

## Prime Minister's Questions – Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2022

The Prime Minister was asked—

### *Engagements*

#### **Mrs Paulette Hamilton (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab)**

Q1. If she will list her official engagements for Wednesday 7 September.

#### **The Prime Minister (Elizabeth Truss)**

I am honoured to take my place as Prime Minister in this House and to take on responsibility at a vital time for our country. I am determined to deliver for everybody across our United Kingdom. I will work constructively with all Members of this House to tackle the challenges we face.

This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall have further such meetings later today.

#### **Mrs Hamilton**

Can I warmly welcome the Prime Minister to her place? This is her first Prime Minister's question, and it is also mine.

In a leaked audiotape, the Prime Minister is heard saying that British workers need to put in “more graft” and that they are lacking in “skill and application”. She also wants to take away their basic workers' rights. In my Erdington constituency, the latest figures from the Commons Library show that children in over 7,000 households are living in child poverty and that 68% of those households have working parents. So does the Prime Minister believe that thousands of working parents on low income in my community should just put in more graft?

#### **The Prime Minister**

I congratulate the hon. Lady on her first Prime Minister's question. What I am determined to do as Prime Minister is to make sure we have an economy with high wages and high-skilled jobs, and the way I will achieve that is through reducing taxes on people across our country and boosting economic growth. That is the way that we will make sure we get the investment and the jobs that people deserve.

**Theresa Villiers (Chipping Barnet) (Con)**

Q3. I want to warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend on becoming the third woman Prime Minister of this great country. I wish her well with her premiership, and I am going to ask her about pubs today. Those from a pub restaurant in my constituency of Barnet got in touch with me to say they were struggling to find an energy supplier, and the quotes they had got hold of showed that they would be paying a 600% increase in their bill to £320,000. They cannot survive that. Will she ensure her plan to tackle the energy price crisis helps businesses in the hospitality sector, which our communities value so much?

**The Prime Minister**

My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. The hospitality industry is vital, and I will make sure that our energy plan, which will help support businesses and people with the immediate price crisis, as well as making sure there are long-term supplies available, will help businesses as well as helping individual households.

**Mr Speaker**

We now come to the Leader of the Opposition, Keir Starmer.

**Keir Starmer (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab)**

Thank you, Mr Speaker. May I congratulate the Prime Minister on her appointment? When she said in her leadership campaign that she was against windfall taxes, did she mean it?

**The Prime Minister**

I thank the right hon. and learned Gentleman for his welcome. I hope that we will be able to work together, particularly in areas we agree on. I know that we have had strong support from the Opposition in opposing Vladimir Putin's appalling war in Ukraine, and I want us to continue to stand up to that appalling Russian aggression, which has led to the energy crisis we face now. I am against a windfall tax. I believe it is the wrong thing to be putting companies off investing in the United Kingdom, just when we need to be growing the economy.

**Keir Starmer**

I thank the Prime Minister for her answer. I ask because Treasury estimates are that the energy producers will make £170 billion in excess profits over the next two years. The Prime Minister knows that she has no choice but to back an energy price freeze, but that won't be cheap, and the real choice—the political choice—is who is going to pay. Is she really telling us that she is going to leave those vast

excess profits on the table and make working people foot the bill for decades to come?

**The Prime Minister**

I understand that people across our country are struggling with the cost of living, and they are struggling with their energy bills. That is why I as Prime Minister will take immediate action to help people with the cost of their energy bills. I will be making an announcement to this House on that tomorrow, and giving people certainty to make sure that they are able to get through this winter, able to have the energy supplies and able to afford it. But we cannot just deal with today's problem; we cannot just put a sticking plaster on it. What we need to do is increase our energy supplies long term. That is why we will open up more supply in the North Sea, which the right hon. and learned Gentleman has opposed, and why we will build more nuclear power stations, which the Labour party did not do when it was in office. That is why we will get on with delivering the supply, as well as helping people through the winter.

**Keir Starmer**

I look forward to tomorrow's statement, but the money has got to come from somewhere. The Prime Minister knows that every single pound in excess profits that she chooses not to tax is an extra pound on borrowing that working people will be forced to pay back for decades to come. More borrowing than is needed—that is the true cost of her choice to protect oil and gas profits, isn't it?

**The Prime Minister**

The reality is that this country will not be able to tax its way to growth. The way we will grow our economy is by attracting investment, keeping taxes low, and delivering the reforms to build projects quicker—that is the way that we will create jobs and opportunities across our country.

**Keir Starmer**

So, Mr Speaker, the right hon. Lady's first act as Prime Minister is to borrow more than is needed because she will not touch excess oil and gas profits. On that topic, how much would her planned corporation tax cut hand out to companies?

**The Prime Minister**

The right hon. and learned Gentleman is looking at this in the wrong way. The last time we cut corporation tax, we attracted more revenue into the Exchequer because more companies wanted to base themselves in Britain, and more companies wanted to invest in our country. If taxes are put up and raised to the

same level as in France—that is what the current proposal is, which I will change as Prime Minister—that will put off investors, and it will put off those companies investing in our economy. Ultimately, that will mean fewer jobs, less growth, and fewer opportunities across our country.

**Keir Starmer**

It is extraordinary that the Prime Minister is not only refusing to extend the windfall tax but choosing to hand the water companies who are polluting our beaches a tax cut. She is choosing to hand the banks a tax cut. Add it all together, and companies who are already doing well are getting a £17 billion tax cut while working people pay for the cost-of-living crisis, stroke victims wait an hour for an ambulance and criminals walk the streets with impunity. Families and public services need every penny that they can get. How on earth does she think that now is the right time to protect Shell’s profits and give Amazon a tax break?

**The Prime Minister**

I am on the side of people who work hard and do the right thing. That is why we will reverse the national insurance increase, and that is why we will keep corporation tax low, because ultimately we want investment right across our country. We want new jobs and new opportunities, and that is what I will deliver as Prime Minister.

**Keir Starmer**

The Prime Minister claims to be breaking orthodoxy, but the reality is that she is reheating George Osborne’s failed corporation tax plans, protecting oil and gas profits, and forcing working people to pay the bill. She is the fourth Tory Prime Minister in six years. The face at the top may change, but the story remains the same.

There is nothing new about the Tory fantasy of trickle-down economics and nothing new about this Tory Prime Minister who nodded through every single decision that got us into this mess and now says how terrible it is. Can she not see that there is nothing new about a Tory Prime Minister who when asked, “Who pays?” says, “It’s you—the working people of Britain”?

**The Prime Minister**

There is nothing new about a Labour leader who is calling for more tax rises. It is the same old, same old tax and spend. What I am about is reducing taxes, getting our economy growing, getting investment and getting new jobs for people right across the country.

I am afraid to say that the right hon. and learned Gentleman does not understand aspiration. He does not understand opportunity. He does not understand that people want to keep more of their own money. That is what I will deliver as Prime Minister. I will take immediate action to help people with their energy bills but also secure our long-term energy supply. I will take immediate action to ensure that we have lower taxes and grow the economy. In that way, I will ensure that we have a positive future for our country and get Britain moving.

**Derek Thomas (St Ives) (Con)**

Q9. First, may I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on her successful campaign to become our party leader and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom? It is right and proper that the Government focus their attention on rising energy costs for households across the country, but, as we have heard, businesses big and small are exposed to horrific energy price increases with no restraint provided by the domestic energy price cap and no support so far from Government. For the sake of businesses in west Cornwall and on Scilly, the jobs that they provide and the economy as a whole, what can my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister do to ease the energy costs that our businesses face?

**The Prime Minister**

My hon. Friend is right: we do need to address the issues that businesses face. The package that we will announce tomorrow will do just that.

**Mr Speaker**

I call the leader of the SNP.

**Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP)**

I am sure that the thoughts and prayers of everyone in the House will be with the families caught up in the terrible shooting over recess in Kyle and Lochalsh, and indeed in Liverpool. I trust that the families will be fully supported.

Let me congratulate the Prime Minister and her family on her appointment, but I am sorry to say that her reputation for straight talking is falling apart at the first PMQs. After nine questions, she has still not told us who will pay for her energy plan. Today, the public are waiting to find out the response to the economic crisis, and they want answers. Will she finally answer two very simple questions? Will she freeze energy prices at their current levels, and will that be paid for by a windfall tax—yes or no?

**The Prime Minister**

No, it will not be paid for by a windfall tax. I do not believe that we can tax our way to growth. I want to see us using more of our UK energy supply, including more oil and gas from the North Sea and nuclear power in Scotland. I hope I can count on the SNP's support for that.

**Ian Blackford**

On her first full day as Prime Minister, she has failed to rule out—[Interruption.]

**Mr Speaker**

Order. Let us hear the next question.

**Ian Blackford**

The Prime Minister may have changed, Mr Speaker, but it is the same old Tories shouting us down.

On her first full day as Prime Minister, she has failed to rule out a Truss tax on households and businesses. Instead of targeting the profits of massive corporations with a windfall tax, the Prime Minister's plan appears to be a decade-long raid on the bank accounts of ordinary taxpayers. These costs must not be passed on to consumers and businesses by deferring bills. The Government must announce an enhanced windfall profits tax, making sure that those oil and gas producers pay their fair share from excess profits. Does the Prime Minister understand that her first act as Prime Minister will now define her: a Truss tax that households and businesses will be paying for years to come?

**The Prime Minister**

I am not quite sure what the right hon. Gentleman's position is, because on one hand he does not seem to want oil and gas extraction from the North Sea, and on the other hand he wants them to pay more taxes. Why does he not make up his mind?

**Chris Loder (West Dorset) (Con)**

Q13. May I, too, warmly welcome my right hon. Friend to her seat as Prime Minister? Scottish Power, Bulb and E.ON are just three of the many energy suppliers that say they provide 100% renewable electricity, yet constituents of mine in West Dorset are baffled that the energy regulator allows those prices to rise on a par with oil and gas. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that she is on the side of the consumer in her energy policy, which we will hear about tomorrow?

**The Prime Minister**

I certainly am on the side of the consumer. We need to ensure that we deal with all the issues in the energy market and the way that energy is regulated. I will certainly be saying more about that tomorrow.

**Colum Eastwood (Foyle) (SDLP)**

The Prime Minister should know by now that many people in the north of Ireland are starving and freezing in their homes. We need a tailored solution for Northern Ireland, but that is much harder to achieve because the Democratic Unionist party is refusing to form a Government at Stormont. The new Prime Minister has a choice to make: she can either be on the side of the DUP or on the side of struggling people in Northern Ireland. So whose side is she on?

**The Prime Minister**

I want to work with all parties in Northern Ireland to get the Executive and the Assembly back up and running so that we can collectively deliver for the people of Northern Ireland, but in order to do that we need to fix the issues of the Northern Ireland protocol, which has damaged the balance between the communities in Northern Ireland. I am determined to get on with doing that and I am determined to work with all parties to find that resolution.

**Mrs Theresa May (Maidenhead) (Con)**

May I congratulate my right hon. Friend and welcome her to her position as the third female Prime Minister of the United Kingdom? Can I ask my right hon. Friend why does she think it is that all three female Prime Ministers have been Conservatives?

**The Prime Minister**

I thank my right hon. Friend for her fantastic question, and I look forward to calling on her advice from her time in office as I start my work as Prime Minister. It is quite extraordinary, is it not, that there does not seem to be the ability in the Labour party to find a female leader, or indeed a leader who does not come from north London? [Laughter.] I do not know what the issue is.

**Rushanara Ali (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab)**

Q2. I, too, congratulate the Prime Minister on her appointment. Inflation is at a 40-year high; the NHS is on its knees, with 6.6 million people waiting for treatment; thousands of victims of sexual offences and violent crime are waiting for justice—not to mention the passport delays, a summer of chaos in our airports and our beaches covered in sewage. The Prime Minister has served in every one

of the Conservative Governments responsible for this mess, so why should the British public trust her to clean up the mess that she has helped create?

**The Prime Minister**

I am determined that we deal with the issues facing us as a nation. We do have problems with our energy supply, due to the appalling war being perpetrated by Putin in Ukraine. That is why I will take immediate action to deal with the energy crisis; my Chancellor will take immediate action to reduce taxes and make sure we are growing our economy; and our new Health Secretary, who is also the Deputy Prime Minister, will take immediate action to make sure that people are able to get appointments with their GP and proper NHS services.

**Mr Speaker**

I call the Father of the House.

**Sir Peter Bottomley (Worthing West) (Con)**

All sides of the House should wish to help the Prime Minister to be successful in tackling the problems facing the country.

When I raised one of them in July with the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson), he said that I could talk to the Housing Minister, but the Housing Minister retired within 17 minutes of hearing that. [Laughter.]

Will this Prime Minister look at why the Planning Inspectorate is able to overturn councils' planned protections for green lungs?

And will she look at what is happening to the Goring Gap in relation to the A259 in the Worthing West and the Arundel and South Downs constituencies, because local councils have no role if they cannot protect what matters most to them?

**The Prime Minister**

I am a bit concerned about offering my hon. Friend a meeting with the Housing Minister, in case any ill should befall him. But my hon. Friend is right; there is not enough power in local hands at the moment. It is too easy for local councils to be overruled by the Planning Inspectorate, and that is certainly an issue that I expect my Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to look at.

**Hannah Bardell (Livingston) (SNP)**

Q4. According to the Prime Minister's new Deputy Prime Minister, one of the things that qualified her most for being PM, and was one of her greatest achievements, was the reintroduction of beavers. Now, I am all for the beavers, but given her flip-flopping on Brexit and her inability to understand global affairs, how can constituents of mine, such as Waz Abbas, whose energy prices will go from £7,000 to £37,000 a year, or Broadtex in Livingston—its prices will go from £50,000 to £250,000 a month—have any faith that she can tackle the oncoming humanitarian crisis? Is she going to come out of her den in No. 10 and take real action, or is she going to be as useless and corrupt as her predecessor, who has rocketed off to somewhere in the Pacific? [Interruption.]

**The Prime Minister**

I am determined to tackle the issues we face in energy, and I look forward to the Scottish Government playing their part by building new nuclear power stations.

**Mr Speaker**

Order. I want a nicer Parliament and that question was not a good example. I certainly do not want the word "corrupt" being used against the new Prime Minister. [Interruption.] I am sure that the hon. Member for Livingston (Hannah Bardell) will withdraw that comment.

**Hannah Bardell**

Sometimes the truth hurts, but I am happy to withdraw it.

**Victoria Atkins (Louth and Horncastle) (Con)**

May I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend and welcome her to her place, but may I also wish her the very best with the heavy responsibilities that she now bears? Around 1.5 million households across the countryside rely on heating oil in order to keep their homes warm and cook their meals. They have faced price rises of around 130% in recent months and they are not part of the energy price cap. As rumours abound about what tomorrow's statement may hold, will she confirm that those 1.5 million households—many of them in rural areas such as my constituency—will be specifically included in any mooted ideas about an energy price freeze?

**The Prime Minister**

My hon. Friend is right. Many of my constituents, too, rely on heating oil for their fuel. We need to make sure that we are looking after everybody in this very, very difficult winter that we are facing.

**Martyn Day (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP)**

Q5. Hon. Members may be familiar with the work of Bo'ness firm Ballantine Castings, an iron foundry in operation since the 1820s that in recent years has done much work around the parliamentary estate. Without the protection of an energy price cap, this specialist SME is witnessing unaffordable costs, with bills rising from £13,000 to £120,000 per month. Heavy energy users face a disproportionate burden and clearly need more support than other businesses. What will the PM do to protect our strategically important and energy-intensive industries?

**The Prime Minister**

I very strongly agree with the hon. Gentleman that there are strategic industries that use a lot of energy. We need to do all we can to help them become more energy-efficient, but we also need to make sure that they are able to remain competitive in the global marketplace. That is certainly something that the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is looking at in preparing this package.

**Dr Kieran Mullan (Crewe and Nantwich) (Con)**

May I congratulate the Prime Minister on her appointment and tell her that I know my constituents want her to succeed at a difficult time? Outside the immediate challenges of energy and inflation, levelling up remains a priority for them. One way to demonstrate her commitment to levelling up would be to choose a town such as Crewe to host Great British Railways. Will she ensure that levelling up is at the heart of that decision?

**The Prime Minister**

Crewe is, of course, a great railway town—my hon. Friend is absolutely right. I am not going to prejudge the decision that will be made, but what I will be doing as Prime Minister is absolutely focusing on levelling up and making sure that we are attracting the investment and growth into parts of this country that have been left behind, so that they have their fair share of opportunity.

**Alex Davies-Jones (Pontypridd) (Lab)**

Q6. The new Prime Minister is now finally in post, but make no mistake: she does not have the support of the British public. She cannot even rely on the backing of her own MPs, and people in Pontypridd will never forget that she played a key role in a Government who failed millions, so will she now finally do the right and decent thing and call a general election?

**The Prime Minister**

As a country, we are facing a very serious crisis in energy, caused by Putin's war in Ukraine. We are facing—[Interruption.]

**Mr Speaker**

Order. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent North (Jonathan Gullis) is getting very carried away. I know that as a former teacher he will want to show better behaviour than he is showing at the moment.

**The Prime Minister**

We are facing very serious issues as a country, partly as a result of the aftermath of covid and partly as a result of Putin's war in Ukraine. What the British people want is a Government who are going to sort it out, and that is what I am determined to do as Prime Minister: sort out the energy crisis, get our economy going and make sure that people can get doctors' appointments. That is what I am focused on.

**Nick Fletcher (Don Valley) (Con)**

I congratulate my right hon. Friend on her position as Prime Minister, but I would also like to thank her for her support for my campaign to keep Doncaster Sheffield airport open. Will she now help further by writing to South Yorkshire Mayor Oliver Coppard and Peel Holdings chairman John Whittaker to remind them of their powers, duties and responsibilities to the people of South Yorkshire and beyond? Will she use the full weight of her office on these decision makers to keep our Doncaster Sheffield airport open?

**The Prime Minister**

Regional airports, including Doncaster Sheffield airport, are a vital part of our economic growth. I will make sure that the new Secretary of State for Transport is immediately on the issue.

**The Secretary of State for Transport (Anne-Marie Trevelyan)**

indicated assent.

**The Prime Minister**

I can tell that she is—she is already contacting people in Doncaster and Sheffield to make sure that we protect the airport and protect that vital infrastructure and connectivity that helps our economy to grow.

**Helen Morgan (North Shropshire) (LD)**

Q7. I, too, welcome the Prime Minister to her new post. During her leadership campaign, she said that ambulance waiting times in her rural Norfolk constituency were “appalling”, and I think that many of my constituents would echo that statement. Across Britain, waiting hours and hours for an ambulance has become normal, but rather than the Government focusing on the problem, a Conservative leadership fiasco has seen three Health Secretaries in three months. Will the Prime Minister get a grip on this grave situation, and commission the Care Quality Commission to investigate the causes of, and the solutions to, these ambulance delays before a service in crisis faces the additional pressures of an oncoming winter?

**The Prime Minister**

People should not have to wait as long as they are for ambulance services, and my new Health Secretary is immediately tackling this issue. She has already laid out her priorities, and sorting out the ambulance service is one of them.

**Dame Caroline Dinenage (Gosport) (Con)**

May I, too, warmly welcome our new Prime Minister to her role, and indeed all her Front Benchers to theirs?

September is Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, and, as my right hon. Friend knows, cancer is still the biggest killer of children under the age of 14. Will she restate her Government’s commitment to publishing a 10-year cancer strategy, and can that strategy embed a childhood cancer mission at its very heart?

**The Prime Minister**

Cancer is a devastating disease, and it is particularly heart-breaking when children have cancer. We will certainly proceed with the strategy that my hon. Friend has mentioned, and I know that our new Health Secretary will do all she can to help those children with cancer.

**Tony Lloyd (Rochdale) (Lab)**

Q8. On the theme of children, the Prime Minister will know from her time as Children’s Minister that children whose young lungs are exposed to cold and damp housing are more likely to fall seriously ill and possibly die. Child poverty has been growing during her time in different ministerial offices. Will she give a solemn pledge—with no evasion—that no child will go to bed in a cold, damp house this winter and beyond because the parents cannot afford to put the heating on?

**The Prime Minister**

This is why it is so important that we tackle the issue of energy. I will make sure that people are able to afford their energy bills, at the same time as dealing with the long-term supply issues to ensure that we are resilient in energy and never get into this position again.

**Shailesh Vara (North West Cambridgeshire) (Con)**

It is standard practice in the European Union that when it cannot get its own way in negotiations with the UK, it plays for time and waits for a new leader who it hopes will take a different view from his or her predecessor. For the sake of clarity, will my right hon. Friend confirm that the UK's preferred option in respect of the Northern Ireland protocol is a negotiated settlement, but that if such a settlement is not forthcoming, we will proceed with the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill which is currently going through Parliament?

**The Prime Minister**

Let me first thank my right hon. Friend for his service as Northern Ireland Secretary. He is absolutely right: we need to resolve the issue of the Northern Ireland protocol. My preference is for a negotiated solution, but it does have to deliver all the things that we set out in the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill. What we cannot allow is for this situation to drift, because my No. 1 priority is protecting the supremacy of the Belfast/Good Friday agreement.

**Rachel Hopkins (Luton South) (Lab)**

Q10. The new Prime Minister tells us that she will deliver on the NHS. Well, that is a turn-up for the books, because after 12 years of Conservatives driving our NHS into the ground, we have record waiting lists, people dying in ambulances outside A&E, and nurses using food banks. Given that the Prime Minister has served in the past three Conservative Governments on that watch, can she explain why we should trust her to deliver?

**The Prime Minister**

I do not agree with the way the hon. Lady is talking down our national health service. The fact is that our health service did brilliantly in tackling Covid, in delivering the vaccine roll-out and in getting this country back on its feet, but we do face challenges now with the backlog following Covid, and that is why the new Health Secretary is going to work to address those challenges.

**Sir Jeremy Wright (Kenilworth and Southam) (Con)**

I congratulate my right hon. Friend on her appointment and recognise her determination to address the many urgent and difficult challenges that face us now. Would she accept that one of those challenges is an almost entirely unregulated online space? Would she accept too that no responsible Government can avoid the need for excellent, balanced, sensible regulation in this space? Will she therefore assure me that the Online Safety Bill will come back to this House swiftly for us to consider further and amend if necessary?

**The Prime Minister**

I can assure my right hon. and learned Friend that we will be proceeding with the Online Safety Bill. There are some issues that we need to deal with. What I want to make sure is that we protect the under-18s from harm and that we also make sure free speech is allowed, so there may be some tweaks required, but certainly he is right that we need to protect people's safety online.

**Helen Hayes (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab)**

Q11. The Prime Minister has been part of a Government who for the past 12 years have been systematically letting down the most vulnerable children in the country. The independent review of children's social care, published by the Government in May, describes the system as being in need of a total reset. The Prime Minister has said that she wants to deliver. Will she make a cast-iron commitment to deliver for our country's most vulnerable children, and publish the Government's response to the independent review and an action plan for delivery, before the end of the year—yes or no?

**The Prime Minister**

Yes.

**Dame Andrea Leadsom (South Northamptonshire) (Con)**

I would like to congratulate my right hon. Friend and her whole Front Bench, and wish them every success in the new Government. I would particularly like to thank my right hon. Friend for her steadfast commitment to support for the earliest years throughout the 12 years that she and I have worked together for three previous Prime Ministers. Can I ask her now to renew her commitment to rolling out "The best start for life", to give every baby the best chance of leading a fulfilling life?

**The Prime Minister**

My right hon. Friend has done such a fantastic job championing this issue and developing the policies, and I am committed to following through on delivering for children, because we know that intervening early and helping children early is the best way to help those children to have a successful childhood and, ultimately, a fulfilled life.