

Ed Balls as Shadow Chancellor

Published: January 13, 2026, 3:18 am

Last August Ed Balls set out his vision for Labour's economic policy. That speech is [available here](#).

Few argue that this was a very good speech - even a significant speech.

It shows Ed Ball's ability as a thinker and his willingness to fight for what he believes in.

And to have wasted that talent was always going to be wrong.

I feel immensely sorry for Alan Johnson - he is clearly going through deep personal anguish. I am not surprised he could not face being shadow chancellor at the same time. And maybe his appointment has done its task anyway - to be indication of a transition, albeit a shorter one than was planned. But the real work needs to be done by Labour now, and transitional periods need to be over. The ConDems are wrecking the UK. And Labour has not been an effective opposition to this process as yet.

I hope Ed Miliband has the sense to let Ed Balls fight.

I know it will be said Ed Balls will alienate people. Of course he will. But they would never have voted for Labour anyway.

And I know there are those who say another safe pair of hands should have been appointed - and my answer is 'no way'. We had such policy from Labour for far, far too long.

What people want right now is a bruiser. A man who will fight. Who will fight for public services, for jobs, for the value of the state, for the need to properly fund public services, for the need to create employment that will generate the tax we need to pay for public service, and who will reject the idea that Goldman Sachs' bonuses do so when all they do is threaten the very core of our democracy by putting at risk the very viability of our currency.

What we need now is very marked distinction between Labour and Tory (let's forget Lib

Dem). This is no time for another Labour neoliberal apologist. This is the time for a Keynesian. The time for a person who believes that solving unemployment solves the recession and solves the deficit.

This is the time for someone who can offer hope.

Ed Balls was not meant to be leader of the Labour Party. But he is in the right job now. I hope he realises that. And I hope he can now deliver to his full potential. Because that is what we need.

Of course the Tories are saying his appointment is a disaster today. It is - but only for them.