



Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs)

29th January 2025

Briefing by PoliMonitor

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The Chancellor's speech today has been the main focus for the government with the announcements from Rachel Reeves building on the [Prime Minister's article in The Times](#), in which he compared the UK's regulatory burden to Japanese knotweed strangling investment, his own government to that of Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and vowed to "kick down the barriers to building". Starmer's piece may well set a record for the most metaphors per column inch, but the message was clear: Labour wants to be the party of growth and delivery.

Today, Reeves was given the task of detailing exactly how that will be delivered. This morning in response, the Conservative's Shadow Chancellor Mel Stride attacked Labour's plans as "hastily cobbled together", arguing that investment in the 2030s does little to help businesses struggling today.

During PMQs, however, the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition clashed over the government's economic strategy and the Employment Bill, with Kemi Badenoch seizing on the Chancellor's speech to accuse Labour of adopting Conservative policies while simultaneously introducing measures that would stifle growth. Sir Keir Starmer opened by reaffirming his government's focus on economic growth and investment, citing today's announcements as evidence of progress. But Badenoch wasted no time in challenging this, arguing that while the Chancellor's reforms were welcome, they would take years to materialise. Instead, she focused her attack on the Employment Bill, which she claimed failed Starmer's own "growth test" by increasing business costs and expanding trade union powers. Starmer dismissed these concerns, insisting that the Bill is good for workers and good for growth, accusing the Conservatives of standing in the way of fair protections.

The exchanges quickly turned personal, with Starmer branding Badenoch having the potential to be only the "next lettuce" - a pointed reference to the infamous downfall of Liz Truss - while Badenoch accused the Prime Minister of not knowing the details of his own legislation.

The debate intensified, with Badenoch zeroing in on specific clauses of the Bill, highlighting the financial burden on businesses and the potential for legal disputes. She argued that Labour's true beneficiaries were the trade unions, to which Labour MPs responded with loud cheers - prompting Badenoch to retort, "The public have heard them cheer". She challenged Starmer to drop the Bill, framing it as ideological overreach rather than a measure for economic growth. Starmer refused, doubling down on Labour's commitment to workers' rights while accusing the Conservatives of wrecking the economy and failing to learn from their mistakes. Badenoch's final attack framed Labour as an outlier in its approach to business regulation, claiming that even the EU and President Trump's America were pursuing more pro-business policies.

Starmer, in turn, accused the Conservatives of leaving the country “broken on every front” and concluded that they had “learnt absolutely nothing”.

It was a combative exchange, with Labour standing firm on workers’ rights while the Conservatives sought to cast the government as anti-business - a battle that is likely to continue in the weeks ahead.

PoliMonitor has the full rundown of today’s PMQs below.

Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition

- The Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, began questions today by saying that communities across the UK have been hit hard by the recent storm and that he has spoken with the Leaders of the Devolved Administrations. He continued to say that kickstarting economic growth is the number one priority for this government with the Chancellor announcing new projects in her speech today as they deliver on their Plan for Change.
- The Leader of the Opposition, Kemi Badenoch, began with a solemn commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz highlighting the memory of the six million Jewish men, women and children who were murdered calling it a “unique evil in human history”. Badenoch continued by referencing the comments yesterday from the Prime Minister who set out his growth test which was that if a policy is good for growth, the answer is yes. The Leader of the Opposition continued by referencing the Chancellor’s speech earlier this morning which, Badenoch said, “embraced a series of Conservative policies”. While they are welcome, she continued, they will take years to deliver. She accused the government of destroying growth and highlighted that when the Conservatives left office they had the fastest economic growth in the G7. The Employment Bill was specifically picked out by the Leader of the Opposition saying it “clearly fails the Prime Minister’s growth test, will he drop it?”
- The Prime Minister said the proposition their “golden inheritance was tested” during the result of the General Election. He referenced several reports from the ONS, PwC, the IMF and CBI all positive about the work of the government. He acknowledged that there’s more to do but reiterated that they had started delivering. We are not taking lectures from them.
- The Leader of the Opposition responded by saying that the Prime Minister doesn’t want to talk about the Employment Bill because he hasn’t read it. She continued by saying that last week he misled the House to which the Speaker intervened that she should find other words to describe it with the Leader of the Opposition rephrasing to “he claimed” to have laid down an amendment that wasn’t made. Badenoch referenced the Federation of Small Businesses saying that 92% of small business owners are worried about the measures in the employment bill asking if he will drop the Bill and show that he is not anti-growth.
- The PM said that the government believes in giving people proper dignity and protection at work stating that the Conservatives consistently vote against that. He outlined that the government is driving growth on behalf of working people. On top of planning reforms, building houses and aviation there’s also all the new infrastructure announced by the Chancellor. He accused the Leader of the Opposition of only having a policy to shrink pensions.

- The Leader of the Opposition responded that all the ideas of the government are Conservative policies. Badenoch highlighted that to grow the economy, the government needs to get more people into work referencing clauses 8 and 9 of the Employment Bill and quoting the government's own figures that the changes will increase business costs from £600m to £1bn a year in sick pay and highlighting the Bill as taking that in the opposite direction by increasing entitlements asking the Prime Minister if he will drop these measures from the Bill?
- The PM said no, they are good for workers and good for growth. These are the same arguments they used against the minimum wage ending by saying "we are the coalition of builders, they are the coalition of blockers" referencing the blocking by some Shadow Ministers against infrastructure expansion in their own constituencies.
- The Leader of the Opposition responded "they are hypocrites" referencing that the Chancellor had blocked an airport in their own constituency. On the Employment Bill, Badenoch spoke about part one of the Bill which means that a new employee can start a job in the morning and take their employer to a tribunal by the afternoon calling the Bill terrible for business. Badenoch called on the PM to stop being a lawyer and be a leader asking again if he would drop the clause?
- The PM responded that the Leader of the Opposition was talking "absolute nonsense" saying "we know she's not a lawyer, clearly she's not a leader. If she carries on like this she will be the next lettuce".
- The Leader of the Opposition accused the Prime Minister of not knowing the content of the Bill and offering advice that he should listen to people about this Bill. Badenoch outlined that it was not just lawyers benefitting from the Bill but certainly not taxpayers, not young workers and definitely not businesses who were benefiting either. The Leader of the Opposition asked who benefits from the Bill concluding "it's trade unions". Badenoch continued by highlighting part four of the Bill, injecting "see, they haven't read it" before outlining that this part of the Bill is the biggest expansion of trade union powers for a generation. At this point, the Labour benches cheered loudly with Badenoch responding "the public have heard them cheer" and continuing by stating the Prime Minister is deregulating union rules. The Leader of the Opposition asked that given strikes are catastrophic for the working people, will he drop the Bill.
- The PM said the Chancellor has given a great speech and the CBI have said they are supportive, confirming the government is growing the economy.
- The Leader of the Opposition said "the arrogance of the Prime Minister is that he thinks that it is his government that creates growth. He is wrong. It is business that creates growth". Badenoch continued by outlining that the government cannot tax, borrow or legislate their way to growth but instead need to be serious about freeing business from red tape referencing that Trump is doing it in America, Argentina are doing it and even the EU is not going as far as this left wing government ending that "no wonder wealth

creators are fleeing Britain in droves”. The Leader of the Opposition concluded that the Bill manifestly fails the Prime Minister’s own growth test asking “if he wont drop the Bill what is the point of his growth test?”

- The PM said “she’s got a nerve” accusing the Conservatives of completely breaking the country and failing on every front concluding “they’ve learnt absolutely nothing”.

Questions from the House

1. Damien Egan MP, Labour, Bristol North East
 - **Question:** This April the state pension will increase by £470 benefitting millions of pensioners. Does he agree that means testing the state pension would do severe harm?
 - **Answer:** There will be no means testing the state pension under this government. We are committed to the triple lock and the principle that people should receive pension based on their contribution, regardless of wealth.

2. Rachel Hopkins MP, Labour, Luton South and South Bedfordshire
 - **Question:** Does the PM agree that the Warm Homes Plan will tackle fuel poverty and help working people with their bills?
 - **Answer:** We've taken immediate actions, investing £3.4bn into the Warm homes plan to upgrade 5 million homes.

Sir Ed Davey MP, Liberal Democrats, Kingston and Surbiton, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Party

- **Question:** Thank you for all the work of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust during the commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. A surgeon during a visit to a hospital in Barnstaple said that it was a ticking time bomb explaining that a hospital that size needs twelve operating theatres to meet demand and they have just four. The last government promised to rebuild it and we all know that was a hollow promise. North Devon District Hospital is one of nine across the country where their urgent rebuild programme has been postponed for over ten years, so will the Prime Minister meet with me and other MPs whose constituents' lives are being harmed by this delay?
- **Answer:** People across the country are right to feel angry and betrayed at the last government's non plan on hospitals. These hospitals would never have been built. Our plan will deliver them and will take steps on hubs, etc and more than happy to arrange relevant meetings.

- **Question:** Last week the Prime Minister said that it was going to take three years before social care reforms could be implemented and now he is saying that urgent hospital rebuilds are going to take more than a decade. I will keep coming back to this issue. On economic growth, the Chancellor now admitted we have to go further and faster in pursuit of economic growth. The Prime Minister knows that we believe that means setting aside objections to the UK-EU custom union so our country can go further and faster rebuilding our trading relationship with European neighbours, especially with the threat posed by Trump's trade rules and tariffs. When he goes to Brussels on Monday, will he open negotiations for the UK to join the Pan-Euro-Mediterranean Convention so that we can start removing the growth-damaging trade barriers set by the Conservatives?

- **Answer:** Our number one mission is growth and that's why we have set up all these initiatives. He knows, in relation to the reset with the EU, we're determined to achieve a new trading relationship but we have clear redlines on rejoining the custom market and custom union.
3. Debbie Abrahams MP, Labour, Oldham East and Saddleworth
- **Question:** Today's Joseph Rowntree Foundation report on UK poverty not only highlights who is most likely to be poor but also the scale and increase in depth and endurance of poverty. Many vulnerable people are worried following speculation that the £3bn of savings to be found in the social security budget may impact on their disability benefit. Does he agree that language matters and that their concerns must be heard?
 - **Answer:** The rise in poverty is caused by a mismanagement of the economy by the party Opposite and it is unacceptable. Our approach is to ensure that work is accessible to as many people as possible as a route out of poverty, that includes the new Connect to Work programme expected to help 1000,000 disabled people find and stay in work.
4. Rt Hon Gavin Robinson MP, DUP, Belfast East
- **Question:** On the 15th August 1990, the IRA detonated a bomb in Omagh town, 29 people died and further two unborn twins never saw this world. Through the dignity and stoic campaigning of Michael Gallagher whose son Aidan died, a public inquiry was secured through the courts who recommended in 2021 that the Irish Government should similarly hold an inquiry to understand what could have been done to prevent this given the cross-border nature of the atrocity. The bomb was prepared in the Irish Republic and transported. Will he use his good offices to ensure that the truth is delivered and justice arrives for the families of those who so needlessly lost their lives from Irish Republican terrorism?
 - **Answer:** It was a heinous and cowardly terrorist attack and it shocked the world and our thoughts are with the family members now taking part in commemorative hearings this week. I do welcome the Irish government's commitment to cooperate with the inquiry. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland raised this with the Irish government the importance of working together on addressing these and all legacy issues and grateful for him raising this serious and important issue.
5. Jack Abbott MP, Labour, Ipswich
- **Question:** The Ipswich Northern Bypass is a project of local, regional and national importance which has been gathering dust for years, repeatedly blocked by people who refuse to act in long term interests. Will he back builders in my town and make this a project of national significance through the Plan for Change?
 - **Answer:** We will fast track decisions on at least 150 major economic infrastructure projects to kick start growth and I will make sure he gets a meeting with the relevant Minister.

6. Ian Roome MP, Liberal Democrat, North Devon
 - **Question:** North Devon District Hospital got the devastating news that investment would be delayed 10 years beyond 2035. Given that £200m has reportedly been spent just on consultancy fees for the new hospital programme, what funding for extra maintenance will be available for those hospitals that now face another decade of waiting?
 - **Answer:** Let's be clear, under their non-plan, North Devon District Hospital would simply not have been delivered. It's not been delayed, it was never going to be delivered. We have put in place a funded, deliverable plan that will see the hospital built and will work closely with the Trust to accelerate the work and the Party Opposite owe his constituents an apology.

7. Deidre Costigan MP, Labour, Ealing Southall
 - **Question:** Children in Ealing Southall will be sleeping on sofas tonight as Ealing Council has joined over 100 councils trying to remove the barriers to give these children a decent home to live in. Will the Prime Minister look at the five solutions put forward by the Council so we can secure council housing for those children sleeping on the floor tonight?
 - **Answer:** We are committed to working with every council to deliver the biggest increase in social and affordable housing in our generation. We're immediately taking action to reform Right to Buy to enable councils to borrow more cheaply and invest in more affordable home programmes.

8. Paul Kohler MP, Liberal Democrat, Wimbledon
 - **Question:** I entered politics after an attack in my home was misused by others to promote their anti-EU, anti-immigrant agenda. My life was saved by two brave police officers from Wimbledon Police Station. As a family, our lives were transformed by a restorative justice session organised by the charity Why Me, where we met one of my four attackers in prison. Will the Prime Minister meet with me to discuss how the government could give restorative justice greater emphasis?
 - **Answer:** I have seen the power of restorative justice. Under the Victims Code, all adult victims must be told about restorative justice and how to access it but we can always do more.

9. Luke Charters MP, Labour, York Outer
 - **Question:** This summer I'll be going on paternity leave again for baby number two and may I congratulate the Secretary of State for Scotland on his new arrival. The Chancellor spoke brilliantly this morning on growth and I am pleased to reveal that new JRF research shows that by increasing paternity leave we could increase economic growth by £2.6bn a year. Will the Prime Minister review statutory paternity leave and from one father to another, will he meet to discuss how we can support new parents?

- **Answer:** We are conducting a review into paternity leave because you can't grow the economy if parents have to choose between work and their children and thanks to the Employment Bill, 30,000 more fathers will get paternity leave.
10. Rosie Duffield MP, Independent, Canterbury
- **Question:** The Drax Power Station has been given £7bn of green subsidies by the government for burning 27m trees per year, that's enough money for five years of pensions' winter fuel payments. While Ofgem has been asleep at the wheel, KPMG reports conclude that Drax claimed those subsidies illegally. Will the Prime Minister today demand to see that KPMG report before giving another £1 of taxpayer money to Drax?
 - **Answer:** We will look into the report.
11. Andy MacNae MP, Labour, Rossendale and Darwen
- **Question:** The government's English Devolution Bill is a massive opportunity to get back in the fast lane for other councils. Will the Prime Minister join me in calling on all Lancashire leaders to work together in the interests of our residents to unleash Lancashire's huge potential?
 - **Answer:** Our ambition is for mayors across all areas of England to take advantage of the powers set out in the White Paper.
12. Clive Jones MP, Liberal Democrat, Wokingham
- **Question:** In the gallery today are patients who use the Royal Berkshire Hospital. Part of its estate is crumbling and it urgently needs a rebuild but we are going to have to wait until at least 2037. Can the Prime Minister explain why he thinks that it is acceptable that staff and patients dodge buckets collecting rainwater from leaking roofs for another 18 years and will he meet them face to face?
 - **Answer:** It's undeliverable. The plan only existed in the head of Boris Johnson and now the frustration, I understand because they were promised something the party opposite knew they couldn't deliver. We've put in place a funded scheme and will build as quickly as possible.
13. Gordon McKee MP, Labour, Glasgow South
- **Question:** In China, DeepSeek has developed an AI model almost as good as the most advanced technology from OpenAI. In the US, they are investing up to 500bn dollars in building data centres. Now to build data centres, you need two things: lots of energy and ideally cold weather. Fortunately Scotland has both of those in abundance. So will the Prime Minister back Glasgow being an AI growth zone?
 - **Answer:** The government is working to solidify the UK as the third largest AI market on Earth. I agree that Scotland has real potential for AI Growth Zones.

14. John Milne MP, Liberal Democrat, Horsham

- **Question:** My local hospice St Catherines has had to mothball a brand new ward to take on the rise in National Insurance. What message does the Prime Minister have for all the public services that are outright losers at the hands of this government?
- **Answer:** He knows the settlement to local councils was an increase this year so they have more money to face problems and they were underfunded by the last government.

15. Rt Hon Emily Thornberry MP, Labour, Islington South and Finsbury

- **Question:** It was such great news when the government decided that it was right to pay compensation to the LGBT veterans who unfairly lost their jobs but unfortunately they are not alone and there are others who have been prepared to lay down their lives on behalf of this country and have been treated disgracefully. I include in that list my constituent who was sacked from MI6 for simply being gay.
- **Answer:** We are writing the historic wrongs inflicted on LGBT veterans already significantly increasing compensation available enabling them to get their ranks restored. I will ensure the Foreign Secretary looks into the issues she raised.

16. Jim Allister MP, DUP, North Antrim

- **Question:** Given the strategic commitment to Irish Unity the programme for government of the new government in Dublin, can I ask the Prime Minister whether he and his government have a strategic and economic interest in retaining Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom and if they do why then is he continuing with the system whereby in over 300 areas of law in the economic sphere Northern Ireland is subject not to UK law but to the same laws that apply in the Irish Republic.
- **Answer:** We're proud of and totally committed to the Good Friday Agreement and Northern Ireland matters to this government, it matters to me and he will know I worked there for five years with the police service and I want to see Northern Ireland secure, safe for all communities and thriving in the future and I believe it can be and we will do everything to make sure it is done.

17. Calvin Bailey MP, Labour, Leyton and Wanstead

- **Question:** Tomorrow marks the 20th Anniversary of the loss of Royal Air Force Aircraft VK719 and 10 service personnel on board. We join to commemorate this tragic moment.
- **Answer:** Thanks to him for reminding the House of this case and I know that condolences of the whole House remain with the families of these brave soldiers. We will never forget their vital role. We are immensely proud of our armed forces and their courage and dedication as they keep our country safe.

18. Rt Hon Sir Jeremy Wright KC MP, Conservative, Kenilworth and Southam

- **Question:** This time last week, representatives of those who have been seriously injured by Covid vaccines were giving evidence to the Covid inquiry. I hope he also knows that the compensation available to those people isn't adequate and it isn't adequately accessible. Can the Prime Minister give his personal support to ensure everyone can access this compensation?
- **Answer:** Thanks for raising. The Health Secretary is looking at it and will get back to him.

19. Rachel Taylor MP, Labour, North Warwickshire and Bedworth

- **Question:** Does the Prime Minister agree with me that it is utterly shocking that people are unable to get GP appointments as a direct result of the actions of the party Opposite?
- **Answer:** The damage they did to the NHS is unforgivable. We are taking steps to make sure more GP appointments are available.

20. Andrew Rosindell MP, Conservative, Romford

- **Question:** My constituents are shocked, angry and dismayed by the suggestion by the ONS that the population of this country will rise to 72.5million. We should do something to ensure that the population of this country is sustainable going forward because there is no mandate for such a colossal increase in immigration in this country.
- **Answer:** he should talk to his own Party Leader as net migration went through the roof under the last government.

Please contact the PoliMonitor team at info@polimonitor.com for more information

