

Labour announces plans to 'rebuild Britain' with review of every major infrastructure project

Labour will examine every ongoing major infrastructure project to "get Britain building again on day one" after it wins a general election, Rachel Reeves has said.

The shadow chancellor said that Louise Haigh, her front bench colleague responsible for transport, will also commission an independent expert inquiry [into the HS2 fiasco](#) "to learn lessons for the future".

[Politics Live: Rachel Reeves vows to 'rebuild Britain'](#)

In a speech at the Labour Party conference, Ms Reeves said the high-speed rail line was not the only project that had gone over time and over budget, with others at risk of not being delivered.

She said: "When it comes to getting things built... Britain has become the sick man of Europe, with HS2 coming in at 10-times the cost of the French equivalent.

"And that is why our shadow transport secretary, Louise Haigh, will commission an independent expert inquiry into HS2 to learn the lessons for the future because many more major government capital projects are over time, over budget and are in danger of going undelivered."

As well as the inquiry, Labour said it will act to prevent a repeat of HS2 by creating a new cross-government unit to keep major infrastructure projects under control.

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The unit would be responsible for ensuring projects are delivered on time and on budget and report directly to the prime minister and the chancellor.

Ms Reeves said ahead of this, she had asked Darren Jones, the shadow treasury minister, to work with industry experts “to examine line by line every major capital project”.

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This would help “make sure that on day one of a Labour government, we are ready to get Britain building again”.

“If The Tories won’t build, if the Tories can’t build, then we will,” she said.

Ms Reeves went on to to explain [Labour’s proposals to reform Britain’s “antiquated planning system”](#) to speed up the building of crucial infrastructure.

This includes fast-tracking planning applications for battery factories, laboratories and 5G infrastructure as well as setting out clearer national guidance for developers on consulting local communities to avoid the prospect of litigation.

The former Bank of England economist – who has faced calls from unions for bolder economic policies – insisted the plans would attract the private investment needed to grow the economy, which she claimed had stalled because of “the chaos and instability of this Conservative government”.

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Starmer urged to be less timid

She said Labour will aim to restore investment as a share of Britain's GDP to the level it was when the party was last in power, bringing the UK in line with international peers and adding an additional £50 billion to GDP every single year.

To help achieve this she said a Labour government would "provide catalytic investment" through its previously proposed [state owned National Wealth Fund](#), and will seek three pounds of private investment for every pound they put in it.

Ms Reeves also set out a series of measures to tackle the waste of taxpayers' money including:

- A crackdown on the use of private planes by ministers, which she announced with a jibe at Mr Sunak, suggesting his love of flying was because he was scared of meeting voters;
- Cutting government consultancy spending by half in the first term, and requiring government departments to make a value for

money case if they want to use consultants;

- Establishing a COVID corruption commissioner to chase those who made fraudulent claims for support during the pandemic.

In another policy announcement, she said Labour will raise the stamp duty surcharge on overseas buyers to fund Labour's plans to build more homes and boost homeownership.

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Ms Reeves ended her speech by saying "Labour will fight this election on the economy", and repeating the need for fiscal discipline to boost growth.

She said the question for voters will be the Ronald Reagan question of the 1980 US presidential election, "do you and your family feel better off than you did 13 years ago?"

However Chancellor Jeremy Hunt criticised her for failing to mention inflation in her speech once, calling this the "single biggest issue facing the economy".

And the SNP's Economy spokesperson, Drew Hendry MP said that "just like the Tories, the Labour Party's vision for Scotland fails to offer households any meaningful support during this Westminster-made cost of living crisis".