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Tories must axe
Blairite agenda
or face oblivion

DAILY EXPRESS EXCLUSIVE: SEE PAGE 7



'ABSOLUTELY PERFECT'

National treasure
Prunella Scales
dies aged 93

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Crimewatch presenter Sue Cook issues heartfelt plea to Rachel Reeves

OAPs MUST BE GIVEN A FAIR DEAL IN BUDGET

By Jonathan Walker Whitehall Editor

SUE Cook has urged Rachel Reeves to deliver "a fair deal" Budget for OAPs, protecting the pension triple lock and ruling out a tax raid on the most vulnerable. The ex-Crimewatch host, 76, joined Later Life Ambitions campaigners who

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PUTTING HER CASE:
TV host Sue Cook
outside Parliament

Bin council tax to ease cost crisis, say voters

By **Christian Caille**

BRITONS want Rachel Reeves to scrap council tax in next month's Budget – backing a new annual property levy based on home values, a poll has revealed.

Voters prefer a fairer, up-to-date buildings tax over abolishing stamp duty or cutting National Insurance to boost incomes in the cost crisis, the survey found.

Campaigners argue the current system for funding town halls – based on 1991 property values – has created a “regressive, outdated” postcode lottery.

Updating local government funding based on modern prices could cut average council tax bills by £556 a year and make 77% of households better off.

Momentum

The poll of 1,000 voters asked what the Chancellor should do to help save people money. Some 67% supported reforming council tax, 55% backed a freeze in fuel duty, 42% wanted a national insurance cut, and 40% supported cutting inheritance tax.

Andrew Dixon of the Fairer Share campaign group said: “Momentum is growing to replace stamp duty and council tax with a proportional property tax.”

It is embraced by northern Labour MPs who believe the current system overcharges their constituents and undercharges wealthy southern home owners.

‘Act with foresight or affect those entering

FROM PAGE ONE

represent 250,000 older people to demand that the Chancellor reverses proposals to make 1.2 million low-income pensioners pay income tax.

They also want her to reveal plans in the Budget on November 26 for firms to employ more staff in their 50s and 60s amid fears that age discrimination is preventing older people from working and providing for their retirement.

Ms Cook, also known for her work on hosting Children in Need, said: “Later life should be a time of purpose, confidence and connection – not uncertainty.”

“Older people still have a huge amount to give. With the right support and guidance, they can continue not only to enjoy full, independent lives themselves but also

‘I support a fairer, more sustainable deal for older people’

giving the benefit of their insight and experience to the rest of society. “I’ve put my support behind the LLA’s manifesto as a way to ensure a fairer, more sustainable deal for older people.”

Ms Cook launched the Budget for Later Life at a Parliament event.

The LLA’s campaign brings together the Civil Service Pensioners’ Alliance, the National Association of Retired Police Officers and the National Federation of Occupational Pensioners.

TV star Ms Cook said: “If policymakers don’t act with foresight now, the challenges faced today will continue to affect the increasing number of people entering later life in generations to come.”

Official statistics show two million pensioners live in poverty and campaigners say it would be more with out the triple lock which ensures the



Feeling heat... Rachel Reeves and Qatar’s All bin Ahmed Al Kuwari in Riyadh

state pension keeps pace with inflation and average earnings. However there are fears the Chancellor could end, or water down, the policy to close a multi-billion pound shortfall.

Campaigners also want Ms Reeves to end the freeze on the income tax threshold which means people with just a modest private pension as well as the state pension now pay tax.

According to HM Revenue and Customs, another 1.2 million more OAPs are expected to pay income tax by 2027 as a result of the freeze.

LLA urged the Chancellor not to impose further rises in the state pension age, due to reach 68 between 2044 and 2046, arguing that many people spend their later years in poor health and cannot work.

Campaigners called for support to help people stay in work longer to avoid being a burden on the state, including tougher enforcement of anti-discrimination laws, a Government-backed skills pro-

gramme for older workers and lower National Insurance contributions for firms that employ over-60s.

The report launched by Ms Cook warned: “The UK faces a shortfall in the workforce of one million due to early retirement and long-term sickness among over-50s.”

“Yet many older people want to remain in work if given the flexibility and support.”

Other aims include tackling a gender pension gap which sees women retiring on lower incomes; a minimum income guarantee to ensure every OAP has a decent standard of living; widening access to public transport; making housing safe, accessible and adaptable plus supporting health and social care.

Eamonn Donaghy, NFOP chief executive, said: “It’s an unsettling time for many pensioners who have seen their spending power ravaged by inflation and who are concerned about paying for food and heating.

By **Steph Spyro** Deputy Political Editor

further pressure will be placed on the sector with the demand for palliative and end-of-life care anticipated to rise.

The availability of hospice care varies greatly across England. Charitable hospices were set up through voluntary action, and the variation in availability is a result of the unplanned way the sector developed.

Nearly two thirds of independent hospices reported a deficit in 2023-24, and overall expenditure was £78m more than the income generated, the NAO said. Some hospices have reduced services as a result, with cuts to beds and staff. Gareth Davies,

Concerns... James Sanderson

Hospices slash beds after £78million deficit

A CHARITY has blasted ministers for tailing hospices after a spending watchdog warned the sector is cutting beds and staff after losing £78million in one year.

The Government does not know how much palliative and end-of-life care independent adult hospices provide in England, the National Audit Office said. James Sanderson, the chief executive of Sue Ryder, said: “This report demonstrates the need to reform how palliative care is delivered. It is exposing that the Government doesn’t have a clear picture of the value of hospices.”

“The sector is failing certain communities. The care we provide, which is envied across the globe, must become available to everyone who needs it.” The NAO said



head of the NAO, said: “Independent hospices play a key role in providing palliative and end-of-life care and provide choice for people at the end of their lives.”

“With many more people expected to want hospice care in the future, it is crucial that the sector is financially resilient.”

The Department of Health and Social Care said: “Hospices do incredible work to support people and families when they need it most, and we recognise the incredibly tough pressures they are facing.”

“The NAO report covers a period under the previous administration. “Since then, we’ve made the biggest investment in a generation – £100m – to improve hospice facilities and have committed to £80m for children’s and young people’s hospices over three years.”

‘Show pensioners their contributions are valued’

Health Secretary Wes Streeting has admitted public finances are “in a challenging state” and the Chancellor is expected to increase levies on people she considers the most wealthy, with options including a mansion tax on owners of properties worth more than £2million.

The Treasury said: “We are committed to helping our pensioners live their lives with dignity and respect.”

“Thanks to our commitment to the triple lock, millions will see their pension rise by up to £1,900 this parliament.”

The Chancellor has been meeting ministers from Gulf states on a visit to the Future Investment Initiative global finance conference in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

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DAILY EXPRESS VOTE
Is the Government neglecting the role played by hospices?

YES: 0901 133 4440
NO: 0901 133 4441

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Today's challenges will later life for generations



Watching out for OAPs... Sue Cook takes LLA's Budget to Parliament yesterday; inset, with Crimewatch co-presenter Nick Ross, in 1988



COMMENT

SUE COOK

TV presenter and author

TOO often, we talk about later life as if it's a slow fade – a time to step aside and let others take over. That's not the reality I see around me.

Across Britain, older people are still working, caring, volunteering and sharing the wisdom of long experience.

They're holding families together, mentoring younger colleagues and bringing calm judgment to busy workplaces. Yet too many are quietly pushed to the margins, treated as though age makes them less capable. In truth, the opposite is often the case. A lifetime of experience brings resilience, patience and perspective – qualities every organisation needs more of, not less.

Older workers want to keep contributing, but they also want to be valued for what they bring. With labour

'Older people are working, caring, volunteering and sharing wisdom'

shortages across so many sectors, it makes no sense to overlook millions who are ready and able to work, or to share their skills part-time, or as mentors.

But later life also brings new pressures. Many older people find themselves caring for grandchildren, elderly parents, sometimes an ailing spouse – all while managing rising costs and smaller pensions. It can be tough, especially for women.

Supporting older people means recognising both sides of the story: their continuing contribution, and the challenges they face.

People should be able to blossom in the third stage of their lives – to live with confidence, connection and purpose. If we truly value experience, we must show it: by protecting the state pension, giving fair tax treatment to pensioners, and creating workplaces where age is seen as an asset.

Older people aren't the past – they're a vital part of Britain's present and future. It's time we recognised their value and gave them the opportunity to thrive.