2019 election results.

Successful voter engagement and the mobilisation of previously abstaining voters has corroded Labour's political infrastruc-

ture. In 2019, the Conservatives owed almost two thirds of their increased vote share to those who normally abstained from voting.⁶ Conversely, many traditionally Labour voters didn't vote at all. The party's analysis after the 2019 election found that around 1.2 million people who voted Labour in 2017 didn't vote at all in the following election.⁷ Non-voters are also more likely to be younger people, who make up a key part of Labour's target support base.⁸

There is a reductive tendency to assume Labour should make a simple electoral calculation and decide whether to keep young voters engaged and onside, or appeal to the older, predominantly Tory-voting demographic. Labour must ensure that it has broad appeal across the generations, not pitting them against one another and the policy proposals outlined in the subsequent sections offer a potential solution to this issue.

2. COMMUNAL AND TRIBAL BONDS

At a time when "anti-politics" is on the rise, leading to the electoral success of populist parties and politics such as UKIP, it could be said that established political parties are less appealing to their traditional voter bases.⁹ Recently, the Conservative Party have stoked various "culture wars" to exploit the increasingly tribal nature of community relations, particularly surrounding liberation issues like Transgender rights.¹⁰ The Brexit debate is undeniably one

of the most prominent markers of tribalism in recent years,¹¹ with 27% of voters in the West Midlands choosing it as their most important issue at the 2019 General Election, as shown in Figure 36. Given that Labour was largely seen to be a pro-remain party (although its stance was also considered by some to be unclear), many traditionally Labour voters' tribal bonds with the party were weakened. An estimated 30% of 2017 Labour voters voted Leave,¹² and 1 in

5 formerly Labour voters who switched to Conservative in 2019 cited Brexit as their rationale.¹³

Ormerod argues that working class identities are increasingly being sidelined, fractured and deemed unimportant by traditional parties.¹⁴ In the case of the Labour Party, whose traditional voter base is the lower-skilled and working classes, this presents difficulties. Coupled with the

alienation of younger voters, who feel detached from political party alignment, Labour must quickly outline a strategy to bring communities together and heal the divisions that those on the right seek to exploit. An economic strategy based on localism, championing the importance of 'place' and pride in communities should be at the heart of addressing this.

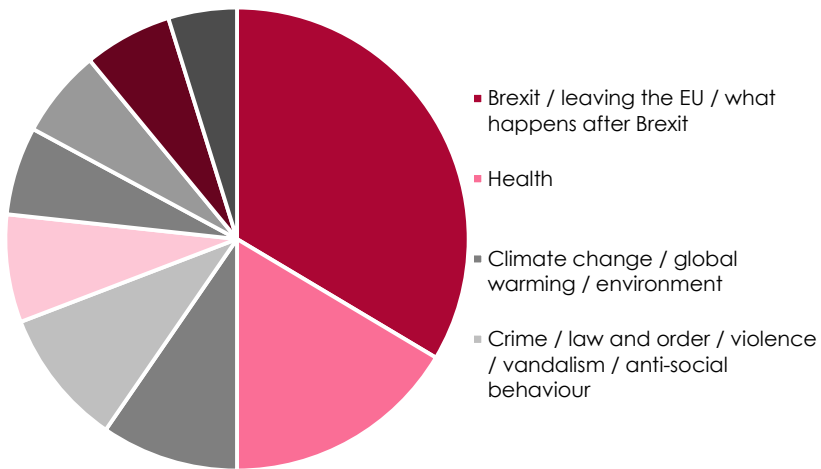


Figure 36: Policy priorities of voters in the West Midlands at the 2019 GE¹⁵

3. THE CHANGING MANUFACTURING LANDSCAPE IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

50 years ago, the West Midlands was the most prosperous region in the country, on the basis of output and productivity.¹⁶ As the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, it has a proud industrial heritage and has enjoyed economic resilience - often sustaining lower unemployment levels than the UK average.¹⁷ However, the dismantling of plants, factories and collieries by Thatcher led to the collapse of industrial hubs, substantial restructuring of local economies, and a changing manufacturing landscape.¹⁸

Almost half of the workforce in the region are employed in the service-based economy.¹⁹ Immediately following the global recession, the West Midlands enjoyed a cumulative economic growth of 15% - the 2nd best performing region in the UK, in the years 2010-6.²⁰ By 2017, regional GDP amounted to £17billion - 7.3% of UK GDP.²¹ Per inhabitant, this equated to £26,100, below the UK national average of £31,700.²² This has impacted take-home pay, as can be seen in Figure 37.

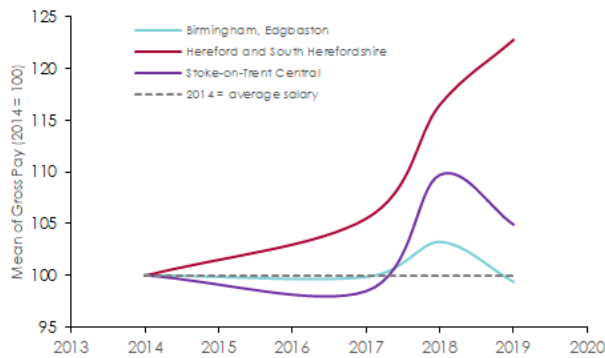


Figure 37: Changes in Take-Home Pay Across Parliamentary Constituencies in the West Midlands Between 2014 and 2019

The COVID-19 pandemic is predicted to have had a negative impact on the regional economy, with the West Midlands being the most affected region during the first lockdown, suffering a 21% drop in output.²³ Just as the distribution of high-skilled and educated workers is not uniform across the region, the same could be said for economic resilience during and after Covid - with more rural areas, such as Shropshire, suffering due to reliance on tourism/hospitality.

Ahead of the next General Election,

Labour must take stock of changing demographics in not only its Heartlands but the country as a whole. As tribalism continues to wane, Labour must be the Party which seeks to regain lost trust in the political establishment and community cohesion. The West Midlands is the ideal region to centre in any economic strategy based on localism, especially given how detrimental the pandemic has been to the regional economy. Labour must take advantage of this and deploy a local strategy based on pride of place and community.

2022-2023: WHAT CAN LABOUR ACHIEVE IN OPPOSITION TO GAIN TRUST EN ROUTE TO THE GENERAL ELECTION?

An eighty seat Conservative majority means that nationally Labour has diminished power. The party will need to rely on the soft power of its MPs, councillors and activists to drive impactful work between now and 2023. Residents of the West Midlands are presented with different layers of the democratic realms. In particular, this section focuses on the need for the party to facilitate asset-based community development (ABCD) between now and the next General Election to regain the trust of the electorate within the West Midlands.

There are distinct parallels to international development that can be made and it is clear that we should approach this period through the lens of ABCD. DePaul University defines ABCD as an international development practice “concerned with how to link micro-assets to the macro-environment” and further outlines that “the appeal of ABCD lies in its premise that communities can drive the development process themselves by identifying and mobilising existing, but often unrecognised assets, and thereby responding to and creating local economic opportunity”.²⁴ The Industrial Strategy Council and City-REDI have analysed international case studies of successful ‘levelling up’ and several elements of their findings can be implemented whilst in opposition.

The party must earnestly begin the process of reframing extant projects as wins for our communities. HS2, for instance, has been panned by some communities as destructive, despite the fact that regions with High-Speed Rail (HSR) stations have

higher economic productivity. This is a problem-first narrative. The party should be centring solutions, and in doing so, MPs and councillors are able to take responsibility for the development that HS2 will inevitably bring, acting as harbingers of opportunity. Doing so from the opposition must entail work that goes beyond taking credit for the passive arrival of a well-recognised national policy. MPs and councillors must work with their communities to advocate for their inclusion in supply chains, ensuring that businesses in their wards and constituencies are engaged with, and likely to benefit from, the likes of HS2. MPs and councillors, as elected local representatives, have more soft power than they are currently exercising and should be using it to influence the delivery of public projects to maximise their benefits for their local community.

If Labour were to win the next general election and continue the HS2 constructions, the Party will need to work towards improving the transparency of environmental safeguards and finance as well as communicate the improvements HS2 is bringing. Furthermore, Labour also needs to ensure any further decision making process is done democratically.

One of the most underutilised assets in the West Midlands is the region’s universities. The Ruhr region of Germany exemplifies the transformative impact that innovation and universities can have on regional and local economies. Economic development can be driven by the innovation pioneered by universities, but the institutions

themselves are also centres of national and private sector investment, which in turn also drive local development. Therefore, Labour can play a role at a local level in harnessing the existing strengths of the West Midlands by enhancing the collaboration between universities via Midlands Innovation and further boosting the relationships between universities and industries where universities will perform R&D and organise student apprenticeships in exchange for the companies providing research grants and funding. The focus industries should have a strong presence and reputation in the West Midlands such as manufacturing and advanced engineering - example companies are Rolls-Royce, Jaguar Land Rover, Toyota and Tarmac.²⁵ This role of facilitating collaboration can only be achieved if local representatives have a good understanding of the economic geography of their areas and maintain strong relationships with anchor institutions.

Economic development of this kind should also go beyond larger corporations only. The party at national and/or local level should aim to ensure that SMEs in the region are included in innovation ecosystems, where local supply chains draw on the West Midlands' historical manufacturing base.²⁶

This focus on innovation as a component of economic development ensures that the unique economic and political histories of the West Midlands are made relevant and reborn, redeveloping the lost generational links as well as future-proofing the regional economy. The Centre of Excellence for Digital Systems at the University of Birmingham showcases this mutually beneficial relationship between academia and the whole rail sector's supply chain. The Centre will be able to leverage relationships to innovate

and support transformational change within the rail technology sector, and if local representatives (with their knowledge of their local economies) are able to proactively create those relationships, the party achieves economic development whilst in opposition.²⁷

Voters with no educational qualifications are more inclined to vote for the Conservatives with a post-2019 General Election polling suggesting a lead of 29% for the Conservatives.²⁸ Local parties can address this. The fact of the matter is that "successful places build on their past strengths and focus on continual sectoral development to build for the future, [and] the success of these places was linked to skills and retraining the existing workforce".²⁹ The West Midlands Mayor has a significant adult education budget within their control, and so is able to sculpt the contours of the workforce of the future. Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) have identified significant growth sectors in their geographies, and the strategic application of (up)skilling strategies can ensure that those sectors are able to flourish. By advocating for the education and livelihoods of their residents, Labour can ensure that people who have been economically excluded by the changing West Midlands economy are offered a route back into the economy, as well as taking direct action to shift voting patterns. Whilst in opposition, the party must leverage its position to scrutinise and influence, through partnership working arrangements that exist within and between different councils, programmes that are designed and delivered by Conservative administrations. The party must also influence the tools with which people are able to engage with the changing profile of their local economies and build the wealth of, and in, their

local areas.

The foundations of CWB outlined in this section should provide external economies of scale within the region for businesses to flourish. Examples provided include the championing of better transportation through HS2, as well as facilitating com-

munication between universities and local businesses. Other measures outlined also include the West Midlands Mayor having control of a significant adult education budget, where the party is able to shape the workforce of the future.

2024: WHICH GENERAL ELECTION ECONOMIC POLICY CAN LABOUR PROPOSE TO REGAIN THIS WEST MIDLANDS HEARTLAND?

Having illustrated that CWB is a people-centred approach, which ensures the retention of wealth into a local economy,³⁰ the chapter now turns to how this momentum can be driven up to ensure the West Midlands can be built up as an export-driven internationalist geographical entity, which enhances the standard of living for local residents.

The opacity of the Shared Prosperity Fund and the loss of European funding in the long-term only highlights the critical nature of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the West Midlands. In a post-Brexit UK, the party needs to champion the region on the international stage, tapping into the strengths of high-growth sectors, such as digital and health technologies, as well as the green economy. The nurturing and development of local and regional assets, both tangible and intangible, engendered by CWB and ABCD (which Labour should be leading locally as outlined in the previous section), will provide the socio-economic frameworks that will be attractive to foreign investors. This will encourage large-scale investment, which will in turn enable community assets to flourish, but only if there are robust local representatives willing to make the case for their areas, and

more importantly, have the local knowledge to guide where those investments are best targeted.

The Gross Value Added (GVA) measure by Oxford Economics provided insight into industries Labour can advocate for within the West Midlands region from an FDI perspective, namely information and communication (£6.6bn GVA projected for West Midlands in 2021) and transport equipment (£6.4bn). The two industries are projected to grow cumulatively by 14.7% and 12.2% respectively between 2021 and 2025.

In the case of information and communication, Labour politicians at both national and local levels can play a role in helping to realise the 2021 West Midlands Digital Roadmap, published by the West Midlands Combined Authority.³¹ The roadmap outlines five key priorities for the region for the period 2021 to 2026, including becoming the UK's most well-connected region and providing access to digital opportunities for everyone including those in poverty, all of which Labour can support.

As the West Midlands currently has the highest rate of 5G connection outside London at 11.0%, Labour can allocate (where possible) and push for more funding to

further enhance 5G infrastructure in the region. Having better connectivity will make the region more attractive for FDI by easing access to information. Apart from 5G, the 2021 West Midlands Digital Roadmap identified some areas in the Black Country having less than 10% broadband fibre coverage, such as Sandwell. Therefore, Labour can also propose for an improvement in broadband connectivity within the General Election manifesto for such areas to ensure all facets of society can benefit from digitalisation.

Besides connectivity, the report also noted that digital skills remain a challenge with 38% of employers identifying difficulties in securing talents with digital skills. In turn, the report referred to schemes which Labour can support including the Digital Retraining Fund and Building Digital Skills in Partnership. Examples of the former scheme include the Princes Trust collaborating in technology with 800 young people and Dudley College training 500 adults in drone manufacturing and technology and virtual reality. The latter scheme combines funding from the public and private sectors to provide apprenticeships and university or college courses. Labour can thus work in

tandem with the public and private sectors to expand such schemes and enhance digital skills in the West Midlands, thereby making the region more attractive for FDI. This can be done by allocating funding at government and local levels, while also working to secure private sector funding for the schemes.

Overall, such localised investment policy will assist the West Midlands being built up as an export-driven internationalist geographical entity which will enhance the standard of living for local residents. The loss of European funding in the long-term only highlights the critical nature of foreign direct investment in the West Midlands. In a post-Brexit landscape, the party needs to champion the region on the international stage, harnessing the strengths of industries in the West Midlands such as information and communication and transport equipment. This policy addresses the development of local and regional assets engendered by CWB and ABCD that provides the socio-economic frameworks that will be attractive to foreign investors while also demonstrating Labour's capability in propelling the economic development in the West Midlands forward.

CONCLUSION

The Labour Party must seize the Midlands Engine and use it to radically reinvigorate the economy of the (West) Midlands. The Engine's lacklustre impact on the region (and its inability to mitigate COVID-19's impacts) is tied to its overreliance on increasing the frequency of 'serendipitous conversations'³² between actors, rather than the development and implementation of a proactive, strategically coherent development plan. 'The Midlands Engine'; the 'Heartbeat of Britain's Economy'; 'The Workshop of the World'; all are highly salient narrative framings that deliberately calls on the generational memory of the West Midlands and the civic success that once characterised it. This shared history is an underdeveloped asset to the region and

combining the narrative power that it offers with the economic policies outlined above, will generate buy-in from communities that can see their past and present reflected in their potential future. The battle to regain the West Midlands starts now, and the economic policies that will help us win are intrinsically tied to the needs and wants of our communities. Strengthening local industries will not only enhance the local economy but also boost the Treasury income, benefitting the UK as a whole. Economics without people and places is just the disinterested financialisation of human life - the economic policies that will help Labour win the West Midlands will centre on what has been systematically ignored; its people and its places.



Zac Barker Williams

Zac Barker Williams is a 3rd Culture Kid, moving to the UK in 2016 after having lived in Thailand for nine years, in Sudan for two years, in Bangladesh for two years and in Taiwan five years. He studied at the University of Birmingham for both his undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, where he specialised in the intersection of religious communities and the public sphere, producing research on the relationship between religious communities and national security policy and the engagement of religious groups in international development. Zac is a governor at a Birmingham primary school and an active member of the Young Fabians, and the Labour and Cooperative Parties. His day job is as a management consultant, specialising in major capital projects, the power sector and public infrastructure.



Lauren Davison

Lauren Davison is a Criminologist, having studied Criminology and Criminal Justice both at Undergraduate and Postgraduate levels at the University of Portsmouth. She specialised in Marxist criminology and carried out her Masters Thesis on Grenfell Tower as an example of social murder. Since graduating she has been heavily involved in the Young Fabians - founding the YF Criminal Justice Network, which she is currently Vice Chair of. She is also one of Open Labour's 2 policy officers and campaigns for justice policy reform in the Labour Party.

YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER

“Yorkshire and Humber sits right at the beating heart of our Labour Party and wider movement. We cannot hope to secure a transformative Labour government – that our people and communities so desperately need – without rebuilding trust in seats right across the region. This chapter provides an important contribution to the debate of how to do precisely that.”

Dan Jarvis MBE MP
Barnsley Central
Mayor of South Yorkshire (2018-22)

“Yorkshire and Humber has huge economic potential. Demonstrating that we have a plan to tap this potential and change people’s lives and prospects for the better will be key if Labour is to win back trust in the region.”

Sarah Champion MP, Rotherham
Chair of the International Development Select Committee

“Yorkshire and Humber is one of the areas where Labour needs to regain trust. After Tory broken promises in areas like transport, Labour can do this by, for example, having a plan to improve connectivity across the North. Labour can and must be the real party of levelling up the North and other heartland areas around the country who have been hit hardest by Tory austerity aimed at the most deprived. This Fabian pamphlet explores ideas that point a way forward for a modern Labour Party.”

Dame Diana Johnson DBE, Kingston upon Hull North
Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee; Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (2009-10)

"Harnessing the talent of people across Yorkshire and providing pathway through education and skills attainment, Yorkshire's economy has an incredible opportunity to grow in leading economic clusters, from the biotech and biosciences advancing green collar jobs, such as through BioYorkshire, to developing the future of our transport system headquartering Active Travel England, Great British Railways and the advanced automation and digital centres of research and development, to the creative and digital arts economy emerging out of Yorkshire. Our higher and further education can lead an economic renaissance of Yorkshire, giving everyone the opportunity to share in the economic benefit this will lead to."

**Rachael Maskell MP, York Central
Shadow Minister for Arts, Civil Society and Youth (2020-1)**

"2019 was the tipping point of a move away from Labour in the region which had begun some time before. We need to reconnect with many of the voters of Yorkshire and Humber and to do that we need credible policies that they will recognise have the potential to improve their lives and the local area directly. They also need to know we are listening to them and feel that what they are saying is being heard. This pamphlet contains concrete ways of achieving those goals."

**Emma Hardy MP, Hull West and Hessle
Shadow Minister for Further Education and Universities (2020-1)**

INTRODUCTION: YORKSHIRE, LABOUR, AND A STORY OF ECONOMIC DECLINE

Yorkshire is the largest historic county in the UK, with a population greater than Scotland and Wales.¹ In many ways, Yorkshire is also the metaphorical Heartland of the Labour Party and the wider Labour movement. In 1899, a railway worker from Doncaster, Thomas Steeles, put forward

a motion to the Trade Union Congress, compelling the nascent workers movement to consider Parliamentary representation, thereby setting in course the formation of the modern Labour Party. No route to power runs without this Heartland of the UK.

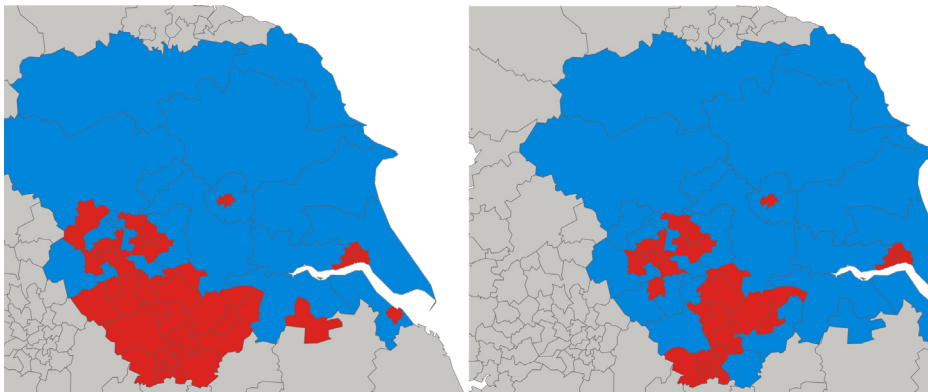


Figure 38: Decline in Labour share of seats (2017 left, 2019 right)

However, in 2019, the bond between the Party and Heartlands that had been fraying for many years finally snapped. Labour lost nine MPs in Yorkshire, the second highest loss for a region in that December election (Figure 1). Almost all of these losses were found in the former industrial areas that the Party might once have not even bothered to send activists to, “red rosette on a donkey” territory, but not anymore. In spite of ten years of Conservative-induced austerity that had hit the poorest and working classes hardest, Labour was fundamentally not trusted by voters to deliver a better alternative or future. The memories of industry had long-faded. Coalfields filled in and were left neglected, while the high-skilled

work in factories with workers bonded by unionisation, was replaced by low-skilled and low-paid employment in unforgiving warehouse depots. For too long, Labour had banked on the now far-away negative associations with the Thatcher era, without promising much better or brighter.

One such loss was Wakefield, a city in West Yorkshire and a seat held continuously since 1932, lost in 2019. In the eyes of this essay, Wakefield is a microcosm for both the wider issues in Yorkshire’s economy, and the shift away from Labour that 2019 marked as a decisive break. Formerly focused on the glass and textiles industries, along with coal mining, Wakefield exhibits many of the signs of stagnation evident

across similar areas in the region that have held back its potential. The factories and collieries which were once commonplace across the landscape, providing community and purpose, have long been closed. Supplanted by bland, shopping aisle-centred regeneration, and low-wage, low-skilled employment that cannot provide opportunities for mobility nor progression. Such low-skilled, low-wage employment accounts for 14% of the total workforce in Wakefield, compared to 8.6% in the South East, revealing the severe disparity in life chances between the two areas.²

Changes in the economy, then, are very much at the heart of this story. They offer both the reason why Labour lost this Heartland, and more hopefully the route back. Places like Wakefield have been let down, unable to share in the prosperity that has driven the economic revival of Yorkshire's cities. This pamphlet chapter offers Labour an ambitious vision of economic development for these towns that meets the needs of communities as they are, embracing positivity and identity, to forge a new covenant with these voters.

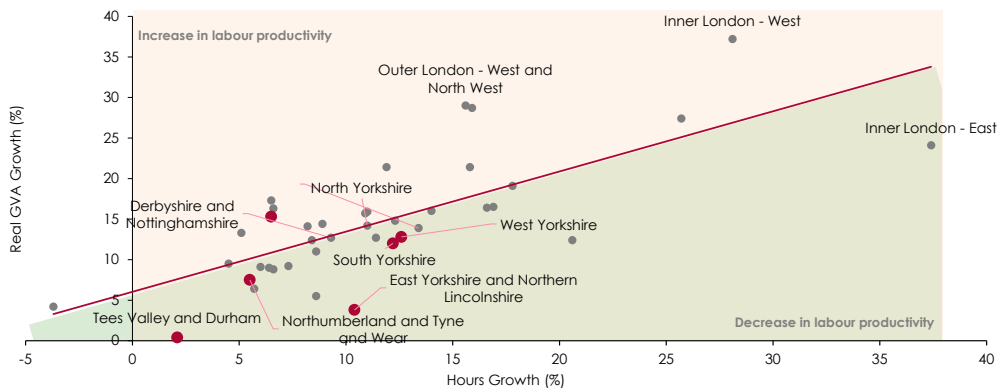


Figure 39: Since 2010, Yorkshire NUTS2 subregions experience a decline in labour productivity, compared to the rest of the UK³

2019 GENERAL ELECTION AND BEFORE: WHAT WENT WRONG FOR LABOUR IN TOWNS LIKE WAKEFIELD?

To see how Labour can move forward and utilise the messaging and policy on the economy to its advantage in towns like Wakefield, we must first assess where the Party has been going wrong. As well as what led to the eventual collapse in support in 2019, in which nine seats across Yorkshire and Humber were ceded.

Something seismic happened in Yorkshire and Humber. Party political and academic reports on the General Election (GE) 2019, conclude that Labour was on the path to ruin in these post-industrial towns due to both the repellent nature of the leadership, and the apparent ‘betrayal’ over Brexit. Both of these factors led to Labour’s losses in the region, as attested by many MPs who either lost their seats, or saw devastating reductions in their majorities. At the root of many of the Party’s problems was its manifesto and its economic policies.

However, while the leadership may have been the hammer, and Brexit the nail, in truth this coffin was a long time in the making. As Dan Jarvis, MP for Barnsley Central attested, too many former Labour voters in the towns of Yorkshire and Humber felt that

the party did not speak for them or in their interest. Part of this may have come from the breakdown of trade union membership in the aftermath of deindustrialisation, pulling traditional voters both out of collectivised employment, and out of the orbit of Labour’s interests.⁴ As a result, voters in these towns felt that Labour had moved away from them and their lives; a party too content to give a “hand-out” rather than a “hand-up”. Too often, economic policy was not appealing to those older, home-owning, and stable residents, found in many of these towns. Economic policy and rhetoric did not match up to what people in cities like Wakefield saw around them. Too much political capital was exerted on extolling Labour’s no tuition fees policy for example, and too little on how it would help those not in further education have opportunities for high-paid and high-skilled work. The subsequent sections propose policies that Labour can implement to address issues of disconnectedness and apathy if it is to regain power again in Yorkshire and in a seat like Wakefield.

2022-2023: LOCAL POLICIES IN OPPOSITION TO WIN BACK YORKSHIRE TOWNS

Labour has a lot to do to win back the trust and votes of those that deserted it in 2019, and have been left feeling isolated from the party for a long time before that. This section provides concrete suggestions on what Labour can implement locally within the region to regain the confidence of the electorate in economic affairs ahead

of the 2024 General Election. This is done with the intention to change the narrative that has gone before which left former voters alienated. A new narrative will be one that still shows the divides with the Conservatives, but embraces a vision of inclusive and helpful economic change. This section informs Labour on the importance of taking

ownership of the following: measures to raise financial capital in “left behind” areas within the region, the importance of hosting regular polling groups, and public consultations used effectively to shape economic policy.

Ahead of 2024, Labour councillors must seek methods to gain greater financial resources. This can be done by lobbying for greater resources from central government, as well as increasing tax receipts from the local population. While we must balance this with breaking through our negative perception as a ‘tax and spend’ party, Labour must show that it is able to raise the revenues necessary for the spending requirements to truly level up the regions. For Labour, gaining financial resources within Yorkshire and Humberside is essential to firstly, show that Labour can be trusted to increase the local authority finances; and, secondly, to deploy finances to areas that are currently under resourced. For example, additional expenditure on energy resources, housing, and road connectivity with Highways England, can connect “left behind” areas in East Yorkshire to Western urban areas. Furthermore, increasing spending on tourist attractions will create a greater sense of belonging in the community and attract more visitors.

Labour councillors must ensure that they can help the local council to write up stronger business cases to lobby the central government for financial injections. To do this, Labour councillors must demonstrate that, using the framework from HM Treasury’s Magenta,⁵ Book Guidance, the rationale for this additional spending aligns with the government’s Industrial Strategy.⁶ For each calendar year, ahead of the General Election, local Labour councillors must demonstrate to the central government that

they can effectively monitor and evaluate the success of government grants spent on local projects. Within Yorkshire and the Humberside in particular, local councils struggle to provide adequate funding to address issues that go beyond the provision of basic services. Consequently, problems such as youth services, public benefits such as libraries, and council-owned grounds, have fallen into disrepair. It is vital therefore that Labour has a clear plan for how money can be raised to pay for these services, and thus tap into the additional funding from the central government. Having provided a brief overview on how Labour can request more financial resources to address issues identified within the previous section, Labour must also demonstrate how they can raise tax receipts in the lead up to 2024.

Besides lobbying the government for more funding, Labour also needs to demonstrate and publicise its effectiveness in campaigning against austerity, and securing more funding for regional development. An example is in the North West where Mayor Andy Burnham secured c.£1.1bn funding to develop infrastructure in Greater Manchester following the 2021 Autumn Statement.⁷ The funding will be used to integrate Greater Manchester’s trams and buses and build the first Net Zero transportation network in the UK. Andy’s success provides a template for funding requests in Yorkshire and the Humberside, which combines his visions, and aligns them with the Conservatives government’s Net Zero target by 2050.

Within the region, Labour councillors must also provide alternative means to generate more revenue on a local authority level. This includes a consideration of revenue raising instruments, such as:

Council bonds, tourist accommodation taxes including Airbnb lets, and measures on how much funding councils need relative to other councils, not by absolute terms.

Besides generating more revenue, Labour also needs to present an alternative vision of having a fairer tax system. The party seeks to encourage investment and the use of vacant properties, replace business rates with a tax system aligned to property valuation, and increase the Digital Services Tax from 2% to 12%.⁸ Labour therefore has a chance of implementing a fairer tax system, and levelling the playing field for SMEs who might not have an online presence if the proposals were to be included in the next manifesto.

Having now explained how, locally, Labour can take a strong lead in raising fiscal powers for local authorities across the region, it's also equally important for the local party to routinely hold polling discussions with local residents. Hosting deliberative assemblies with local community groups is important. Testing and consulting on policies within local councils allows Labour to see if they are on track to prove credible General Election economic

policies within the region. Such meetings should be held particularly for, but not limited to, formerly inclined Labour voters. Such action would help to provide both accountability to those producing Labour's economic policy moving forward, but also allow citizens across the region to feel as if they have a genuine say in policies for their area. Labour's economic policy moving forward needs to redress the great disparities between the South East and the Yorkshire and Humberside region, such as in transport funding, but without resorting to a reductive form of politics that pits communities and regions against each-other.

Through such measures to raise revenue, a prospective Labour government can show that they can be responsible with the public finances, whilst at the same time ensuring that Yorkshire and Humberside receives the government funding it desperately requires. Having considered how Labour can change in the current period of opposition and ready itself for power, we now move on to considering concrete economic policies that Labour can put forward to inspire voters.

2024 - POLICIES FOR CHANGE: ECONOMIC POLICIES TO WIN IN 2024

Having illustrated that CWB is a people-centred approach, which ensures the retention of wealth into a local economy, the chapter now turns to how this momentum can be driven up to ensure the West Midlands can be built up as an export-driven internationalist geographical entity, which enhances the standard of living for local residents.

The opacity of the Shared Prosperity Fund and the loss of European funding in the long-term only highlights the critical nature of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the West Midlands. In a post-Brexit UK, the party needs to champion the region on the international stage, tapping into the strengths of high-growth sectors, such as digital and health technologies, as well as the green economy. The nurturing and development of local and regional assets, both tangible and intangible, engendered by CWB and ABCD (which Labour should be leading locally as outlined in the previous section), will provide the socio-economic frameworks that will be attractive to foreign investors. This will encourage large-scale investment, which will in turn enable community assets to flourish, but only if there are robust local representatives willing to make the case for their areas, and

more importantly, have the local knowledge to guide where those investments are best targeted.

The Gross Value Added (GVA) measure by Oxford Economics provided insight into industries Labour can advocate for within the West Midlands region from an FDI perspective, namely information and communication (£6.6bn GVA projected for West Midlands in 2021) and transport equipment (£6.4bn). The two industries are projected to grow cumulatively by 14.7% and 12.2% respectively between 2021 and 2025.

In the case of information and communication, Labour politicians at both national and local levels can play a role in helping to realise the 2021 West Midlands Digital Roadmap, published by the West Midlands Combined Authority. The roadmap outlines five key priorities for the region for the period 2021 to 2026, including becoming the UK's most well-connected region and providing access to digital opportunities for everyone including those in poverty, all of which Labour can support.

As the West Midlands currently has the highest rate of 5G connection outside London at 11.0%, Labour can allocate (where possible) and push for more funding to

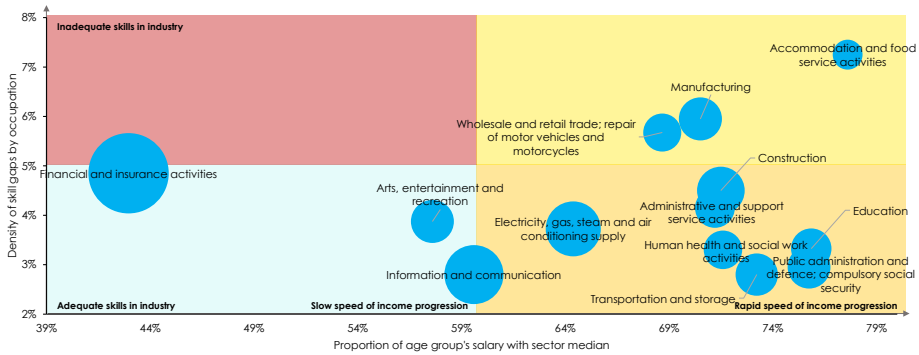


Figure 40: Speed of progression, earnings potential and expected new jobs within Yorkshire and the Humber?

The promotion of retraining schemes for the local labour supply is important. Such retraining is required across the major towns of Yorkshire and Humber, free at the point of use. This would provide training and support in the areas identified through an audit for all those unemployed, looking to change careers, or wanting to develop new skills. As a precondition for participating in the scheme, the participants will need

to work for a company based in Yorkshire & Humber for a set amount of time so that the local area will benefit from the upskilling programme.

One key detractor from economic growth in towns like Wakefield, is the often unreliable and poor-quality transport links, a product of Yorkshire's low transport spending per head (£276), compared to London's staggering £907.¹⁰

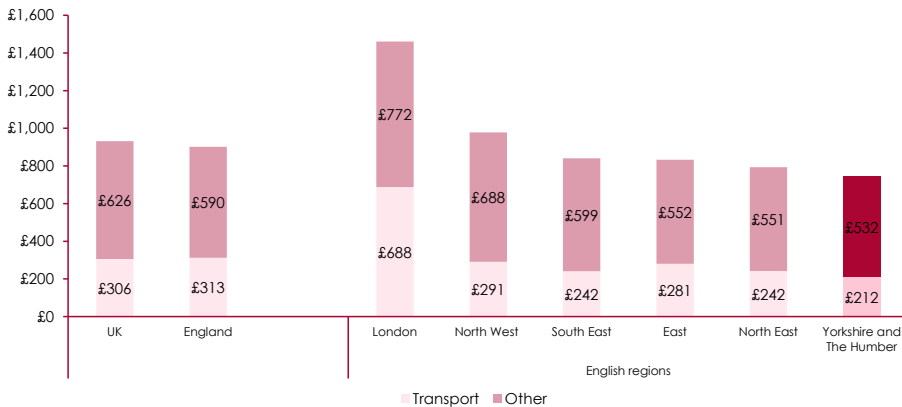


Figure 41: Capital spending per person within Yorkshire and the Humber is smaller compared to the majority of regions and country averages, annual average between 2014–15 and 2018–19.¹¹

If the rhetoric regarding levelling up is to mean anything, this must be addressed urgently. Labour should commit to increasing funding per capita to at least half the London level, meaning an increase by c.£132 in the case of transport. This funding could be used for the full electrification of the crumbling TransPennine line, enhancing links between Hull in the East (including connections to Selby), Sheffield in the South and Leeds in the West of the region, connecting with other towns and cities in the North on the route. This would help in turn to encourage greater commuting levels whilst encouraging greater cross-county interconnectivity. Ultimately, this would garner greater private sector investment while also boosting economic productivity and development. Doing so will enable Labour to take back the levelling up agenda from the Tories.

Moreover, Labour can also champion better connectivity within and between Yorkshire & Humber and other regions¹² by presenting alternatives to the Conservative Government's plans (some suggestions in the reference link).¹³ Following the scrapping of the HS2 Eastern leg, the Conservative Government proposed to build the high-speed section from Manchester to Marsden only, while upgrading the lines from Liverpool to Warrington, and Marsden to Leeds instead. Although the Conservative government had announced in November 2021 a planned express service between Hull, Leeds, Manchester-Liverpool to start in 2022, there is still no direct connection to Manchester Airport (which Hull's three Labour MPs Diana Johnson, Emma Hardy and Karl Turner have been calling

for¹⁴) and no tangible improvements to the Hull-Sheffield line. Therefore, Labour's plans will need to address the shortcomings of not improving current links from a) the Midlands to Leeds and North East England, b) cities such as York and Newcastle to Birmingham and c) Leeds to London or Birmingham.

Ultimately, Labour's transport plans will need to account for equal prioritisation of investing into local transport, environmental impacts of the plans and transparency on environmental and health & safety safeguards as well as finance amongst others.

Between October to December 2021 passenger journeys on the TransPennine Express which is a major railway line in Yorkshire and Humber had recovered to 66.5% of 2019 levels, a significantly higher percentage than a low of 23.0% in 2020. At the time of writing, these figures from the Office of Rail and Road suggest there might be further scope of recovery and thus demand (as the pandemic recedes) to merit further investments into transport.¹⁵

The policies proposed in the previous two sections allow Labour to address the conjoined twin issues of existing skill deficits and transport planning. By implementing the combination of such localised and national level policies during the next General Election, Labour can show what true 'levelling up' would look like for Yorkshire and Humber. These are not policies of flash in the pan fizzle, but long-term, sustainable investments that can provide Yorkshire and Humber, and towns like Wakefield, a long-term and sustainable solution to their current economic problems.

CONCLUSION: A ROUTE INTO POWER, A ROUTE TO CHANGE

It is almost cliché to say that Labour nationally has a mountain to climb to get back into power, and there are few parts of the country with a steeper section of that electoral mountain than Yorkshire. Voters at present feel at best apathy towards Labour, and feel it no longer represents them. However, it is not too late to win back seats like Wakefield. The party must present a bold and optimistic vision for the future. This needs to be rooted in place,

with voters feeling they have a chance to participate in the new economy. Labour can promise hope and the chance for people to shape the rejuvenation of their own communities, rather than to be paternalised. Policies, such as those outlined within this chapter, can help to do this, ensuring that Labour speaks again to the specificities of Yorkshire, and can present a future full of practical change.



Ciaran Tomlin

Ciaran Tomlin recently graduated from the University of Leeds with a degree in Geography. During his studies, he was secretary of the Yorkshire and Humberside Young Fabians network, and the leader of a University volunteer expedition to Cambodia. After graduating, Ciaran worked for the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, researching economic productivity deficits in the U.K. He now plans to put this theory into action by training as an urban planner at University College London next autumn.



Dominic Jones

Dominic Jones is a recent Politics Graduate from the University of Liverpool, originating from Barnsley, Yorkshire. He has held roles in his local youth council, Youth Combined Authority, regional Youth Voice Steering Group, UK Youth Parliament, National Youth Select Committee, national Work Experience Action Group, as a parliamentary intern and as the Economy Delegate to the G7 Youth Summit. Dominic is involved with both the Yorkshire and Humber Fabians and the Co-Operative Party and has a keen interest in ensuring that Labour solidifies support in all of its Heartlands to help it win across the country on its path into power at all levels of Government.

DEMOGRAPHIC HEARTLANDS

GREEN



"I'm proudly red on the outside and green on the inside. That environmentalism rooted in deep fairness and our communities must become standard issue alongside a Labour membership card from now on.

We need to be bolder, greener and more determined that decarbonisation should not only be a middle-class pursuit for those who can afford it. Application of social justice and equality must happen to ensure that every household in Britain can live lower carbon lives and embrace nature more.

That means confronting uncomfortable truths about our politics. Some things in this pamphlet will find supporters, some others perhaps not. That is necessary in a document deliberately designed to challenge established thinking. It makes uncomfortable reading. That is what it should do.

In Parliament, in councils and in communities it is Labour taking the lead in decarbonising, while ensuring that those in heavy emitting industries have secure unionised jobs to transition into it. A green transition is something only the Labour Party can achieve, but to deliver the change that is needed, with the pace that is required and the fairness that must be baked into every policy, we need to win. Now is the time for us to be bold, to propose winning and bold measures. Turn towards the fray, and let's ensure that it's a Labour plan for fair and fast action that triumphs at the polls."

Luke Pollard MP
Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport;
Shadow Minister for the Armed Forces
Shadow Secretary of State for
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2020–2021)

"In the time between now and the general election Labour needs to commit to a manifesto which will deliver this green prosperity for the long term. It can also showcase where it is already leading by example in those areas where Labour has control and is taking action.

Which is why this Young Fabian pamphlet is so timely. After all, it is our future generations who have to deal with the legacy they have inherited. Its scrutiny of what is now needed and its emphasis on how local clean investment can address local transport, employment, planning and health needs- including in skills and jobs- will prompt engagement and collaboration from across all the different groups and sectors, whether young or old, skilled or unskilled.

Labour is the only party which can rise to the urgent challenge of the climate and nature emergency and as these essays show, the opportunities for engagement and collaboration on this cross cutting agenda are a key part of the process which will deliver success at the ballot box."

Joan Walley, Stoke-on-Trent North, 1987-2015
Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee (2000-2015)

INTRODUCTION

The Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change estimates that, to achieve the 1.5 degrees maximum global temperature increase in 2100, global CO2 emissions will have to fall by 45% by 2030; and reach Net Zero by 2050.¹ The Labour Party should have a leading role in achieving this, both as the Official Opposition and once in power. Historically, Labour has positioned itself as the only force in Parliament with the desire and power to implement

environmental policies.² Yet the Green Party has increasingly replaced Labour as the party for environmental change in recent years. Labour needs to retain and reshape the coalition of voters who prioritise green policies, to remain competitive in future elections. This chapter will focus on why Labour must reclaim and expand its Green Heartland, by winning back not only lost green voters, but working class voters with a focus on green jobs and investment.

2019: WHY DID LABOUR LOSE THIS HEARTLAND?

In the last defeat of 2019, 2.65% of Labour's voting base went for the Green Party, an estimated c.340,000 voters.³

They account for 10% of the voters who switched from voting Labour between the 2017 and 2019 elections.

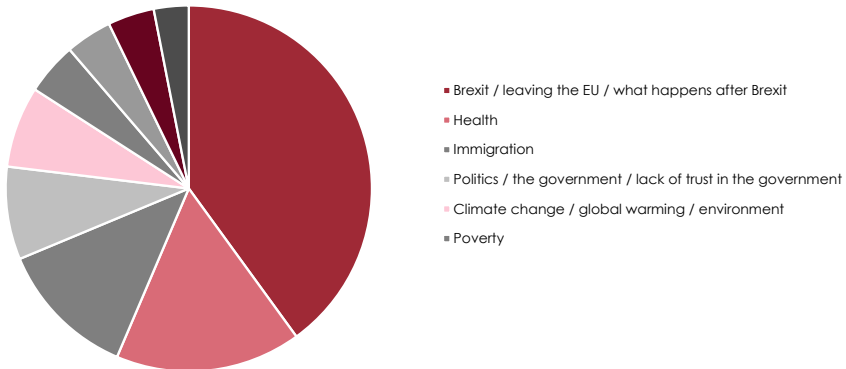


Figure 42: *Issues that mattered to the voters who switched from the Labour Party to the Green Party in 2019*

While only 10%, there is evidence that suggests the Green Party is growing in support as climate change and green policies become more politically salient.

The Labour Party lost this Heartland primarily due to Brexit and concerns about leadership. According to the British Election Study, Brexit was the top issue for 31% of the respondents who switched from the Labour Party to the Green Party in 2019.⁴ Unfortunately, negative perceptions of the party and the leadership led voters to view the manifesto as impractical and unrealistic.⁵

Issues of the environment have increasingly grown in importance since the aftermath of Labour's 2019 defeat. Less than a month after the general election, Ipsos Mori polling showed that climate issues had climbed past the economy, falling behind only Brexit, healthcare, and crime in terms of voter salience.⁶ On the day of the election, the climate wasn't a top five issue for Conservative voters, but claimed the fifth spot for Labour voters, third for Liberal Democrats, and fourth for the Scottish National Party.⁷ The environment mattered for many non-Labour voters, but the party's communications didn't cut through. Brexit, concerns about the credibility of the party, and credibility of the leader remained the top concerns. Ed Miliband has called the next general election the "climate election" for good reason. Climate policy should be far more salient as Brexit debates evolve, the party leadership has changed, and climate and economic policies become more deeply connected. In fact, during the 2019 election one of the Party's most popular policies was its Green New Deal with the 2030 Net Zero carbon target.⁸ Focusing on this will be an opportunity to restore the party's credibility so that it can put forth a

vision for a green economy, which is vital ahead of the next election.

Labour's leadership failed to make an effective argument for job security targeted at individuals and businesses negatively affected by fluctuating oil prices and declining oil demand. Pre-COVID, there were approximately c.280,000 jobs supported by the oil sector, roughly half of which are located in Scotland and the North.⁹ Green energy can provide greater job security and support investment in manufacturing, including electric vehicles as automakers transition. This is where Labour should be putting their focus.

The economic gains Labour purported in the 2019 related to green policy initiatives weren't well communicated. 850,000 green jobs created by 2030¹⁰ sounds good on paper, but compares poorly against rates of change elsewhere in the economy when you consider that 2.4 million gig economy jobs were created from 2016-2019.¹¹ There was little clarity on how the proposed £250 billion to be lent through a National Investment Bank would be spent in practice or how the return of the energy sector to public ownership and management would create jobs.¹² The environmental manifesto promised to build environmental standards into trade agreements, but did little to clarify their significance for exporting businesses. Labour policies in 2019 were seen as a positive reason to vote for the party and had supermajority support.¹³ Yet, upon deeper evaluation, people were more concerned about Brexit, the cost of policies, and pocketbook issues. It is essential to communicate that large-scale green investments and policy will provide well-paying, stable jobs, lower the cost of living for voters and businesses, create growth, and won't leave those

negatively affected by the green transition to fend for themselves.

The party must keep this vision at the heart of its 2024 manifesto and electoral strategy. Labour can't win power by reclaiming these c.340,000 Green Party voters alone. The party's Green Heartland must be expanded to include voters from other parties and demographics too. The

party's commitment to create 400,000 green, secure jobs with £30 billion of spending is a good start. Still, the stakes of these investments must be made locally, especially in the countless communities the Tories are promising to 'level-up' and those dependent on the 100,000 oil sector jobs and oil taxation in Scotland.

WHAT ECONOMIC POLICIES CAN LABOUR ACHIEVE IN OPPOSITION 2022-2023?

It is important to recognise that Labour is in an unenviable position. Market trends, changing investor demands, and spending on electric vehicles and related infrastructure increasing under Conservative rule have meant that it's more difficult to distinguish Labour as the party of environmentalists. Given that the national party is largely limited to criticising the current administration, it must continue to develop its own green agenda and sell it to voters. Consider the role of the North Sea's offshore oil and gas industry for the Scottish economy. It must be stressed that an independent Scotland would face a more difficult financial path to achieving complete decarbonisation and promoting job creation without its current access to the City of London, British financial and consumer markets, and budget transfers from England. The margin for error on the path to power is much larger if Labour is able to pick up more seats in Scotland at the expense of the SNP and Conservatives. At the dispatch box, the Labour leadership must highlight the Conservative Party's lack of vision to address Scotland's economic losses from the existing energy transition. Most importantly, this section identifies regional working groups as the key issue the

party must use to bring about the material benefits clear at the local level.

One potential route to increase engagement locally and retain voters who switched to the Greens would be to establish regional working groups with unions, local businesses, Labour Party councillors, mayors, MPs, organisers and party members. These working groups can bring unions together with green industries to deliver much-needed investments and economic opportunities, which create well-paying, secure, union-friendly jobs, bolstered by a political commitment to increase council funding and devolve more fiscal powers to local councils so they can borrow and direct public investment to maximal effect when Labour is in government. The local level is where the Conservative Party does the most damage undercutting green investments by refusing to devolve appropriate fiscal powers. Labour-led local devolved authorities and councils have an opportunity to show the public what good policy can achieve, building on decisions such as the return of Manchester's bus system to public ownership and planned launch of the first Net Zero transportation network in the UK,¹⁴ which has been achieved by the Labour run GMCA devolved authority.

The party lacks power at the national level, so its best bet is to deliver green investments in the areas where it is in power locally and building up a local infrastructure to help communities where possible, acting as a bridge between businesses and the workforce in pursuit of green investment and opportunity. It can then target the

constituencies and areas where it needs to increase its vote share and restore its credibility as a party ready to govern and improve people's lives. In doing so, it can leverage a strong green policy agenda and local organisation into credibility of its proposals at the next General Election.

WHICH GENERAL ELECTION ECONOMIC POLICIES CAN LABOUR PROPOSE TO WIN THE GREEN HEARTLAND IN 2024?

Taking action to calm the concerns of Green voters and show the broader electorate that the Labour Party is intent on delivering green jobs and investment locally will not be enough to win the next general election. Instead, the party must provide the basis for a credible policy offer that makes clear what Labour can do in power nationally. A credible policy platform must bridge the gap between national and local needs and approaches. This section proposes that, in order to regain the votes of this group, Labour must firstly offer workers in high carbon-emitting industries opportunities to retrain, whilst offering income support if they cannot find work that pays comparably with the jobs lost to the energy transition or automation. Secondly, the party should repurpose existing land and assets for green energy; and finally, a green trade policy offering market access to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. This would give Labour a more proactive and concrete vision for "Global Britain" in the wake of Brexit than any of the Tories trade policies to date. Making national policy 'local' is the way to go.

Firstly, it's important to secure buy-in from older workers who are in their mid to late careers and have worked in heavy emitting

industries, such as oil and gas or manufacturing, that are beginning to automate more production. This is where Labour's 2019 rhetoric about a "just" transition provides a conceptual base for the next election's policy offering and communications strategy. Rather than situate a just transition in an explicitly social justice context, a "just" transition should be one that offers workers opportunities to retrain, offers income support if they cannot find work that pays comparably with the jobs lost to the energy transition or automation, and invests locally to create new jobs. National wage data shows that those working in manufacturing tend to earn more than the regional average, which makes the potential for any job disruptions mid to late career a highly sensitive matter politically, especially if workers don't trust Labour to look out for their interests. Fabian Society researchers' Josh Abey and Andrew Harrop's proposal for a revised unemployment support scheme pegged at 80% of one's employed income, so long as they had paid sufficient credits into national insurance, is a perfect starting point for a more tailored approach. Targeting workers who belong to voting demographics that tend to vote Tory is a crucial electoral foundation upon which a

far-reaching climate agenda can then be built.

The 2024 manifesto must make the case for the use of old mines, connections to the grid and large tracts of land in places like Bassetlaw to accelerate the decarbonisation of the national energy grid. Repurposing existing land and assets not only saves on costs, but also can help reinvigorate communities in need of investment by rehabilitating dilapidated structures and areas. Pushing to provide greater funding to councils so that they can hire more staff, restore long-fraying administrative capacities, and bring more bus and other public transport systems into public ownership can make a persuasive case to increase local autonomy, lower transport costs, and improve public services to better join up towns and rural areas with urban centres. Plans to reinvigorate local councils can then be paired with a national initiative to provide significant investments to build tens of thousands of sustainable, affordable housing units, while also providing financial support to families and councils to retrofit existing housing stock and buildings. These policies then provide a strong base for a national industrial strategy seeking to revitalise former industrial towns and assets across the Midlands and the North through state-led coordinated investments, tax incentives, and state aid for green industrial projects modelled off of efforts seen elsewhere such as the Swedish firm Hybrit, which launched the first 'green' steel project that replaces coking coal with hydrogen.¹⁵ This is crucially important for creating highly skilled jobs generating higher income and in turn tax income for the UK and supporting a self-sustaining economic ecosystem that lowers the costs of decarbonisation for businesses and households.

Labour also needs to propose investor-friendly policies to attract investment in green energy production by offering incentives such as tax breaks, R&D grants and forming public-private partnerships to push forward green energy projects.

The green industry has demonstrated its enormous potential to generate economic returns, as shown by the examples of Britishvolt battery cell gigafactory¹⁶ and the UK's first offshore wind farm¹⁷ in Blyth (built in 2000). Britishvolt will generate c.£2.6bn investment for the gigafactory, representing the biggest single investment into North East England after Nissan, while also creating c.3,000 jobs.¹⁸ The offshore wind farm has helped to generate 500 jobs and related to 60 companies in the sector so far.¹⁹ The announcement in September 2021 of a further £130m investment to construct manufacturing facilities for components of future wind turbines means there will be 170 jobs created in Cambois (Northumberland) and 270 jobs safeguarded in Hartlepool.²⁰

Both examples above illustrate the promising outlook for the green industry going forward. Labour in opposition or power therefore needs to develop clear policies to advocate the industry further and communicate its economic benefits to the electorate.

The party must also communicate that decarbonising the economy isn't just a matter of climate justice. The country's exporters face a world in which the EU and, to a lesser degree, the United States is now considering applying tariffs, duties, or other forms of tax on imports on imports based on their carbon-intensity, while China slowly implements a carbon trading system. Carbon pricing and domestic climate policies are now a matter of trade policy. Labour can propose a post-Brexit trade agenda that links trade partners' com-

mitment to key climate benchmarks and energy transition policies to market access for developing countries in tandem with access to a large concessional loan program managed by the UK Export Finance Agency to enable developing countries to import more goods and services from British firms for energy, infrastructure, and urban development projects that reduce emissions, increase energy efficiency, and

meet other sustainability criteria. Labour must also leverage the power of the City of London in global finance to improve existing Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG), climate reporting frameworks and requirements, so that companies and financial institutions do not use emerging criteria to 'greenwash' their activities and enlist them as partners in the rush to invest in decarbonisation.

CONCLUSION

The Labour Party lost c.300,000 of its voters from the 'green Heartland' in 2019, and the climate crisis has only become more visible since. If the party is to win power in 2024, it needs to make the environment indistinguishable from the economy and challenge the Tories' stranglehold on the public's perception of good economic governance. The Labour Party must rebuild its relationship with voters, communicating clearly that green investment and jobs can, and will, improve their lives. The message the party needs to communicate to the electorate, is that being green also aligns with the public's priority on "jobs, jobs, jobs"!

It is of the utmost importance that the Labour Party has a robust Green New Deal.

We propose that this time its centrepiece is of these prosperous green new jobs, that can be showcased to voters as beneficial, appealing and realistic.

Finally, the Labour Party must communicate that it is ready to be on the world stage; Boris Johnson and the Brexiters' laissez-faire economics will not cut it, if the UK is to compete and thrive in the decades to come. The demands of the energy transition require a more imaginative state to guide, support, and nurture markets, while making the investments needed to underpin a green economy. There is a large coalition of people across the political spectrum who have much to gain from the Labour Party's Green New Deal; we now just need the party to show them that it is possible.



Nicholas Birman-Trickett

Nicholas Birman-Trickett is a political risk analyst with a specialism in Russian and Eurasian political economy, the political economy of energy, and energy consulting. He holds an M.A. in Russian and Eurasian studies from the European University in St. Petersburg and an MSc in international political economy from the London School of Economics. Nick also has experience in the D.C. policy world, interning for the Senate Committee on Small Business as well as the Hudson Institute and CSIS, used to work with the Foreign Policy Research Institute, as well as stints with AKE Ltd. and Wood Mackenzie. He used to run BMB Russia, a daily newsletter covering political and business news from Russia and a daily newsletter called OGs and OFZs doing the same, but focusing on the impact of COVID and the energy transition on Russia and the region's political economy. He now works as a metals and mining analyst for Fitch Solutions.



Marie Hill

Marie Hill is a member of the Environment Network and the West Midlands branch of the Young Fabians. She has been involved in climate justice campaigns in her hometown, Birmingham. She is interested in the link between environmentalism and economics and she is currently writing about these topics.

MIDDLE ENGLAND



"People will only vote for us when they believe that their priorities are our priorities too. Most people are worried about having a good well paid job, good schools for their children and being able to see their family doctor. People want to be able to pay the bills, fill up the car and go on holiday. That's why Labour are right to offer answers to the energy price rise and to highlight the 15 Conservative tax rises, which see taxes at their highest for 70 years and why we are right to oppose the unfair National Insurance increase, which is a tax on jobs and working families."

Bill Esterson MP
Sefton Central, Shadow Minister for Business and Industry

INTRODUCTION

What is 'Middle England'? It is important to firstly clarify that it is not a geographic region. Although no official definition exists, Middle England is generally considered to encompass lower-middle and middle class voters who hold traditional, conservative or right-wing views. Therefore, by definition, it is not a Labour Heartland. This may lead you to think, "Why would Labour care about this area in the next General Election?" I can sympathise with this, but that rather misses the point. Labour must do better across the whole country. These are hard-to-win areas, but if Labour is serious about election victory, it must battle with the Tories, eating away at traditional Tory votes, and trying to win over the Middle Englander.

What makes a Middle Englander? They can typically include ambitious and aspirational self-improvers, who want to exceed in their career, and have become increasingly wedded to capitalism and consumerism.^{1,2} They come from neither wealth nor poverty, but live in traditional Tory territory; bustling towns and pretty villages in the Shires.

Middle Englanders have changed over time - they are no longer just the typical Daily Mail reader,³ and are not necessarily pro-Brexit nor anti-immigration. They are, however, more likely to be patriotic and often hold traditional family values.

Middle Englanders now represent a large proportion of the electorate (58% of the UK population are in a middle income group⁴). Successfully wooed by Tony Blair, many voted Labour for the first time in 1997⁵; in the next election Labour needs Middle England again.

There are many possible reasons for Labour's failings in this socio-demographic area, but what is the most significant one? As someone once famously said: "It's the economy, stupid". Although there is plenty of existing evidence that Labour fares worse on the economy than the Tories,⁶ no literature seeks to understand why, nor provide genuine solutions. This piece will focus on an economic lens to winning Middle England.

If Labour are serious about winning the next General Election (their first since 2005!), they must do more than just win back the Red Wall – they must woo Middle England too.

This chapter first explores the reasons why Labour continues to lose in this group, followed by explaining what steps need to be implemented between now and the next election to switch the votes of this demographic from blue and yellow to red. Finally, this chapter proposes several policies on what Labour can propose in the subsequent general election to re-win this Heartland.

2019: WHY DID LABOUR LOSE THIS HEARTLAND?

For Middle England, this question is probably best reworded as: Why doesn't Labour win this Heartland? Although Labour had some success in Middle England in '97 when Labour won a total of 418 seats,⁷ (the highest ever for a single party⁸), Labour still often came third in many Mid-

dle England seats (Liberal Democrats often second). As signified by the difference between the Tory and Labour votes in the AB social class column (more typically Middle England), the gap has widened since 1997 (Figure 43).

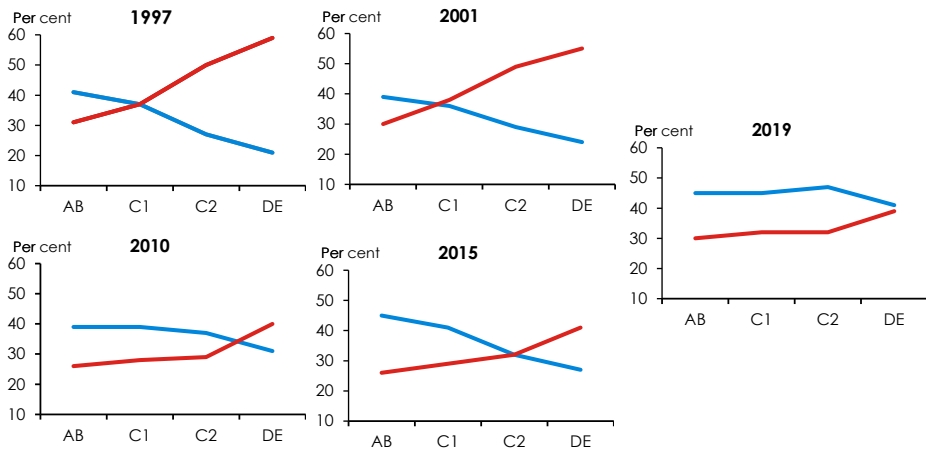


Figure 43: Social class⁹ voting by party (selected elections)¹⁰

James Wilder, Labour's candidate for the Middle England constituency of Newbury in 2019,¹¹ argued that Labour's recent economic policies have had relatively little emphasis on prosperity for the middle classes. Thus, Labour did not successfully appeal to this group due to Labour's lack of aspiration and promise to bring a greater amount of socio-economic mobility, as well as a safety net for those who are unable to work. But not all is lost - Labour can

win in this area. Middle Englanders are just as angry as always-Labour voters are with austerity cuts to education and local services.¹²

Other issues with Labour's support among this group include some people perceiving the term Socialist as a dirty word or a slur, and that it means Labour economic policies are anti-business,¹³ or Labour is just a spend (a lot) and tax (a lot) party.¹⁴ These associations need to change.

2022-2023: WHAT CAN LABOUR ACHIEVE IN OPPOSITION TO REBUILD THIS HEARTLAND?

Between now and the next general election, Labour has just one clear goal for this Heartland: that is to simply change the perceived weakness of Labour’s economic policies.

Labour are consistently seen as weaker on the economy than the Tories (Figure 44).

On handling the economy, Labour have averaged 17 percentage points behind since Starmer took over (that gap is just 8% across 2022.)¹⁵

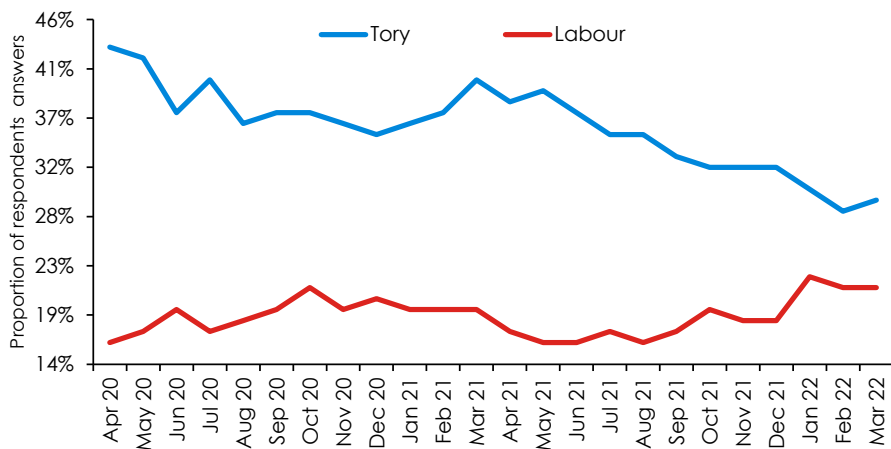


Figure 44: Poll - Which political party would be best at handling the economy?¹⁶

In reality, Labour’s economic policies are popular.¹⁷ The economy has fared very well when Labour has been in power. The Labour government enjoyed 10 years of consecutive real GDP growth from 1997 to 2007.¹⁸

In addition, Figure 45 shows annual year on year wage growth averaged 2% when Labour came to power in 1997, -0.1% during coalition years, and just 0.9% during Tory rule. Meanwhile, Figure 46 illustrates that the debt-to-GDP ratio was also lower when Labour was in power. Contravening popular convention, the

Tory pre-election Budget of March 1992 saw huge fiscal loosening, not seen again until March 2020. Although total causality cannot be attributed to the party in power, this demonstrates that the economy can be strong when Labour is in charge, and without it being overly debt-burdened. It also combats Tory attacks about Labour’s record on the economy, especially as the Tories have presided over an economy of high taxes and low growth, as Shadow Chancellor Rachel Reeves stated in her response to the 2021 Autumn Statement.²⁰

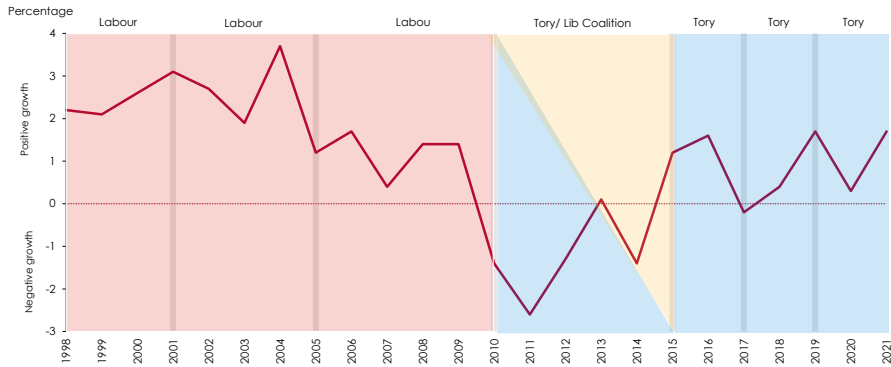


Figure 45: Percentage growth in hourly earnings (annual data)²¹

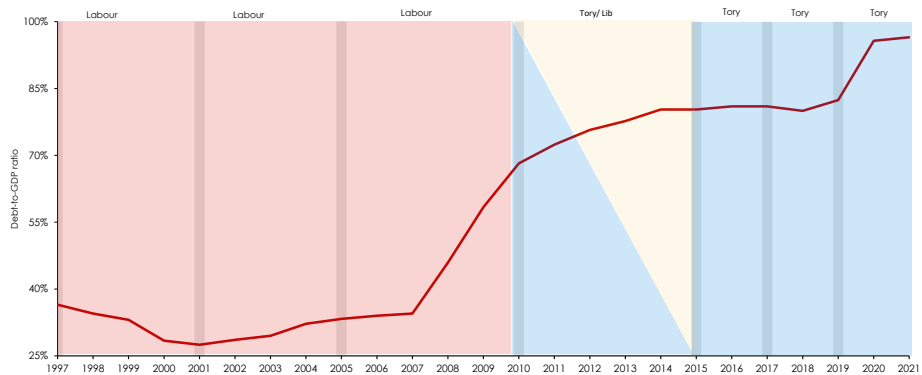


Figure 46: Debt-to-GDP ratios over time (annual data)²²

So what explains the verdict of the pollsters that Labour is worse on the economy? Former Shadow Chancellor, Anneliese Dodds, stated that the issue for Labour is more of a communications problem than a policy problem. Anneliese noted that when she speaks to people, Labour’s economic policies are popular, Labour just needs to get the message out there! This is true - evidenced even in 2019’s disastrous election defeat - the majority of Labour’s economic policies were very popular, with an average net approval rating of 39%.²³

Indeed, many of Labour’s previous economic policies were popular and successful too: National Minimum Wage, central

bank independence, tax credits, deciding against entering the Euro, and public spending. So, in fact, it is not Labour’s economic policies which are unpopular.

The issue then is the perception that Labour is less financially responsible. Driven by right-wing media, this likely stems from the false notion that the Global Financial Crisis was made worse by Labour. In fact, Gordon Brown led the international community to help alleviate some of the pressures of this global (not domestic) crisis, which was largely triggered by the US subprime mortgage crisis.

Despite this falsehood, it is still important to tackle people’s misconceptions. Labour

must extol the virtues of previous economic policies, such as public services' spending and its impact on reducing relative poverty and inequalities while also communicating the damage austerity causes.²⁴ These policies also improve GDP, which in turn lower our debt-to-GDP ratio with GDP growth. Tory austerity was a disaster, and there are signs with income tax band freezes that Tory austerity by stealth might be around the corner again. Although fiscal discipline is needed, strong government investment in public services such as the NHS and education does not equate to fiscal irresponsibility. You can still spend and tax within sensible frameworks. Indeed, austerity and a greater focus on inequality seem to have shifted public opinion on taxation. The

proportion of Britons who favour increasing taxes and spending more on health, education and social benefits rose to 53% in 2019 (31% in 2010).²⁵ This, however, does not mean Labour should unfairly increase the tax burden on Middle England and the middle classes.

Labour's individual economic policies are popular, but the real task is making them seem feasible as a package. Labour should focus on a smaller set of economic policies, prioritising those that enable people's aspirations, supporting middle incomes and SMEs.

So, between now and the next general election, how does Labour change the perceived weakness of their economic policies?

1. ATTACK TORY-LED ECONOMIC POLICIES THAT ADVERSELY AFFECT MIDDLE ENGLANDERS

Labour must now be more focused in their messaging. Clear, crisp and concise communication is needed to demonstrate the devastating impact of Tory economic policies. In the run up to the next general election, the Labour Party must reveal that from 2010, the Tory-led government adversely affected the Middle England demographic in these key areas:

- Austerity following the banking crisis has caused stagnating wages²⁶ and productivity;²⁷
- Brexit is already making households worse off by reducing growth and raising the cost of living²⁸, the latter has since been accentuated by the cost of living crisis in 2022 due to high inflation rates of 10.1% in July 2022²⁹ following COVID-19 and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.;
- Mismanagement of public funds, such as COVID-19 leading to

billions of taxpayers' money being wasted via government contracts to cronies, and gimmick policies such as "eat out to help out", which HMRC's Permanent Secretary questioned taxpayer Value for Money,³⁰

- As a percentage of total welfare expenditure, welfare spending on children and working-age people has fallen since the Tories took over in 2010;³¹
- The Tories have been presiding over an economy of "high tax, low growth" which Labour needs to use as one of its electoral mantra³² - March 2022 polling results by Savanta ComRes for LabourList confirmed this perception with 39% of UK adults perceiving the Tories as 'the party of high taxation' vs 27% for Labour.³³

2. A CALL TO ARMS

Despite the clear skew in favour of right-leaning media, the Fabians, the Guardian, the Statesman etc. have a duty to properly disseminate Labour's economic policies – clearly, succinctly and directly. There must also be a serious commitment to

work with all media outlets to explain the benefits of Labour's key economic policies, the ways Labour will support the aspirational Middle Englanders, and the shortcomings of Tory policies. If we do this, even the Daily Mail might run with such policies!

2024: WHICH GENERAL ELECTION POLICIES CAN LABOUR PROPOSE TO GAIN THIS HEARTLAND?

Labour can do economic policy well. Labour needs to be seen as not just wealth distributors, but wealth creators too. Labour cannot be perceived to be anti-business or anti-hard work, instead Labour must support the aspirational working and middle classes. Labour must embark on a coalition uniting the middle and working classes in a mission for prosperity.

The middle classes are being squeezed by high house prices and low pay growth,^{34, 35} and the top 10% are consist-

ently outpacing middle income earners.³⁶ 50th percentile earners' gross weekly wages have grown slower than the 10th, 25th, 75th and 90th percentiles since the turn of the century.³⁷ There needs to be more policies to support them.

The issue of communications around the perception of fiscal responsibility is important, but what policies can Labour actually propose to Middle England to turn their vote red?

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION:³⁸

1. **H**air-shirt approach to public spending. **A golden rule for debt-to-GDP ratio (or other similar measures)** to signal financial responsibility where the party will commit to spend within an agreed range of debt-to-GDP ratio and publish transparent, regular updates of the statistics with the accompanying data available for analysis.³⁹
2. Income tax cut for the middle classes. **Increase the threshold for the 40% tax rate band and (if possible the Personal Allowance) by at least the inflation rate each financial year over the lifetime of the next Parliament, especially in light of the high inflation rates in 2022.** This plan will be a contrast to the Conservative plan of freezing the 40% income tax and Personal Allowance brackets at the current level until 2026 (announced during the Autumn Statement 2021) which will result in lower take-home real pay.

This represents a tax break for Middle England and benefits between 10% and 20% of the workforce.⁴⁰ More would have to be earned to start paying the Higher (40%) rate of tax. This is important because the bottom 50% of income earners now pay a higher total proportion to the total tax take than at the start of the century (23% then to 25% now⁴¹). The overall tax burden has increased for middle income earners as 13% of taxpayers pay the Higher rate, up from 10% at the start of the century.⁴² This is inequitable for Middle England, and should be corrected, especially in light of the cost of living crisis in 2022. Another fix would be to push the additional rate back up to 50% to fund some of the increase in the upper limit of the Basic rate band.

Labour can also further demonstrate its commitment towards fiscal responsibility by hiring more tax auditors and stepping up random spot checks to reduce tax evasion, which will generate more revenue for the state and implement a fairer tax system. An IFS study in 2017 showed that a tax audit can generate an extra £1,230 on average per audited person in 5 years following the audit, which demonstrates the potential impacts of tax audit on state revenue.⁴³ Australia has implemented a system where interest incomes are automatically deducted from bank accounts so the UK under a Labour government can look to implement such a system by cooperating with banks.⁴⁴ Another area of focus is to look into and minimise as much as possible the use of non-domicile status as a way of avoiding taxes.⁴⁵

The party can also commit to working with tax havens such as the British Virgin Islands to close the tax loopholes allowing

wealthy British taxpayers and corporations from shielding their wealth from tax via means including transfer pricing. One such organisation Labour can advocate for is the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes whose main aim is to end tax evasion.⁴⁶ HMRC had estimated the tax gap including tax evasion and avoidance as being c.£35bn in 2019-2020.⁴⁷ Therefore, Labour can drive home a pledge to minimise the tax gap via a stronger enforcement action and international cooperation.

Moreover, Labour can propose tax policies to minimise the gap in tax paid by employed and self-employed individuals or contractors who get remunerated via a company and thus pay corporation tax, which is lower than employment taxes.

3. If you are aspirational, Labour is the party for you. Labour, in collaboration with the private sector including banks, should offer access to cheap business loans and grants to SMEs, to get businesses off the ground, to train staff and for innovation. Any business loans would be at affordable interest rates, but still allow the government to make a net fiscal gain from the returns. To prevent the loans propping up zombie companies, only relatively small and short-term loans would be available initially, with firms subsequently being able to borrow more and for longer should the capital and interest be paid back in full on time. A comprehensive due diligence will also be performed to assess business plans before the loans are granted to ensure that loans are given to the companies with credible plans to repay the loans.

4. As well as being pro-worker, Labour must also be pro-business. Labour needs to be more “more entrepreneurial”.⁴⁸ Creating a pro-business environment (Recommendation 4) may even allow for moderate capital gains or corporation tax increases later on without harming the majority of firms. Labour should keep corporation tax roughly in line the EU average,⁴⁹ while closing tax loopholes outlined above. Furthermore, the party can create a level playing field for SMEs, some of whom might not have online presence, by increasing Digital Services Tax from 2% to 12% and aligning business rates with property valuation.⁵⁰ In the case of Digital Services Tax, there is a need to ensure that SMEs are protected from the possibility of large marketplaces such as Amazon passing on the taxes onto the small and medium retailers. This can be done by offering some financial reliefs to small and medium retailers impacted by the add-on costs.
5. Proposals to alleviate the cost of living crisis such as by scrapping VAT on residential energy bills, to be funded by a windfall (excess profit) tax on North Sea energy producers,⁵¹ which the Conservatives defeated in the House of Commons by 319 to 229 in January 2022.⁵²



Dominic Shaw

Dominic Shaw is an economist and former employee of the Bank of England. He is the current Chair of the YF Economy & Finance network and Secretary of the YF London regional group. He is also an army reservist and trade union rep for Prospect. His main areas of interest are financial economics and behavioural economics. Outside of work, he enjoys football, travelling across the UK, and socialising.

CONCLUSION

This pamphlet sets out the challenges Labour must overcome to regain trust with the electorate and build economic credibility required to win hearts and minds before the next General Election. In the introduction Armavir Singh-Bal eloquently laid out the historical context we find ourselves in, we are in the midst of an economic and industrial revolution that requires an economic vision that goes far beyond a single parliamentary term. The pamphlet contributors have advanced a clear set of policy proposals that the Labour party can include in their manifesto for the next general election.

1. Alleviating the cost-of-living crisis amid the high inflation rates of 10.1% through a mix of scrapping VAT on residential energy bills funded by windfall tax
2. Maintaining a commitment towards fiscal responsibility
3. Addressing the Conservatives' U-turns on the HS2 Eastern leg and Northern Powerhouse Route
4. Outlining a commitment towards business aspirations and SMEs
5. Ensuring the next Manifesto addresses the priorities of the rural community

6. Enhancing vocational and skills training at a local level
7. Providing secure, sustainable jobs
8. Providing secure, sustainable jobs
9. Facilitating the Green Energy transition
10. Enhancing broadband connectivity
11. Offering further devolution of power
12. Supporting the agenda of Mark Drakeford's government

This 12 point policy plan that helps alleviate the cost of living, invest in our nations transport and digital infrastructure, supports SME and investing in green energy transition. Providing a policy platform to enable economic growth while addressing some of the inherent structural weaknesses in our economy and alleviating inequality.

This pamphlet is the culmination of a partnership between the Fabian Society Economics and Finance group, the Young Fabian Economics network and the Labour Party's, Shadow Treasury team. I want to thank Rt Hon. Gordon Brown, Rt Hon. Pat McFadden and Tulip Siddiq for their words and the chapter authors for their contributions. I want to pay tribute to Amarvir Singh-Bal, Christopher Wongsosaputro, Amy Dwyer and Helen Clarke whom are among the rising stars of our movement.



Dr Martin Edobor FRSA, MRCGP

Chair of the Fabian Society, Clinical Director for North Newham Primary Care Network and former Chair of the Young Fabians (2015 to 2016).

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An Economic lens to reclaiming the Heartlands

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The Fabians Economy and Finance Policy Group and Young Fabians Economy & Finance Network is made up of Fabians who have a personal, professional or academic interest in economics, business, and finance. The networks host economy and finance-related events, publish regular macroeconomic updates and blog posts as well as create podcasts on current economic issues.

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With an introduction by Young Fabians Senior Economist Amarvir Singh-Bal, Executive Summary by Christopher Wongsosaputro and conclusion written by the Chair of the Fabian Society Dr Martin Edobor.

The main forewords were written by former Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown, Tulip Siddiq MP and Pat McFadden MP. Supporting forewords were also contributed by Alex Cunningham MP, Alex Norris MP, Ben Bradshaw MP, Bill Esterson MP, Carolyn Harris MP, Cat Smith MP, Catherine West MP, Conor McGinn MP, Dame Diana Johnson DBE MP, Dan Jarvis MP, Dan Norris MP, Emma Hardy MP, Emma Lewell-Buck MP, Grahame Morris MP, Ian Lavery MP, Ian Murray MP, Joan Walley (former MP), John Griffiths MS MP, Justin Madders MP, Kate Green MP, Kevin Brennan MP, Liam Byrne MP, Luke Pollard MP, Marie Rimmer MP, Mark Hendrick MP, Peter Soulsby MP, Rachael Maskell MP, Ruth Cadbury MP, Sarah Champion MP, Stephen Kinnock MP, Stephen Timms MP, Steve McCabe MP, Taiwo Owatemi MP, Tan Dhesi MP, Tony Lloyd MP, Virendra Sharma MP, Wayne David MP and Yasmin Qureshi MP.

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