

[Transcript] The News Agents / One year on: Are the Tories still Liz Truss' party?

We've just come out of the Liz Truss growth speech.

It was the packed event of the conference so far.

A queue that spread right the way across the ground floor of the Midland Hotel, up the stairs and right the way down another load of stairs too.

It took us about eight minutes just to get to the end of the actual queue.

Inside the room they are talking about growth and they are talking about cutting tax and she has her evangelist believers right here who love her and they think she is still the future of the Conservatives.

Welcome to the News Agents.

The News Agents.

It's John.

It's Emily.

And it's Lewis.

And if you hear a bit of background noise, a bit of ambient sound, it's because we're in a railway terminus.

Well, not exactly a railway terminus.

It was a railway terminus but it is now the centre for where the Conservative Party Conference has just got underway.

Don't mention railways here, John.

I bet they are wishing it was not a railway terminus right now.

Well the Transport Secretary made a whole speech about the future of transport policy in the UK and never mentioned those three words, HS2, funny enough.

We did funny enough talk about the amount of track that we had built in this country under 13 years of Conservative rule which was 1200 miles and the Chinese, according to Boris Johnson, have built 25,000.

I mean, that's the former leader of their party saying how much better the Chinese are at building railways.

But forget what's going on in the conference hall, make less you have been to the fringe event which has drawn bigger crowds than anything else today.

I've been walking around the Midland Hotel trying to find the end of the queue into the Liz Truss speech and it goes right the way through the lobby, right along the ground floor of the Midland Hotel, a big old Victorian hotel and it goes right the way up the stairs and right way down the other stairs and it is full of people, admittedly a lot of journalists who might be there for the shock factor, but there's a lot of people who want to see what Liz Truss had to say.

And once we got into the room, and to be honest, there was a moment where we thought we might not be allowed into the room and we definitely got a Liz Truss side eye.

Well to be clear, we had been told because I had contacted them a few days ago because they sent out a message to other media saying do you want to come and I said we'd like to come and I got a message back saying oh Lewis, Fraser's just not room for you all I'm afraid, but I'm sure some of your LBC colleagues will be able to fill you in.

Sure enough we did.

But they didn't count on the mate list factor of course, but it's just worth underlining that a year ago we were told when Liz Truss made her leader's speech and she had a pop

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at people who live in North London townhouses and make podcasts, she was talking about the news agents.

Yeah, there was definitely a free song when she caught the side of us, but it was fine, we stayed.

Let's just make way for Liz Truss now.

We can axe the tax, we can cut the bills and we can build the homes.

Now I'm under no illusion, I don't think this is necessarily easy for us to do.

It's difficult, but we need to be prepared to do the difficult things because that is what will make Britain grow again.

We need to acknowledge the government is too big, the taxes are too high and that we are spending too much.

So let's stop taxing and banning things.

Let's instead build things and make things.

Let's be prepared to make conservative arguments again, even if it's unpopular, even if it's difficult.

I want everybody in this room to unleash their inner conservative.

And finally, my friends, let's make Britain grow again.

The room was absolutely full of people who still believe in the Liz Truss vision for Britain.

They want low tax, they want more growth, they want a person of vision and it was honestly like the last 12 months had never happened.

It was like she was this aspiring visionary leader who was coming to the front of the party with her ideas and you're kind of sitting there going, wait a second, you do remember, you know, sort of amnesia aside, you do remember what happened 12 months ago when she not only had her platform but had the entire premiership with which to make her case.

You do actually remember that moment, don't you?

I've just been speaking to a Tory Grandi in the House of Lords now but has held a number of very senior positions and is in the engine room of the Conservative Party and he is frankly horrified.

He's tearing his hair out at the support that she's still getting and he says, look, we have become the party of Brexiteers, of UKippers and frankly, if I had my way, we would be appointing a Tory party leader now.

We would not be electing one because by electing one, we are getting people like Liz Truss which is what the Conservative faithful wanted a year ago and look what a road crash that turned out to be.

But Rishi Sunak was appointed and that was the point that many of her sort of infantry men made in the room, oh, Liz Truss, don't forget, was elected by the grassroots of the Conservative Party.

Rishi wasn't.

But look, this is a conference story of two parties.

We've got the headline act or what is technically the headline act in the auditorium which by the way, they've moved to the smaller auditorium here at the Manchester Conference arena rather than the big one which tells its own tale, largely empty for even, you know, reasonably senior cabinet ministers but then it's pretty buzzing on the fringes with people like Truss,

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with people like Rhys Mogg, with people like Patel which is where the energy is for this conference but it speaks to in a way, I mean, just to take Liz Truss though, she is someone who, you know, she likes to think of herself as a like political teacher, right?

She likes to think of herself as someone who is taking the argument to people.

She even said in that speech, right?

We need to make these conservative arguments again.

It's all predicated on the idea that conservatives have not been sufficiently bold in making their arguments but of course the truth is, as she says herself, the people she really likes talking to are other conservatives.

She's less of a teacher, more of a preacher and I think, you know, really what you've got to think of is that this is a conference which is really, half of it is setting itself up not looking at the past, not looking at the present but is looking at the future.

It's looking for what the post-Sunak period looks like and setting themselves up for the period of opposition that most of them feel like is coming and you know what, it really reminds me of, it doesn't really remind me of a conference that I've been to but one that I've seen enough footage of.

It reminds me of the Labour 1980 conference, right?

Wow, that's even before my time.

For this reason, the Labour 1980 conference is the first proper conference they have in opposition.

Obviously it's not quite like in that sense but then you have Tony Benn getting up to the conference stand in that conference and listing out a whole ream of things that the last Labour government at that time did or didn't do saying it wasn't socialist enough.

And you can just see that all of these characters, they are looking at 13 years of what they think of as basically failure, they're trying to find a way of analysing and coming up with an answer for why it has been a failure and their answer is we just weren't ourselves, we just weren't conservative enough.

It's actually a way of thinking that historically it's been more characteristic of the left in British politics and you are seeing that hard ideology at play at this conference.

But you make the comparison with the Labour party conference at 1980.

I wasn't at it but I mean I do remember it.

The point was then that this was the post-mortem that took place after losing power in 1979.

We are a year away from the general election and you already feel that the battle lines are being drawn.

I was just talking to a cabinet minister special adviser about the reshuffle and who are the people that you can and can't get rid of and the reasons for it and not for it and the extent to which you've already got cabinet ministers who are lining up positioning themselves whether it be Kemi Badenoch or whether it be Suella Braverman who are looking to be the leader after next.

And you've got polling advice apparently from central office where they've been focus grouping anyone who stands still for more than 10 seconds saying that Rishi Sunak is more popular than the Conservative party.

He's ahead of the brand of the party and therefore the way you've got to win the next election or have any chance of saving the next election is you've got to go all in behind Rishi and

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obviously as we can see from this conference a lot of people are struggling with that. Yeah they're not doing that.

Liz Truss's former environment secretary was on the stage after she spoke and he talked about the number of MPs now supporting their group, the Conservative growth wing let's call it and he said it's about 60 now.

We knew there were about 30 MPs that were rebelling against the Chancellor's tax rising agenda.

If they have 60 that magic number is very close to Rishi Sunak's majority right now which means any kind of legislation involving taxes could cause him a huge headache and I think the problem for Rishi Sunak and it's not something that we've talked about that much as he cuts quite a lonely figure.

I don't know who his tribe is.

I don't know who his friends in the cabinet are.

He loved Dominic Raab, Dominic Raab obviously left over those bullying allegations.

He's got Claire Coutinho who's been brought in now as sort of energy because she is a proper Rishiite but if you look across the range now who really supports him?

It's not Suella, you know it's not really Jeremy Hunt, I mean Jeremy Hunt's a steadying Chancellor but if you're trying to work out like David Cameron had his Cameroons, Liz Truss might have her fruit cakes but they are her fruit cakes and you look at Rishi Sunak and you say you're quite isolated, I don't know who your friends are.

Yeah and one of the things, talking about the energy at this conference being from the Trussites and those sorts of people and this weird unreality that we're in that we could be a year on from everything that happened and it's Truss who is exuding the energy.

One of the reasons for that is I was told at the weekend someone said that you know that the Tory whips had been phoning round MPs trying to offer them inducements to get up to Manchester because so many of them are just sort of staying away and rather just take the week off or do something in their constituencies particularly all of those by the way of course they've got a lot of MPs who aren't standing again, there's no reason or inducement for them to come up here for one last conference and there are no bloody trains to get here or get away in the first place but I mean just on that club for growth, gang for growth.

What are they?

Make Britain grow again.

Mugba.

Mugba.

Mugba's.

It really rolls off the tongue.

Mugba.

Mugba.

I'm going to keep saying Mugba.

They just need the caps.

I mean I'm going to get a Mugba cap.

Something else for all of you.

Oh I can't wait.

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Something else which adds to the air of unreality about it is it's fine you know it goes back to that whole trusting, everyone agrees we need to grow more, fine everyone does but to listen to them sort of roll off all of the things that are making British businesses struggle.

Trust says we need to become the party of business again you know environmental regulation, taxes, the blob, strikes, industrial action whatever it is, there is of course an elephant in the room that funnily enough they don't mention.

What's that?

It's Brexit.

That is something you talk to, any exporter you talk to, any small business you talk to some of the exhibitors in this very hall when they are struggling in terms of getting exports and imports in and out of the country, something that is completely absent from the so-called Mugba's or club for growth love.

Can I just quote you, Jacob Rees-Mogg, last Brexit here, Jacob Rees-Mogg, we should get rid of all the remaining tariffs with France and cut regulations, oh wait hang on, oh how could we do if only there was this amazing magic bullet which would have taken all those carrots away.

He also said I want cheaper food, I want hormone injected beef from Australia, I've eaten beef in Australia, it's delicious, there's nothing wrong with it, don't you sound a bit weird do you Jacob?

The thing you were saying though Emily a moment ago about who are Rishi's core supporters, I was just talking to a Treasury person, senior, who says that at the moment everything is concentrated in Downing Street, all power, all decision making, people are being shut out of all sorts of decision making.

Now as Parliament's go on and a government gets embedded and a Prime Minister sees he's fighting an election, that always tends to happen a bit, but it underlines the point you were making, the sense that Rishi Sunak is sort of by himself with a few trusted people in Downing Street and it's him and them against the rest of Whitehall, the rest of the government departments and if you've got the Treasury being shut out of decision making, that really is quite significant, you know Jeremy Hunt is the steadying influence and I'm sure he's heard when he needs to be heard, but it sounds like an awful lot of the big decisions are being taken for political reasons with all the levers and all the voting inside number ten.

When you hear the Chancellor say things like this vicious circle of tax rises and you kind of think well are you saying that we should be cutting taxes or that they have to grow or what are you actually saying it because it sounds as if you, the Chancellor, are at one remove for any of the decisions that are actually being made, but I just want to get back to what happened in the room for a second because I do think there is this air of unreality that we still have to discuss around English truss and that's that everything sounds very positive you know when you're sitting there and this is often what happens you know you're in the room and you kind of start nodding along right and she talks about growth as you said nobody stands up going what do we need less growth when we want it now, never we want less growth and we always want less growth.

So she talks about for example house building and she talks about the need for young people

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to have houses and she could have been literally on this show talking exactly the same way that we have for the past sort of six months about the need to have more housing and then she says I want five hundred thousand more houses, new houses built every year and then she says we need to give tax incentives to council to cut regulation and so you go ah okay that's the thing that's the moment so what are you saying that they have to build wherever they want I mean it sounds very positive until you realise that she's probably talking about environmental legislation again, water polluting, all the things that Labour wouldn't vote to give up in order to build houses and she's saying Labour's the one holding us back. Right Emily that's because these are people who from the very beginning are unwilling to deal in trade-offs.

Or in reality quite frankly.

Yeah very often they are people who their fundamental analysis of politics is always that goes back to what I was saying before that we're not being sufficiently conservative or we're not exerting a strong enough will.

It was the same philosophy that we saw again and again during the Brexit negotiations when confronted with a hard reality you have a choice or you have two types of politicians it's basically the two halves of the Conservative Party.

One half go okay let's see what we can do we might not get everything that we want but we might get some of it and you have the other half who are absolutists and it was the absolutists that you were within that room.

Look if you look at where this comes from and where this normally happens in political parties it's normally on the Labour Party.

The ideological purity of the left no compromises with the forces of capitalism you don't want to be making compromises that you let down the working class and that always gets a big audience.

Now you're getting Liz Truss getting a big audience for that sort of message.

But the significant thing I think about this is how is this going to be played out on the television bulletins tonight and in the newspapers tomorrow it's going to be Liz Truss at the centre of events at the Conservative Party conference.

With your Rishi Sunak that is the last thing in the whole world that you want.

You want Liz Truss nowhere near this conference anything that is a reminder of the chaos of last year leave aside the people who are in the room and cheering and whooping and hollering I think a large chunk of the rest of Britain will think oh my god she's still there.

But there is a tradition at Conservative Party conference and I've been at enough of them to remember Boris Johnson completely hijacking Theresa May at her own party conference just before her speech and he had the medium of absolutely hanging on every word he said.

He also, finally if it was Boris Johnson again, who tried to do it in the Cameron years when he was the pretender to the throne as it were, there is something about Conservatives and leadership.

They are brutal to each other and she is acting like she's about to topple him because he toppled her.

Yeah but the difference of course is that when Johnson was doing that he was still after her job, Theresa May's job.

Truss has had the job, albeit for a microsecond.

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The weird thing about this is having a former Prime Minister doing it and not only doing it but also acting in a way which is adding to what I would say is the radicalisation of the Conservative Party in all sorts of ways.

What did we see at the weekend?

Her and her team partly helping orchestrate a pledge among Conservative MPs never to raise taxes again, never under any circumstances.

That is what happened to the Republican Party in the 1990s and 2000s.

It becomes a sort of shibboleth, the kind of article of faith that under no circumstances could you ever raise taxes.

That is crazy for any party of government, a true aspiring party of government to commit to.

You imagine what the Labour equivalent would be, you know it's like we'll never cut taxes under any circumstances, we'll only ever increase state spending under any circumstances. It's a sign of a party which is descending into zealotry and replacing any idea of pragmatism that they might have had to ideology.

This is The News Agents.

So we've talked about all that's been happening in the room where Emily Maitlis eventually found Liz Truss and got to the front of the queue.

I suppose it's worth talking a bit about what's actually happening in the conference but with the actual government.

With the actual government, with Secretary of State after Secretary of State making speeches to audiences that were a little on the thin side because there were huge rows of empty seats where Mark Harper spoke and there were others as well where you just thought there really isn't an audience for this.

There should have been quite frankly because some of the stuff that was coming out of Mark Harper's mouth was jaw dropping.

This is the Transport Secretary who didn't mention HS2 at all.

Don't mention it.

Sorry.

Take that away.

Take that away.

There's a three letters not allowed.

I mean he spent a lot of time talking about buses and bus routes and I know that buses are important to people but it also is your actual annual party conference and the trouble with talking about buses is that you remind people you're not talking about trains and you're not talking about massive infrastructure projects, you are starting to go down the line of conspiracy theories and Mark Harper turned his wrath on the 15 minute city. This idea of trying to make cities more pedestrian friendly and he said in his speech, Tories will stop the misuse of 15 minute cities.

What is sinister is the idea of local councils deciding how often you're going to stop the 15 minute cities.

What is sinister is the idea of local councils deciding how often you can go to the shops.

I agree Mark.

I think that is sinister, it's really sinister.

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I don't think it's true.

In fact I'm pretty confident it isn't true.

If you're a local council that is trying to stop people going to the shops please, please write in and tell us at the newsagents.

And Harper wasn't alone.

I mean Claire Coutinho, the energy secretary who in so far as there are kind of sunakites she is definitely one of them, favoured by the prime minister.

She wasn't speaking in a kind of measured pragmatic way.

She was speaking in a way which was fevered.

I mean she was talking about the idea that basically anyone who didn't agree with government energy policy is zealous.

She was talking about the idea that Keir Starmer doesn't want anyone to meet because he's a vegetarian and it started to sound like you've basically had a lot of people here, Tory ministers who spent too much time on the internet.

They start to kind of talk in those ways and trope some memes of people who were basically sort of online too much.

I think one of the problems with the whole Conservative strategy at the moment, look what Coutinho was trying to do, what Harper was trying to do, they're trying to create dividing lines.

That's what this whole conference is about, it's trying to create political dividing lines with Labour and you know they've got to do that because they're still 15, 20 points behind the polls and nothing seems to be shifting and they've identified energy and they've identified net zero as one of those and environmentalism as one of those dividing lines.

It's a big bet though and therefore probably a big weakness of their overall strategy because in all sorts of areas they're basically trying to create issues to rail against which either don't exist or which people have very little conception of.

So 15 minute cities is a really good example of that, right?

You say 15 minute city, the average person, they either haven't heard of it or the chances are they think, well everything is within the 15 minutes of where I live, sounds like actually quite a good idea.

But if they had more time it's possible they might be able to politicise net zero and the politics of the environment more as it has in other countries but they're starting from quite a low base because it hasn't been a big political issue up to now and they're trying to do it in double quadruple time before the election.

Of course you're trying to create dividing lines, that's what you're there to do as a political party to say this is us and this is them but if the them that you are portraying is so absurd and so based on falsehood then it just becomes ridiculous.

You sound stupid, right?

So for example, we heard from Mark Harper that every lamppost in Labour areas is going to have a camera on it.

What?

Every lamppost?

Literally every lamppost will be having a camera so that it can give you a parking

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park.

I mean it was just nuts.

This idea that the Conservatives have been watching the internet too much was something we couldn't resist.

There are all the things they want you to be afraid of, be very afraid.

What is sinister and what we shouldn't tolerate is the idea that local councils can decide how often you go to the shops and that they ration who uses the roads and when and they police us all with CCTV.

And our plan includes a new national parking platform ending the need to install numerous apps just to park your car as well as a comprehensive package of measures to help councils tackle the menace of potholes.

Labour will continue with their same failed approach, taxing the poorest motorists, political speed limits.

It's the Conservative Party which is proudly pro-car.

The other thing that is driving me mad at the moment, I've got to get this off my chest and forgive me.

The way that they are talking about the scourge of potholes reminds me of conferences going back 35, 40 years before the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet threat.

I'm sorry potholes are a pain in the backside but you know we are talking about potholes as if my god the future of western civilisation will hinge on whether we can deal with that potholes.

Potholes are really important to a lot of people genuinely like if you drive potholes really wreck your car.

Having said that as I said before this is the annual conference for the whole party.

If you're talking about potholes it does suggest the narrowness of your vision that you haven't got anything else to trail.

You can't talk about big infrastructure policies, you can't talk about the amazing vision you've got for the 21st century, you can't talk about joining up the north with your railway scheme which might now be imploding as we speak.

You can't even talk about your vision for growth in the country and so potholes are very narrowly focused on going right down into the ground as the road equivalent of a tummy button.

But also the other thing about the potholes and god bless potholes I agree with you when I used to ride a scooter, when I still ride a bicycle potholes were horrifying and dangerous and all the rest of it.

But it is the way that it's being framed that you can either do rail infrastructure or we can do potholes as if you cannot do both as if there is somehow we can't walk and chew gum.

So therefore we're going to do potholes rather than HS2.

One point Mark Harper actually warned about and again this is the idea that things are just sounding fever and the danger is they end up sounding just absurd.

He warned about political speed limits.

Political speed limits.

It's like woke trains.

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It's like woke trains and we should just talk about HS2 right because it just continues to haunt this conference.

In this hall.

In this hall.

It used to be a railway station.

Oh look they're the big block as if you were about to catch a train.

And we are still a couple of journalists of Robert Peston and Sam Cotis guy news they're saying that their understanding is that the scheme is going to be axed although we just listened to Jeremy Humphins speech just now.

No sign of it was we said Mark Harper didn't mention it and I think that's the point about the potholes point right is HS2 is the biggest piece of infrastructure we have done in this country for a century and for it not to get a mention and for people in the country including investors by the way still making investment decisions potentially on the basis of a massive piece of infrastructure which might or might not happen.

The incongruence of that and talking endlessly about potholes and political speed limits is very jarred.

I have just spoken to a treasury source who says to me yeah it's expensive.

The cost has overrun but so too has virtually every major infrastructure project that has ever been built.

Look at Crossrail now the Elizabeth line everyone says how fantastic M25 when it was being built people were saying what's this all about it's the biggest car park in the United Kingdom it's now an essential piece of infrastructure.

What about the M4 which people protested about and this treasury source was saying major infrastructure projects create growth they create jobs and they improve the way the economy works and so the idea that the treasury as a whole have given up on HS2 I think is false.

I think there's a live argument still going on.

I think what it speaks to though is a lack of confidence.

I mean a government that knows what it wants to do goes ahead with a plan because it believes in the plan this all speaks to a lack of vision but I also want to talk about the stuff that we're hearing because when you talk about things that aren't true it feels like a brand new world of policies that were never going to happen being cancelled or where we're being saved from sinister practices that don't actually exist and it is this world where you end up having to invent things that your opposition are doing invent things that your predecessors were doing invent things that are potential acts of any future government because you can't actually talk about your own manifesto anymore.

We haven't got one.

But Emily what's one of the quintessential examples of that that Jeremy Hunt just spoke about in his speech minutes before we were recording this, debanking.

Yes.

Jeremy Hunt, Chancellor Dixitaka just got up and said that we are going to change rules so that nobody can be debunked because they're not politically correct enough.

Now the Financial Conduct Authority has said that there is no evidence that politicians are being debunked.

They talked about the Nigel Farage Coups case in particular and said there was no evidence.

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Indeed so and Hunt is one of the more measured members of the Cabinet and the thing is I think sitting in the main hall, never mind the fringes which have their own extremities in different ways, sitting in the main hall you just close your eyes and you listen to some of the things that are being said, HS2 and Brexit, TransRight, ECHR, taxation, debanking, you name it.

When I went to enough of them you could have been at a UKIP or Brexit Party conference. The way in which in policy terms and in the way that the Conservative Party talks about politics, the move to the Farage agenda and guess what, he's here by the way and he was at the rally with you.

He was in this process, really.

Yeah.

Has been extraordinary and has been the big story of the long 13 years of Conservative government.

Do you remember on Crime Watch at the end where Nick Ross would say don't have nightmares?

What the Tories want you to do is to have nightmares.

Oh my God, Labour will have to do this, they will do that, they will debank you, they will this, there was everything else under the sun of all these things that could possibly happen and I just wonder how credible any of this is.

Well, a short time ago I spoke to Andrew Mitchell, Secretary of State for International Development, part of the Cabinet, former Chief Whip, about the mood in the Tory Conference Hall.

Andrew Mitchell, welcome to the news agency.

Again, it's a bit dull in here isn't it, a bit flat.

No, it reminds me very much of the conferences in the early 90s, 1991, where of course we just elected a new leader, there was a change in tempo, the Prime Minister was taking possession of the party, focused on the next general election, which of course against the odds he won and I can see quite...

So it doesn't remind you of 96 then?

No, no, not at all, it reminds me of 91 and I think that the speech that the Prime Minister makes, which is obviously a very important one at this conference, will set out why in these foothills of the general election he is the right man to lead us through these turbulent times.

Tax cuts?

Michael Gove wants them.

We are a low tax party, everyone in the Conservative Party, wherever they stand.

But he was calling for a cut in taxes.

I would like to see lower taxes but I trust Jeremy Hunt, who after all has shown himself to be a steely and effective finance minister, to make the judgement about when is the right time for this.

But no one should be in any doubt that the Tory party is the low tax party.

So are you saying but out Michael Gove?

No, not at all, I think Michael was expressing an opinion but I heard what Michael said and he said that he backed the judgement of Jeremy Hunt and I agree with him, Jeremy Hunt's judgement is the right judgement to back on this.

Do you think the party is behind him and we were here last year and it was a bloodbath

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what unfolded at the Conservative Party conference.

Do you need to make apologies for what happened during the Liz Truss era to the British people? We need to get on with the business of serving the British people and delivering on their priorities and I do remember last year's conference and what strikes me is the contrast between then and now.

The economy has been gripped in very difficult times and that the combination of Rishi Sunak and Jeremy Hunt is delivering on the priorities of our constituents.

Do you need to apologise for what went on because it was a shambolic episode in British politics I would say without parallel.

I don't really dwell in the past like that, I'm focused on the future, on delivering for my own constituents and making sure that our government and the party deliver for the country.

What do you say delivering for the future and which of course is the slogan of the conference for about the long-term future and your very own message, you're putting a thumbs up to that idea.

All very good.

Isn't this actually all about focusing on the next general election?

You're thinking about the next 12 months what you need to put in place, it's not the next 10 years, HS2 is going to be abandoned it looks like, that's not long-term planning. There are all sorts of things and net zero, all sorts of policies which are to give you a bit of a lift over the next few months before an election.

We are focused on the future and the election is part of that future but we're focused on tackling the problems and the net zero is a very good example of that.

The Prime Minister rightly, having drilled into all the detail, worked out that we did not need to put people through these extra costs to quite the same extent as we thought and the reason for that is that Britain has been incredibly successful at driving towards net zero by 2050 and so we could ease off a bit and ensure that hard-working families don't have to pay that extra amount of money.

He did the right thing on that but actually, let's face it, the world is burning up, the oceans are dying, we are seeing the rise in temperature, the chemical changes, there were brush fires in London.

And I listened to Mark Harper saying we love the car.

There were brush fires in London.

We're the party of the motor car.

There were brush fires in London last year.

Internationally and domestically, Britain is showing real leadership on net zero and plasticity.

Mark Harper, Lord Colleging Cabinet, the Transport Secretary has stood up and said we are the party of the motor car.

I am the Member of Parliament for the constituency with the most cars per head in the country. Of course we're on the side of the motorists but the thing about this government since 2010 is that we have done the right thing on net zero and we're now making sure that these dreadful labour plans to penalise the motorist locally are not able to be rolled forward.

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There are many of these dreadful plans being put forward by Tory councils.

Well I was thinking, I went to Uxbridge during the by-election there and I saw the turmoil and misery being caused by these plans from the Mayor of London and the Tory party has clearly heard the voice of people living in those circumstances and we're going to make sure we put it right.

Is it fair to say that your whole election strategy is being built around the Uxbridge by-election?

No, not fair at all.

Our election strategy is being built around doing the right thing for the economy, doing the right thing in this dreadful war that's going on in Ukraine, doing the right thing across all the different political pieces that our constituents are really concerned about and delivering for them.

Just one more question.

When you talk about Ukraine, how worried are you about what is happening in the US where Congress has just signed a funding bill which strips out aid for Ukraine?

No I'm very worried about that as is the President of the United States whose statement I heard this morning.

I think this is one of the aspects of domestic politics in the United States which we see playing out year after year and I very much hope the end of this is that the budget is restored for support for Ukraine.

This is a very important moment for the international system and for the world.

If a country is able, particularly one of the permanent five at the United Nations, if a country is able to invade its neighbour, bomb its infrastructure, butcher its citizens in this way and get away with that, that will be a terrible moment for the international community.

Are you frightened by the idea of a Donald Trump second term?

Well, it's a matter for the Americans who they elect as their President but were I a voter in America, I would not be voting for Donald Trump.

Andrew Mitchell, thank you very much indeed.

Thank you.

This is The News Agents.

And Lewis, you have been busy over the weekend, not just podcasting away but also this really interesting investigation into the boats and people smuggling and the rest.

Yeah, News Agents have a sleep as you both know and it couldn't be more opposite because what's one of the big things emblazoned on this conference hall, one of the Prime Minister's five top priorities, stop the boats and obviously all we ever hear from from the Prime Minister and from Kerstarm as well is we've got to crack down on people smugglers, that's the answer to all of it.

Well, we have been speaking to a people smuggler, we have managed to identify one in a way that apparently the British and French police seem often incapable of doing and we've caught up with him, had a conversation with him as part of an undercover investigation and looking at the question as to how if anything, what if anything, the people smugglers can be stopped and I have to say from both in terms of what we've gathered there but also reporting from there many times in the past, for me it is a red herring but people can listen to that

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on our normal News Agents feed, it's out on Sunday and you can continue to listen to it. I mean it is amazing really as a Conservative policy that you could start by saying stop the boats and by the end of this conference you could add stop the trains.

Bye for now.

Bye for now.

Bye.

Bye.

The News Agents with Emily Maitlis, John Sopo and Lewis Goodall.

This has been a global player original podcast and a Persephoneka production.