

TRANSPORT

MACRO ANALYSIS

Despite the brief interruption of a heckler, there will be sighs of relief after today's launch of Labour's manifesto. As predicted there were no surprises and many of the big policies had been briefed well in advance. What it demonstrates is quite how serious Sir Keir is about winning the election and reassuring the swing voters he needs for a healthy majority.

The five 'missions' are padded out a little but the focus is undeniably one of economic growth and reassurance that Labour can be trusted on the economy. Will everyone be happy with the manifesto? Well no, there are already grumblings on the left of the party that it's not radical enough. But as Sir Keir made abundantly clear in the Sky News debate last night – his priority is country not party, and today's manifesto is a clear reflection of this mantra.

Jennifer Gerber, Senior Political Advisor,
WA and former Labour Special Advisor

POLICY ANALYSIS

Of all the promises made to the electorate this week, Labour's rail nationalisation plan is perhaps one the most 'radical' - and achievable.

Private rail operators will be brought under public control as existing contracts expire. There will be no need to pay compensation to outgoing train companies.

The owner/operator of tracks and stations has long since been in public hands. In fact, it was George Osborne who effectively nationalised the railway when he put billions of pounds' worth of Network Rail debt on the public books as Chancellor.

But Labour's flagship transport policy creates a clear point of difference with Rishi Sunak's Conservative Party - and is popular with Labour's left wing. Track and operations will be brought together under Great British Railways and a new passenger watchdog will be created to drive service improvements. It is notable that Labour is promising to retain a role for the private sector in the form of 'Open Access' operators, who run services in 'gaps' in the existing timetable.

Labour's bus policies are another ideological dividing line with the Conservatives.

The party plans to give local authorities powers to franchise local bus services and will lift the ban on municipal ownership.

Labour's most powerful Mayors, such as Sadiq Khan and Andy Burnham, already oversee franchised bus services. We can expect the model to be rolled out in other cities, with local control over routes and timetables.

Labour's commitment to the Electric Vehicle 'transition' is another standout policy, as the party vowed to reinstate a 2030 ban on the sale of new petrol or diesel cars – something Sunak ditched in the autumn. Labour is also promising to deliver £1.5 billion to gigafactories to build EV batteries, accelerate the roll out of charge points and make the purchase of second-hand EVs easier by standardising information about the condition of batteries.

Like the Conservative Party, Labour is vowing to tackle the crumbling state of Britain's roads and promised to fill an extra million potholes in England every year.

Aviation and shipping received scant mention.

Labour promised to support sustainable aviation fuels and encourage the modernisation of airspace – the two initiatives airlines and airports see as the best route to reduced emissions.

To discuss WA's manifesto analysis and what it means for your organisation, please email **Marc Woolfson**, Founding Partner at marcwoolfson@wacomms.co.uk.

HEADLINE POLICY ANNOUNCEMENTS

- A ten-year infrastructure strategy will be delivered, aligning with Labour's industrial strategy and regional development priorities. This will include improving rail connectivity across the north of England.
- Overhaul the railways by bringing them into public ownership as the contracts with existing operators expire. Great British Railways will be brought forward to deliver a unified system that focuses on reliable, affordable, high-quality and efficient services.
- Promote the use of rail freight and Open Access and introduce a new passenger watchdog.
- Restore the 2030 phase-out of internal combustion engines (ICE), support the creation of new automotive gigafactories with £1.5bn in investment, and support the growth of the second-hand market by standardising the information supplied on the condition of batteries.
- Maintain and renew the road network, fixing an additional one million potholes across England in each year of the next Parliament and tackle the soaring cost of car insurance.
- Building on the work of Labour's Metro Mayors, greater powers will be given to local leaders to franchise local bus services and the ban on municipal ownership will be lifted.
- The role of Metro Mayors will be bolstered to include some responsibility over setting rail services in their area.
- Promote sustainable aviation fuels (SAF) and encourage airspace modernisation.

WA ADVISORY BOARD ANALYSIS

It's interesting that Labour's plans start with car drivers, fixing potholes and the cost of car insurance. There's some good stuff on economic infrastructure. There are big choices to come after the election on the role of the private sector in rail – e.g. in Open Access, freight and property.

Sir Philip Rutnam, Chair of the Advisory Board, WA Communications

Labour will put passengers at the heart of the service by reforming the railways and bringing them into public ownership.' Yes, you heard that right – Labour may not use the word nationalise which demonstrates a certain political timidity, but it is clear they are committed to this policy. Several commitments on buses and putting communities first is a nod to the work of Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham, who has been leading with the Bee Network in the North West. It also demonstrates that Labour are not afraid of being radical when it comes to big policy decisions.

Jennifer Gerber, Senior Political Advisor, WA and former Labour Special Advisor

The commitment to partially renationalise the railways is a sole survivor from the 2019 manifesto. It would not be there if there were obvious upfront costs and had not been popular with focus groups. The precise role of GB Railways is another example - of many - that will be addressed in government. The shadow transport secretary, Lou Haigh, insists she will play an 'arm's length' role. That is rarely how these dynamics play out. Look at the unresolved tensions between NHS England and most Health Secretaries.

Steve Richards, Senior Adviser, WA Communications