

## AUTUMN STATEMENT 2023

# Treasury dreams big plan to turbo-charge

By **David Williamson**  
POLITICAL EDITOR

CHANCELLOR Jeremy Hunt says the economy has “turned the corner in a big way”, fuelling hopes the Autumn Statement will boost business and pave the way for tax cuts.

He promised an “Autumn Statement for growth” and pledged to “spread this prosperity across the UK”.

The Treasury is betting that if it can turbo-charge productivity in the public sector, tax cuts will become possible.

Measures to slash admin could free up more than 38 million police hours each year and cut a

## Hunt's Latin moves

**JEREMY Hunt has revealed he once had such a passion for Latin dancing he would dash to clubs after late Commons votes.**

**He would wear a T-shirt under his shirt and “like Superman” transform himself into a dancer.**

**His comments will fuel speculation he may one day follow in the dance-steps of former Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls and compete on Strictly Come Dancing. But he said his Latin adventures belonged to a time “before I was married”.**

teacher's workload by up to five hours a week, it says.

Mr Hunt wants to torch red tape by unleashing the power of Artificial Intelligence.

The Treasury claims some public sector workers spend up to eight hours a week on administrative tasks that may not be necessary.

The Chancellor told the Sunday Express that changes would result in “more time for teachers to teach our kids, for nurses to treat us when we're sick and for police to keep us safe”.

He is determined to get “over a million people into work” and is prepared to use “tough new sanctions for those who refuse a job”.

But he can expect a major political row if he cuts inheritance tax while squeezing benefits. He has warned there is “no easy way to reduce the tax burden” and that the Government needed to “take difficult decisions to reform the welfare state”.

There is speculation that working-age benefits will not be updated by the September inflation figure of 6.7 per cent, but by the October rate of 4.6 per cent instead. The Resolution

## Sandie: String elderly along and you won't win the next election!

POP icon Sandie Shaw says protecting the pensions triple lock will be the key to victory for Rishi Sunak or Sir Keir Starmer at the next general election.

The Puppet on a String singer, 76, is helping launch a “manifesto for later life”.

Drawn up by a pressure group representing 250,000 older people, it also calls for everyone receiving the state pension to get a Christmas bonus of up to £100.

And in a rallying call, the 1967 Eurovision winner said: “Politicians ignore senior citizens at their peril.”

Both the Prime Minister and the Labour leader have refused to promise they will maintain the triple lock, which guarantees pensions rise in line with the higher of wages or inflation.

Chancellor Jeremy Hunt has also not yet confirmed the triple lock will be honoured in full next year, which would mean increasing the £10,600 state pension by 8.5 per cent.

An announcement is likely in Wednesday's Autumn Statement.

Ms Shaw is backing demands drawn up by campaigners Later Life Ambitions, which includes the National Federation of Occupational Pensioners, the Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance and the National Association of Retired Police Officers.

“This manifesto makes clear that older people don't just have ambitions to live full and fulfilling lives but we stand ready to contribute to society, the economy and the country in general,” the star said.

“With a general election due in the next

By **Jonathan Walker**

year it's the right time to remind politicians of all stripes they must meet the needs of older people and keep us in mind when drawing up policies.”

Eamonn Donaghy, chief executive of the National Federation of Occupational Pensioners, said: “Let me be absolutely clear, keeping the triple lock is the key to victory at the next election.”

The campaign being launched on Tuesday also highlights the £10 Christmas bonus introduced in 1972, which has never been increased.

A 25p-a-week bonus payment for pensioners over 80, introduced in 1971, has also never risen.

The manifesto states: “Uprating these allowances to allow for inflation would equate to over £250 for elderly pensioners, a lifeline for the thousands of pensioners living in poverty.”

Later Life Ambitions is also calling on the Government to appoint a Commissioner for Older People and Ageing to champion the elderly.

A DWP spokesperson said: “The Government is committed to the triple lock. The Secretary of State will conduct his annual review of benefits and state pensions using the most recent data.”



Foundation warned against “moving the goalposts”, saying this would “hit the incomes of nine million families, with some losing as much as £500 a year”.

Louise Murphy, an economist with the think tank, said: “The context for this important decision facing the Chancellor is a cost-of-living crisis that is really a cost of

essentials crisis, as energy and food bills have soared.

“Tough times for everyone are already toughest for low and middle income Britain.”

Mr Hunt is also said to be considering halving the headline rate of inheritance tax from 40 per cent to 20 percent.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies

said the top fifth of earners are “about eight times more likely to benefit from a cut to the inheritance tax rate than those in the bottom fifth of earners”.

It said the rumoured cut would “give away an average of £180,000 to the top five per cent of estates at death”.

However, the Chancellor is

under intense pressure to restore the Conservatives' reputation as a party of low taxation.

The tax burden is expected to hit a seven-decade high and Mr Hunt has insisted the Government needs to “bring that down”.

Conservative MP Jake Berry said Wednesday's statement is a “chance to stop the cycle of ever-

## Discount for householders living near pylons

HOUSEHOLDS will get up to £1,000 off their energy bills every year if they live close to electricity pylons or substations, under plans to be announced by the Chancellor.

The discount is designed to build support for new green energy infrastructure and avoid objections during planning applications, allowing a swifter rollout so the UK can cope with increased demand for power. Planning regulations will also be

changed to make it easier to approve and build pylons, cables and other infrastructure.

A Treasury source said: “Expanding the grid will unlock global investment for Britain and bring improvements for people across the country.”

Energy watchdog Ofgem has also drawn up plans to replace the electricity pricing system with “locational” pricing, allowing cheaper bills for industry where there is a surplus of energy.

