

A green and digital future



This is a critical year for Labour to set out the case for change: for a fairer, greener and more dynamic Britain, where aspiration is rewarded, where working people succeed and where communities control their own destiny.

There can be no doubt that Britain faces serious challenges, nor that 13 years of Conservative government have left our country, our economy and our public services on their knees and vulnerable to those challenges. But there should also be no doubt that we can rise to them.

We believe in our country and our people. What they lack is a government that shares their ambition.

We need to show people that Labour would be that government. Show not just what the Tories have done to Britain but the Britain that Labour can build. A country run in the interests of working people, and where politics is once again a force for good.

This requires a bold and credible policy agenda – and the National Policy Forum plays a critical role in getting us there.

These will be the final NPF consultations before Labour finalises our manifesto for the next election, and they are a vital opportunity for us to hear from voices across the labour movement and country on some of the most pressing policy issues facing an incoming Labour government.

They look at the ways Britain can prosper by ensuring growth in every part of our country, by forging new, ethical trading relationships and by improving our everyday economy. They consider how better public services, focused on prevention and early intervention, can make us happier, healthier and safer. They look at how we can support families in all their wonderful diversity, and how by pushing power out of Westminster we can make our neighbourhoods and communities more cohesive and prosperous.

Please do contribute your thoughts and ideas. The strength of our movement is its diversity, and that is nowhere more apparent than in our democratic policymaking process. It is important that we are able to draw on the thoughts and experiences of our members, affiliates, stakeholders and supporters.

Together we can give Britain the fairer, greener future it deserves.

Keir Starmer
Leader of the Labour Party

Anneliese Dodds
National Policy Forum Chair

Thank you for taking part in the Labour Party's 2023 National Policy Forum (NPF) consultation. This is the final of four annual consultations before the next general election and will form a key input to the manifesto-drafting process.

As we further develop our policy platform, it is particularly important that we hear from people across the labour movement, including from local Labour Parties and affiliated trade unions. We also encourage external organisations, such as charities, think tanks, businesses and civil society bodies to submit their ideas.

Members should contribute to discussions and submissions through their constituency or branch party, as the commissions will not be accepting submissions directly from individuals in this final year.

The Labour Party is publishing six consultation documents this year. Each asks a set of seven questions on a specific policy area, followed by detail on the context and the challenges we face.

After the consultation closes on 17 March, all of the submissions from the four years' worth of consultations will be used to develop final year policy documents. Those documents will then be debated, amended and agreed by the NPF representatives in a final meeting on 21-23 July.

You may wish to look at the work of the Labour Party's policy roadmap, Stronger Together, which produced a final report, structured around the same six policy themes, in 2022: www.labour.org.uk/stronger-together.

Alongside Stronger Together, the party commissioned three independent reviews which reported over the last year, which may be helpful to refer back to as you consider your responses:

1. *A New Britain: Renewing our Democracy and Rebuilding our Economy*, the final report of the Commission on the UK's Future, chaired by former Prime Minister Gordon Brown, which made recommendations to reignite Britain's economy, rebuild trust in politics and reunite the country: www.labour.org.uk/page/a-new-britain;

2. *Start-Up, Scale-Up*, the final report of the Start-Up Review led by Lord Jim O'Neill, which explored what is needed to make Britain the best place in the world to start and grow a business: www.labour.org.uk/startupreview; and

3. *Learning and skills for economic recovery, social cohesion and a more equal Britain*, the final report of the Council of Skills Advisers, chaired by former Education Secretary Lord David Blunkett, which detailed how Labour's further education and skills agenda could improve growth, deliver quality jobs and prepare people for the future of work: www.labour.org.uk/skillsreport.

You don't need to answer every one of the questions in this document, nor answer them in a specific way. We suggest using the questions to help structure your response and act as a prompt for your thoughts on the policy area.

You can submit a response on behalf of your local party, at branch or Constituency Labour Party level. You can also respond as an organisation, such as an affiliated trade union, socialist society or external stakeholder.

Once you have drafted your response, please submit it to us through the Labour Policy Forum: www.policyforum.labour.org.uk. For more information on how to make a submission, see www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/consultation-submission-guide.

You can find all six consultation documents on the website, and explore other ways to get involved in the consultation such as online members' events, which you can find at labour.org.uk/npf23/.

Thank you again for taking the time to contribute to the NPF. It is through the contributions of members, supporters and stakeholders that Labour will develop the policy platform that will build a fairer, greener, more dynamic future for Britain.

Want to know more about how Labour makes its policy?

You can learn more about the Labour Party's policy-making processes on our website: www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/resource-hub.

You can also follow us on Twitter [@labpolicyforum](https://twitter.com/labpolicyforum) for policy development news and information on members' events.

Accessible Materials

The Labour Party is an inclusive, member-based organisation that prides itself on being accessible to all who share its values. If you would like an accessible version of these documents, please email us at **policydevelopment@labour.org.uk** to discuss how we can best accommodate your requirements.

Delivering growth

Introduction

The National Policy Forum (NPF) is entering the final year of the current policy cycle, which will culminate in a full, in-person meeting of the NPF to determine Labour's policy platform. That platform will in turn contribute towards an election-winning manifesto for the next general election.

The Green & Digital Future policy commission and its predecessor commissions have consulted on a range of policy topics over the previous three years:

- In 2020, on Protecting the natural environment after coronavirus;
- In 2021, on Just Transition: Making the green transformation work for all of us; and
- In 2022, on Creating green jobs.

For this fourth and final year, the Green & Digital Future policy commission has chosen to focus on delivering growth. We welcome submissions on this issue – and specifically the seven consultation questions set out below – from Constituency and Branch Labour Parties, affiliated trade unions and socialist societies, as well as contributions from expert third party organisations such as think tanks, businesses and civil society. Full details on how to make a submission can be found on **www.policyforum.labour.org.uk**.

The outcomes of all four consultations will then be taken into account when the commission produces its draft policy document for consideration at the full NPF meeting in July 2023.

Questions

1. How can science and technology policy support growth in all regions and nations of the UK?
2. What role does the digital economy have in enabling the UK's growth?
3. How can improvements to transport deliver growth across the country, including in rural areas?
4. What policies can help deliver Labour's existing pledges on green growth, particularly the Green Prosperity Plan?
5. What policies can help contribute to the four missions outlined in Labour's industrial strategy?
6. What are the specific implications of policy proposals in this area for (a) women, (b) Black, Asian and minority ethnic people; (c) LGBT+ people, (d) disabled people and (e) all those with other protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010?
7. What consideration would need to be given to policy proposals in this area when collaborating with devolved administrations and local governments in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland?

The context

Britain has extraordinary economic potential. Yet the country are in the midst of the worst cost of living crisis in 40 years and the economy is shrinking.

The Conservatives have failed to protect working people from rising prices. While Labour has consistently called for energy prices to be frozen, the government has allowed them to soar. Working people are picking up the bill, while oil and gas giants are getting a tax break thanks to the windfall tax loophole.

The UK entered this crisis more vulnerable than we should have been because the Conservatives have failed over 13 years to grow the economy, leaving us less prosperous and more insecure. On top of a lost decade of growth, the UK is the only G7 economy that is smaller than before the pandemic. And we are forecast to have the slowest growth in the G7 over the next two years.

Low growth is reflected in declining living standards across the country. Real wages are lower in every region of Great Britain than they were in 2010. On average, people are earning £1,600 less per year than they were when Labour was last in government.

Driving weak growth is the lowest rate of business investment in the G7. Businesses need stability and certainty but the Conservatives have overseen a chaotic economic environment. They've broken their own fiscal rules 11 times, undermined independent economic institutions and shunned economic warnings that have led to higher mortgages and borrowing costs for the UK. The botched Brexit deal continues to cause difficulties for exporters.

To rebuild Britain, we need to improve our technological capabilities and compete on a global stage. Yet the Government scrapped its industrial strategy, leaving the UK falling behind in the race for the jobs of the future, many of which will be in green and digital industries. Our world-leading research capabilities in science and technology too often fail to translate into growth in the high-tech sectors which could provide good jobs across the country. Despite much talk about 'levelling up', there continue to be stark differences in income between different regions in the UK.

Digital technologies have the potential to be a significant source of growth. But businesses are still waiting for regulatory clarity and poor digital infrastructure is holding growth back.

A chronic lack of investment has created high-cost, low-reliability utilities and public services, including the transport network. When people cannot reliably and affordably travel to work, the whole economy suffers.

Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine has exposed just how insecure the UK's energy system has become under the Conservatives, contributing to higher bills for everyone. The Conservatives have failed to invest in energy security, severely cutting energy efficiency programmes and effectively banning new onshore wind projects. This leaves people facing higher bills, businesses less competitive and growth dampened.

The Government has neglected its role as a partner for businesses and unions. They scrapped their industrial strategy, leaving businesses without the certainty and clarity they need. And they have frequently refused to sit down with unions, forcing them into the largest wave of strikes in a generation.

The future under Labour

Labour would unlock Britain's potential by creating a fairer, greener, more dynamic economy that delivers better jobs and living standards for working people. A Labour government would secure growth that is sustainable, and that is both driven by and delivering for all communities and groups.

Science and technology policy

Labour has a vision for the UK to lead the world once again in high-tech industries. Labour would build on our strengths in science and technology, aiming for at least three per cent of GDP to be invested in research and development (R&D). Labour is proud of the foundational research conducted by universities, and the public good that produces. But Labour also thinks we can do better at translating the UK's research successes into growth and jobs across the country. The Commission on the UK's Future highlighted the regional challenges the UK faces on R&D and recommended a reformed suite of place-based R&D programmes. The Start-Up Review highlighted the potential to improve the pipeline of spinouts emerging from universities.

The digital economy

Labour believes that to unlock the economic potential of digital technologies, it is necessary to shape them for public good. Therefore, Labour would act to ensure that systems are safe, trustworthy and reliable. Labour would use data to drive better outcomes for public services and open up more data for the benefit of researchers and small businesses. Labour's pro-innovation regulatory regime would ensure the UK's data ecosystem is secure and trusted, providing certainty to businesses and delivering better outcomes for consumers. To avoid unnecessary trade barriers, Labour would maintain Britain's data adequacy status with the EU.

A Labour government would also address the huge power some digital platforms have over consumers and workers, with a robust and agile competition and regulatory regime, which would help level the playing field for smaller firms, creating more competitive markets and enabling new services. And a Labour government would ensure everyone can benefit from digital technologies, ensuring the UK has world-leading digital infrastructure, with every home connected.

Transport

The UK's transport network is failing to provide reliable, affordable and clean options for millions of people. This is a drag on growth, with people unable to travel reliably to work, school or the high street.

Too many rail operators are profiting from failure. The problem is especially bad in the North of England where it is common for hundreds of services to be cancelled every day. Labour would end the failed experiment of railway privatisation and bring services back into public ownership as contracts expire. And a Labour government would build High Speed 2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail in full.

Labour would also give the public more control over bus services. Labour would give local communities that want it the power to set bus routes and fares, following the path set by Labour mayors in Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire and Liverpool City Region. It is only by improving services that buses will become a more reliable option for many people.

Public transport is not always an option, especially in rural areas. To reach net zero, Britain also needs to decarbonise private transport, which is why Labour would build electric vehicle supply chains in the UK and roll out charging infrastructure. Labour would also develop more active travel options including walking and cycling.

Green prosperity

Labour believes the best way to grow the economy is to win the global race for the industries and jobs of tomorrow, many of which will be in the green economy. Labour's Green Prosperity Plan will create one million good jobs in new industries and businesses in all parts of the country.

The next Labour Government will launch an urgent mission for a net zero-emission electricity system by 2030, making the UK a clean energy superpower, exporting clean power to the rest of the world.

To achieve this, the next Labour government will establish Great British Energy, a new national champion in clean power generation. Labour would create a National Wealth Fund to build British industry, investing in electric car battery manufacturing, green steel and clean energy including on and off-shore wind and nuclear power.

Delivering on these pledges will require mobilisation from government and the private sector to overcome barriers. For example, a Labour government would turbocharge planning decisions for energy projects, to bring the decision timeline down from years to months.

Industrial strategy

At the heart of Labour's approach will be a modern industrial strategy. At Annual Conference 2022, Labour set out its industrial strategy¹ vision centred on a partnership between government, business and unions to grow the high-tech, competitive industries of the future.

Labour's industrial strategy is centred around four missions:

- Delivering clean power by 2030
- Harnessing data for public good
- Caring for the future
- Building a resilient economy

Labour's missions will provide a clear signal and organising framework for business and set the overall direction for the party's policy interventions on growth.

Equalities

Just as a Labour government would unlock the potential of communities across the country to contribute to growth, it would unlock the potential of different groups currently underrepresented in certain parts of the economy. For example, the Start-Up Review highlighted the potential for the British Business Bank to direct more funding to women and Black, Asian and minority ethnic founders.

Devolution

Under Labour, the economy will be run for working people in all parts of the country. Labour knows Britain succeeds only when everyone contributes. Labour will devolve power, wealth and opportunity, to every place in Britain so that people can determine their own future and grow their local economy.

¹ <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Industrial-Strategy.pdf>