

Policy

Are you committed to the direction on Labour's 2017 and 2019 manifestos – are there any specific manifesto policies which you would want to change or amend?

I am proud of both the 2017 and 2019 manifestos which offered a true vision of hope and a real programme of transformative change. We must remember where we were before 2015 and the policies coming out then – including damaging immigration policies. I am proud of our strong anti-austerity stance.

The Labour Party cannot simply be a protest party and to form a government we must ensure our message appeals to voters all over the country. Having spoken to people in seats where we lost, I understand that it simply was not clear what Labour's overall vision was for the country, compared to the three simple words uttered by the Tories - this must change.

Do you support the renationalisation of Royal Mail?

I support the full renationalisation of Royal Mail. This includes the reversal of franchising Post Offices across the country. I strongly believe that bringing Royal Mail back into public ownership would offer better value for the taxpayer, more security for our workforce and a seat at the table for our trade unions.

Royal Mail was a profitable public service at the time of its privatisation and now that profit is going to private shareholders rather than being invested in improving services and supporting postal workers. Investing in our Postal Network is vital to tackle the challenges ahead including investing in greener initiatives and guaranteeing job security for the 100,000s of postal workers in the UK.

Do you support the introduction of a publicly owned national post bank?

The UK has seen a massive reduction in bank and building society branches since the 1980s - with around two-thirds of banks closing down in this period. I believe these losses disproportionately impacts smaller towns, damaging local communities and smaller enterprises.

I am a firm believer in community banking and I believe the implementation of a national post bank, utilising Post Offices across the country would be a great way to facilitate this. A National Post Bank, decentralised and accountable to regional offices would be a massive asset to local economies. It would fit into a long-term economic strategy encouraging investment and economic growth in our towns and cities outside of London, addressing the regional economic disparity between the regions.

What are your views on a Labour Party strategy to support our members in the telecoms and financial services industries, including the policy of universal broadband and renationalisation of relevant parts of BT?

We must have a long-term strategy to protect and improve infrastructure in the UK, including our telecommunication industries. I am committed to working with telecommunication companies of all sizes to ensure that the UK is properly equipped for the 21st century. To achieve this, we must ensure we are properly consulting with the workers of companies of all different sizes to determine how best we can support them.

Too often I have heard from smaller businesses that they feel ignored and are not part of the discussion regarding industrial strategy. These smaller businesses are vital to local economies and we must ensure their views are considered when developing national policy initiatives.

I fully support the principle of universal broadband, however the policy was communicated poorly to voters and left many concerned that it was an unrealistic endeavour. Many members have told me that they believed the policy made us lose financial credibility amongst the wider electorate. After ten years of Conservative austerity, improving infrastructure is vital, so we must ensure we properly consult with trade unions, workers and companies in order to develop policies which can be communicated effectively with our supporters and the wider electorate.

Are you committed to repealing the existing Trade Union Act and how would you support Trade Union organisation and values being reasserted across the world of work?

As a proud trade unionist myself, I fully understand and appreciate the vital role that trade unions play in the modern democratic state. Trade unions do not just protect the rights of those they represent, they also work to drive political engagement amongst their members through education and support. The Trade Union Act completely undermines these principles and I am fully committed to repealing this shameful legislation.

With growing concerns regarding automation, climate change and Brexit, it is more important than ever to ensure the rights of workers across every region and nation of the UK. I am committed to ensure our trade unions are strong and can organise effectively to help tackle the modern challenges facing our workplace. As Deputy Leader, I will meet regularly with trade unions and their members to stay informed of their policy objectives and to discuss how I, and the Labour Party, can best support them.

Given the passing of the withdrawal agreement, how will you respond to the ongoing Brexit negotiations?

Despite campaigning to Remain, I accept the debate has now moved on now, following the General Election result. It's now no longer an argument for remain or leave; it's about the values that we in the Labour Party represent.

We have to listen to our voters and that involves rolling up our sleeves and putting in some hard graft. Traditional Labour communities have sent us a message - they did not trust us to listen to them and this was partially because of our indecisiveness on Brexit.

We must start this next chapter fighting to protect workers' rights, environmental standards and our NHS. We must scrutinise every piece of legislation that the Government puts forward. Voters in leave areas may have voted to leave the EU, however they did not vote to be worse off and to be stripped of their rights. We must ensure we engage with leave voting areas and take their concerns seriously, whilst making the case that we should stay aligned with the EU to protect jobs, stop the selling of our NHS and tackle the climate crisis facing our planet.

What would your top 3 priorities be if you were elected as Deputy Leader?

My first priority would be to listen to the voices of those who have lost faith in our party – people from every race, region and background. We need to move beyond the last few years where nasty internal debates about faction and ideological purity have too often alienated people outside our movement.

The Labour Party is the most powerful grassroots movement in Europe, but what more can we do to reconnect with our local communities? I'll work with local councillors and campaigners to empower us to be even better community leaders – whether supporting local high streets, connecting people with local foodbanks and welfare advice, or being a trusted community resource at the heart of local neighbourhoods. I was the first candidate to email all councillors that I had an email address for.

The fight against a damaging Brexit is not over. This far-right Tory Government will begin negotiating trade deals with Donald Trump and around the world, but our cherished workers' rights, NHS and environmental standards must not be up for sale. We must scrutinise every piece of legislation that the Government puts forward. Whether you voted remain or leave, I'll ensure our Party is at the heart of the continuing fight against a far-right Brexit and the threat to our public services, our environment and our NHS.

Media and Engagement

It is critical in our view that Labour develops a more robust communications and media strategy.

How would you improve the overall communications of the Labour Party?

At the last election we put forward a bold vision for a Labour Government. The policies were popular, however we struggled to communicate how many would be implemented and the benefits they would bring. We must bring people together and communicate how we're going to improve their lives in a way that people can understand.

I have heard from members in marginal seats that they simply did not have the resources to communicate Labour's vision effectively. As a Party, we must ensure we are adequately supporting CLPs outside of the major cities by not just running campaigns from London. We must listen to regional feedback and concerns, and ensure we adapt our message to communicate more effectively without compromising on our vision.

How would you use the media to convince the electorate Labour is ready to govern at the next election?

I would ensure we had a bold but clear message, which would be easily understood. The media would struggle to criticise a cohesive narrative and we must work as a Party to make sure we are utilising the communication skills of our members.

During this Parliament, we must ensure we first form a strong opposition to the government. The media will only take us seriously if we are a united opposition and we scrutinise and attack all damaging legislation which will come out Boris Johnson's right-wing government. I am the only Deputy Leader candidate who has not nominated a Leader - I will work with whoever is elected Leader to unify the party against the Tories.

How would you increase our influence with the mainstream media?

Let me be clear, we cannot pander to right-wing press just for some more influence. Our movement and our values are bigger than that.

We cannot control what the mainstream media says about the Labour Party, however we can limit their ammunition. Our movement is often attacked for the internal divisions which exist in our Party. Internal debate is healthy and our movement is better for it, however accounts of in-fighting plastered over the press does nothing to help our movement. Factionalism makes us look weak. As Deputy Leader I would endeavour to unify the Party to stop fueling constant attacks in the press.

The mainstream media like to back a winner, and we win when we are united.

Would you work to grow a new media in the UK?

The Labour Party has made great strides in utilising new media in the past five years and we must continue this trend. We are now the biggest grassroots movement in Europe and we are successfully engaging younger people with an innovative new media strategy.

As Deputy Leader, I would look to build on this by ensuring we are effectively using new media, not just at a national level, but at a regional level too. We have extremely talented members all over the country who we have failed to mobilise in effective ways. We need to make sure we are utilising the skills of members and use them to advance our online presence. If we mobilise members effectively, we can develop our new media strategy and tailor it suit specific regions and communicate our message clearly.

Would you implement a dynamic and engaging social media strategy and what steps would you take to achieve this?

I would absolutely implement an engaging social media strategy at both national and regional levels. The Labour Party has caught up with the times by utilising new and social media, however we can do more. As a Party, we need to start skill-sharing and ensuring that members with social media and tech skills are supporting the seats who need it most. We cannot just rely on Head Office to use social media effectively, each CLP and regional office should have a presence and it should be used to engage voters and members alike.

The dawn of the press meant that conventional views were critiqued and radical ideas were circulated. It laid the foundations of political education and engagement for years to come. We must work to utilise social media in the same way.

The Party

What sort of internal strategy would you pursue regarding the democratisation of the Labour Party? Including;

How would you make local CLP meetings more dynamic?

CLPs are the lifeblood of our movement and I would work to empower them. We have to decentralise party structures to make sure that local members have a say in how their party is run. CLPs also need to feed into policy development. Policies cannot just be dictated from

London, active members in CLPs across the country understand the problems affecting their areas and will have the most innovative solutions to regional problems.

We can ensure party democracy and due process are followed while making them a more enjoyable experience. For example, some CLPs still spend 45 mins arguing about the minutes of the last meeting - which turns off new members. We need to streamline the procedural points and get more political debate into our local meetings. We can be sociable too: regional social events that break even, instead of looking to make profit. Quiz nights, continuing the great work of Stand Up For Labour, pub nights, coffee mornings - let's bring our movement together.

How would you involve members and trade unions more?

We need a huge organisational change - what I'm hearing from members in seats where we lost is that the party just was not there for them. They did not have the resources they needed and their cries for help were not listened to. I would set up a system of sharing best practice amongst CLPs and Boroughs.

It's not all about delivering leaflets and knocking on doors, we have social media experts, journalists, policy gurus, videographers and many other talents in our ranks. We need to tap into the unique skills of our members.

We need a proper rollout of digital campaigning: lots of dedicated time went into creating software and apps to revolutionise our campaigning in recent years but the party didn't have the resources to fully roll them out. I would ensure this software is fully rolled out and all CLPs are trained in the software. More modern campaigning techniques will encourage younger members to get more involved.

I would look to grow our movement by offering reduced rates to emergency service workers to encourage them to have their say over how we fight to save our NHS.

Our path back to power will involve once again delivering a coherent programme of Government nationally, but it also means constantly empowering our members, councillors and trade union supporters at a local level, so we can run the best campaigns possible.

What would your approach to annual conference be?

I am comfortable with the current workings of Labour Conference. We need to ensure that members have a real say in which policies are carried forward so I think we must get better in recognising what policies have been formally adopted by members and ensuring they are put into practice.

I also want to DJ at the CWU party, and I hope to be invited this year!

How would you encourage more working class candidates rooted in their communities to stand for parliament?

Growing up poor and cold while my single-mum worked two jobs to support me and my brother, taught me the reality of day-to-day life for most people in the UK. My mother always told me though that there were people worse off than us - I have never forgotten that and it drove me to fight to become a doctor, despite failing my A-Levels, and spurred me on to work as a humanitarian aid doctor in conflict zones across the world.

Standing up for my local community in Parliament is one of my proudest ever achievements and something I would never have imagined due to my background. Being working-class should never be a barrier to stand for election, however for too many people they feel it is.

As Deputy Leader, I would ensure that more support is given to CLPs, PPCs and elected MPs when they first arrive at Westminster. The Labour Party should have more training days and cross-constituency events where members can learn skills which are not solely based on campaigning. Collaborating like this will ensure that members have the confidence to stand for election.

I would also see us utilise our pool of hard working Labour councillors. We have many working-class councillors who are amazing advocates for their local areas, but I know that many feel they are not supported enough from the Labour Party at a central level. This needs to change.

With support, access to educational material and the right distribution of resources, we can encourage more people from working-class backgrounds to put themselves forward for election.