

PM speech on Plan for Change: 5 December 2024

Prime Minister Keir Starmer made a speech on the government's Plan for Change at Pinewood Studios.

Location:

Pinewood Studios

Delivered on:

5 December 2024 (Transcript of the speech, exactly as it was delivered)

Thank you.

Thank you, Ange...

And thank you, to all of our speakers.

Bliss has never spoken on a stage like this before but you absolutely nailed it there Bliss, well done and what an amazing contribution that you're already making to our country so thank you for that.

A positive story of change.

And as Ange said, it's great to be here at the iconic Pinewood Studios...

The spiritual home of Britain's film industry.

[Political content redacted]

But look - this really is an incredible place.

Countless Oscars – produced here...

An engine of growth which supports 8,000 jobs.

A beacon, to the world...

Of British creative brilliance.

So I'm delighted to be here today to launch our Plan for Change.

Because this is about who we are as a nation.

How we project our values...

Fight for our values...

Show our strength in an ever more volatile world.

But also – show the British people...

That their country can still do great things.

And to be honest – not just great things...

Things they should be able to take for granted...

The basic functions of the state.

Take the NHS mentioned earlier.

Because perhaps more than any institution...

It represents the bigger 'us'.

Millions owe everything to it...

And two of them are here.
My family – no different.
In fact, as I've said before...
I wouldn't be here without the NHS.
It's the reason my mum was able to have children...
When she was first told, aged 11...
That would never happen.
Because the NHS never gave up on her.
And behind every single door in this country...
There is a family who has their own version of these stories.
And yet here we are.
The NHS – even the NHS...
Losing the trust of the British public.
Record dissatisfaction.
Unable to provide the timely care and dignity that Britain relies on...
A precious contract between the state and the people – broken.
Broken - by public services in crisis, unable to perform their basic functions.
Broken - by an economy that leaves millions working harder just to stand still.
Broken - by politicians who promised change and never delivered.
Broken...
But not beyond repair.
Because one thing the British people do know in their bones...
Is that this is a great nation.
No matter how tough things are for their family and their community...
They know that – and they are right.
Because they recognise it in themselves.
After all, even in the last fourteen years...
They tightened their belts when they were told “we're all in it together”.
They closed ranks to defeat a deadly virus...
Never once wavered in their commitment to stand with Ukraine...
And all they asked for in return...
Was for the Government to meet them half-way.
And there's hope in that.
The hope of a Government finally able to match their ambition...
With a credible plan for unlocking their potential...
A great nation - rediscovering it can do great things...
Renewing that contract with the people...
Delivering the change they voted for.
But that's the catch – isn't it?
The purpose of this Government is to make our public services and economy work for working people...
Strengthen our country in a world that increasingly preys on weakness.
It's a cause that demands nothing less than the full power of government.

Yet that's precisely what's broken – isn't it?
As I said a number of times.
Fixing the foundations it's like finding damp on a wall...
You can paint over it...
Get the hairdryer out...
Hope it goes away.
Or you can strip it out, rip out the plaster, and deal with the problem once and for all.
But unless we fundamentally reform the way government goes about its business...
Unless we first change how we try to change the country...
Then the hairdryer is all we've got.
And this is a big job.
Prisons overflowing...
The NHS on its knees...
A £22bn black hole in our public finances...
Which, just to put it into context...
Is nearly half what we spend on the defence of our country.
Now, I don't want to use that as an excuse.
I expect to be judged on my ability to deal with this.
And the work of change has begun...
£25bn invested in the NHS...
Asylum returns – up 53%...
The minimum wage raised by a record amount...
Stabilising the economy...
Fixing the foundations...
Clearing up the mess - so we can take the country forward with our missions.
This doesn't happen by accident.
There's no investment in our public services, without difficult decisions.
No solution to the housing crisis, without approving controversial development...
And no taking our country forward, without levelling with you honestly...
About the trade-offs we must face together.
No, the path of change is long...
It is hard...
And there are few thanks in the short-term...
But mark my words – with this Plan for Change...
We will stick to it...
Country first, party second.
So in that 'country first' spirit...
We launch our Plan for Change.
A plan that does two things – at the same time.
First – it doubles-down on our national missions.

A strategy that, for all the turbulence of the world around us...
Has remained robust since we published it nearly two years ago.
A strategy that will give government and the nation...
Whether in calm or choppy waters...
The stabilising certainty of the clear destination...
Guide us towards a decade of national renewal.
Yes, some people will say – we've heard these missions before...
Where's the rabbit out the hat?
In Westminster – they always say that.
But I make no apologies for sticking to our plan...
And no apologies for fixing the eyes of Whitehall...
Not on the distractions of Westminster...
But on the long-term good of our country.
However, to drive those missions forward in this Parliament...
And show our progress towards them...
Today, we publish new milestones...
Measurable milestones...
That will also give the British people the power to hold our feet to the fire.
Because that accountability...
That is part of how we shift the focus in Westminster towards long-term change.

Second – our plan commits Whitehall to mission-led government.

An approach to governing that won't just deliver change...

But also change the nature of governing itself.

Fix the foundations and find new tools for the job.

Make no mistake – this plan will land on desks across Whitehall...

With the heavy thud of a gauntlet being thrown down.

A demand, given the urgency of our times...

For a state that is more dynamic...

More decisive...

More innovative...

Less hostile to devolution and letting things go...

Creative - on the deployment of technology...

Harnessing its power to rethink services...

Rather than replicate the status quo in digital form.

Artificial intelligence is particularly crucial here...

An unprecedented opportunity for this country...

We are strong already – and we must become stronger still.

We must also tear down the walls of who let the nation build its capacity from partnership.

But also – I want us to tear down the walls and let the nation in...

A state that builds its capacity through partnership...

Rather than viewing itself as the only source of expertise.

Which begins today...

Because ultimately – mission-led government is a plan for the nation...

A partnership...

Businesses...

Charities...

Campaigners...

Unions...

Investors...

England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland...

The people of these islands...

All pulling in the same direction.

All focused on taking our country forward.

Because, at the end of the day – we all have a stake in change.

We all look forward and see the same horizon.

And we all feel the burden of where we are as a country...

The contract which must be repaired is ours.

And that requires change.

So – this is our plan.

It begins, as we set out in our manifesto, with strong foundations...

Economic stability...

National security....

Border security...

Those fundamentals never change.

And we will never risk them.

That's the argument we made and continue to make...

[Political content redacted]

Serving the real concerns of working people...

Not changing the conversation...

Walking away....

Or talking down to them.

That's not just about immigration...

But, as ever, that shows the argument.

Take, the statistics published last week...

[Political content redacted]

This government will reduce immigration – legal and illegal.

Because that is what working people want.

And not just on migration itself...

Also - the way they want the economy to grow for them...

That is absolutely the change we promised at the election.

And we're not hanging around.

We're clearing the asylum backlog...

Processing thousands more claims than when we came to office...

Returns of foreign national offenders – up 29%...

On track for the highest overall number of returns - for six years.

That is what dealing with the problem seriously looks like...

A much more meaningful deterrent than spraying taxpayers' money up the wall...

On the ridiculous Rwanda gimmick.

Then, on those strong foundations...

We rebuild Britain with our national missions.

Driven forward, in the harsh light of accountability...

By the milestones for this Parliament.

One – higher living standards in every region of the country...

As we target the fastest growth in the G7.

So working people have more money in their pocket.

The burden of the cost-of-living crisis...

No longer intruding on the joy of family life.

Two – Britain rebuilt with 1.5 million new homes...

So the security I enjoyed when I was growing up...

The 'base camp aspiration' of home ownership...

Does not move further and further away from working-class families like mine.

Three – Safer Streets...

More police on the beat...

Stamping out anti-social behaviour in every community...

Because nobody should feel insecure on the streets they call home.

Four – the best start in life for every child...

With a record proportion of five-year olds starting school ready to learn.

Because it is a scandal...

An affront to the British value of equal respect...

If we do not give every child, whatever their background...

A fair chance to succeed.

Five - clean power by 2030...

Homegrown British energy...

Making our country more secure...

So never again can a tyrant like Putin attack the living standards of working people.

And six – waiting lists in our NHS cut...

The 18 week target, from referral to treatment – finally met.

A symbol of an NHS back on its feet...

Facing the future...

Dignity and care restored to millions.

Now – some people may say...

"That's pretty brave.

You've seen the books now...

You know how hard that NHS milestone is.

Building 1.5m homes is ambitious...

A little too ambitious, perhaps".

And look, I'll be honest...

They're right.

We face an almighty challenge to hit these milestones by the end of this Parliament.

Like I say – we are starting from ground zero.

Waiting lists – over seven million.

Housing starts and permissions – the lowest for a decade.

One in three children not ready for school at the age of five...

Kids in reception, who aren't starting to read...

They're struggling to speak.

In fact – given that inheritance on housing starts...

Clearly if we don't turbocharge housebuilding with reform...

We're won't meet that milestone.

And if that level of candour surprises you...

Then honestly – it shouldn't.

After all – what is the point of setting a target that you can deliver without bold action.

That's not public service – that's political cynicism.

No, the job of these milestones is to take our country forward...

Drive reform through the public sector...

It's not about making the Government look good.

So yes - they are risky for us.

Country first, party second.

Because this is something we've totally lost sight of in British politics...

And, to be honest, across Whitehall as well.

I don't think there's a swamp to be drained here...

But I do think too many people in Whitehall are comfortable in the tepid bath of managed decline.

Have forgotten, to paraphrase JFK...

That you choose change, not because it's easy...

But because it's hard.

I totally get that when trust in politics is so low...

We must be careful about the promises we make.

But across Whitehall and Westminster...

That's been internalised as "don't say anything".

"Don't try anything too ambitious".

"Set targets that will happen anyway"...

[Political content redacted]

And then they wonder why working people won't give you a pat on the back...

Wonder why working people no longer believe politics can make a real difference to their lives.

[Political content redacted]

Our plan for change that is the most ambitious and credible programme for government in a generation.

And we embrace the risk that comes with that.

Because if there was no jeopardy...

If there was no resistance...

No blockages or impediments for us to remove...

Then as sure as night follows day...

That would be a sign that we were not serious about delivering real change...

And I will never do that...

The mandate was for change...

And change is what we will deliver.

So to those who still need to hear it...

Change and reform are coming.

That is what this plan means.

Productivity in the public sector is 2.6% lower than this time last year...

8.5% down compared with just before the pandemic.

That wouldn't be accepted in any other sector or walk of life...

And I am not going to subsidise it with ever rising taxes on the British people.

Take our Neighbourhood Policing guarantee – as an example.

That will deliver 13,000 extra neighbourhood police.

Visible on the beat...

Cracking down on anti-social behaviour...

A named, contactable officer in every community...

A relief for millions of people scared to walk their streets.

That pledge is only made possible because we are matching investment with reform.

Standardising procurement...

Streamlining specialist capabilities like digital forensics...

Ending the madness of each of our 43 forces purchasing their own cars and uniforms.

Or take our planning system...

A blockage in our economy that is so big...

It obscures an entire future...

Stops this country building roads, grid connections, laboratories, trainlines, warehouses, windfarms, power stations...

You name it.

A chokehold on the growth our country needs...

Suffocating the aspirations of working families.

I mean - you walk around our country...

You look at our infrastructure...

And it is clear almost immediately...

That we have long freeloaded off the British genius of the past.

Because we won't build a future...
We haven't built a reservoir for over 30 years...
And even the projects we do approve...
Are fought tooth and nail...
Nail and tooth...
Until you end up
With the absurd spectacle of a £100m bat tunnel...
Holding up the country's single biggest infrastructure project.
Driving up taxes and the cost of living, beyond belief.
I tell you now...
This Government will not accept this nonsense anymore.
We will streamline the approval process in the forthcoming Planning and Infrastructure Bill...
And driving through that reform – I can announce another new target...
Not just 1.5 million homes...
But also 150 major infrastructure projects...
A milestone that will triple the number of decisions on national infrastructure compared with the last Parliament.
And just as important...
Will send a very clear message...
To the nimbys, the regulators, the blockers and bureaucrats...
The alliance of naysayers...
The people who say no "Britain can't do this"...
We can't get things done in our country.
We say to them – you no longer have the upper hand...
Britain says yes.
Because whether you like it or not...
We are building a future for working people...
Making our country strong...
With stability, investment and reform.
And we're building it with urgency.
Because there is no time to lose.
Everyone can see there's a growing impatience with traditional politics...
Everyone can see how people are tired with those who fail to get the job done.
Populism isn't the answer to Britain's challenges...
'Easy answers' won't make our country strong.
But nobody can deny that this kind of politics feeds off real concerns.
In fact – that's the crux of the matter.
People haven't become radical ideologues...
We are still, in our values, a pragmatic nation...
What people want from politics – that hasn't changed.
They want a stable economy...
Their country to be safe...

Their borders secure...
More cash in their pocket...
Safer streets in their town...
Opportunities for their children...
Secure British energy in their home...
And an NHS that is fit for the future...
That is why we have set these missions...
Missions to make our country strong...
Missions to make working people better off...
Missions this Government will deliver.
I don't think these are unreasonable hopes – clearly not.
But nor do I underestimate how little faith there is, from working people
most of all...
That politics can still deliver them.
And that's not unreasonable either.
Because they kept to the contract.
Worked tirelessly for their family and their community.
But the previous Government never kept their side of the bargain.
And that is what we must change.
That is what these missions add up to.
I don't want to give you the whole story about my parents all over again...
But no matter how tough life was growing up...
They always believed that if they worked hard...
Britain would be better for their children.
You can call that hope.
You can call it security.
You can call it aspiration.
But in the end – it all amounts to the same thing.
A feeling, a belief, a confidence...
That allowed working class families like mine...
To raise their eyes, look forward...
And build their lives around the future.
People can call that sentimental...
But I am convinced that if we unlock that potential...
There is so much power in this country.
I am convinced that if we get these missions right...
We can make our country stronger.
And I am convinced...
That if we show politics can change Britain for the better...
Then we can face the future with confidence...
A country secure in its values...
Determined to walk through the storm...
And build a new Britain...
With 1.5 million new homes...

Neighbourhood policing in every community...
Children starting school, ready to learn...
A more secure energy system...
Living standards raised...
People better off...
More cash in their pocket...
More freedom to enjoy their family life...
And waiting lists cut dramatically...
That is my plan for change...
The driving purpose of this government...
And we will stay the course...
We will fix the foundations...
Repair the damage...
Reform government...
And rebuild Britain through the power of change.
Thank you.
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