

Prime Minister Liz Truss's speech to Conservative Party Conference 2022

Wednesday 5th October 2022

Prime Minister Liz Truss addressed Conservative Party Conference 2022 and outlined our plan to Get Britain Moving.

My friends, it's great to be here with you in Birmingham.

It's fantastic to see the cranes across the skyline building new buildings...

...the busy trams coursing down the streets...

...and the bull standing proudly at the heart of Birmingham.

My friends, this is what a city with a Tory Mayor looks like – it's positive, it's enterprising, it's successful.

And Andy Street is a human dynamo, delivering for the people of Birmingham.

And our Teesside Mayor Ben Houchen is also delivering new jobs and investment.

This is what modern Conservatism looks like.

Let's get Tory mayors elected in London, in Manchester, in West Yorkshire and right across the country.

We gather at a vital time for the United Kingdom.

These are stormy days.

Together, we have mourned the death of Queen Elizabeth II, the rock on which modern Britain was built.

We are now in a new era under King Charles III.

We are dealing with the global economic crisis caused by Covid and by Putin's appalling war in Ukraine.

In these tough times, we need to step up.

I am determined to get Britain moving, to get us through the tempest and put us on a stronger footing as a nation.

I am driven in this mission by my firm belief in the British people.

I believe that you know best how to spend your own money, to get on in life and realise your own ambitions.

My friends that is what Conservatism is about.

It is a belief in freedom, in fair play and the great potential of the British people.

So, I'm not going to tell you what to do, or what to think or how to live your life.

I'm not interested in how many two-for-one offers you buy at the supermarket, how you spend your spare time, or in virtue signalling.

I'm not interested in just talking about things, but actually in doing things.

What I'm interested in is your hopes and fears that you feel every day.

Can you get a good job locally?

Is it safe to walk down the high street late at night?

Can you get a doctor's appointment?

I know how you feel because I have the same hopes and fears.

I want what you want.

I have fought to get where I am today.

I have fought to get jobs, to get pay rises and get on the housing ladder.

I have juggled my career with raising two wonderful daughters.

I know how it feels to have your potential dismissed by those who think they know better.

I remember as a young girl being presented on a plane with a “Junior Air Hostess” badge.

Meanwhile, my brothers were given “Junior Pilot” badges.

It wasn't the only time in my life that I have been treated differently for being female or for not fitting in.

It made me angry and it made me determined.

Determined to change things so other people didn't feel the same way.

I remember growing up in Leeds, where I saw too many children being let down.

Let down by low expectations.

Let down by a Labour council who were more interested in political correctness than they were in school standards.

But I was lucky to have been brought up in a family that cared about education.

They taught me the value of hard work and enterprise.

And I stand here today as the first Prime Minister of our country to have gone to a comprehensive school.

That taught me two things.

One is that we have huge talent across the country.

And two, that we're not making enough of it.

This is a great country.

I'm so proud of who we are and what we stand for.

But I know that we can do better and I know that we must do better.

And that's why I entered politics.

I want to live in a country where hard work is rewarded...

...Where women can walk home safely at night....

...And where our children have a better future.

To deliver this, we need to get Britain moving.

We cannot have any more drift and delay at this vital time.

Let's remember where we were when I entered Downing Street.

Average energy bills were predicted to soar above £6,000 a year.

We faced the highest tax burden that our country had had for 70 years.

And we were told that we could do nothing about it.

I did not accept that things had to be this way.

I knew that inaction would be unconscionable.

Families would have been unable to heat their homes.

Businesses would have gone bust.

Jobs would have been lost.

And we would have had worse public services, including the NHS.

I could not allow this to happen.

I refused to consign our great country to decline.

That is why I promised on entering Downing Street to act.

Now later on in my speech my friends I am going to talk about the anti-growth coalition.

But I think they arrived in the hall a bit too early, they were meant to come later on.

We will get onto them in a few minutes.

But what we did is we acted.

We made sure that the typical household energy bill shouldn't be more than around £2,500 a year this winter and next.

We followed up with immediate action to support businesses over the winter.

We are determined to shield people from astronomically high bills.

So much so, that we are doing more in this country to protect people from the energy crisis than any other country in Europe.

Our response to the energy crisis was the biggest part of the mini-Budget.

It was the biggest part for a good reason – because we had to do it.

But it's not the only challenge that we face.

For too long, our economy has not grown as strongly as it should have done.

I know what it is like to live somewhere that isn't feeling the benefits of economic growth.

I grew up in Paisley and in Leeds in the 80s and 90s.

I have seen the boarded-up shops.

I have seen people left with no hope turning to drugs.

I have seen families struggling to put food on the table.

Low growth isn't just numbers on a spreadsheet.

Low growth means lower wages, fewer opportunities and less money to spend on the things that make life better.

It means our country falling behind other countries, including those who threaten our way of life.

And it means the parts of our country that I really care about falling even further behind.

That is why we must level up our country in a Conservative way, ensuring that everywhere everyone can get on.

Conference it is wrong to invest only in places which are thriving, as economic models often have it.

We need to fund the furthest behind first.

And for too long, the political debate has been dominated by the argument about how we distribute a limited economic pie.

Instead, we need to grow the pie so that everyone gets a bigger slice.

That is why I am determined to take a new approach and break us out of this high-tax, low-growth cycle.

And that is what our plan is about: it is about getting the economy growing and rebuilding Britain through reform.

The scale of this challenge is immense:

War in Europe for the first time in a generation...

...A more uncertain world in the aftermath of Covid...

...And a global economic crisis.

That is why in Britain we need to do things differently.

We need to step up.

As the last few weeks have shown, it will be difficult.

Whenever there is change, there is disruption.

And not everyone will be in favour of change.

But everyone will benefit from the result – a growing economy and a better future.

That is what we have a clear plan to deliver.

I have three priorities for our economy: growth, growth and growth.

Growth means more money in people's pockets it means businesses creating jobs.

Growth means people can feel secure and they can plan for their future.

Fundamentally, growth helps people fulfil their hopes and their dreams.

That is why our dynamic new Chancellor and I will be taking action in three areas.

First of all, we will lower our tax burden.

Over the summer, we had a robust debate.

The Conservative party will always be the party of low taxes.

Cutting taxes is the right thing to do morally and economically.

Morally, because the state does not spend its own money. It spends the people's money.

Economically, because if people keep more of their own money, they are inspired to do more of what they do best.

This is what grows the economy.

When the government plays too big a role, people feel smaller.

High taxes mean you feel it's less worthwhile working that extra hour, going for a better job or setting up your own business.

That, my friends, is why we are cutting taxes.

We have already cut Stamp Duty, helping people on the housing ladder – especially first-time buyers.

We are reversing the increase in National Insurance from next month.

We are keeping corporation tax at 19%, the lowest in the G20.

We are helping 31 million working people by cutting the basic rate of income tax.

We need to be internationally competitive, with all our tax rates attracting the best talent.

Cutting taxes helps us face this global economic crisis, putting up a sign that Britain is open for business.

The fact is that the abolition of the 45p tax rate became a distraction from the major parts of our growth plan.

That is why we are no longer proceeding with it.

I get it and I have listened.

Secondly, we will keep an iron grip on the nation's finances.

I believe in fiscal responsibility.

I believe in getting value for the taxpayer.

I believe in sound money and the lean state.

I remember my shock opening my first paycheque to see how much money the taxman had taken out.

I know this feeling is replicated across the country.

And that's why we must always be careful with taxpayers' money.

It is why this Government will always be fiscally responsible.

We are in extraordinary times.

It would have been wrong not to have proceeded rapidly with our energy and tax plan.

I am clear we cannot pave the way to sustainable economic growth without fiscal responsibility.

So we will bring down debt as a proportion of our national income.

We are seeing rising interest rates worldwide in the wake of Putin's war and Covid.

The Federal Reserve has been hiking rates in America and has signalled more rises to come.

Inflation is high across the world's major economies.

We will do what we can as a government to support home-owners, such as cutting stamp duty.

But it is right that interest rates are independently set by the Bank of England and that politicians do not decide on this.

The Chancellor and the Governor will keep closely co-ordinating our monetary and fiscal policy.

The Chancellor and I are in lockstep on this.

Thirdly, we will drive economic reforms to build our country for a new era.

We are taking a new approach based on what has worked before.

Previously, we faced barriers to growth like militant unions, nationalised industries and outdated City regulation.

Now, we must breakdown the barriers to growth built up in our system over decades.

Decisions take too long.

Burdens on businesses are too high.

Infrastructure projects get delayed for years, and years and years.

As a result, we have seen economic growth choked off.

Houses have not been built where they are needed and wanted.

We have become averse as a nation to doing things differently.

I love business.

I love enterprise.

I love people who take responsibility, start their own businesses and invest.

They generate profits, they create new jobs and they power our success.

I want to see more of that.

That is why we will back businesses to the hilt.

We are cutting taxes and simplifying red tape to help businesses realise their ambitions.

This is what our new investment zones will do, helping us level up across the country.

We will be inspired by the great hubs of industry like Bournville, here in the West Midlands.

That is what zones in places like here and around the country will deliver.

We want to create the zones in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Now is the time to harness the power of free enterprise to transform our country and ensure our greatest days lie ahead.

This is the United Kingdom at its best, working together and getting our economy growing.

And we will face down the separatists who threaten to pull apart our precious union our family.

Next year, we will host the Global Investment Summit.

This will show the world's top investors there is nowhere better to invest than the UK.

And we are seizing the new-found freedoms outside the European Union.

We are the party who got Brexit done and we will realise on the promise of Brexit.

We are building an economy which makes the most of the huge opportunities Brexit offers.

By the end of next year, all EU-inspired red tape will be history.

Instead, we will ensure regulation is pro-business and pro-growth.

Leaving the EU gives us the chance to do things differently.

And we need more of that.

That is why over the coming weeks, my team of ministers will set out more about what we are going to do to get Britain moving.

We will make it easier to build homes, to afford childcare and to get superfast broadband.

We will help you set up your own businesses and get a mobile phone signal wherever you are in the country.

We are in tough times.

But I want you to know that day in, day out, I'm thinking about how we get this country moving.

I'm working flat out to make sure people can get through this crisis.

So let me be clear, we have your back.

That is why the Government took decisive action to tackle the energy crisis.

It is why we are pushing ahead with our plan for growth.

Economic growth makes life better and easier for everyone – and it will level up our country.

I know that is what people want to see.

Economic growth will mean we can afford great public services such as schools, the police and the NHS.

Our fantastic Deputy Prime Minister and Health Secretary will deliver for patients so they can expect a GP appointment within two weeks.

She will ensure that those who need urgent care will be seen on the same day.

And she will get ambulances out there faster and she will improve A&E.

And she will bust the Covid backlog.

That is not all and she will bolster social care so that everyone gets the care they need.

We are working to put this country on the path to long-term success.

That means ensuring we are safe and secure.

One of the reasons we are facing this global crisis is because collectively the West did not do enough.

We became complacent.

We did not spend enough on defence.

We became too dependent on authoritarian regimes for cheap goods and energy.

And we did not stand up to Russia early enough.

We will make sure this never happens again.

So we are taking decisive action to reinforce our energy security.

We are opening more gas fields in the North Sea and delivering more renewables and nuclear energy.

That is how we will protect the great British environment, deliver on our commitment to net zero and tackle climate change.

We are also taking decisive action by strengthening our borders by beefing up our Border Force and expanding the Rwanda scheme.

Our brilliant new Home Secretary will be bringing forward legislation to make sure that no European judge can overrule us.

And while she is acting meanwhile, the Labour Party has absolutely no plan to tackle illegal migration.

But my friends we cannot have security at home without security abroad.

That is why our tough Foreign and Defence Secretaries are updating the Integrated Review to make sure we can face down these threats.

It is why we are increasing defence spending to 3% of GDP by the end of the decade.

This will ensure that our Armed Forces are ready to tackle new and emerging threats.

We are working with our friends and allies to support Ukraine in the face of Putin's brutal war.

The brave Ukrainian people aren't just fighting for their security but for all our security.

This is a fight for freedom and democracy around the world.

Putin's illegal annexation of Ukrainian territory is just the latest act in his campaign to subvert democracy and violate international law.

We should not give in to those who want a deal which trades away Ukrainian land.

They are proposing to pay in Ukrainian lives for the illusion of peace.

We will stand with our Ukrainian friends however long it takes.

Ukraine can win, Ukraine must win, and Ukraine will win.

I know that President Zelenskyy and the people of Ukraine will welcome our solidarity with them at this very very difficult time.

To take on Russia and other authoritarian regimes, free democracies need strong economies.

Economic growth makes us strong at home and strong abroad.

We need an economically sound and secure United Kingdom.

And that will mean challenging those who try to stop growth.

I will not allow the anti-growth coalition to hold us back.

Labour, the Lib Dems and the SNP...

...The militant unions, the vested interests dressed up as think-tanks...

...The talking heads, the Brexit deniers and Extinction Rebellion and some of the people we had in the hall earlier.

The fact is they prefer protesting to doing.

They prefer talking on Twitter to taking tough decisions.

They taxi from North London townhouses to the BBC studio to dismiss anyone challenging the status quo.

From broadcast to podcast, they peddle the same old answers.

It's always more taxes, more regulation and more meddling.

Wrong, wrong, wrong.

We see the anti-growth coalition at work across the country.

Keir Starmer wants to put extra taxes on the companies we need to invest in our energy security.

And his sticking plaster solution will only last six months.

He has no long-term plan and no vision for Britain.

Mark Drakeford in Wales is cancelling road-building projects and refusing to build the M4 relief road.

Nicola Sturgeon won't build new nuclear power stations in Scotland to solve the energy crisis in Scotland.

Have these people ever seen a tax rise they don't like?

Or an industry they don't want to control?

They don't understand the British people.

They don't understand aspiration.

They are prepared to leave our towns and cities facing decline.

My friends, does this anti-growth coalition have any idea who pays their wages?

It's the people who make things in factories across our country.

It's the people who get up at the crack of dawn to go to work.

It's the commuters who get trains into towns and cities across our country.

I'm thinking of the white van drivers, the hairdressers, the plumbers, the accountants, the IT workers and millions of others up and down the UK.

The anti-growth coalition just doesn't get it.

This is because they don't face the same challenges as normal working people.

These enemies of enterprise don't know the frustration you feel to see your road blocked by protesters, or the trains off due to a strike.

In fact, their friends on the hard Left tend to be the ones behind the disruption.

The anti-growth coalition think the people who stick themselves to trains, roads and buildings are heroes.

I say the real heroes are those who go to work, take responsibility and aspire to a better life for themselves and their family.

And I am on their side.

We will build roads, rail, energy and broadband quicker.

We will be proudly pro-growth, pro-aspiration and pro-enterprise.

That is how we will forge ahead on our long-term path to national success.

In this new era, we are taking a new approach.

My friends, we are focused on boosting growth and opportunity across our country.

This mission will be difficult but it is necessary.

We have no alternative if we want to get our economy moving again.

I am ready to make hard choices.

You can trust me to do what it takes.

The status quo is not an option.

That is why we cannot give in to the voices of decline.

We cannot give in to those who say Britain can't grow faster.

We cannot give in to those who say we can't do better.

We must stay the course.

We are the only party with a clear plan to get Britain moving.

We are the only party with the determination to deliver.

Together, we can unleash the full potential of our great country.

That is how we will build a new Britain for a new era.