# Labour MP criticises party's austerity-like benefit reforms



A Labour MP has sharply criticized his own party's recent benefit reform measures, which he argues mimic the austerity policies previously implemented by the Conservative government. Brian Leishman, the Member of Parliament for Alloa and Grangemouth, voiced his concerns following the announcement from Work and Pensions Secretary Liz Kendall about her plans to reform disability benefits — a move that the government claims will save £5 billion.

Leishman's remarks highlight a growing discontent not only among charities and the Scottish Government but also within the Labour Party itself. The MP specifically condemned the proposed welfare cuts for "impoverishing" vulnerable sections of society, emphasizing a "basic lack of humanity." In comments shared with Holyrood Magazine, he stated, “There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that these cuts are going to impoverish already vulnerable, disadvantaged people living in our society today.” This situation raises troubling questions about Labour's commitment to those in need, particularly given the stark contrast between their prior promises and current policies.

Having recently ascended to power, the Labour Party now finds itself mired in controversy for backtracking on its anti-austerity position. Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar, in a televised debate prior to the election, made an emphatic declaration: “Read my lips: no austerity under Labour.” In light of the backlash from Kendall's announcement, Sarwar has defended the party's decisions, insisting that "public spending is on the rise— the very opposite of austerity" and that support for those unable to work would remain intact. However, such assertions ring hollow in the face of proposed cuts.

In response to the current situation, a spokeswoman for Labour stated they plan to "work to provide opportunities to those who can," while simultaneously urging the Scottish Government to collaborate on employability services. One must wonder if this focus on jobs truly addresses the urgent needs of the most vulnerable or merely serves as a distraction from the adverse effects of their own policies.

Adding to the turmoil, Leishman, who has previously voiced concerns about the economic fallout from the impending closure of the Grangemouth oil refinery, is facing mounting pressure as 400 job losses loom. Petronieos, the refinery's owner, declared this closure last year, citing financial challenges. The decision has been met with political outrage, yet efforts by both the Scottish and UK Governments to avert this crisis have proven ineffective.

In a bid to propose solutions, Leishman suggested leveraging the redevelopment of Manchester United's Old Trafford stadium, currently owned by billionaire Sir Jim Ratcliffe, as a bargaining chip. He remarked, “When we look at the regeneration needed around Old Trafford, why would we not say you can have that money, but you need to keep Grangemouth open? That’s just negotiation in my opinion.” Yet he expressed frustration with party leadership's lack of support for such initiatives.

Reacting to these unfolding events, a spokesperson from the UK Government has stated they are taking steps in response to Petroineos’ closure confirmation. They assured the public of a focus on securing Grangemouth's industrial future with plans for Project Willow, designed to identify long-term industrial options for the site. Their announcement of a £200 million investment aimed at strengthening job creation and fostering economic growth stands in contrast to the Labour government's failure to protect jobs and welfare. As they signal intent to leverage Grangemouth's industrial legacy for future investment and clean energy, Labour's retreat into austerity raises pressing questions about their ability to effectively govern and support the very people they promised to uplift.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/why-labour-cuts-to-disability-benefits-would-be-completely-unpalatable-5036276> - This article corroborates Brian Leishman's criticism of Labour's cuts to disability benefits as 'completely unpalatable' and highlights the concern of consigning vulnerable individuals to poverty. It also mentions the potential change in eligibility criteria for Personal Independence Payments (PIP) as part of welfare reforms.
* <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/uk-government-anas-sarwar-liz-kendall-jim-ratcliffe-governments-b1218368.html> - This article supports the claim of growing dissent within Labour over benefit cuts and the contrast between Labour's current policies and past promises. It also provides context on Anas Sarwar's previous statements against austerity and the current debate surrounding Labour's stance.
* <https://members.parliament.uk/member/5196/voting?page=3> - This URL confirms Brian Leishman's role as the Labour MP for Alloa and Grangemouth, providing background on his political position and voting record.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This is the source of the original article, which outlines the controversy surrounding Labour's benefit reforms and Brian Leishman's criticism of these policies. However, it does not provide further external corroboration but serves as a primary reference.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/labour-benefits-cuts-liz-kendall-pip-b2295904.html> - This URL would support claims about the proposed changes to the welfare system, particularly concerning PIP and the potential implications of these cuts, though it is not available in the provided search results.