

THE LABOUR PARTY

LEARNING THE LESSONS FROM DEFEAT TASKFORCE REPORT

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Learning the lessons from defeat

Introductory letter

I was asked by the National Executive Committee of the Labour party to lead a review to uncover the lessons that we can learn as a movement from our defeat in 2015.

We have consulted far and wide. We have had responses from tens of thousands of party members, we have spoken with many political figures and those who were closely involved in the campaign, and we have taken input from pollsters, pundits and academics.

Inevitably there are many theories. Many conflicting and many strongly held.

I have the dubious privilege of being able to set this election in historic context and believe that it is necessary to do this to understand it. The global economic crash cast a long shadow, the 2010 Parliament had a coalition government and a fixed term, and the five years was punctuated by the independence referendum in Scotland and the rise of UKIP.

The reaction to the result was inevitably an emotional one because it was such a surprise. There was certainly no complacency in Labour ranks, but the polls showed Labour neck and neck with the Tories, when clearly we weren't. And no one foresaw the scale or nature of the Liberal Democrat collapse that ultimately delivered a slim overall majority to the Tories.

Many believe that ultimately elections are votes for continuity or change. And perhaps, while the public had little enthusiasm for the coalition, we didn't do enough to convince them to change back to Labour. While in Scotland, we somehow came to represent continuity rather than change.

There are certainly lessons to learn, and I have summarised these in section 3. They are preceded by an analysis of the results in Section 2. But I start with the all-important historic context.

I would like to thank the members of the taskforce and staff who have given their time and talent to this review.

Dame Margaret Beckett



Section 1: The 2010-15 Parliament

The economic narrative

The 2015 election was never going to be easy.

The defeat of 2010 had been heavy and although the economy had returned to growth, the aftermath of the global crash was a major feature of national life.

Politics has changed across Europe and we are not immune from this in the UK. We have seen a rise of populism. Voters have lost confidence in many traditional parties and feel that they aren't heard. Many are uncertain about the benefits of an increasingly global economy, fear the loss of their cultural identity, and worry about the impact of geographic mobility. Consequently we have seen here and elsewhere the rise of new parties with simple and superficially attractive messages - the 2015 election involved six parties not just three. And throughout Europe the global crash has made austerity and debt reduction the backdrop for all political discussion.

Before the crash, the Tory opposition had committed to matching Labour's spending plans and to reducing financial regulation, especially in the mortgage market.

In the aftermath, this was forgotten, not least by the Tories, who assiduously fostered the myth that US, German, French and Japanese financial institutions had been brought to their knees by the overspending of a profligate Labour government. This myth took hold.

The reality, of course, was that governments across the world had been persuaded by the banks and their supporters - including the Conservative party - to be "light touch" in their regulation of banks, and that, in any event, the banks had become too complex to regulate easily, and too big for governments to allow them to fail. So when the crash came, the UK government had no choice but to support them.

The coalition

The formation of a Tory/Liberal Democrat coalition government was a major contributory factor to the firm establishment of the narrative that Labour was responsible for the crash.

Before the election, much of Labour's economic analysis, as well as specific criticisms of Tory policies, had been broadly shared by the Liberal Democrats.

Both, for instance, accused the Tories of planning an increase in VAT – something Osborne and Cameron vehemently denied.

Both had sought common ground, even with the Tories, on care for the elderly – even then a visibly mounting concern – only to find on-going talks scuppered by Cameron.

With the advent of the coalition, the Liberal Democrats adopted not just Tory policies – voting, among much else, for the VAT increase they had condemned – but also the Tory narrative of unwarranted Labour spending when in government. It was too easily forgotten that the Labour Government in 1997 inherited a country that needed to be repaired after the damage to our industrial base, healthcare, housing and education inflicted by the Thatcher and Major governments.

There was a near universal demand for public investment in infrastructure, in research and development, and in training, as well as for socio-economic policies such as childcare, so that we could compete internationally.

Suddenly, with the creation of the coalition, every Labour spokesperson on any current affairs programme faced, not just disagreement and opposition from two other major parties – par for the course – but disagreement which was tightly co-ordinated, and began in, and stressed, the same story – that somehow this was all Labour's fault.

So from the outset, it was hard for Labour's counter-narrative to be heard.

Scrutiny

Nor indeed was there much media interest in anything we had to say. For political commentators, there was a much more fascinating soap opera in continual transmission. A steady stream of differences and disputes were available within each governing party – the Liberal Democrats and the Tories – and to that was added differences and disputes between them as coalition partners, and all of it the more important for being directly relevant to government decisions.

So, to the annoyance and disappointment of Labour supporters, Shadow Ministers found it even harder than is usual as the main party of opposition to make a public impact. Even where Labour was highly effective in opposition, say on energy prices, or on health, this rarely attracted the sustained coverage it merited.

Equally, major policy failures by the coalition, such as the failure to meet targets on debt and deficit, and the loss of the Triple A credit rating, on which they had asked to be judged, were allowed to slip from public attention, despite our best efforts to keep them to the fore.

The fixed term parliament

To these factors may be added the almost deadening effect of being in the first ever five year fixed-term parliament. It created a shape and momentum to political campaigning, which was unprecedented. For example, in UK Parliaments, with no fixed general election date, opposition parties begin to set out the broad shape of their likely election programme a couple of years in, and, as time goes on, this is fleshed out with greater detail and certainty. The likely context for an election, which could be as little as two years away, can also be more readily discerned.

So parties are focused on the need to shape an overall political narrative, which must be conveyed in time for an election which might come as early as the fourth year of a parliament, while speculation as to the election date creates its own excitement. These factors were absent from the 2010 Parliament. Indeed, the coalition agreement had deliberately made it impossible for the Liberal Democrats to collapse the coalition, and precipitate an earlier election.

The certainty of timetable, along with very large pledges from rich donors, meant that, not only were the Tories able to massively outspend us - perhaps threefold - but, with a defined and certain time frame, they could deploy these assured funds to maximum effect.

While lacking our much larger membership and activist base, their war chest meant that they could staff up for, and fund, both a central operation that was simply unaffordable for Labour, and the long-term use of paid-for digital ads and mail drops.

For example it appears that, as early as 3 years before election day, direct mail, such as personal letters from David Cameron to carefully selected individual voters, whose details and interests were held on a central data base, was being supplied to local parties from Conservative HQ.

The existence and, still more, the potential effect of this substantial and sustained operation was a source of anxiety before the election, but, without presuming that it could ever have been countered easily, funding constraints precluded mounting a comparable effort.

Labour's response to the economic narrative

The new Labour leadership team had to deal day to day with the impact of Tory/coalition policy on the economy and on society, to reshape Labour's organisation for the electoral challenges to come, including European elections, and to establish a policy framework and approach for the longer term.

Whether implicitly or explicitly (opinion and evidence differ somewhat), it was decided not to concentrate on countering the myth of 'Labour's crash', on three grounds.

First, it was felt that arguing endlessly about the past risked being bogged down in it, when what mattered more to the country was the shape of its future.

Second, although it was believed that the government's approach was not only misguided, but risked actively damaging the economy, it was still thought that, by 2015, a more substantial recovery would have occurred and would make the events of 2010 seem less relevant. It should be remembered that until George Osborne's VAT increase and rash spending cuts, the economy was recovering - the sheer scale of his failure to achieve growth was not anticipated.

Third, whatever the considerable merits of our record in government, and the very real achievements of 1997 - 2010, we had just lost an election fought on that very record. It was clear too that some elements, such as our record on immigration, remained a source of considerable contention and disagreement.

So it was decided that, as in 1994, the Labour party in 2010 should fundamentally reassess the condition of Britain and its people and seek a fresh approach to addressing their problems.

Labour's response to the electoral challenge

One other fundamental and bold decision was also made early in the Parliament. Labour would explicitly challenge the assumption that no opposition can come back after only one term without power. Although bold, this was not unreasonable - after all, the Tories had failed to gain a clean victory in 2010.

Both the public and the party were told that Labour had set its sights, not just on retaining all the seats held in 2010, but on gaining enough additional seats to form a majority government. A list of 106 'key seat' targets was not just drawn up, but also publicly announced.

In consequence, key seat constituency parties were encouraged to select candidates early, so that the maximum possible time was available for them to establish an identity and track record locally, before new MPs from other parties could build up much of an 'incumbency factor'. Steps were also taken to establish a network of local organisers to work in the key seats.

These two early judgments - not simply to move on from reliance on 'New Labour' policies and brand but also to commit - organisationally - to a key seat programme whose size and scale were determined politically, rather than organisationally, had a considerable effect, not just on the course of the parliament, but on the eventual campaign.

While the early investment in organisation was a great success, the ambition of the list, and, in some cases, the very early selection of candidates, created inflexibility, fatigue, and considerable strain on resources, especially for many individual candidates. We have been much impressed, not only by the commitment and talent of our unsuccessful candidates, but by their personal sacrifice - many effectively put their lives on hold for several years.

The economy

Throughout the parliament, concern was expressed that, whatever the undoubted merits of focusing on the future, insufficient challenge to the endlessly repeated 'crash myth' was, and would continue to be, damaging. Certainly the Osborne mantra that we had failed to 'fix the roof while the sun was shining' was deeply galling, to those who remembered just how many roofs on hospitals, schools and homes had to be fixed, after the decay and dereliction of the Thatcher/Major years.

Labour had been in government when the global economy was crashed by the banks, and however heroic and successful the efforts made, to stop the banking collapse turning into a new Great Depression, it was impossible to avoid attracting some of the blame for it occurring, however unfair that might be.

Conversely, the Tories' mistake, post 2010, of cutting "too far too fast", stalled the recovering economy that they inherited, but meant that the recovery, though late, and slower than in other countries, still came at an electorally convenient time.

Just as Labour, being in government was blamed for a global crisis; the Tories, being then in government, got credit, as the election approached, for falling global energy and food prices, as well as the record low interest rates that persisted across the world.

The leader

Over the period 2010 – 15, what the polls did consistently show was that, when asked if 'this man could be Prime Minister', David Cameron was rated above Ed Miliband. Since he actually was Prime Minister, this response was perhaps less than surprising.

It is the fate of every Labour Leader of the Opposition to be the target of ferocious attack from partisan sections of our media. Tony Blair was called 'Bambi', and described as too young and inexperienced to be up to doing the job.

However, Ed Miliband faced an exceptionally vitriolic and personal attack. Even before he courageously took on the public concerns that led to the Leveson enquiry, elements in the news media seemed determined to try to destroy him.

Policy development

Many could see the sense of a reassessment that did not rely on an assumption that, what worked in 1997 was the right approach for 2015. However, some 'New Labour' lessons were still certainly valuable. For example, the need for a clear and consistent vision and political narrative, combined with a consistent and persistent approach to 'repetition and rebuttal' seemed to have been taken on board by our opponents, rather than us.

Over the course of the Parliament, much excellent work was done on policy development. The policy review ranged wide and deep. It combined a fundamental assessment of the issues facing Britain with drawing up detailed proposals to tackle them.

Reports on further developing the National Minimum Wage, a National Infrastructure Commission, how to build on the strengths of British manufacturing, and ways to tackle the housing crisis, were among those commissioned - many from senior figures in the business community. Our election manifesto was an impressive document whose policies would have made a real difference to the lives of British people and the state of the nation.

In addition, many thoughtful and constructive speeches were made in the House of Commons, around the country, to major organisations, such as the CBI, and at party conferences.

Indeed, though all our opponents criticised our manifesto - and the Tories, in particular, claimed it was uncoded, (totally untrue), irrelevant and unaffordable - during the election campaign, and since, they have paid it the greatest compliment - that of imitation.

During the run-up to the election, the SNP, in pursuit of their claim to be a party of the left, adopted Labour proposals on taxation that they had previously refused to support.

The Tories, during the campaign, adopted a 'me too' approach to many of Labour's pledges they had previously criticised. On health spending, on extra hours of childcare, or on economic devolution, they suddenly claimed to match, or to exceed, Labour proposals.

And, following the election, they have proposed a higher minimum wage, the setting up of a National Infrastructure Commission, and to make changes in non-dom tax status - all in our manifesto - though it is not yet clear how well these or many other uncoded Tory election 'offers' will actually be delivered. Certainly rail electrification schemes, and a cap on care costs - both promised during the campaign - have already been postponed to the next Parliament.

However for all the strength of our policies, much of the evidence we have received speaks of a lack of public awareness of much of their content. We have also heard of a perception that, while individual policies were often sound and popular, we lacked the early adoption of a consistent overarching narrative or theme, which could be simply expressed and conveyed on the

doorstep, or in the studio. It is felt that, as the course of events changed during the parliament, a succession of different themes emerged. In contrast the Tories stuck to the “crash myth” and welded this into their mantra of the ‘long-term economic plan.’

In addition, while our policy agenda was well constructed, it was not always easy to communicate. We adopted a highly principled and strict rule that all policy announcements must be “fully costed,” in part to counter any concerns about our handling of the economy. We were highly responsible, taking care only to promise what we knew we could deliver. This may have made us too cautious.

On issues such as immigration and benefits we rightly stuck to our Labour values, but this meant that our policies were nuanced, compared to the brutal simplicity of either the Tories or UKIP. Given this, it was essential that policies were agreed early and then communicated consistently and simply.

By contrast, the Tories made promises that were wholly uncoded or unquantified - for example, £7bn of ‘tax cuts’, an extra £8bn for the NHS, £12bn of unexplained cuts in welfare - without the media storm that any such proposals from Labour would have provoked. They were also able to get away with a whole litany of promises made on Ministerial visits - promises specific to particular seats - for local roads, bridges or schools. How many will be delivered remains to be seen.

A possible turning point

With the inestimable benefit of hindsight, it appears that a turning point in the Parliament may have been reached after the fall-out from the ‘omnishambles’ budget of 2012. In his budget response, Ed Miliband made the best such speech that many long serving parliamentarians could remember. The government’s standing was considerably damaged. The 2012 local elections brought many successes. And at the Paralympics, famously, George Osborne was spontaneously booed by the crowd. The economy was showing few, if any, signs of recovery.

Although nothing changed about the government’s rhetoric or verbal response, in practice, the hard-line pursuit of austerity at any cost softened. As predicted - not least by Labour – as policy eased, growth began, slowly, to return.

At this mid-point in the Parliament, Labour's standing in the opinion polls was quite healthy and there was a view held by certain pollsters that it would be impossible for the Tories to win the 2015 election because of their weakness across large parts of the UK, and the assumed impossibility of their improving on their vote in 2010.

Then and later, many commentators asserted that we were pursuing a 'core vote' strategy. In other words, we had ceased even to try to win over voters who had deserted Labour in recent years. The taskforce certainly never heard those words, nor did we ever detect an approach that could be so designated, in any presentations about election strategy. However, if the evidence of the public's view of Labour was favourable enough to win an election, it would be only human for this to have at least some effect on strategists' appetite for risk. Unfortunately this preceded the political shifts of the second half of the parliament.

The second half of the parliament

Following the wake up for the Tories of the omnishambles budget, events added new challenges for Labour beyond the economy and the historic narrative. The challenges were both political - the focus on immigration and on benefits - and electoral - a rise in nationalism and changes in the standing of other political parties.

The European elections of May 2014 inevitably led to a greater focus on, in particular, UKIP and the Greens, as being likely to do better in that contest than they had done at the election of 2010. UKIP's concentration on immigration, especially from Romania and Bulgaria undoubtedly dominated the political dialogue. Even though much of what they said about the practical impact of immigration was untrue, the government's pledge to reduce the figures to 'tens of thousands, 'no ifs, no buts' - and spectacular failure to deliver - fed the UKIP narrative that immigration was out of control.

Ed Miliband made a thoughtful, and well regarded, speech on the issue, but it took time for clear policy to be developed, and for Labour's strong anti-exploitation stance to be deployed. UKIP was able to exploit the claim that the major parties were all out of touch on this issue - a claim that had resonance among many in low paid or insecure work.

Meanwhile the Government continued to target those forced by circumstance to seek financial support from the state, whether as a result of unemployment or ill health. A series of vicious and cynical attacks were mounted on some of the most vulnerable in society, in the expectation that the Labour party would do its utmost to defend them, and could be painted as the party of 'welfare', rather than one on the side of the citizenry as a whole.

The work of Jon Cruddas and others has highlighted the sense in the country that politicians, including Labour, had lost connection with many people who felt that no one was "looking out for them". People were fearful for their futures or dissatisfied by being held back, as the cuts damaged them, alongside the Tories emphasising the weakness in the economy and the scale of the deficit challenge. This is likely to have been more damaging for Labour than the Conservatives, of whom less understanding is expected.

The Scottish referendum followed in September 2014. Labour had been the dominant party in Scotland for many years after the near death of the Tories. It is widely believed that our collapse there was a disaster that had been waiting to happen, perhaps for many years.

The referendum victory was a relief for the cross party Better Together campaign, and came literally a day before the start of Labour party conference.

Because the referendum was cast, inevitably, as a 'Yes' or 'No' campaign, Labour and the Tories ended up on the same side, in support of the Union.

What no one envisaged was that, immediately after the result, the Prime Minister would choose to play the English nationalism card, with a dishonest, as well as unscrupulous, call for 'English votes for English laws', when all experienced parliamentarians know that, only rarely, is there any law affecting only England. Labour strongly dissociated itself from such a dangerous manoeuvre.

Perhaps in consequence, few realised that support for the "yes" campaign might lead straight to increased support for the SNP, especially as their policies, on, for example, the top rate of tax, or a mansion tax, were more conservative than those of Labour.

In fact, while some might have expected Labour to regain support after the referendum, the SNP adopted Labour policies they had previously rejected, and built not only on the emotion of the referendum, but on the perception of a possible betrayal of government promises.

Moreover, as in 2010 after the general election, in the aftermath of the referendum campaign, the Scottish Labour party was forced to conduct a leadership election, while, like the Tories in 2010, the SNP were able to concentrate on disseminating their post referendum narrative.

Polls suggested that a near wipe out in Scotland was becoming inevitable. By this point Labour hopes of a majority in Westminster had diminished, but there was still hope of forming a minority government, going into the short campaign in April 2015.

The short campaign

In the aftermath of an unexpected result, it is all too easy to jump to snap judgements. Inevitably after this campaign the focus fell on the party, the campaign and the leader.

Our view is that the seeds of defeat were sewn far before the short campaign. Ed Miliband and the party had stated an ambition to return to power after one term in opposition. In retrospect, while this may have been achievable in 2010 - given the Tories failure to achieve an overall majority - it was unachievable after the fall out of the Scottish referendum, regardless of leader and strategy.

The potential outcome of forming a minority government depended on greater success in our target seats, but was also affected by the scale and nature of the Liberal Democrat collapse.

In truth the defeat was only a shock because the opinion polls were so inaccurate in predicting the overall vote share of Labour and the Tories tied at 34 per cent-34 per cent. Most likely, they failed to take account of differential turnout - i.e. those who planned to vote Tory turned out in greater numbers than those who planned to vote Labour. If so, this is somewhat surprising, since the same effect has occurred in previous elections, including 2010, and pollsters could presumably have corrected for it. Also, the polls were especially inaccurate in the key marginals - both our targets and Liberal/ Conservative marginals.

Ed Miliband performed well during the campaign - his "people's question times," early in 2015 laid the groundwork. In the election campaign itself, when for the first time, the public had more of an opportunity to see Ed Miliband for himself, his standing markedly improved.

But this was, of course, too little too late, and was in a context where the Tories had succeeded in muddying the waters by involving other leaders in the election debates, none of whom was an alternative Prime Minister.

It is perhaps the most eloquent tribute to Ed's qualities, that - having boasted for many years that he 'could not wait' to be judged in a head to head encounter with Ed Miliband, - with only a few weeks to go, the Prime Minister did his utmost to run away from the challenge altogether and, when that failed, to fix the timing and terms of the encounter to minimise his exposure.

We certainly did not lose the campaign on the ground. Many have remarked that the ground campaign was the best ever, and while there are inevitable geographical variations our staff and activists did us proud. There are lessons to learn, for example about candidate support and selection, and some of the mechanics of the ground campaign. And during this review, we have learnt of excellent examples of effective working with trade union colleagues in key seats, and need to replicate it. The party has collated lessons learnt for the ground campaign, through a detailed review that we have taken into account.

We have enormous strength on the ground and should be proud of the great work done by our activists and the support they received from our talented and committed party staff and the trade union movement. Going into the election we had the largest party membership for 15 years. Along with these strengths, our digital team was effective in communication, in mobilising supporters and in raising money.

At the same time we should recognise that many believe the Conservatives - partly because of early and certain access to substantial funds - were better able to use careful targeting of key voter groups and to co-ordinate the central and local elements of their campaign more effectively. We should continue to benchmark ourselves against both our political competitors and political movements elsewhere, so that, for example, we don't fail to recognise the growing role of digital and data in future campaigns.

Section 2: Analysis of the 2015 results

Introduction

This section sets out our understanding of the results. It is important to recognise that it is not possible to be certain about every aspect of the result, but we believe that, with assistance from party staff, academics, and others, and taking account of all available information, we have a reliable picture.

Votes

Labour gained votes in the 2015 election both in the UK as a whole and in England and Wales. There was a small swing to Labour, 1.5 per cent. This was the first election since 1997 when Labour's share of the vote went up.

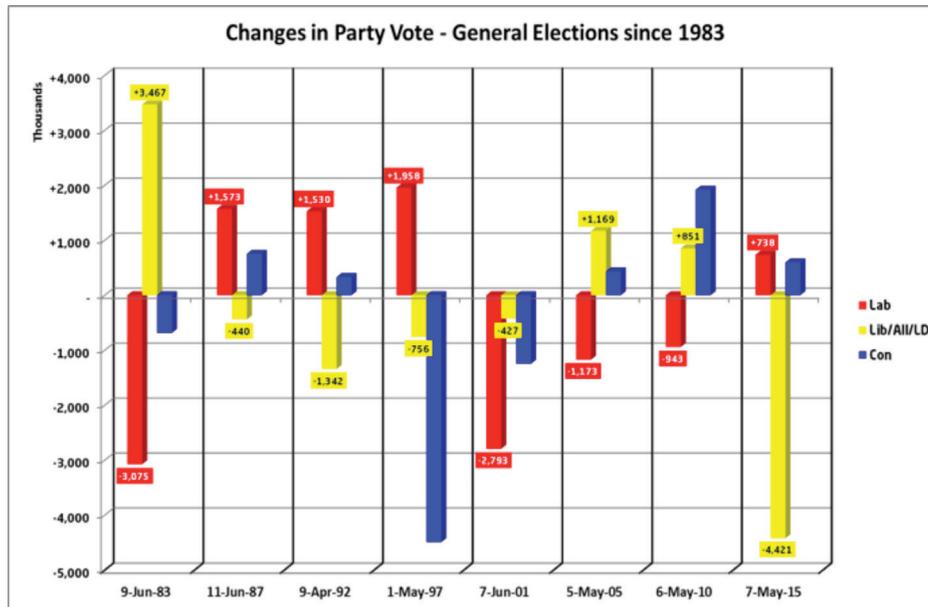
However, the votes we gained were in insufficient numbers, and in the wrong places for greater electoral success. Our vote gains were over-shadowed by the impact on seats of the collapse of the Liberal Democrats and the rise of the Scottish Nationalists.

There was a large swing against the government, but this fell not on the Tories but on the Liberal Democrats. In a sense, the result in Scotland was also a vote against the government, but it had a wider character - a vote against Westminster - and the Tories' weakness in Scotland meant that, in a sense, a vote against 'the government' in Scotland turned into a vote against Labour.

Both UKIP and the Greens made large gains in votes but won only one seat each. Analysis suggests that votes that went to UKIP and the Greens did not significantly affect the overall outcome of the election, i.e. the number of seats won by Labour and the Tories.

The table below sets out the changes in votes for the three main parties since 1983. After the disappointment of 1983, we gained votes progressively until 1997, and then lost votes in each of the next three elections. 2015 showed a recovery for Labour.

The graph on page 17 sets out the changes in votes for the three main parties since 1983. After the disappointment of 1983, we gained votes progressively until 1997, and then lost votes in each of the next three elections. 2015 showed a recovery for Labour.



While there was a slight swing to Labour, this was much less than was forecast in the polls. The polls forecast a tie in votes but the result was more than a 6 per cent victory for the Tories over Labour. This was a very difficult election for the pollsters to read. It was a six party election with dramatic shifts. It has become harder to rely on simple concepts such as “core voters” and “floating voters”. And it was hard to predict the impact of the UKIP vote, and the impact of coalition on the Liberal Democrats. Polling is not an exact science, and it is said that it is often harder to reach Tory than Labour voters. It was particularly difficult to predict the scale of the Liberal Democrat collapse, since incumbency has been highly beneficial to them in the past – but was not in 2015.

We took comfort in the fact that, nationally, the published polls were static – with Labour and the Tories tied at 34 per cent each - and that the published polls in the marginals were favourable. Our own marginal polling was restricted to our target seats, and so gave no additional information about Scotland, or the Liberal Democrats.

With hindsight, we may have been too ready to rely on the reassurance of the closeness of the polls, and either failed to hear the message from the doorstep, or, if it was heard, failed to act on it.

Analysis since the election suggests that there was no significant late switching between us and the Tories and that at least half of the 6 per cent polling error was accounted for by differential turnout - i.e. those who said they would vote Tory turned out in greater numbers than predicted.

However, it is extremely hard to be sure. The party's own analysis suggests that, while there was no 'late swing', in the sense of a conscious decision to switch parties, a large number of people were uncertain of how to vote. An unusual number then firmed up in the same direction - away from Labour. They may have been swayed by the supposed 'SNP threat'.

Seats

We lost the election decisively, not only because our small gain in votes was insufficient, but also because our votes were in "the wrong places". Critically, in terms of converting votes to seats, we gained votes in seats where we are already strong. We went backwards where we needed to go forwards. Our best results were in our own seats (4.8 per cent swing to Labour) and especially our 100 safest seats (5.7 per cent swing to Labour). In the 100 most marginal Conservative seats we gained only 0.6 per cent and the Conservatives gained 2.5 per cent.

Specifically:

- We had a disastrous result in Scotland where the SNP reached a "tipping point" that enabled them to win almost 50 per cent of the vote, and 56 of the 59 seats, including 40 gains from Labour.

Where we gained votes in England, they were mainly in seats that we held already, rather than in the key marginals - we won only 22 of our target seats, and lost 8 of our existing seats to the Tories.

The collapse of the Liberal Democrat vote further hampered our ability to win the marginals. While we gained more votes than the Tories from the Liberal Democrats, these tended to be in seats we would have held in any case.

The analysis by the party's staff and that by British Electoral Survey (BES), the leading academic analysts, suggests UKIP may have had no impact on the seats' result. However, because they had taken votes more from the Tories than from Labour, the movement away from UKIP during 2015 helped the Tories more than Labour.

The table below shows our votes and seats nationally.

	Votes	%	seats won	gains	losses	net	change %
Labour	9,347,326	31.3%	232	22	48	-26	1.5%
Conservative	11,291,248	37.7%	331	35	10	25	0.8%
Lib Dem	2,415,888	8.1%	8	0	48	-48	-15.5%
UKIP	3,862,805	12.9%	1	1	0	1	9.7%
Green	1,150,791	3.8%	1	0	0	0	2.9%
Plaid cymru	181,694	0.6%	3	0	0	0	0.0%
SNP	1,454,436	4.9%	56	50	0	50	3.2%
Other	275,919	0.9%	18	0	0	0	-2.6

Scotland and the SNP

The facts in Scotland are very simple: this was a victory for the SNP and a defeat for all other parties and because the Tories held only one seat in 2010, we were the major losers.

Despite our awareness of a likely disaster in Scotland, we (and the commentators) still believed that we would prevent the Tories winning an overall majority and that we were likely to form a minority government - while we were clear that we wouldn't do any deal with the SNP, it was highly likely that they would make it impossible for the Tories to stay in power. However, we failed to foresee the scale of the Liberal Democrat collapse.

The Liberal Democrats collapse

The nature of the Liberal Democrats collapse overturned a long lasting assumption that there was an inverse relationship between the fortunes of the Liberal Democrats and those of Labour. In the past where the Liberal Democrats did well Labour did badly and where the Liberal Democrats did poorly, it helped Labour (e.g. 1987 and 1992).

Latest estimates from the BES of the results are that 7.9 per cent of the 2010 Liberal Democrats moved to Labour and 4.4 per cent to the Tories. However the Tories took 27 seats from the Liberal Democrats, the SNP 10 and Labour 8.

There are three reasons why, while Labour gained more votes from the Liberal Democrats, the Tories won more seats:

- The Tories were in second place in 2010 in two thirds of Liberal Democrat seats
- The Tories were clearly targeting Liberal Democrat seats, especially in the South West
- There is some evidence that Liberal Democrat voters supported Labour tactically, or moved to us in Lib/Con marginals, and may have let the Tories in. For example, BES estimates that up to 7 seats were lost in this way. However, the change in the Labour vote suggests that the impact was not so significant, and the Liberal Democrat vote may have fragmented.

These dynamics mean that the Tories now hold a number of seats that they can only lose through a Liberal Democrats revival, or by Labour coming from 3rd place in 2010 to win in 2020. Though a difficult task, such dramatic shifts have occurred in previous elections.

Greens

The Greens' share of the vote increased in the UK from 1 per cent to 3.8 per cent. There were 43 English (mainly South and Midlands) and Welsh Labour target seats where the Green vote rose by more than the Labour vote.

While some people switched to the Greens from Labour, they were probably few in number. The increase in Green votes came overwhelmingly from the 2010 Liberal Democrats and was correlated with those constituencies where the Liberal Democrat vote collapsed the most, including some of the seats that the Liberal Democrats lost to Labour. What is certain however is that there was significant tactical voting by Green supporters, including many who voted Green in the local elections, who backed Labour in marginal seats.

We can therefore conclude with some confidence that Labour was successful at attracting the support of Greens and that their rise played little part in Labour's defeat.

The impact of UKIP

Much has been made of the threat to Labour from UKIP. We should avoid complacency, especially in the various elections that will take place between now and 2020. However, we believe that, in 2015 UKIP was in net terms more damaging to the Tories than to Labour, though they are a growing presence in local government. UKIP are estimated to have taken many more votes from 2010 Tories (4.6 per cent) than from 2010 Labour (1.7 per cent). It is not possible to identify any seat where the increase in the UKIP vote clearly came more from Labour 2010 voters than from the Conservatives, which means, by definition, that there is no seat which Labour might have won in the absence of UKIP, but did not because of Labour switching. However, it is likely that some of those who voted Tory in 2010, and moved to UKIP in 2015, had voted Labour before 2010.

While the UKIP vote more than trebled, its distribution remained largely unchanged implying that its character was also unchanged. Had there been a coherent swing from Labour to UKIP among groups and in communities that had previously been loyal to Labour, then that would have been reflected in a much more varied performance between seats than they in fact achieved. There would have been some seats where the concentrations of these voters would have led to very large swings and possibly one or two seats changing hands. Instead what is notable is the lack of peaks and troughs in their support. In the vast majority of seats their share of the vote was between ten and twenty per cent.

In every election there is a large proportion of the electorate, perhaps one in four, who switch their support from one party to another regardless of the dominant national swing. These are mainly people whose affiliation to any of the parties is loose. In the past this has tended to affect the Liberal Democrats the most as their lack of political definition, their centrism and their anti-establishment rhetoric meant that they had a wide potential reach. However the Liberal Democrats were unavailable as a party of protest, having been part of the government.

The polls were consistent in showing that, among direct switchers from the major parties, previous Conservatives were the largest in number. That constituted a real swing, more than just the normal churn between parties, and it made sense, in that, not only were those concerned about immigration and the European Union much more likely to have been previous Conservative voters, the Conservatives were in government and therefore more likely to be shedding voters than attracting new ones.

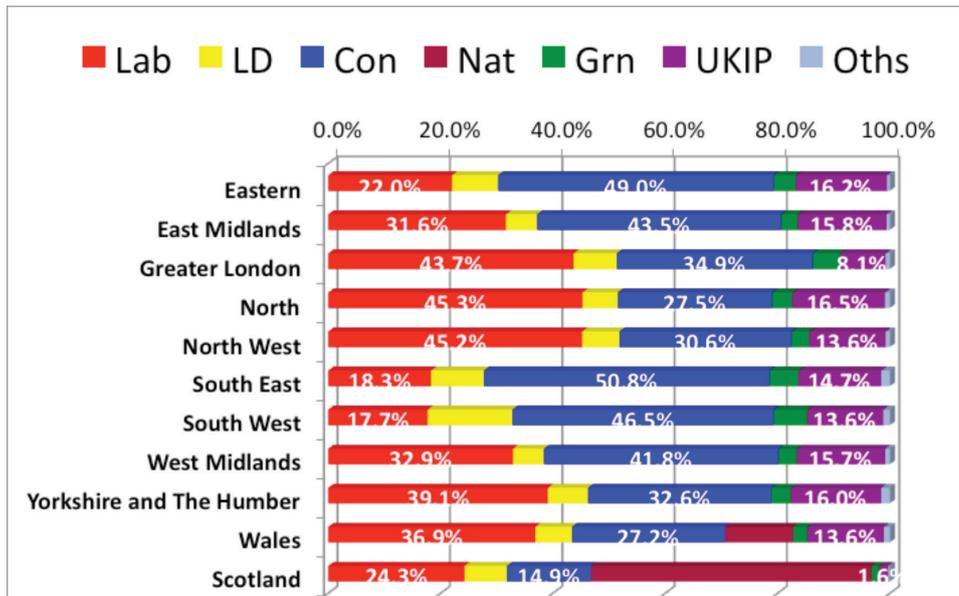
Regions

The table below shows the swing in each of the English regions and Wales. In general we gained votes in regions where we were already strong: 7.1 per cent (6 seats) in London, 5.5 per cent (4 seats) in the North West and 4.8 per cent (one seat) in Yorkshire and Humber.

The table below show the regional vote share for the UK. The election has reinforced Labour's strength in the North and London and the Conservative lead in the South and the East.

Reg	Region		Lab	LD	Con	Nat	BMP	Grn	UKIP	Swing Con to Lab
EA	Eastern	58	+2.4%	-15.8%	+1.9%		-2.1%	+2.5%	+11.9%	0.2%
EM	East Midlands	46	+1.9%	-15.3%	+2.3%		-3.1%	+2.4%	+12.5%	-0.2%
GL	Greater London	73	+7.1%	-14.4%	+0.3%		-1.5%	+3.3%	+6.4%	3.4%
N	North	33	+2.8%	-16.5%	+1.6%			+3.3%	+13.8%	0.6%
NW	North West	71	+5.5%	-15.2%	+0.6%			+2.6%	+10.4%	3.0%
SE	South East	84	+2.1%	-16.7%	+1.2%			+3.7%	+10.8%	0.4%
SW	South West	55	+2.3%	-19.6%	+3.7%		-0.7%	+4.8%	+9.1%	-0.7%
WM	West Midlands	59	+2.3%	-15.0%	+2.3%			+2.7%	+11.7%	0.0%
YH	Yorkshire and The Humber	54	+4.8%	-15.8%	+0.2%		-4.3%	+2.7%	+13.2%	2.5%
W	Wales	40	+0.6%	-13.6%	+1.1%	0.8%		+2.1%	+11.2%	-0.3%

The graph below shows the regional vote share for the UK. The election has reinforced Labour's strength in the North and London and the Conservative lead in the South and the East.



Wales

The result in Wales was disappointing – we underperformed compared with other traditional Labour heartlands. There was a small swing in votes to the Conservatives from Labour (0.3 per cent) compared to the average swing in England and Wales of 3.4 per cent. We lost two seats - Vale of Clwyd and Gower - to the Conservatives, by very small majorities. We won one of our target seats – Cardiff Central, which has a large student population – from the Liberal Democrats, who also lost a seat to the Conservatives. The Conservatives fought a campaign on local issues and played down national politics, and indeed played down the word “Conservative”.

We remain the largest party by some distance, with a 10 per cent lead on the Conservatives. UKIP made large gains in votes, and, while they didn’t win any seats, are in second place in five Labour seats. They could, therefore, present a threat in the Welsh Assembly elections, because of the list system.

Our target seats

We were largely unsuccessful in our target seats. We won only 10 from the Tories.

The seats that we took from the Tories are instructive in that they largely reflect the voter groups who moved towards us: four in London, most likely because left leaning Liberal Democrats voted Labour; Dewsbury and Wolverhampton South West which have large multi ethnic communities; the North West has become a Labour stronghold – we won seats from the Tories in Wirral West, Lancaster & Fleetwood and City of Chester.

Our best gains in the vote and our best swings from the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats were almost entirely in City seats. Our worst results were almost entirely in towns and suburbs. Our only gain in a southern town was Hove, where we had a very strong local campaign and probably benefited from tactical voting by Green supporters.

Voter groups

In very simple terms we did well: amongst the BAME communities, amongst liberal professionals, among younger people – especially younger women - and amongst the most disadvantaged. We went backwards amongst older voters and stood still elsewhere.

Age and gender

We did badly with men over 60 (Labour 24 per cent Conservatives 44 per cent) and women over 60 (Labour 25 per cent Conservatives 46 per cent). It has been estimated that the Tories' lead in votes from the over 65s is equivalent to their total majority. Around a third of voters are 65+.

This is a growing weakness. It has been separately estimated that we were 5 per cent ahead with 65+ in 1997, 13 per cent behind in 2010 and 24 per cent behind in 2015. Polls on voting intentions suggested a swing against Labour of 8 per cent amongst the over 65s and a swing to Labour of 12 per cent among 18-24 year olds and 6 per cent among 25-34 year olds.

We did marginally better overall amongst women (Labour 33per cent, Tories 38 per cent) than men (Labour 29 per cent, Tories 37 per cent). Our gender advantage is entirely amongst younger women.

Social class and employment

Compared with 2010, we neither clearly “lost touch with middle class voters” nor “lost our traditional working class voters”. However, we made little progress with either.

Our DE support which was 59 per cent in 1997 slipped to 40 per cent in 2010 and to 37 per cent in 2015. We stopped the slide in C2s - but remain 20 per cent behind our 1997 figure.

The Tories lead us by 17 per cent points amongst private sector workers and Labour lead by 3 per cent among public sector. The 20 per cent gap has increased from 16 per cent in 2010.

BAME

Despite what has been reported, and the Conservatives’ efforts, Labour continues to have a clear lead amongst Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic voters. The data on this is inconsistent. An Ipsos MORI poll saw Labour attracting 65 per cent of the BAME vote against 23 per cent for the Conservatives, while Survation had Labour at 52 per cent and the Conservatives on 33 per cent. As would be expected, there is a wide variation between different communities. Survation show the Conservatives ahead amongst Hindus and Sikhs, whereas Labour has a substantial lead amongst BAME Christians and Muslims but sample sizes are very small. Survation also show Labour having a huge (46per cent point) lead amongst black voters and only a 12 per cent point lead amongst Asian voters.

The Conservatives may therefore have benefitted from what appears to have been a concerted and systematic campaign to engage with certain BAME communities and from Cameron’s overseas visits aimed to impress diaspora communities

Section 3: Learning the lessons

Turnout

Turnout remains lower in most of our key groups. Older voters are almost twice as likely to vote as younger voters. Turnout is also lower in the social classes where we lead the Tories. For example 58 per cent C2s, 59 per cent DE, but 76 per cent AB. This combined with our failure to broaden our appeal, made success arithmetically difficult.

Drivers of the result

As the new leadership plan for 2020, they should approach with caution a number of theories for our defeat that sound plausible but need to be nuanced and substantiated:

- “We had the wrong policies.” In fact our individual policies polled well, the issue was the difficulty in creating a cohesive, consistent narrative and communicating this clearly and simply
- “We were out of tune with the public on deficit reduction.” While trust on the economy and blame for the deficit were major factors, BES analysis suggests that the majority of people thought that the cuts were going too far and preferred higher taxes to further cuts as the route to deficit reduction
- “We were too left wing.” This is not a simple discussion. Many of our most “left wing” policies were the most popular. These were the kind of policies the public expected from Labour. An analysis by BES suggests that some of those who supported us would have been less likely to had they seen us as less left wing. Both the SNP and Greens gained votes in this election and arguably they were seen as to the left of Labour. However, we did fail to convert voters in demographic groups who are traditionally seen as in the centre, we lost voters to UKIP, failed to win back Liberal Democrat voters in sufficient numbers in the right places, and lost a small number of voters to the Tories.
- “We were too anti-business.” We are, of course, wholehearted supporters of a strong and responsible private sector. As in previous elections, the Tories worked hard to mobilise their big business supporters to attack us. And when people are insecure about jobs and wages, such propaganda fosters uncertainty.

However, polls showed a wish, from voters, for us to be tougher on big business, and policies that were unpopular with many senior business people, such as the energy price freeze and the Mansion Tax, were popular with voters. Moreover, we had a strong and positive agenda for small and medium-sized businesses.

- “We were seen as anti-aspiration.” Few thought this was the case specifically. However we need to be clearer that we are concerned for the prosperity of all and have a clearly articulated strategy for growth.

In general, we believe that these commonly held reasons for defeat should be treated with caution and require deeper analysis. Often they were contributory factors to the broader narrative rather than necessarily significant reasons in their own right.

We have consistently heard four reasons for our defeat both from pollsters and from those on the doorstep:

- Failure to shake off the myth that we were responsible for the financial crash and therefore failure to build trust in the economy
- Inability to deal with the issues of “connection” and, in particular, failing to convince on benefits and immigration
- Despite his surge in 2015, Ed Miliband still wasn’t judged to be as strong a leader as David Cameron
- The fear of the SNP “propping up” a minority Labour government

Of these, the effect of the SNP threat is the most disputed. The Tories played heavily on it at the end of the campaign. The evidence is unclear. Some analysis suggests there was no clear late switching. However, it was heard consistently on the doorstep that this scaremongering raised concerns. It may have reinforced the views of those who had already decided not to vote Labour, and, if so, may have had a decisive impact in a small number of constituencies.

Historic perceptive

The result was a shock. So much so that some have compared it to the result of 1983, which was the most decisive defeat for Labour since the war. There is no comparison either in nature or scale.

In 1983 there was a 9.3 per cent swing away from Labour, whereas, in 2015, there was a small swing to Labour. In 1983, the third party, the Liberals, won 13.9 per cent of the vote but only 23 seats, whereas in 2015 the SNP attracted only 4.9 per cent of the vote but won 56 seats –gaining 50, mainly from Labour.

The standing of the parties after the election also bears no comparison. In 1983 the Tories had an overall majority of 144 (2015:10) and a lead on Labour of 188 (2015:98) seats and a lead in votes of 14.8 percentage points (2015: 6.5 percentage points).

Conclusion

We were badly beaten. The collapse in Scotland made it impossible for us to be the biggest party and the Liberal Democrat collapse enabled the Tories to gain an overall majority and keep us out of power. We received far fewer votes than were foreseen. And where we did achieve swings against the Tories, these were in safe Labour seats, rather than in the target marginals, in which we worked so hard.

Context

It is critically important for the country that Labour is able to win the 2020 election but we will face huge challenges. On current boundaries we need 94 gains to secure a majority of 2. There are only 24 Conservative seats with a majority of less than 3000 over Labour. There are only two seats in Scotland where the SNP majority over Labour is less than 5000. We have a number of seats with narrow majorities to defend.

The Tory government is likely to make this more difficult through: their plan to make it even more difficult for people to register to vote, the changes in constituency boundaries which will be prejudicial to Labour and further restrictions on the funding of political parties which will affect Labour, but not the Tories, who will continue to be heavily funded by those who benefit from their tax reductions for the very wealthy.

Apart from boundary changes –which it has been estimated might reduce our seats from 232 to 220 - demographics will move against us unless we change the make-up of our vote or turnout. It has been estimated that by 2020 there will be 1.5 million more voters aged 65+ and that if turnout is static and the Tories maintain their 2015 share of these voters, then they will automatically gain 570,000 votes. In addition it is likely that by 2020: the proportion of private sector versus public sector workers will increase; that there will be 1.5m more self-employed and that there will be far fewer in manufacturing.

Scotland is a huge challenge. Were Labour to fail to recover in Scotland, it has been estimated that the swing required in England and Wales from the Tories to Labour would be 12.5 per cent to secure an overall majority or 4per cent to be the largest party.

2020 will be another complicated election. It is hard to predict the future of UKIP and, while a strong UKIP may not have damaged Labour in 2015, we shouldn't be complacent. UKIP has established a strong position in some of our heartland areas. Any un-wind of UKIP is likely to help the Tories rather than Labour. Conversely a Liberal Democrat recovery may assist Labour.

However, we have reasons to be positive.

The huge increase in our membership which, in 2015, was at its highest for 15 years, and began to surge in the days immediately after the election, and the excitement that has been generated by the leadership contest, gives us something on which to build. We have new capabilities in digital, and a proven track record in using local organisers.

Labour's new leadership have already drawn on some of the lessons identified during our review. For example, Jeremy Corbyn's leadership campaign rightly focused on trust in politics, mobilised young people, and engaged more directly with the electorate.

In addition we should remember that the Tories only secured a small majority, despite a favourable global economy and the benefit of incumbency.

We believe that there are indeed lessons that we can learn from our defeat in 2015, which will help us in 2020.

Vision for Britain

We must set out a vision for the country's future, which shows both what we believe the country needs and what we will contribute to its achievement. All our policy development communications should be set within the framework of that vision, so that we have a story to tell. Specific policy proposals and ideas can then, over time, be fleshed out so as to exemplify that vision.

We should spell out the vision in language which is as clear, simple and inspiring as we can make it - 'campaign in poetry'.

The primary and heavy responsibility of the party's leadership, including the Shadow Cabinet, lies in the devising and expressing of such a vision, through inclusion and debate.

Once developed, these themes and phrases must be used persistently and consistently until they are embedded, not just in our thinking, but also in that of the country.

Policy

Our policy making – while dealing with the day to day – must be focused on the likely condition of Britain in the 2020s.

We should draw on as many sources as possible to help us identify the problems and the opportunities likely to arise and to consider government's role in addressing them. We must try to ensure that we draw on the full range of available information and ideas – not confining ourselves to those whose experience or assumptions mirror our own.

For instance, it is unlikely that the challenge of providing high quality social care for a growing number of citizens will have been overcome by 2020 – indeed it may have become worse. This is just one aspect of our changing society which calls into question the post war settlement of our welfare state, founded as it was in an era when most families had one (male) breadwinner, with secure employment, who earned enough to support the family, and were able to occupy housing which was itself both secure and stable.

Such conditions can no longer be taken for granted - yet not only do they form the background to our system of pensions and benefits, - but they underlie the assumptions and operation of much of the financial sector, whose services such as banking, credit cards and mortgage lending are essential to modern life. The spread of self-employment alone raises issues which will need to be addressed.

We should recognise that it is in Britain's interest to have a strong and internationally competitive private sector. A single process of engagement with the business community should be established so that we understand each other's point of view, and so that we can draw on their understanding and expertise in developing an economic strategy to return Britain to a path of sustainable growth and improved productivity. This would facilitate a frank exchange as to where the national interest lies, and what the business community can and should contribute.

We already have strong policies to promote small and medium- sized businesses, where innovation and ideas are often to be found. We should not only maintain this focus, but also ensure that it is recognised and appreciated.

One major opportunity to convey our wider vision for the future will be found in the EU referendum campaign. This is an issue of paramount importance for the future of our country, and indeed of the EU as a whole, and it is one where our opponents are deeply divided. We can be, and should show ourselves to be, the custodians of the national interest – recognising concerns and criticisms of Europe's path, which we all share, but recognising too that Britain's place in the world is within this family of nations.

Communications

We need a comprehensive media strategy, which includes local, regional and national media, print, broadcasting and social media. While recognising that by far the greater part of UK media supports our opponents, we should work to establish and maintain good professional relationships with media practitioners. We should develop and promote the possibilities of social media for communicating with the public at large, while recognising the risk it carries of self-reinforcing messages and assumptions.

In our campaigning, we should try to ensure we maintain a two-way channel of communication and feedback. What our campaigners are hearing on the doorstep should be a major part of our political intelligence. We should endeavour to find ways to use the opportunities presented by our vastly increased membership to provide intelligence which can supplement what we learn from opinion polling and add this to our understanding of what most concerns our fellow citizens.

There should be a simple seamless narrative, whose relevance can be demonstrated, and which can be used, at regional and local, as well as national level.

We must take the global crash myth head on, which we can now see dogged us throughout the last parliament. We must re-establish our hard-won reputation for economic competence, reminding the country that, pre-crash, not only did we rebuild our NHS, schools and infrastructure, we paid down the level of debt we inherited from the Thatcher/Major years, and even after the global crash, it was under the last Labour government that interest rates fell to the historically low levels we see today.

In addition we should be proud of our record of major social change, establishing the National Minimum Wage, sharply reducing pensioner and child poverty, and encouraging greater equality of gender, race, creed and sexual orientation in our diverse society - all of these changes many now take for granted, and our opponents seek to claim.

We should work to counter the blatant double standards and rash promises, which so bias our political debate. In 2015, not only did the Tories make pledges and promises, which were uncoded, and unsourced, they promised huge cuts - for example in 'welfare' - while refusing to say where they would fall.

A register of broken promises in the 2010 parliament, could be supplemented, by those made in 2015, especially the many made at local level on Ministerial visits. We should monitor progress too, in areas where the Tories claimed to be planning to match or exceed Labour proposals, such as tackling non-dom tax status, or massively increasing the hours of childcare.

We can work with colleagues in local government, broadcasting the rich vein of innovation and excellence to be found in local Labour Government, which should be a showcase for the competence of the Party as a whole.

Political organisation

Given a 5-year fixed-term parliament, we should draw up a comprehensive five year strategy, including planning the party's fundraising and expenditure to make the most effective use of the comparatively limited resources that we have. While, of course, such a strategy will be geared towards 2020, we should make maximum use of the other electoral opportunities, elections in Scotland and Wales, as well as in the European Union and the regular cycle of local elections.

We should continue to strengthen our movement: build up our membership, work with councillors and other activists to develop community organising, continue conversations with voters, and maintain data collection, so that, although we will never match the Tories financially, we can find other means of having the same impact.

We must think and plan carefully as to how early investment can and should be made in our ground organisation, policy making, the selection of candidates and their training and support.

And, while seeking support across all groups and communities we must develop better links with older voters, and continue to nurture those, such as BAME voters or trade unionists, with whom our links have historically been strong, but who we must never take for granted, or neglect. Thought should be given to the phenomenon of differential turnout among various groups in the electorate, whether and how this could be overcome.

It is impossible now to foresee how other parties will change, develop or perhaps fade but we must take account of the possibility that we will continue to see a complex picture of minor party involvement and participation.

We should be conscious of the way in which the Tories used the last stages of the parliament, using the platform provided by public money, primarily to campaign for re-election, and consider what plans we ourselves should make should this be repeated.

Equally, we should try to encourage the development of proper ground rules which could prevent the Prime Minister from manipulating the timing and conduct of the leader's debate for party and partisan advantage, as happened in 2015.

The party leadership, including the Shadow Cabinet - both individually and collectively - should plan to spend as much time as possible away from Westminster, in order both to keep their finger on the pulse of the electorate, (rather than the Westminster 'bubble') and to have the maximum opportunity to communicate more directly with the public.

Efforts should also be made to establish a pattern of diversity amongst staff - of background, gender, race, creed and orientation. Staff should be encouraged to maintain their links with and among the wider party and movement.

Electoral organisation

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to our many excellent candidates who fought in 2015, and must learn from their experience how better to train and support them - for example in community organisation. Efforts should be made to understand, and correlate from that learned experience, what are the seats and areas where early selection is particularly key. Other than in exceptional circumstances we should not select until after the boundary review is complete and then should balance the needs of the seat and the resources of the candidate and local party.

The Labour party is fortunate in having many staff of skill, expertise and experience. Close working relationships between those at the top of the party, including the HQ staff and the leader's office are a potential source of strength.

We should cultivate a culture of excellence, including learning from sister parties, and other experts in - for example - other fields of community organisation.

Voter registration is a particular concern at the present time but, even now the December 2015 deadline has passed, should continue to be an important goal throughout the electoral cycle - especially if, as we fear, the new register is defective. Such registration drives can be led by local councillors and activists, and give a focus to continued electoral contact.

In the last election, the benefits of working closely with trade unions colleagues in key constituencies were identified. Efforts should be made to ensure that this is the norm in future campaigns.

We must develop and support a long-term strategy for Scotland. The Scottish Labour party, while remaining a key part of the UK party and movement, should have significant autonomy in policy areas relevant to Scotland and its own campaign strategy.

We are the largest party in Wales, but the Welsh assembly elections present a key electoral test, and our approach to them must be entirely without complacency, especially given the list system. In some parts of Wales we have had success in countering the threat of nationalism and of UKIP, but these lessons need to be learnt and applied across Wales as a whole.

The Lessons Learned project

We should continue to track progress in the years to 2020. We recommend a light touch version of this review should be undertaken - perhaps every year - to track progress. It could begin after the 2016 elections and include benchmarking of our progress across the country, and an assessment of our strengths and weaknesses, relative to our competitors.

The road to re-election is a marathon, not a sprint. If we learn the lessons of defeat in 2015, we can take the steps needed to return a Labour government in 2020, to rebuild a society in which the common good, and greater prosperity for all, go hand in hand.

Learning the lessons from defeat-contributors and thanks

A huge thank you to all of the members of the taskforce and to all those who have contributed to the report:

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