

Hansard

[UK Parliament](#) > [Hansard](#) > [...](#) > [Commons Chamber](#) > [Oral Answers to Questions](#) > [Treasury](#) > [Topical Questions](#)

Topical Questions

Volume 732: debated on Tuesday 9 May 2023

[Download text](#)

Mr Speaker >

[Share](#)

I call Carla Lockhart. She is not here.

Ashley Dalton >

(West Lancashire) (Lab)

[Share](#)

T2. If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities. ([904840 \(Unique identification number\)](#))

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury >

(John Glen)

[Share](#)

Three of the Prime Minister's five priorities are economic priorities: to halve inflation this year, to grow the economy and to reduce debt. We are on track to halve inflation this year to ease the cost of living. We have taken the difficult, but responsible decision needed to get net debt falling and secure the future of public services, and we have a clear plan to grow the economy to create better paid jobs and opportunity right across the country.

Ashley Dalton >

[Share](#)

The consumer voice organisation Which? has recently found that 2 million UK households missed a key payment for their mortgage, rent, loan or credit card. Last month alone, 700,000 of these related to housing, so when will the Tory Government wake up to the fact that the cost of living crisis is far from over and what do they intend to do about it?

John Glen >

[Share](#)

In previous answers, I have set out a number of the interventions the Government have taken to help the most vulnerable. I have mentioned the household support fund, the benefits that accrue to all those who are on means-tested benefits, particularly pensioner households, and those who are eligible for disability benefit. As I have also said, the money that the Government have made available is designed to focus on those who are most in need, and we will continue to look out for the most vulnerable through this difficult time.

Gareth Bacon >

(Orpington) (Con)

[Back to top](#)[Previous debate](#)[Next debate](#)

T3. Does my right hon. Friend agree that fiscal responsibility is vital if we are to cut inflation and grow the economy? Does he also agree that the Labour party's £90 billion of unfunded spending commitments would put all of that at risk, with higher taxes and more borrowing the inevitable result? (904841 (Unique identification number))

John Glen >

[Share](#)

I could not agree more. Responsible public spending is at the core of getting our economy into a state where it can grow, and the £90 billion of unfunded spending pledges made by Opposition Members will be scrutinised very carefully, I am sure, by many in the months ahead.

Mr Speaker >

[Share](#)

I call the shadow Chancellor.

Rachel Reeves >

(Leeds West) (Lab)

[Share](#)

The Conservatives have now had 13 years in office—wages lower, the weekly food shop astronomical, energy bills unprecedented, 24 Tory tax rises and the national debt has ballooned —so can I ask: after 13 years of Conservative Government, does the Minister think that people feel better off, or worse off?

John Glen >

[Share](#)

What I can tell the right hon. Lady is that, since 2010, there has been a 25% increase in real take-home pay for workers on the national living wage and, recently, the national living wage increased to £10.42 an hour—a 9.7% increase—for those over the age of 23. In 2009-10, there was a deficit of £158 billion. Before we got into covid, it was down to £38 billion. We have gone through the most tremendous challenges that this country has seen for about 100 years. I think most people in this country understand that this Government have acted on the challenges we have faced in office.

Rachel Reeves >

[Share](#)

The Government have had 13 years, and the answer to the question “Do people feel better off?” is a resounding no. This morning, I met 22 newly elected council leaders from the Labour party, who are creating emergency plans to help to tackle the cost of living crisis in their communities. Why will the Conservative Government not play their part, do the right thing, close the loopholes in their oil and gas tax and help working people in Britain, as a Labour Government would do?

John Glen >

[Share](#)

I congratulate those successful across the country in last week's elections, but what business leaders want and what the country wants is steady policy making, delivering growth in the economy, dealing with the biggest scourge on the economy, which is inflation —[Interruption.] The right hon. Lady says from a sedentary position that we have had 13 years. We spent £400 billion when we had a global pandemic, where we had to shut down the economy. When we came out of it, we had high inflation consequential on a war that we have not had in Europe for over 70 years. Those are the realities and that is what this Government have responded to.

Kevin Foster >

(Torbay) (Con)

[Back to top](#)[Previous debate](#)[Next debate](#)[Share](#)

T6. Regenerating our town centres was a key part of the local election campaign in Torbay. Would my right hon. Friend meet me, my hon. Friend the Member for Totnes (Anthony Mangnall) and the new leadership of Torbay Council to discuss what further fiscal steps can be taken to support those aims? [\(904844 \(Unique identification number \)\)](#)

John Glen >[Share](#)

I am always happy to meet my hon. Friend. I congratulate him on his leadership of his council candidates last week and the excellent result that he secured. Of course, we have invested in many coastal communities across the country, and we are keen to discuss the specifics of how the Government can support him as he drives that local constituency and economy forward.

Chi Onwurah >

(Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab)

[Share](#)

T4. Today, manufacturing body Make UK warned the Government that, to tackle regional inequalities and compete on a national stage, we need a national industrial strategy as a matter of urgency. Do Ministers recognise that the reason wages in the north-east are falling under the Tories is their lack of an industrial strategy and their failure to follow Labour's example and commit to a modern industrial strategy that invests in the industries of the future and delivers good-quality jobs across our country? [\(904842 \(Unique identification number \)\)](#)

John Glen >[Share](#)

No, I do not recognise that characterisation. What I recognise is that the Government are determined to see the economy grow. I see investment in investment zones focused in the hon. Lady's region, working with the excellent universities that she is familiar with. I see a Government who are putting £100 million into the foundation model taskforce, £900 million to invest in a supercomputer to fund AI, a quantum strategy that is generally seen as world leading, as well as £160 million of investment in the tech sector. So this is a Government who are committed to the growth industries of the future.

Jane Hunt >

(Loughborough) (Con)

[Share](#)

T8. University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust was pleased to hear that it is to receive £400 million for a new hospital, but I understand that the money is still with the Treasury. Can my right hon. Friend please confirm when UHL will receive the £400 million, and whether that might be increased to account for construction cost rises? [\(904846 \(Unique identification number \)\)](#)

John Glen >[Share](#)

Delivery of new hospital infrastructure and prioritisation within health budgets is a matter for the Department of Health and Social Care, but I know from frequent conversations with the Secretary of State that he is working tirelessly to ensure as many new hospitals as possible, and that wider improvements to the health estate can occur. I shall make representations to him after these questions.

Andrew Gwynne >

(Denton and Reddish) (Lab)

[Share](#)

T7. It has been reported in the press today that, prior to any investment, BP and Equin [Back to top](#) [Previous debate](#) [Next debate](#) the Teesworks site had not been acquired as a result of an “unacceptable act”, and that directors “will not hide or dissimulate the nature, origin, location, disposition or ownership of assets, rights or values.” It is just extraordinary. Given the importance of that freeport to investment and jobs in Teesside, can the Treasury confirm whether it too has made any similar checks? [\(904845 \(Unique identification number \)\)](#)

John Glen >

[Share](#)

I am sorry, I cannot answer that question. But I am happy to meet the hon. Gentleman to look at the serious matter he has raised and get an answer for him.

Richard Fuller >

(North East Bedfordshire) (Con)

[Share](#)

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury knows that the long hidden business case for East West Rail represents a bad deal for taxpayers, and that MPs from across Parliament have written about greener, better alternatives for growth in the Ox-Cam arc. He will know that on Thursday the Conservatives won the mayoralty in Bedford for the first time because the Conservative candidate, Tom Wootton, called for a review of Bedford Council's working and its support for East West Rail. Will my right hon. Friend meet me to discuss that further urgently?

John Glen >

[Share](#)

I would be happy to meet my hon. Friend, and congratulate the Mayor of his home town of Bedford for the success he had last week.

Sam Tarry >

(Ilford South) (Lab)

[Share](#)

We are clearly falling pretty short of where we need to be if we are to tackle net zero. Recent research by E3G and the World Wide Fund for Nature into clean investment showed that the gap is currently between £81 billion and £111 billion between now and 2030. That is equivalent to a quarter of the investment required in that crucial economic sector and every other sector of the economy. Public investment clearly needs to be a key driver in reaching net zero, so I wonder whether Ministers would consider increasing the capacity of the UK Infrastructure Bank on that.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury >

(Andrew Griffith)

[Share](#)

The Government are leading the way with the recently published green finance strategy, but that stands as part of a broader piece of work, unleashing productive finance into all parts of the economy and in particular funding the transition, which is capital intensive.

Dr Luke Evans >

(Bosworth) (Con)

[Share](#)

I thank the Chancellor for two weeks ago meeting Leicestershire MPs and the senior leadership of the county council to discuss funding there. Of particular concern is the core funding of special educational needs and disabilities, social care and transport such as buses. What more can the Minister do to address the problems with county council funding that we have in Leicestershire?

John Glen >

[Back to top](#)[Previous debate](#)[Next debate](#)

I know my right hon. Friend the Chancellor welcomed that meeting on 25 April. The Government remain committed to improving the local government finance landscape, and in doing so they will work closely with local partners, including Leicestershire, and take stock of the challenges and opportunities across the sector. I thank my hon. Friend for his deep thinking into how improvements can be made.

Mike Amesbury >

(Weaver Vale) (Lab)

[Share](#)

Why are the Prime Minister and Government Ministers so keen to protect non-dom status while not investing sufficiently in our NHS, as Labour would do?

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury >

(Victoria Atkins)

[Share](#)

I hope the hon. Gentleman knows that we are spending record amounts on the NHS. We are also mindful that non-doms pay some £7.9 billion in UK taxes on their UK earnings and have invested some £6 billion since 2012. So we are mindful of the very real impact that they make on our revenues, but we have managed to tighten the rules around non-dom status, and that is why—

Mr Speaker >

[Share](#)

Order. I call Jonathan Gullis.

Jonathan Gullis >

(Stoke-on-Trent North) (Con)

[Share](#)

Day one on the job and Labour in Stoke-on-Trent talk about cancelling the £56 million of levelling-up funding, which is UK-leading, going to the great city of Stoke-on-Trent. Will the Chief Secretary to the Treasury confirm that the Conservative Government will have the backs of the people of Stoke-on-Trent and deliver this important levelling up?

John Glen >

[Share](#)

We are very committed to the people of Stoke-on-Trent and recognise that enormous investment, thanks to my hon. Friend's work in campaigning for investment through the levelling-up fund. It is down to the council to deliver on that significant investment and make a difference on the ground.

Dave Doogan >

(Angus) (SNP)

[Share](#)

The transition to net zero should be the overarching priority for all of us. With that in mind, when will the Treasury finally get its act together with the Acorn project in the north-east of Scotland and accelerate its funding to ensure that the people of the north-east of Scotland do not just have to listen to warm words about the just transition, but can get a job in the just transition?

John Glen >

[Share](#)

I think that we have made commitments on the first phase. The Chancellor is considering House in due course.

[Back to top](#)[Previous debate](#)[Next debate](#)**Dame Diana Johnson** >

(Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab)

[Share](#)

The *Financial Times* is reporting today that there have been meetings between the Treasury and the Department of Health and Social Care about compensation for victims following the **infected blood inquiry**. Will the Minister confirm that those meetings have taken place and who was present, and offer reassurance to those who were **infected** and affected that compensation will be implemented in full, as Sir Brian Langstaff has recommended?

John Glen >[Share](#)

I believe that the Minister for the Cabinet Office updated the House on this matter a couple of weeks ago, and I am sure that he will be keen to do so again when those conversations have taken place.

Hannah Bardell >

(Livingston) (SNP)

[Share](#)

This morning, before I left my constituency, I attended a rally organised by “Hands off Howden Park” and “Save our Pools”, which are two incredible campaigns in my constituency trying to protect our arts venues and pools from closing. Unfortunately, they have been mismanaged by the Labour and Conservative administration, and those results are the reality to be faced after a decade and a half of austerity has decimated public funding. When will the Government stop wasting money on things like Brexit and nuclear weapons and properly fund our pools and arts venues?

John Glen >[Share](#)

We do not typically make specific decisions on local authorities from Whitehall, but we have committed to significant additional funds for local authorities and funding for the Scottish Government through the Barnett formula. I will leave the hon. Member to continue to lobby and campaign with her constituents to get those decisions made on the ground.