

**PoliMonitor Briefing:****PMQs: 12th March 2025**

It's Wednesday, 12th March and Westminster is certainly counting down to the much-anticipated Spring Forecast on 26th March. Today's Prime Minister's Questions had the distinct feeling of an overture to a larger fiscal reckoning. Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and Opposition Leader Kemi Badenoch traded blows across the despatch box, with speculation mounting that the Chancellor may be forced to deliver an emergency budget in the coming weeks rather than the expected Spring Forecast.

Starmer began proceedings on solemn ground, welcoming progress in US-Ukraine talks and confirming that he will convene leaders on Saturday to push for a lasting peace. He also paid tribute to the "bravery and dedication" of the emergency responders following the recent ship collision in UK waters, sending condolences to the family of the crew member now presumed dead. Domestically, the Prime Minister highlighted "landmark" legislation aimed at getting Britain building, alongside continued progress on the Employment Rights Bill. These were the moments of calm before the inevitable storm.

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The clash between the two leaders quickly turned to the economy. Badenoch accused the government of pushing through a Budget that is forcing businesses to shut up shop and lay off staff. She pressed the Prime Minister on whether he has been given an estimate of “how many people will lose their jobs over the choices in his Budget,” arguing that the so-called “job tax” is already hitting working families hard—nurseries, she said, are warning parents of fee hikes linked to rising employer National Insurance contributions. In reply, Starmer pointed to “thousands of new jobs,” wage increases, and three interest rate cuts as evidence that, in his view, families are “better off under Labour.” He insisted that tough fiscal choices are needed to fill a £22bn black hole inherited from the previous administration.

But Badenoch wasn’t letting go. She claimed the Labour government is preparing an emergency budget and not a Spring Forecast later this month, blaming what she described as “Labour’s mistakes.” She argued the government would attempt to pin economic turbulence on “global challenges” when, in her words, “they trashed the economy.” Starmer retorted that he would take “no lectures” from the Conservative benches on fiscal management, drawing a line under the debate with a curt rebuke of his predecessors.

Badenoch also took aim at Labour’s council tax policy, accusing the government of breaking its manifesto pledge to freeze council tax. Citing Birmingham as an example—“when people vote for Labour, all they get is trash,” she quipped—she warned that rising costs for families, including cuts to winter fuel allowances and increased care home fees, are leaving older people and those on fixed incomes particularly exposed. Starmer responded by saying the government was “fixing the mess left by the Conservatives” and reiterated Labour’s investment in measures such as breakfast clubs to support working families.

Elsewhere in today’s exchange, Badenoch questioned whether Labour’s tax decisions are undermining farmers and the UK’s steel industry, pointing to supermarket warnings of price rises and the impact of US-imposed tariffs on British steel and aluminium. Starmer countered that the government’s Budget had included investment for farmers, and that wages were rising faster than prices, leaving households “better off overall.”

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Though both leaders paused to reflect on the lives and service of Sir David Amess and Jo Cox—Starmer confirming his meeting later today with Amess’s family—the tenor of PMQs was defined by economic sparring and looming fiscal decisions.

During questions from the House, the Prime Minister faced a broad spectrum of questions ranging from the geopolitical to the hyper-local, with foreign policy, welfare reform, and rural support schemes dominating the agenda. Starmer reaffirmed his support for Ukraine’s pursuit of a “just and lasting peace,” assuring Mike Martin MP that any peace settlement must address the return of abducted Ukrainian children. On domestic policy, welfare reform loomed large. Sir Ed Davey MP pressed for reassurances that benefits for those unable to work would be protected, with the Prime Minister responding that reforms would be guided by fairness, while repeating his government’s mission to boost employment and tackle what he described as the “legacy” of Conservative economic mismanagement.

The session was not without sharper exchanges. Andrew Snowden MP poked at the government’s sentencing reforms, dubbing the PM “two-tier Keir” and on rural affairs, Sarah Dyke MP challenged the sudden closure of the Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme, a decision that continues to attract cross-party criticism.

With the Chancellor’s Spring Forecast expected at the end of the month, and accusations of an emergency budget in the air, Westminster’s attention is firmly fixed on the Treasury. The Prime Minister will hope today’s exchanges have bought his government some breathing space. Whether they have done so remains to be seen.

You can read the full set of questions from today’s session below. Thanks, as always, for using PoliMonitor.

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### Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition

- The Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, began questions today by welcoming progress on talks between Ukraine and US, reiterating that the UK must redouble efforts to get a lasting secure peace. The PM stated that he will convene leaders on Saturday to discuss this further. He paid tribute to the “bravery and dedication” of those responding to the recent ship collision in UK water and shared that his thoughts are with the family of the crew member who is sadly presumed dead. He continued by outlining that the government this week had introduced landmark legislation to get Britain building and was also continuing to drive forward progress with the Employment Rights Bill.
- The Leader of the Opposition, Kemi Badenoch, began by saying that later today the PM is meeting the family of the MP Sir David Ames which they Opposition benches welcomed. She continued that every week she speaks to businesses who are closing or letting go of staff and asked the PM if he has been given an estimate of how many people will lose their jobs over the choices in “his Budget”.
- The PM responded that Sir David was a deeply loved and respected colleague and his death was particularly felt by the House as was the murder of Jo Cox. The camera during this part of PMQs turned to the two plaques in the House of Commons Chamber in honour of both the MPs. He confirmed he would be meeting the Amess family later today to ensure they get answers to the questions they ask. On businesses, he stated that Labour have created thousands of new jobs into the economy, wages are up and that there have been three interest rate cuts.
- Badenoch quipped that the PM needs to get out more, outlining that the tax rises are have a big impact on working people and things are getting worse. Badenoch referenced that nurseries are writing to parents saying fees will go up because of the “job tax” as part of the increase to employer national insurance contributions. Badenoch asked the PM how this was good for working families.
- The PM said the government are putting in breakfast clubs which will support young people and their families. He referenced the £22bn black hole as the reason why we are making the tough choices and replied that Badenoch has not said she will reverse the decisions made by Labour.
- Badenoch said that the PM is out of touch because he should know that nurseries are charging over £2000 per month while he is talking about “60p breakfast clubs”. She stated that the PM “has no idea”.

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### Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition

- The Leader of the Opposition continued by outlining that the average council tax bill is set to increase by £100 from April with hard working people's money going to the Chancellor. She asked "why should families pay more for less".
- The PM said that the Conservative Party should be welcoming the breakfast clubs restoring that the Conservatives had put up council tax every year for 12 years. He referenced a number of local conservative run councils who had asked for more money to which the Labour Government said no to.
- Badenoch said the point was that the Labour Party manifesto committed to freezing council tax when it will actually go up. She referenced Labour run Birmingham where there is reportedly rubbish on the streets not being collected and said that "when people vote for Labour all they get is trash just like they're getting at the dispatch box". She continued that people all over the country are suffering with older people having had their winter fuel allowance taken while care home costs go up. Badenoch asked how the PM expected people on a fixed incomes to afford the price increases.
- The PM said that the government is fixing the mess the Conservatives left.
- Badenoch responded that the PM is not looking at what is happening out there. She referenced that supermarkets say that prices will increase by over 4% because of his tax hikes. She asked what does the PM have against farmers? Does he not see his budget is killing farmers and making life hard for everyone else?
- The PM referenced that the Budget had given investment to farmers alongside other proposals all of which have been welcomed by farmers. He continued that she talks about prices but wages are going up higher than prices so families are better off under Labour.
- Badenoch retorted that "he has no answers today" outlining that Labour are making mistakes in the Budget. The Leader of the Opposition said that is why the Chancellor will deliver an emergency budget and not a Spring Forecast at the end of the month. Badenoch continued that the government will try to blame this on global challenges but it is actually because "they trashed the economy". She continued to accuse the government of being high tax and would use an emergency budget to fix it.
- The PM referenced the record of the Conservative Party and said that he would not take lectures from them.

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### Questions from the House

- Mike Martin MP, Liberal Democrat, Tunbridge Wells
  - **Question:** Russia has abducted 19,000 Ukrainian children. They have been placed in Russian homes. For this despicable crime, the International Criminal Courts have issued 6 arrest warrants. I note the PM's previous support for the ICC and the support he has shown to Ukraine. Can the PM confirm British peacekeeping troops will only be deployed if the peace deal includes the return of these children and Putin's prosecution.
  - **Answer:** This is a terrible case and when we say a lasting just peace it must be and I will of course include this issue as we are continually raising this.
- Shaun Davies MP, Labour, Telford
  - **Question:** This week saw the bizarre spectacle of the Conservatives trying to bring back the Rwanda policy. Does the PM agree that it is quite clear the party opposite have learnt absolutely nothing.
  - **Answer:** They ran an open border experiment and the leader of the opposition was the champion for it. What a contrast. We've got the flights off.
- John Slinger MP, Labour, Rugby
  - **Question:** Too many young people and those with disabilities are not getting the help they need to get into work. Will the PM outline how this government is supporting people to return to work with compassion?
  - **Answer:** I come from a family who dealt with disability and understand the concerns being raised but we inherited a system that is broken, indefensible and we must and have to, reform it. We will protect those who need protecting and will help those who can work back into work. Labour is the party of work but also of equality and fairness.
- Sir Ed Davey MP, Leader of the Liberal Democrats, Kingston and Surbiton
  - **Question:** Shout out to Young Carers Action Day today but I promise I will not sing. The PM has rightly spoken about the need to get more people back to work. But for many with disabilities better training and support is what is needed. Will the PM calm anxieties that those benefits for those who simply cannot work will not be cut.
  - **Answer:** There will be guiding principles. 1 in 8 young people not in education, employment or training. That's the legacy of the Conservative Party.

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### Questions from the House

- **Question:** Can I persuade the PM to speak with President Trump about steel prices. Will the PM fly out to Canada as soon as possible to show their new PM and the Canadian people that Britain stands with it's Commonwealth allies against Trump's threats and tariffs.
- **Answer:** Canada is an important ally. I was disappointed to see global tariffs on steel and aluminum. We are negotiating a deal with the US which includes tariffs and keep options open during those discussions.
  
- Claire Hanna MP, SDLP Leader
  - **Question:** Can I congratulate the PM on the relationship between him and Taoiseach. Will the PM join me in wishing a Happy St Patrick's Day to all those who celebrate and invite him to Belfast in August 2027 for Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann.
  - **Answer:** A very Happy St Patrick's Day. We need a strong and settled relationship between the UK and Ireland and welcomed the first UK-Ireland Summit last week and very happy to go to Belfast in 2027 but also hope to go before that too.
  
- Andrew Snowden MP, Conservative, Fylde
  - **Question:** In 20 days time new sentencing guidelines will come into effect which the Justice Secretary has already said will be two tier. Will the PM overrule the Justice Secretary and back the Conservative Bill on Friday or will he prove he has been two tier Keir all along.
  - **Answer:** Everyone should be equal under the law and the proposal he refers to was drafted in 2024 under the Conservative Party to which they said they welcomed the proposal. I understand the Shadow Justice Secretary has taken the sentencing council to court maybe he should be the second defendant.
  
- Tulip Siddiq MP, Labour, Hampstead and Highgate
  - **Question:** I represent a large Jewish Community and I was horrified to read about rising anti semitism on NHS wards. What is he doing to ensure that Jewish constituents can safely use the NHS?
  - **Answer:** It is unacceptable for anyone to face racism, discrimination or prejudice in the health service and it is a fundamental principle that the NHS treats everyone. I expect all trusts to take action where there are reports of such behaviour.

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### Questions from the House

- Dave Doogan MP, SNP, Angus and Perthshire Glens
  - **Question:** If he will make an assessment of the durability of UK-US relations. I welcome the efforts of the National Security Adviser. What reassurance can he give the House that the President of the US is listening.
  - **Answer:** The US is an ally and we are working to reach a peace deal. As soon as the step last week was taken by the US to withdraw support to Ukraine, me and my team started working on a deal to ensure that there was a deal for Ukraine that is just. I am pleased we made progress but as always, there is further to go.
- Richard Burgon MP, Labour, Leeds East
  - **Question:** Disabled people in my constituency are frightened because they are hearing politicians using the language of tough choices and they know that means the easy option of targeting poor and vulnerable people. Does the PM agree that the real tough choice would be to introduce a wealth tax.
  - **Answer:** The party opposite left a legacy. And we must help those who need to support and there is a moral imperative to do that. We must kickstart growth to get economic stability we need.
- Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP, Conservative, North Cotswolds
  - **Question:** Most people would accept that we need more housing in this country, yet so often it's not accompanied by the necessary infrastructure. In my own constituency thousands of houses are proposed, yet without the £250 million to upgrade junction 12 of the M5, the inspector is likely to rule our plan unsound. So will the Prime Minister use his upcoming planning and infrastructure to approve this much needed project?
  - **Answer:** We have to get houses built and stop those who block and that is why we have introduced the Planning and Infrastructure Bill so we can deliver on the 1.5m new homes. On the particular issue he raises, I am happy to ensure he gets a meeting with the relevant minister.
- Sojan Joseph MP, Labour, Ashford
  - **Question:** I commend this government's landmark reforms under the Plan for Change. What is the PM's message to those blocking infrastructure?

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- **Answer:** We know who has been standing in the way for 14 years. The Leader of the Opposition last month said she would continue working with Conservative councillors to block key infrastructure as have others on the Shadow front bench. What a bunch of blockers.
  
- Sir Ashley Fox MP, Conservative, Bridgewater
  - **Question:** Will the Prime Minister grant special constables the right to take unpaid leave to perform their duties under the Employment Rights Bill?
  - **Answer:** Special Constables play a very important role in our communities and keeping us safe. The numbers of special constables dropped under the last government. We support the existing employer supported policing scheme and will support our special constables.
  
- Andy McDonald MP, Labour, Middlesbrough and Thornaby East
  - **Question:** I recently visited the James Cook Middlesbrough Hospital for the work. Only 18 rehabilitation beds whereas guidelines say it needs 80 beds. Will the government remedy the position to ensure that resources are allocated to meet the ambition of the Hospital?
  - **Answer:** In his constituency, we are investing £350,000 in research on interventions which support people with functional neurological disorders to rehabilitate them within the community. Our Plan for Change invested £25 billion to cut waiting lists, speed up treatment and shift more care into the community. In relation to the hospital, I'll make sure he gets a meeting with the Minister to see what can be done.
  
- Sir John Whittingdale MP, Conservative, Maldon
  - **Question:** Will the PM look at the case of my constituents who returned from visiting France in their motorhome to find an illegal immigrant concealed in the bike rack. They reported it immediately to the police only to receive a fine from the border force of 1,500 pounds. Can he address this to ensure there is no future prevention of reporting.
  - **Answer:** I have seen some of the details and am concerned about it and important that the Home Office looks into it.

## Questions from the House

- Peter Dowd MP, Labour, Bootle
  - **Question:** Statistics can only measure part of the cost to veterans. Given that, will the PM restate Labour's commitment to veterans that they need and deserve?
  - **Answer:** We all owe an extraordinary debt to veterans and we are investing in a number of initiatives to support them.
- Sarah Dyke MP, Liberal Democrat, Glastonbury and Somerton
  - **Question:** Yesterday, with no notice, DEFRA closed SFI applications, leaving thousands of farmers who want to deliver public goods waiting for a year without support. So can the Prime Minister assure British farmers that they won't be left stranded?
  - **Answer:** SFI have provided considerable support and many schemes closed and reopened. We do support farmers and are putting more details forward at the SR.
- Zarah Sultana MP, Independent, Coventry South
  - **Question:** In October 2023, in an interview with LBC, the Prime Minister said, and I quote, I think Israel does have that right, when asked if cutting off power and water to Gaza was appropriate. Seven days now, Israel has blocked the entry of vital goods and aid into Gaza, subjecting over two million people to collective punishment and starvation. Israel's decision to also cut off electricity to a water plant supplying drinking water to half a million people is yet another blatant violation of international law and further evidence of genocide against the Palestinian people. In light of these facts, does the Prime Minister still maintain that Israel is not committing genocide?
  - **Answer:** I am really appalled by Israel blocking aid. Blocking goods and supplies entering Palestine and Gaza risks breaching international humanitarian law and it shouldn't be happening.
- Sir Julian Lewis MP, Conservative, New Forest East
  - **Question:** Will the Prime Minister focus on the fact that it was standard Russian procedure to take over other countries by having bogus elections and to be very wary of calls to hold elections in Ukraine during a wartime situation which could result in the subversion and takeover by Russia of the entire country.
  - **Answer:** The track record is there for all to see on top of that, this country did not hold elections when we were at war and that is a reasonable course of action.

## Questions from the House

- Lloyd Hatton MP, Labour, South Dorset
  - **Question:** Green investment opportunities are all coming down the track. Can the PM reassure that the government will work to ensure green investment at the heart of the plan for change?
  - **Answer:** Recognise the huge opportunities in green investment. Our investment works together with private money and that's exactly what the Crown Estate Act does, unlocking significant investment, boosting offshore wind and kick-starting economic growth.
- Andrew Rosindell MP, Conservative, Romford
  - **Question:** As the Leader of the Opposition has mentioned, the PM will meet with the family of Sir David Ames. I plead the PM on the decision to not hold an inquiry into the circumstances. Can he stop this shameful saga and take forward the inquiry and the related failure of PREVENT programme?
  - **Answer:** Acknowledge how heartbroken they are and difficult to imagine what they have gone through and will discuss with them all the questions. Sir David was a respected and loved colleague.
- Chris Kane MP, Labour, Stirling and Strathallan
  - **Question:** This week will see the anniversary of the events of the Dunblane Massacre. It is alarming to hear that adverts for handguns for sale are appearing on online. Does the PM agree that technology companies have an obligation to prevent illegal advertising and not rely on a reactive?
  - **Answer:** The thoughts I'm sure of the whole house are with the victims of the Dunblane massacres 29 years after the tragic event. The Online Safety Act will require online services to proactively remove such content from their platforms and prevent it appearing there in the first place. These duties fully take effect from Monday and then we'll make sure that all companies meet their obligations.

Please contact the PoliMonitor team at [info@polimonitor.com](mailto:info@polimonitor.com) for more information.

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