

BROWN'S BROKEN PROMISES

Last September Gordon Brown made his first Party Conference speech as Labour leader. He used it to make numerous promises about what his Labour Government would deliver. A year later, as he prepares for another Party Conference, we analyse the promises he made and what he has delivered. The result is a year of broken promises and failure to deliver.

With an imminent General Election being planned, Gordon Brown made a series of promises to the British people. But one year later, analysis of his speech shows that at least 26 of those have been broken. Once again, Gordon Brown has failed to deliver.

Among the pledges broken by Gordon Brown this year are:

- Ensuring low inflation and stable growth
- Five-year sentences for all gun crimes
- Using new powers to ban alcohol in trouble spots
- Introducing individual budgets for personal care
- Abolishing child poverty
- Empowering Parliament to make the final decisions about peace and war
- Five hours of sport a week for all pupils
- Increasing house-building
- Counting people in and out of Britain
- Building ten new eco towns

Commenting, Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary, Chris Grayling said:

“Just days before he bottled the election, Gordon Brown cynically made a whole host of promises to the British people. One year on, it is now clear that he has failed to deliver. Once again he has been caught treating the British people like fools.”

1. The Promise: Low inflation and stable growth. ‘A path of low inflation, low interest rates and stable growth’ (Gordon Brown, speech to Labour Party Conference, 24 September 2007).

The Reality: Zero growth, recession forecast. Britain’s economy grew by 0.0 per cent in the last quarter. The OECD predicts that this year Britain will be the only economy to go into recession (*What is the economic outlook for OECD countries?*, OECD, 2 September 2008). Inflation is at highest rate since 1992, running at 4.4 per cent. More than double the rate it was in 1997 (ONS series D7BT).

- 2. The Promise: Alcohol ban in trouble spots.** ‘Councils should use new powers to ban alcohol in trouble spots’ (Gordon Brown, speech to Labour Party Conference, 24 September 2007).

The Reality: No alcohol bans in force. As of June 2008 no Alcohol Disorder Zones had been established (*Hansard*, 5 June 2008, Col. 1120WA).

- 3. The Promise: Individual care budgets.** ‘It’s time also to make public services personal to the needs of the elderly: more control over personal social care budgets’ (Gordon Brown, speech to Labour Party Conference, 24 September 2007).

The Reality: No progress made. Individual budgets to give patients control of their social care have been in pilot stage since November 2005. The Department of Health’s website still reports that the results of the pilots are ‘expected in April 2008’ (http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/SocialCare/Socialcarereform/Personalisation/Individualbudgets/DH_4125774).

- 4. The Promise: Abolish child poverty.** ‘Our goal for this generation is to abolish child poverty and let me reaffirm that goal today’ (Gordon Brown, speech to Labour Party Conference, 24 September 2007).

The Reality: On track for failure. On current policies Labour will miss their target to halve child poverty by 2010 by 500,000 (*Households Below Average Income Statistics*, DWP, June 2008; IFS, Press Release, 10 June 2008). In February the Government admitted in the small print of an official strategy document that their child poverty ‘targets are unlikely to be fully met’ (DWP, *An analysis of the productivity of the Department for Work and Pensions 2002/03 to 2007/08*, February 2008, p16).

- 5. The Promise: a Britain of full employment.** ‘we will continue to intensify the reform of the new deal, remove every barrier, show we can have flexibility and fairness together to advance to a Britain of full employment’ (Gordon Brown, speech to Labour Party Conference, 24 September 2007).

The Reality: almost 5 million people claiming out of work benefits. Employment rates were higher in 1990 than they are today. Up to 80 per cent of new jobs created since 1997 have gone to migrant workers (Employment rate 16/59-64, Labour Market Statistics, Time Series Data, series MGSU, August 2008; Statistics Commission, *Foreign Workers in the UK – Briefing Note*, Dec 2007). This summer saw the largest rise in unemployment since 1992 (ONS, *Labour Market Statistics*, August 2008). After 11 years of a Labour government there are almost 5 million people claiming out of work benefits (DWP, *Quarterly Statistical Summary*, August 2008). Youth unemployment and Incapacity Benefit claims are both higher than in 1997 (ONS *Labour Market Statistics*, August 2008; DWP *Quarterly Statistical Summary*, August 2008).

- 6. The Promise: Tough sentences for gun crime.** ‘for anyone over 18 illegally carrying a gun, a five-year sentence’ (Gordon Brown, speech to Labour Party Conference, 24 September 2007).

The Reality: Offenders given less than the ‘minimum sentence’. In July 2008, the Government admitted that only half (141) of the 281 people convicted of firearm possession offences in 2006 received the mandatory minimum sentence (*Hansard*, 8 July 2008, col. 1525WA).

- 7. The Promise: A clear message on drugs.** ‘We will send out a clear message that drugs are never going to be decriminalised’ (Gordon Brown, speech to Labour Party Conference, 24 September 2007).

The Reality: Downgrading of ecstasy being considered. While cannabis remains a class C drug, the Home Office’s Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) is actively looking at whether ecstasy should be downgraded. This follows the appointment of Professor David Nutt as Chairman of the ACMD. In 2006 he said that LSD and Ecstasy ‘probably shouldn’t be class A’ (*The Daily Telegraph*, 21 May 2008).

- 8. The Promise: 12 months paid maternity leave.** ‘It is right this year to raise [paid maternity leave] to nine months for all mothers on the road to 12 months paid maternity leave’ (Gordon Brown, speech to Labour Party Conference, 24 September 2007).

The Reality: Implementation delayed. Paid maternity leave is still available for only nine months, not twelve. The Government has been saying it would extend paid leave since 2006, but has still to do so. An extension to 52 weeks was expected to be introduced in April 2009, but this month HM Revenue & Customs announced the change will be delayed until April 2010 (*People Management*, 3 September 2008).

- 9. The Promise: Every child a reader.** ‘And because I want every child to be a reader, every child to be able to count, we have decided that one-to-one tuition will be there in our schools not just for Max, but for 300,000 children in English and 300,000 in maths’ (Gordon Brown, speech to Labour Party Conference, 24 September 2007).

The Reality: 3 million children without the 3Rs. This year’s results for seven year olds (Key Stage 1) show that the proportion of children reaching the expected grade (Level 2) has remained static compared to last year and has fallen since 2005. The proportion of children reaching the higher Level 3 has fallen in reading, writing, maths and science since last year (DCSF, 28 August 2008). 3 million children have left primary school without the basics in reading, writing and maths under labour (Source:).

10. The Promise: Five hours sport a week. ‘We aim for the first time for five hours a week sport and time for arts and music too’ (Gordon Brown, speech to Labour Party Conference, 24 September 2007).

The Reality: A million children not getting two hours. Nearly one million children (14 per cent of all children) are not getting the basic two hours of sport required as outlined in the Government’s own physical education target (*Hansard*, 29 January 2008, Col 254WA). Only 67 per cent of pupils in Year 10 and 63 per cent of Pupils in Year 11, take part in two hours of physical exercise a week (*Schools and Pupils in England January 2007 (Final Report)*, compiled by the Department for Children, Schools and Families). Fewer are now benefiting than when the last survey undertaken in 2004/05.

11. The Promise: Skilled work for college leavers. ‘For every college or school student, A-levels and diplomas and for all a clear pathway into skilled work’ (Gordon Brown, speech to Labour Party Conference, 24 September 2007).

The Reality: More young people not in employment, education, or training. The number of young people who are not in employment, education, or training (NEET) is growing. There are currently 783,000 16-24 year old NEETs. This represents a rise of 22 per cent in the 16-18 year-old NEET population, and 16 per cent amongst 19-24 year-old NEETs since 1997 (*Hansard*, 9 June 2008, Col. 39WA).

12. The Promise: Licences removed from shops selling alcohol to minors. ‘let me tell the shops that repeatedly sell alcohol to those who are under age – we will take your licences away’ (Gordon Brown, speech to Labour Party Conference, 24 September 2007).

The Reality: Government doesn’t know how many licences taken away. The Government does not even know how many licences have been removed for under-age selling. Shortly after the Prime Minister made this promise, the Home Office was asked how many licences had already been revoked as a result of selling to persons under 18. Minister Gerry Sutcliffe replied: ‘Past and future statistical bulletins on licences to sell alcohol include the number of licences revoked, but do not indicate why’ (*Hansard*, 4 Dec 2007, Col. 1075WA).

The Home Office has admitted that, in 2006, only seven offenders were given the maximum fine of £1,000 for selling alcohol to children in premises such as pubs or clubs (*Hansard*, 3 June 2008, Col. 818WA).

13. The Promise: Limits on carbon emissions. ‘Britain will now become the first country in the world to write into law binding limits on carbon emissions’ (Gordon Brown, speech to Labour Party Conference, 24 September 2007).

The Reality: Limits not enacted. After more than a year in office, Gordon Brown's Government is still dithering over the Climate Change Bill. The Bill was announced in the 2006 Queen's Speech but two years later we are still waiting for it to become law. Environment Secretary Hilary Benn has confirmed that Labour expect to miss their target to cut carbon emissions by 20 per cent by 2010 against the 1990 baseline (Hilary Benn, Evidence to the Environment Audit Committee, 4 December 2007).

14. The Promise: More power to Parliament. 'Parliament will make the final decisions about peace and war' (Gordon Brown, speech to Labour Party Conference, 24 September 2007).

The Reality: No resolution tabled. In March 2008 the Justice Secretary proposed that Parliament's role in decisions to go to war should be enshrined in a Parliamentary resolution (*Hansard*, 25 March 2008, Col. 22). No resolution has yet been tabled.

15. The Promise: Building more homes. 'We will increase house-building to 240,000 new homes a year... My aim by 2010 two million more homeowners than in 1997' (Gordon Brown, speech to Labour Party Conference, 24 September 2007).

The Reality: House building has plummeted. Because of the way in which the Government has undermined the housing market, house building has plummeted. In the last year, just 147,470 homes were started in England (DCLG, *Live Table 213, Q3 2007 to Q2 2008*, August 2008) and the numbers are expected to fall further.

16. The Promise: More money for medical research. 'Through the medical research council and the NHS together, Britain will invest more than ever before - £15 billion of public money - financing the genius of British researchers and doctors as they convert breakthroughs in genetics, stem cell research and new drugs into cures and vaccines to combat cancer and the deadliest of diseases' (Gordon Brown, speech to Labour Party Conference, 24 September 2007).

The Reality: £92 million taken from Medical Research Council. The Medical Research Council (MRC) earns about £200 million per year in 'commercial funds' by exploiting its intellectual property, which it uses to fund medical research. But in December 2007 it was announced that the Treasury was helping itself to £92 million from the fund to help pay for general Government spending. The Royal Society called the Government's raid on funds set aside for medical research a 'breach of faith' with scientists (*Nature*, December 2007).

17. The Promise: Deep clean hospitals. 'to make sure every hospital is clean and safe, following best practice around the world, there will be new funds direct to every hospital for a deep clean of our wards' (Gordon Brown, speech to Labour Party Conference, 24 September 2007).

The Reality: C. diff deaths increasing. The number of reported deaths involving *Clostridium difficile* continued to rise between 2006 and 2007. The number of death certificates in England and Wales that mentioned *C. difficile* infection rose from 6,480 in 2006 to 8,324 in 2007, an increase of 28 per cent (ONS, *Health Statistics Quarterly*, 28 August 2008).

18. The Promise: Hand-held computers for police. ‘I can announce that we will provide hand-held computers [for the police] - 1,000 now, by next year 10,000 right across the country’ (Gordon Brown, speech to Labour Party Conference, 24 September 2007, emphasis added).

The Reality: Only available in some areas. Just 27 out of the 43 police forces in England and Wales will receive funding for hand-held computers (*BBC News*, 26 May 2008).

19. The Promise: Counting people in and out of Britain. ‘In July I announced a new unified border force. And already the first elements are in place - a stronger uniformed presence at ports, customs officers targeting illegal immigration, stronger security checks at passport control, by next year ID cards for foreign nationals and we will start to count people in and out’ (Gordon Brown, speech to Labour Party Conference, 24 September 2007).

The Reality: Only some passengers checked. According to key staff in the immigration system, ‘the Government's flagship programme to protect Britain's borders is threatening to weaken national security’. Staff said that they received insufficient training to perform key roles such as passenger profiling (*The Guardian*, 28 October 2007).

Home Office Minister Liam Byrne has admitted that the e-Borders Programme will only involve checking and screening 60 per cent of all passenger movements in and out of the UK by December 2009 (*Hansard*, 1 September 2008, Col. 1532WA).

20. The Promise: Low carbon economy. ‘I want Britain to lead in carbon-free vehicles, carbon-free homes and carbon-free industry’ (Gordon Brown, speech to Labour Party Conference, 24 September 2007).

The Reality: Second last in the EU league. The UK is languishing second last in the EU renewable energy league table (RWE, *Factbook Renewable Energy*, June 2008). By the end of June 2008, just 13 homes had claimed zero stamp duty on zero carbon homes, despite Gordon Brown's pledge to ‘accelerate the building of zero carbon homes’ (*Hansard*, 22 July 2008, Col. 1479WA; and *Pre-Budget Report 2006 Speech*, 6 December 2006). And carbon emissions from government vehicles increased in the last year by 1.5 per cent (Sustainable Development Commission, *2007 Sustainable Development in Government*, March 2008).

21. The Promise: Study at college or university not prevented by money. ‘I stand for a Britain where every young person who has it in them to study at college or university should not be prevented by money from doing so’ (Gordon Brown, speech to Labour Party Conference, 24 September 2007).

The Reality: Part-time learners budget cut. The cross-party Innovation, Universities, Skills Select Committee, criticised the Government for cutting £100m from part-time learners: ‘we cannot support the decision to cut funding to ELQ students in this way’ (27 March 2008). Part-time education can be a key way of encouraging those from non-traditional backgrounds to get involved in HE.

22. The Promise: Foreign criminals deported. ‘Any newcomer to Britain who is caught selling drugs or using guns will be thrown out. No-one who sells drugs to our children or uses guns has the right to stay in our country’ (Gordon Brown, speech to Labour Party Conference, 24 September 2007).

The Reality: Only half removed from the UK. In December 2008, it was revealed that the Border and Immigration Agency had told HM Prison Service that it had ‘no interest’ in deporting prisoners serving sentences of less than twelve months (HM Prison Service, PSI 2007/16). The total number of foreign prisoners discharged from prisons in the UK in 2007 was 8,350 (*Hansard*, 24 Jan 2008, Col. 2160WA; *Hansard*, 6 May 2008, Col. 789WA; *Scottish Parliament Hansard*, 21 May 2008) but only 4,200 – barely half – were removed from the UK (Home Office press release, 1 July 2008).

23. The Promise: Ending child poverty. ‘We have lifted 600,000 children out of poverty. We are doubling child benefits. We have trebled maternity allowances. And 6 million families now benefit from the Child Tax Credit’ (Gordon Brown, speech to Labour Party Conference, 24 September 2007).

The Reality: Child poverty rising. Child poverty has risen by 100,000 since Gordon Brown became Prime Minister. The number of children in poverty now stands at 2.9 million before housing costs and 3.9 million after housing costs, remaining effectively unchanged for the last five years (*Households Below Average Income*, DWP, June 2008).

24. The Promise: Ten new eco-towns. ‘We are announcing that instead of just 5 new eco towns, we will now aim for ten eco towns’ (Gordon Brown, speech to Labour Party Conference, 24 September 2007).

The Reality: Scheme delayed and downgraded. The eco-town programme has become a shambles, with developers pulling out of the process, the timetable being extended and extended, and local opposition growing to the Government’s unsustainable and environmentally damaging proposals. The policy has been downgraded with reports suggesting that only 2 or 3 may ever be built (*The Daily Telegraph*, 19 August 2008).

25. The Promise: Lasting settlement in Darfur. ‘We will not rest until there is an end to the aerial bombings, a ceasefire, a lasting political settlement and justice for the women and children of Darfur’ (Gordon Brown, speech to Labour Party Conference, 24 September 2007).

The Reality: Violence in Darfur increasing. The situation in Darfur remains dire. According to the International Crisis Group, ‘violence is again increasing in recent months while access for humanitarian agencies has become more difficult, international peacekeeping is not yet effective and a political settlement remains far off’ (*Crisis in Darfur*, International Crisis Group website, 10 September 2008).

In a report backed by 36 NGOs, the international community was criticised for a lack of political will and for failing to provide basic equipment vital to the peacekeeping mission in Darfur (*BBC News Online*, 31 July 2008).

26. The Promise: Affordable childcare. ‘Our aim high quality [child]care not just available to some but to all and tailored to parents needs when they need it and at a price they can afford’ (Gordon Brown, speech to Labour Party Conference, 24 September 2007).

The Reality: Childcare costs rising faster than inflation. The typical cost of a full-time nursery place for a child under two has increased in the last year by 5 per cent, faster than the official rate of inflation. 70 per cent of Children’s Information Services (CIS) in England said that parents had reported a lack of affordable childcare in the last 12 months (Daycare trust, *Childcare costs survey 2008*).