

## Heywood Foundation Public Policy Prize - "City Centres"

11.7.2021

Categories: City Centres

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ID: 57-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Social Housing Bonds or crowd funding fulfilment**

Many Governments have attempted to fix the housing issue by social housing building programmes, rent controls etc. This has lead to market distortions, the creation of near ghettos and even a reduction in the availability of rental properties. The pandemic has exacerbated the problem and it's apparent that a long term solution is needed. Governments can be good enablers, but are usually poor at implementing.

Now more than ever, the younger generation need jobs, decent housing and a stake in society.

There's another group that do have the cash, stuffed under mattresses earning precisely zero. These are the savers, the older generation, the private pension pot holders. Near zero interest rates have saved businesses but continue to hollow out savings. The pandemic has pretty much entrenched this situation for the coming years.

My proposal is to connect these two groups - i.e. the older savers and the young needing decent housing and work. The savers have the cash and the young have the energy. Taxes on the younger population pay for pensions anyway, so why not connect the two in a more direct way?

I propose a Social Housing Bond. Issue a ten year bond ring fenced for rental housing construction, not council houses but administered by existing housing associations. I've had a peek around my own area of Northumberland and there are thousands of small, derelict or under-utilised plots of land owned by varying levels of Government which could be brought into use for no cost.

On this land, we can build small developments of 10 to 50 houses, be they decent apartments or family homes. This will fill in small gaps nicely and avoid over-loading local services. They also tend to be where the jobs are located, which is no bad thing. Typical social-level rents will give a 4% annual return for bond holders and leave around 2.5% for maintenance and admin. There are many billions of pounds of pensions and savings earning near zero returns, so a Government guaranteed bond giving modest but decent returns will be very welcome. Let's make that income tax free as an added incentive.

While we're at it, how about a nice bit of social engineering? Inevitably, there'll be a waiting list for new, high quality and cheap rental homes. So, let's take the young whose employment opportunities have been decimated by the pandemic together with the the intractably unemployed, the untrained and the unmotivated then dangle a great big, fat carrot in front of their noses.

Sign them up to a construction industry apprenticeship in plastering, tiling, joinery or, if they simply are incapable, they can learn to manage a sand heap, push a wheelbarrow and shovel rubble. It'll be some time before Artificial Intelligence replaces those vital skills. If they sign up and fully participate then BING! Front of the queue they go. Just think, the average builders age

is 57. We need more and younger. Brexit will most likely mean that we'll be in desperate need of these skills very soon.

Hook them up with a local building company, give the business a tax break to reward them and get the apprentices working on their own housing project. Imagine, building your own house. It's primal, goes straight to the ancient, tribal brain and the essence of providing a hearth and home for your family...and they will look after it.

If they're a good tenant for five years, give them the right to buy at the cost of replacement plus a small premium to put some more cash into the pot. If they sell up in less than a further five years then there would be a 20% per annum profit claw back. Bingo, a new generation will be invested in society in a deep and meaningful way. This is "Help To Buy" with sharp teeth.

Those on the scheme can market it to their peer group by offering a kick back of a months free rent for each of their pals who complete the training course. Social media does this all the time as the Youtube generation monetise their lifestyles, so why not this? It wouldn't take many early adopters to spread the news.

Some folk just need a cheap rent or a way into the housing market. However, others need more and this policy could help them all. So many problems solved with one idea. If policies were weapons, the Social Housing Bond would be a machine gun not a rifle.

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ID: 92-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Getting people to use public transport again**

In order to encourage people to get "back on public transport" why not change the tax laws and allow costs of travel - to and from a place of work - to be classified as genuine expenses which can be claimed or off set against a tax return.

At the moment people on PAYE have to fund their own expense to get to a place of work out of their personal net income. Hence a lot of people drive, especially those who have a designated parking space which is often provided by their employer.

To get these people out of cars and onto public transport, if they could offset - even a proportion - of the public transport costs against gross pay - I believe a lot of people would consider leaving cars at home.

In addition a lot of people who have now seen it is possible to work from home - who before COVID worked in an office and commuted daily - are now loathe to return as they have seen the savings in travel costs possible. Again if some of the future public transport costs were now allowed to be expensed against gross pay - I am sure a number of people would be more inclined to go back to commuting.

This is a simple idea, which is would be very easy to implement as the government can allow employers to credit against pay, public transport costs for getting to work. It does not require a huge investment nor a massive admin change, just a directive out to companies from the HMRC. It can be implemented quickly, it could be announced as a specific COVID policy to help “get people back to work”, it could be for a limited period (say 12 months) or for a single tax year? It could also be of great political benefit if presented properly by the government. Another way we are helping the country get back on its feet. It also is a very green idea.

I am convinced if personal expenditure on travel to work is allowed to be seen as a legitimate expense, even just a portion, more people will happily return to cities and towns by public transport. This would be a boon to the various transport operators and really good to support the green initiatives for cleaner air.

I hope you find this idea interesting, I really believe it could make a difference. Incidentally I would like you to know, I personally would NOT benefit from this idea.

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ID: 939-11 - Category: City Centres

**Devolved cultural renewal hubs and a public works of art project.**

Cultural renewal implies growth and regeneration. The pandemic and Brexit provide a perfect opportunity to re-structure and re-charge culture in the UK, levelling up areas that have been left behind and building on the communities that have been vital to so many throughout the last 10 months.

I propose that new cultural renewal hubs are set up across the country, most especially in deprived areas, that can act as focal points to boost cultural activity in these regions. The remit of these hubs would be to distribute funds more locally so as to support local art and local regeneration. Their purpose would be threefold. First, they would provide educational sessions in local primary and secondary schools, demonstrating art, instruments, popular music, the artistic opportunities of technology and other activities that focused on unique local interests and talent. They could also provide after-school help for choirs and local youth orchestras, something previously provided by local council music services, but cut in Cameron-era cuts.

Second, they would redistribute the generous cultural funds provided by the government to create art. However, instead of funding institutions, the funding would be targeted to actual artists and musicians and ask them to produce new work that represents the UK. This would combat the lack of inspiration that lockdowns have produced and create a post-Brexit boost of new musicians and artists to fill the institutions that were saved by the generous Cultural Renewal Fund. This takes its inspiration from the Public Works Project (PWAP) announced as part of the New Deal in post-depression America. Artists were directly funded by the state to produce art and were asked to focus on the 'American scene'. In total 3,749 artists were hired, and 15,663 works of art were produced. The artists were paid a modest wage and was relatively inexpensive given the massive post-depression cultural renewal it produced. This could be recreated in the UK and could be time-limited to coincide with the Festival of Britain 2022. The opportunity it could create for artists and musicians across the UK would be enormous, helping to level up the country, provide inspiration for young artists of the future, and renew a distinctive cultural Britishness that would mark the new age of a truly global Britain.

Third, the hubs could provide a database and meeting point for local artists that could collaborate with each other and provide a community in which to express ideas. This takes its inspiration from the Society of Finnish Composers who provide a community for all professional musicians in Finland. The community creates a valuable opportunity to discuss and create works and brings the community closer together. As a result, Finland boasts one of the highest compositional outputs compared to its population size in the world and is internationally famed for its standard of musical collaboration and modern composition.

These hubs would be centrally organised by Arts Council, England, showcasing the fantastic institution this is and Nicholas Serota's new term as head. Crucially, however, they must be granted a certain amount of operational independence that can allow them to focus on local issues and local talent. This cultural devolution can bring the UK closer together under a common spirit and community values. The advantages of such a project for the UK and the current government are immense. It would combat the idea that the government doesn't care about cultural industries, something I know not to be true. The post-Brexit touring issues have made many in the industry incandescent with rage and a public works project on this scale would show this government knew the importance of culture in post-Brexit Britain. It would also inspire communities that are not traditionally included in art and cultural education, combating the cutting of the performing arts BTEC. The project would create a British cultural distinctiveness that could showcase national renewal.

Crucially, this idea is fairly practical to implement and wouldn't need to be expensive. Much of the infrastructure for a project of this kind would just need to be revitalised from the local council music services of the past and could be set up through local artistic leaders. It would rely partially on voluntary service, asking artists that are financed through the Public Works Programme to also help in the educational aspect of the hubs. In return for the state funding their art, they should be happy to give back to the community around them. Little new funding is needed, it is more about restructuring the system to devolve responsibility to communities that can create local, and simultaneously national, works of art. This idea could create a new national cultural voice that is the product of collective responsibility, a trait found across the country during this pandemic. It could drive cultural renewal and fill the world-beating

institutions that have been skilfully preserved.

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ID: 1322-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Forward to the Village**

Using the topical meeting of 99yr old Sir Captain Tom Moore and 5yr old Tony Hudgell- inspired this;

We merge the social and educational services that currently exist in isolation across our towns, both physically and culturally. Immediately we make use of our empty High Street buildings to reconfigure all schools and community services into merged environments. Nursery, Primary and Secondary education happen alongside community provision of libraries, special needs and care for the elderly. Thus our town and village centres become our place of learning and growing. It becomes natural for elderly to walk into a complex to get a coffee, to play mah-jong with friends, to sit and read in the library or to do some craft work in the craft rooms. In just a few years it will be natural for a school teacher to call on an elderly person to assist them. An elderly person can assist with reading or teaching or to help garden in the playground plot (every school will have a community vegetable plot). There are many elderly persons who does not have their own grand child (nearby) to be able to extend their life worth on to the next generation. However as part of a local community hub where they go to socialise, get a library book, print out a letter, see the Doctor, they will be a known person and as such will not be strange to teachers, children or other community members. Thus every settlement that currently deserves a school will soon have a community hub dealing with far more than just teaching the 1-10 yr olds.

We are / were charmed on holidays seeing ladies in black sitting outside their doors on a street in a Mediterranean village knitting, not realising that they are performing an important role of watching children play, keeping an eye on behaviour and generally being a part of the community. Britain may not have the weather but it has banished the elderly into fear and isolation through the TV, care homes and "geriatric" facilities away from the flow of life. So we reinvent the "village" by having our schools and community activities as part of our Main Street, not on the periphery. Local shops will continue to be used but they will be alongside the Drs and the special needs clinic.

We capitalise on it by creating a healthier, integrated community, by making use of empty town centre premises for all those services currently flung to the outskirts. With or without pandemics this has to be the way for our High Streets to continue to exist - to redevelop as community hubs.

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ID: 871-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Create Cornerstones in every community**

Within our community a Cornerstone was begun as a central place for a community of 3,000 to build on the trust and self-reliance established during the health crisis. The template should be promoted and encouraged across Britain.

As in many neighborhoods, towns, and villages, there are underused community spaces. In our case, an empty property was rented and decorated and a hub for giving and receiving was begun. Originally a response to a growing number of people who were finding it hard to feed their family in a time of joblessness, Cornerstone developed into a place where surplus could be donated, and shortages made up. Excess produce from people's gardens and allotments, books, toys and games which had been used and enjoyed but were no longer wanted, outgrown school uniforms with plenty of life left in it; all these things flowed into the Cornerstone – and out again.

All types of people use the Cornerstone, removing any stigma as recipes involving quinces were swapped, and fresh eggs from over productive hens eagerly seized upon. Other organisations began to look to Cornerstone as an outlet for their giving, whether fresh meals, information on funding or resourcing. Staffed by paid and voluntary workers, it became a place to meet and chat, giving and receiving so much more than was originally imagined, a symbol of what could be achieved if a community worked together. Had it not been for the lockdown, Cornerstone would probably not have happened. Had our old way of doing things not been broken, we would not have found a new way.

Starting a Cornerstone requires: a small start-up grant of about £5,000; an intrepid local leader of which there are thousands in Great Britain; a local administrative group such as a church or a community organisation; available space to rent on a short-term basis; local part-time paid staff. Once established, a Cornerstone can become self-sufficient through local donations and available grants.

If we were to be awarded funds from the Heywood Foundation the funds would be used to help another Cornerstone get started in another community. We will help with our experience and advice to get new hubs started. We have seen how communities and individuals have gained from giving as well as receiving and have increased their understanding of their neighbors. This is not an opportunity to be missed as from here it can lead on to helping communities deal with future crises - health, economic, and environment.

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ID: 1512-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Working from [Warm] Homes**

It looks like we'll be spending more time working from home, even when the restrictions are lifted. The need to improve the energy efficiency of our homes has been highlighted to all, simply by the fact we've been spending so long in them.

PROBLEM: What's stopping people from putting solar panels on the roof, insulating their lofts and buying an electric car? I'm sure that part of the reason for not doing so is that one has to eat into savings or take on debt. Very risky given the Covid economic picture.

If the government were to offer loans for home upgrades and low carbon technologies, on an income-dependant repayment plan, like the higher education student loans, people would feel much more comfortable taking on the debt. If you were to lose your job or see your business turnover drop, your repayments are lowered or put on hold, just like the student loan repayments. The amount you pay is proportion to your income.

As with the current Green Homes Grant, reputable and registered firms carry out the improvements to your home and are involved in the administration.

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ID: 2256-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Mixed-generational communal living spaces**

There's no quick fix for this problem, but there are ways to foster closer ties between generations which could solve other problems within society such as loneliness, soaring housing costs, the ageing population, and waste. I propose introducing communal co-living spaces which take inspiration from the Dutch idea of 'nursing home dorms'. They will offer cheap rents to young people in return for a commitment to spending time with older residents, helping them learn to use new technology and tending to a communal roof garden. Whilst the private rooms in this co-living space will be small and basic, a lot of resources will be devoted to making large communal spaces for everyone to enjoy. Weekly film nights, art classes, political talks, exercise sessions, AR experiences, and cooking events, will be organised by the community. There will also be quiet areas for people to work in. The only commitment each resident must make, is to volunteer for a minimum of two hours a week. This could be scaled up in return for cheaper rents but there will be a cap on it.

After the pandemic, our high streets will need to be reimagined. As the shutters go down on big department stores and office blocks, the state should be commandeering these buildings to create these co-living spaces. They will be there for people whose lifestyles are more suited to renting - young people yet to put down roots, older people whose children may have flown the nest, or who have lost loved ones, and now want to live more communally. The space could also be available to short term residents, who only need to spend one night a week in the city now that they are predominantly working from their homes in rural areas. A lot has been made of people wanting to work more from home, but in my opinion this has been exaggerated. Those that are younger are living in cramped shared flats and have a lot to learn from their colleagues. There is also still a desire, across the board, for environments which foster collaboration and idea sharing. This co-working/ co-living hybrid space is one of them. To encourage this change, cities need to get rid of old zoning laws that specify single uses for buildings.

Closer ties between generations also need to be fostered to help us rethink assumptions about how we've traditionally lived. This is not just desirable, but necessary because of our ageing population and falling birth rates. People are going to be working into old age because society will not have enough money to support their pensions, and we are likely to be still paying off the pandemic! If we sow the seeds now of intergenerational connection through co-living and working spaces, we will reap the reward when society expects and needs people to work until 75. Research has also shown that multi-generational working environments bring a diversity of thought and promote more creativity.

On the subject of future generations, we need to create a cross-party department, made up of politicians and experts from a wide range of fields, that's solely focussed on the rights of future generations. This will allow for long term planning to tackle issues such as future pandemics, climate change and migration. Too often politics is bogged down by short-termism and quick fixes with eyes firmly on winning elections. This department will be shielded from party politics but still democratic. It will hold town hall policy think-ins which select a cross section of people to serve like a jury service. They will debate, vote, and guide the work of this cross-party group. Modern technology will allow for the work of the organisation to be transparent, open, and accountable. Facebook could also be involved in creating an efficient, regular voting system to guide the work of the body.

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ID: 455-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Build strong economies and communities through shared work hubs for the "work from home" future.**

As the pandemic grew, people abandoned urban areas for new lives in hamlets, villages and towns across the UK. Property values in these areas grew, especially those areas with a convenient city link, as demand for larger living spaces which suited a work from home environment became a new priority. Meanwhile businesses across the UK closed their doors, many for good, leaving a barren landscape of empty commercial properties on the high streets of our nation and yet another opportunity for social interaction lost from our daily lives. My solution to this challenge is to capitalise on the nation's new work from home phenomenon within the growing non urban populations using the multitude of empty properties on the high streets across the UK. With this combination of people and property there is an opportunity to revitalise communities and economies through government backed, flexible shared work hubs for people within these growing country and suburban areas. Essentially provide a government version of Wework for communities across the nation. For those not familiar, Wework was an innovative start up which grew to its global, multi billion pound valuation in less than a decade, with countless imitators following their business model. They realised that today's workforce didn't always require a traditional work environment but still wanted the social aspects of an office. What Wework offered was subscription packages for shared workspaces with amenities such as cafes, bars and wellness centres that offer fitness, spas and classes. Though Wework and its imitators were decimated by the pandemic due to society's exodus from metropolitan areas it does not mean that their business model was a failure. People are social animals and will always want to feel connected. Government backed work hubs in smaller communities

across the UK would be an opportunity for the citizens of those communities to come together in a flexible working environment and get to know their neighbour, create strong communities, encourage local businesses to grow around these communal work hubs and help to grow the economies of communities across the nation. Understandably there are financial requirements that would be needed to allow an initiative such as this to blossom. First councils would need to invest in empty properties in their area and familiarise and incentivise residents to the concept through considered spatial design/amenities within the hub and local marketing. As the use of the hubs grew the costs could be subsidised through leasing corners of the hub to other local business, such as cafes, restaurants and hospitality/fitness, who would benefit from the congregation of locals. There could also be private rooms for hire so that locals who needed to conduct meetings for a business pitch or staff training could request that their employer hire the hubs for this purpose. Eventually as the use of the hubs became as natural as a morning cup of coffee, people working in the hub could be charged a minimal subscription service dependent on local rates, which could then be passed on to the employer of that person to cover, or if the constituent is self employed and not VAT registered it could remain a free service to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship within the local region. As the hubs became a social lighthouse for the communities they were in, businesses surrounding the shared work hubs would begin to flourish. This frequent and constant traffic of locals would encourage other businesses such as retail and entertainment to build around these hubs. Eventually communities across the UK would grow into flourishing micro economies with revitalised and diverse high streets catering to a collaborative and neighbourly community. Apart from the economic benefits of this plan there are many social benefits too. The community using these hubs would begin to build relationships with their neighbours through regular and frequent interactions. As a result this would strengthen the community bond and improve the living conditions of people across the UK by helping to encourage camaraderie, rid loneliness and reduce crime through community investment. I believe that starting small in commuter towns and in areas which saw the most growth from the urban exodus would be a good place to start and grow from there. While I have no doubt that this would be a difficult initiative to launch, I think it has great potential for improving the economies and lives of people across our country.

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ID: 1382-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Can renting the world's forests, with help from the foreign aid budget, lead the way?**

We know relatively little about the world's forests and what they might ultimately be able to give us by way of chemical and biological resources. Might they also prove to be our salvation, if only we knew it? We know they are being cut down at a catastrophic rate. We know we are only too rapidly losing the lungs of the world. We know the loss of forests causes untold environmental damage in various ways. We also know that they provide a habitat for animals

and that this loss of habitat drives these creatures into closer contact with us. We also know that this increases the risk of us becoming infected by Zoonotic diseases. We know millions of us are catching Covid-19 and it is killing us (1.9 million so far). How much more do we need to know before we wake up and do something to address this situation? Those who destroy the forests (rain or otherwise) do so either for direct income (a business) or survival (to grow food they lack the means to pay for). So one very obvious way of taking that first step towards saving these forests is to replace the internal income generated by destroying the forest with an external source of income to protect and enhance the forest. In other words 'rent' them from their owners. Pay them to look after the forests just as we are now looking to pay our farmers to look after our countryside. In the UK the obvious source of this rent should be the foreign aid budget; particularly when you consider that 7.73 billion (and rising) foreigners will benefit from such action. If the rules don't allow it; change the rules. Of course ideally global action is required, but we could start with the next G7 Summit, which the UK is hosting and which will include climate and environmental action as one topic. We should seek to get as many nations as possible on board to each contribute towards this annual rent. Why not include some of the world's wealthiest, for example Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, James Dyson, Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk et al? A global organisation would be the tenant and any benefits accruing, from the carefully controlled activities permitted within the areas rented, would be shared globally.

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ID: 1362-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Make companies pay for non-recyclable products they produce**

Currently there is a massive problem in that many companies are producing products (many of which are single use) that are not recyclable. These end up in landfill where the true cost of these products are felt by the environment, and the taxpayer who ends up having to fund landfill and all the associated problems. Currently, companies can avoid putting these costs onto their product, meaning the shelf price of these goods is much lower than the cost to wider society. Companies benefit. Society loses out.

With landfill still continuing to grow in the UK, companies need both a carrot and a stick to reduce the number of products they produce that are not recyclable. The stick would be to add a tax onto companies that varies depending on the proportion of products they produce that are single-use and non-recyclable. Whilst companies would likely pass on this cost to consumers, consumers would then be encouraged towards the lower prices of goods that are recyclable. The carrot in the equation could be a certified sticker on products that says a company is producing below a certain percentage of goods that are not recyclable - incentivising

good behaviour for companies.

There would be exemptions for the production of medical products - such as syringes - which for obvious reasons are rightfully single use.

This should also be a hypothecated tax so that money raised from the companies, and from consumers buying these products, would go towards paying for the associated issues from landfill. It could also be used to fund the research of new recyclable materials that have a better environmental impact than existing single use materials. This research could then be made freely available to companies and the public, providing a public good that contributes towards the reduction of landfill.

The main effect of this policy would be that it pushes the onus for the lifetime of product onto the company that made it. Ultimately, this would hopefully stop companies from producing environmental harmful products and packaging, meaning they wouldn't be available for consumers to buy in the first place.

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ID: 901-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Thoughts to bring climate change to the consumer so stimulating demand for UK products**

This is a simple idea to implement, has low cost but will have a significant impact on both:

- The global crisis of climate change by bringing it gently and daily to the consumer,
- while also stimulating demand for UK manufacturing and farming which will help with the re-levelling across the UK, post-Brexit.

My Idea: I would like to see all UK sold goods, labelled simply to show their use of raw and scarce materials (especially water and carbon) and impact on the environment on their

production, delivery and packaging.

Consider strawberries sold in a supermarket. In June, UK grown strawberries will have a 'low rating' because transport costs will be low whereas, for strawberries bought in December, the rating will be much higher because of the carbon impact of flying in overseas grown strawberries.

Similarly, the labelling will show that items made of cotton have a significant environmental impact because of the high-water requirement in production.

I don't believe in telling people what they should do but without information, we can't make any effective and informed decisions. To be successful, the labelling system needs to be simple and accessible.

I suggest a simple 1 to 5 scale.

The scale also needs to be understandable by children. I know that if we educate children about the labels by including them in the national curriculum, they will drive buying parental preferences and so I recommend matching children accessible pictures (maybe level 1 could be a polar bear sitting alone on a tiny ice flow) to the scale.

The impact of all of this will be to:

- increase awareness and show what we can do individually to have a positive impact on climate change.

- Change buying behaviours towards environmentally friendly products.
- Encourage consumers to buy UK and locally sourced goods (which will always be more environmentally friendly because of lower transport costs) stimulating UK business.
- Provide a focus for continuing education and understanding.

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ID: 103-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Employment-Poverty-Energy-Solution**

The Government is faced with the three challenges as briefly outlined in 1.b. and is hosting the Climate Summit in Glasgow, which this solution could highlight as available to all wealthy western nations, as well as the UK.

Very simply, it would legislate that all new housing should have photovoltaic cells, to generate electricity, installed on every new property built. (This could also include industrial premises) The cost, relative to the total cost of a new dwelling, is minimal and should be borne by the builders, or individuals if building their own house. Thus no cost to the exchequer. These houses would use mainly electric heating, thus a reduction in carbon emissions. The home owners or tenants would have lower utility bills, reducing poverty. Employment in terms of developing our local manufacturing base for this; as well as R. & D. would increase. Employment for installing the panels would increase; all helping to reduce poverty. It would help to facilitate the move to electric vehicles. For sensitive areas or wealthy house owners, the cells can be in tile form. The power supplies would benefit from decentralisation and the UK would be less reliant on foreign supplies.

This is a completely win-win scenario!

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ID: 803-11 - Category: City Centres

### **What Build Back Better really means for the UK housing market**

There are excellent UK precedents for government interventions working to change markets for the better. In the energy market, UK government support for onshore and offshore wind turbines and attractive feed-in tariffs for domestic solar power generation have contributed substantially to our nation being able to meet electricity demand for extended periods without burning coal. As importantly in the context of new-build housing, government support in the energy sector has led to economies of scale in wind turbine construction and solar panel production, thereby reducing and eliminating the historic cost differentials.

So, the government should introduce legislation to require all new build homes from 2023 to achieve at least EPC A ratings, or preferably meet a Zero Carbon Standard.

This requirement should be backed up with stick and carrot incentives:

- A substantial levy (say £20,000 to £30,000) should be charged on developers and house builders for every new-build unit that fails to achieve at least an EPC A rating.
- To address the existing cost differential of building homes to a higher environmental standard, an initial subsidy (akin to a feed-in tariff) should be provided to developers and house-builders for every unit which does achieve an EPC A rating, with a higher initial subsidy provided for every unit which achieves a Zero Carbon rating.
- As volumes increase and economies of scale of production emerge, subsidies should be reduced to avoid undue enrichment by developers and builders.
- In any future Government support for first time buyers, there should be an absolute requirement for new properties to meet a Zero Carbon standard.

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ID: 631-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Offer government support for converting unused office space into low-carbon housing**

The government should work with businesses, including providing financial support, to convert unused office space into low-carbon housing. This would work towards a number of valuable short-term goals: alleviating the housing shortage in urban centres, increasing Britain's overall stock of low-carbon homes, and providing financial relief to businesses and investors harmed by the sudden collapse of Britain's office-space market (real estate plays a significant part in Britain's pension investments, for example). More importantly, however, it could help the government play the role of environmental market-maker by providing construction firms with a meaningful financial incentive to retrain and certify in low-carbon domestic construction, with a view to expanding these techniques to the broader sector, including existing homes, along the

lines of the Future Homes Standard.

This programme would begin by offering financial incentives to existing owners of office space willing to convert their property into housing. This could take the form of direct subsidies or a sizeable reduction in stamp duty on the sale of properties for conversion. If political risk was identified as a significant barrier to businesses engaging with the scheme, the government could offer periodically-reviewed guarantees along the lines of the assurances given to the energy industry: this may be particularly relevant given the large capital investments, long timescales and shared emphasis on decarbonisation involved.

Given the innate conservatism of the real-estate sector and the relatively frequent shifts in government climate policy (at least compared with the long timescale involved in real-estate development), these incentives should be introduced with ministerial support, a defined timescale and consultation with industry bodies. Eligibility for these subsidies should be clear enough to be understood by the public (to avoid allegations of nepotism) and limited in scope, focusing on the creation of new, low-carbon homes, avoiding project creep. Additionally, some reimbursement should be withheld until conversion of the property is complete, particularly for larger developments, so as to discourage delay and “white elephants”.

The government should also work with the construction industry to introduce measures that facilitate conversion and encourage skills-retention. These include updating and republishing standards for low-carbon housing and, where necessary, working with construction industry bodies to rapidly develop accreditation standards for low-carbon construction practices. Particularly given the disappointment felt by businesses which had invested in retraining for the Zero Carbon Homes standard, dropped in 2015, this may need to be approached with some degree of sensitivity.

Ministerial attention and pre-planning before the programme launches can also help to mitigate key risks, as well as facilitate improved outcomes (for example, by encouraging dialogue between estate agents, landlords and construction companies). This is in part because

the project would cut across several sections and layers of government – notably the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, the Treasury and local authorities – but also because different departments may approach the programme with different secondary objectives. For example, the government may wish to use this programme to expand and update its stock of social housing, though this is not a primary aim.

The government will have to establish and maintain clear rules for which properties are eligible for conversion – some modern office blocks may be architecturally unsuitable, due to centralised utilities or poor access to natural lighting in the centre of the building. Central government should discourage local authorities from overzealous use of Section 106 powers to require affordable housing: many offices exist in locations where housing supply is so limited that even relatively high rents can still improve housing accessibility. This all argues for clear ministerial ownership of the programme and significant interdepartmental planning before launch.

Successful developments would act as cornerstones for integrated communities, stimulating further investment and decarbonisation. This is because the new homes converted from offices would likely exist near to retained office spaces and the public transport links which serve them. Where good quality housing is available, living near work is desirable for many, as well as being carbon-friendly. Commuting involves walking or cycling rather than taking a car or train, and by reducing the load on public transport, encourages others to use mass transit services over private transportation. Good public transport links and central locations mean that social, leisure and cultural activities are readily available and easy-to-access.

The long-term goal of this programme should be to provide an incubator for construction businesses to acquire the skills (and accreditation) for low carbon conversion for use in the broader domestic construction sector. This skills gap is one of the five urgent areas for concern identified in the Committee on Climate Change's (CCC) report on UK housing from 2019. Greater market availability of experienced specialists would also help lower the significant costs environmentally-minded owners face in retrofitting existing properties. These costs act as a significant barrier to the 15% energy-use reduction in existing properties by 2030 that the CCC

identifies as a necessary intermediate target.

The accelerated abandonment of conventional office spaces is likely to be one of the longest lasting and most significant effects of the COVID-19 crisis. Unmanaged, this issue will only exacerbate the economic hardship that the UK will doubtless face in the years ahead. However, empty buildings in some of Britain's most housing-undersupplied areas provide an enormous opportunity not only to create new homes, but act as an incubator for sector-wide skills and practices which will allow Britain to capitalise on her climate ambitions.

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ID: 394-11 - Category: City Centres

### **How can the nation reduce freight transit times and emissions?**

The answer to this question is surprisingly obvious and simple: reduce the amount of road haulage and increase the amount of bulk movements.

#### Finance

The proposed government spend of £27bn on roads and road improvements could instead be spent on Freight Railway improvements, Freight Staging Areas and a unified Freight Movement Database. Superficial research indicates that parts of this proposal already exist.

#### Freight Railway

The freight railway network would be improved from major ports / ferry terminals / airports by removing any restrictions that impedes the free flow of freight rail traffic. The network would link to a number of strategically place staging areas designated for rail freight transfer to road haulage.

#### Freight Staging Areas

These are areas that are geographically significant for industry and major conurbations. They will provide services for loading and unloading of freight and temporary storage. Last road mile delivery from these staging areas will use electric or hydrogen powered tractor units.

## Freight Movement Database

The database would broadly have two functions: the equivalent of parcel tracking (but for freight) and a “click and collect” function. Freight entering the country can be pre-booked before arrival or booked on arrival. Pre-booking would reduce bureaucracy and hence time. Freight leaving the country would be pre-booked before movement and then booked out of the country at a port / ferry terminal / airport. The identification of the freight can be by simple bar code or QR code. Freight requiring real time tracking such as: high value / dangerous / perishable / urgent medical supplies etc. could use GPS tags with data fed back to the database over the mobile phone network (3G / 4G and future 5G).

## Overview

It is possible that some ports may also function as Staging Areas where they are geographically close to the freight final destination. Examples of these would be Liverpool and London Docks. However, Freight Staging Areas such as Birmingham, Manchester etc. would send and receive freight from seaports / airports by train. Last road miles would be completed by electric or hydrogen powered tractor units. These types of tractor units already exist but hydrogen fuel supplies are currently very sparse. Therefore, a hydrogen fuel service could be incorporated at these Staging Areas. It should be noted that the intention of Staging Areas should lead to haulier tractor units not actually covering long distances and as such refuelling may be immaterial.

As freight enters or exits the country it will be registered and tracked using the Freight Movement Database. Like a parcel tracking service, companies will be able to log into the database to find out where their freight is. As mentioned above, depending on the freight type this information could be in real-time.

As inbound (to the UK) freight arrives at a Staging Area the database will send a notification to the company that owns the freight. They will arrange for a haulier to collect the freight. The

haulier will book a collection slot. This will manage traffic into and out of the Staging Area and reduce the amount of temporary storage required. It is possible that fines could be levied if freight collection is not prompt.

### Dover Example

The effects of the new variant of COVID-19 starkly demonstrated how the existing freight transport quickly descends into chaos.

If freight crossing from Europe to Dover had been towed onto and off the ferries using a mule tractor unit then the chaos could have been averted as the drivers would not have been crossing the channel.

If Dover were to be a Freight Staging Area and for example the freight was destined for Birmingham (around 200 miles away) then this would be loaded onto a freight train at Dover and taken to the Staging Area near to Birmingham where it would be collected by a local haulier.

The proposed system does not preclude European hauliers driving freight to its final destination in the UK. The Freight Movement Database would have a number of “available slots” that could be pre-booked. The control of these slots would act as a tap for controlling the flow of long distant road haulage. Additionally a fee could be levied for UK road congestion and emissions particularly if the tractor unit was diesel. These fees could be used to finance Freight Rail, Freight Staging Areas and UK haulier’s costs in the switch to cleaner vehicles.

### Final Thoughts

This entire proposal could be implemented given the political will. Parts of the proposal already exist but may require some enhancement and further integration into a common system.

The IT functions exist as features used by many different commercial companies.

Using this approach will reduce the opportunities for deliberate or inadvertent people trafficking.

Less European heavy vehicles on UK roads will lead to less congestion and more importantly fewer accidents.

UK haulier electric tractor units, if designed to support vehicle to grid power, could supply the National Grid with significant standby power and would also provide the hauliers with an extra stream of income.

Birmingham could be a key hub for the integration of freight and rail commuters.

If the development of Heathrow were to be switched to Birmingham airport this would further improve the hub and would signal to the rest of the country that the government is serious about creating a powerhouse in the North and spreading the benefits of our economy across the whole of the nation.

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ID: 111-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Accelerate the green revolution in the built environment**

1] Across the UK there is a rolling programme of introducing LED light bulbs to STREET LAMPS but since this programme started, technology has moved on. In Northern Europe there are already solar powered street lamps being deployed, proven to work in our climate. Furthermore they can integrate all the requirements for the development of 'smart cities'. Generating more electricity than they use, these solar lamp posts should be viewed as an asset class rather than a capital cost, as their excess capacity can be sold to the grid. SOLUTION: The government should mandate that all public sector tenders for street lighting must henceforth include a requirement for solar lamp posts to be evaluated against existing technologies so the opportunity is properly explored. Because of their asset class potential, street lighting upgrades and new installations might therefore be funded by private sector investors alleviating the cost from local authority budgets. Manufacturing and installation can be by UK employers. The World Economic Forum website carries details of the EU's ambition to install 10 million smart lamp posts along these lines. We should follow suit.

2] The government has a strong commitment to renewable energy and yet sites for solar farms are hard to secure planning for. In Europe and beyond, CAR PARKS at hospitals, sports grounds, retail locations, workplaces, airports and train stations are adopting solar car ports that, as well as providing shelter from the elements for vehicles and their occupants, generate electricity to support electric vehicle charging (for which there is growing demand and insufficient supply

currently) and can feed excess generation into the grid. Arguably the visual amenity of a solar farm is no worse than that of staring at a car park. SOLUTION: The government should ease planning rules and incentivise car park operators to install solar car ports wherever possible. According to the RAC Foundation there are between 17,000 and 20,000 non-residential car parks in the UK with between 3 and 4 million spaces. That equates to between 6 and 8 million standard solar panels - a significant increase in our solar farm capacity without impinging on farm land or the visual amenity of the countryside. That equates to at least 2425 acres of solar capacity. The UK's largest solar park at Shotwick in North Wales covers 250 acres, has a capacity of 72.2 megawatts, reduces CO2 emissions by 202,000 tonnes each year and powers 11,000 homes. Covering our car parks with solar car ports has the potential to therefore provide at least ten times as much benefit as Shotwick. The government could go further and mandate all car park operators of over a certain size (say 20 or 50 bays) to undertake a commercial cost benefit analysis of installing solar car ports, by going out to tender. As with solar lamp posts, car port solar farms would be an asset class that investors would support. Solar car ports can be manufactured and installed by existing UK facilities creating job opportunities.

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ID: 524-11 - Category: City Centres

**Daily Communal Restaurants can bring communities back together, stronger than ever, improving lives, ending poverty**

ABSTRACT: A network of autonomous Daily Communal Restaurants (DCRs) serving bulk-cooked, affordable, nutritious food would cultivate deep community spirit and generate far-reaching benefits.

2020 brought us widespread isolation, atomisation and disunity. To capitalise on a common urge to make up for lost time and repair wounds, DCRs can bring people together by recreating long-lost community spirit around delicious food -- arming against future viruses not just nutritionally, but also through expanded support networks.

It sounds far too good to be true: simply by relieving people of the daily need to cook dinner, they would get significant extra free time to improve their circumstances and relationships. Consistently nutritious food can also guard against illness and promote healthy habits. Serving the food in a communal area leads to many further positives. Deprived communities stand to gain the most, and the potential benefits seem endless.

This proposal requires no extraordinary investment or talent. The first and most important daily task would be to cook and serve one giant pot of food, so perhaps three cooks and a cleaner/porter working a 5-hour shift in a fairly basic kitchen. Anything beyond those basics can come later, as the enterprise becomes sustainable via various income streams.

Imagine if, on any evening of the week, you could briefly stroll to a friendly, comfortable eatery and pay an incredibly reasonable price for a wholesome dinner. For new parents, the daily grind would be much relieved. For pensioners living alone, there would be daily socialising. For those on low incomes, it could reduce a range of expenses. Anyone lacking time to cook wouldn't have to survive on junk food.

The impact such a scheme could have on the average family is profound. If instead of cooking dinner at home, they spent 1-3 hours every evening in a DCR, home utility bills would go down. Since each member of the family could get excellent nutrition at least once a day, lunches could be simpler. Not having to tediously plan, prepare, and clean up after dinner would free up many hours a week for housework, projects, reading, play or exercise.

A city with many DCRs frequented by thousands of people could see less crime, fewer traffic accidents, better school performance, and reduced strain on GPs. Children would be better adjusted after eating beside a variety of older people. From higher birth rates to lower divorce rates and more disposable income, these benefits could multiply across private and public life.

How could tens of thousands of DCRs become a reality and operate in practice? The impetus of the state and cooperation of local councils could ensure pilot DCRs are properly managed, then branched outwards to areas of high demand or deprivation. A gradual national roll-out could begin after a comprehensive strategy is agreed, and suitable premises have been identified.

DCRs could potentially be self-sustaining, democratic and fully independent. With fairly minimal resources required to initially equip each kitchen and seating area, networks of regional DCRs could spring up in support of each other, in constant communication via social media and experimenting with recipes, suppliers and organisational structures.

Each DCR would enjoy a steady stream of volunteers, donations and income from vending machines in addition to revenue from selling food to eat in or take away, at fixed or pay-as-you-feel prices. If necessary, main spaces could be hired out for events and groups before doors are opened for dinner. Favourable rent agreements and deals with local food suppliers would further increase viability.

Once a good dinner service has been achieved, a second meal option, or lunch/breakfast service would be a logical next step. When not serving food, the dining area could be open to anyone wanting company, drinks, snacks or warmth. Larger DCRs could have a play area for children. Every DCR should have a selection of books and magazines, and a hot water dispenser with free tea bags. Leftover food could be available to take away.

Popularity would depend primarily on the quality of cuisine, and the aim should be to establish a settled (but gradually evolving) routine of favourite dishes, each of which would feature around 2-4 times per month. The first recipes could take inspiration from anywhere, and would ideally be possible to cook in a single giant pot or pan. Cost of ingredients, local nutritional priorities, feedback from diners, and ease of preparation/serving would be evaluated over time.

Cooking should be light on meat and gluten, big on vegetables, herbs and olive oil. Dessert could be a small piece of reduced-sugar chocolate. A weekly meal plan would be available online and in a front window, showing which days are gluten free, vegetarian or vegan. Recipes could also be posted online, and the highest-rated dishes entered into contests judged by celebrity chefs.

The beauty of the concept is that each DCR could innovate and evolve in different ways, perhaps opening additional services and workshops, collaborating with neighbouring DCRs, or becoming centres of grassroots organisation in support of multiple causes. Such is the importance of ensuring each DCR is first sustainable, then independent, then preferably democratic. They should belong entirely to the people they serve.

A DCR focused on lifting residents out of poverty could offer free meals to holders of special passes, including free leftovers. A wardrobe could be used for donated clothes, free for anyone to take. A notice board could advertise items or services being donated, sought or bartered. Counsellors, financial planners, trade unionists, solicitors, career advisors and language teachers could be invited to give presentations and take questions.

This proposal must be ambitious and bold in the face of inevitable opposition from corners of privilege and power. The least it deserves is a properly-funded pilot scheme in places where people are loudly calling for it, organised by people whose background makes them obvious choices. The Heywood Foundation should launch a publicity campaign, involving MPs, trade unions, activists and public figures (maybe a Man United striker?)

Let's do it!

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ID: 401-11 - Category: City Centres

**Revitalise communities through government backed, shared work hubs for the "work from home" future.**

As the pandemic grew, people abandoned urban areas for new lives in hamlets, villages and towns across the UK. Properties values in these areas grew, especially those areas with a convenient city link, as demand for larger living spaces which suited a work from home environment became a new priority. Meanwhile businesses across the UK closed their doors, many for good, leaving a barren landscape of empty commercial properties on the high streets

of our nation and yet another opportunity for social interaction lost from our daily lives. My solution to this challenge is to capitalise on the nation's new work from home phenomenon within the growing non urban populations using the multitude of empty properties on the high streets across the UK. With this combination of people and property there is an opportunity to revitalise communities and economies through government backed, flexible shared work hubs for people within these growing country and suburban areas. Essentially provide a government version of Wework for communities across the nation For those not familiar, Wework was an innovative start up which grew to its multi billion pound valuation in less than a decade, with countless imitators following their business model. They realised that today's workforce didn't always require a traditional work environment but still wanted the social aspects of an office. What Wework offered was subscription packages for shared workspaces with amenities such as cafes, bars and wellness centres that offer fitness, spas and classes. Though Wework and its imitators were decimated by the pandemic due to society's exodus from metropolitan areas it does not mean that their business model was a failure. People are social animals and will always want to feel connected. Government backed work hubs in smaller communities across the UK would be an opportunity for the citizens of those communities to come together in a flexible working environment and get to know their neighbour, create strong communities, encourage local businesses to grow around these communal work hubs and help to grow the economies of communities across the nation. Understandably there are financial requirements that would be needed to allow an initiative such as this to blossom. First councils would need to familiarise and incentivise residents to the concept through considered spatial design/amenities within the hub and local marketing. As the use of the hubs grew the costs could be subsidised through leasing corners of the hub to other local business, such as cafes, restaurants and hospitality/fitness, who would benefit from the congregation of locals. There could also be private rooms for hire so that locals who needed to conduct meetings for a business pitch or staff training could request that their employer hire the hubs for this purpose. Eventually as the use of the hubs became as natural as a morning cup of coffee, people working in the hub could be charged a minimal subscription service dependent on local rates, which would then be passed on to the employer of that person to cover, or if the constituent is self employed and not VAT registered it could remain a free service to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship within the local region. As the hubs became a social lighthouse for the communities they were in, businesses surrounding the shared work hubs would begin to flourish. This frequent and constant traffic of locals would encourage other businesses such as retail and entertainment to build around these hubs. Eventually communities across the UK would grow into flourishing micro economies with revitalised and diverse high streets catering to a collaborative and neighbourly community. Apart from the economic benefits of this plan there are many social benefits too. The community using these hubs would begin to build relationships with their neighbours through regular and frequent interactions. As a result this would strengthen the

community bond and improve the living conditions of people across the UK by helping to encourage camaraderie, rid loneliness and reduce crime through community investment. I believe that starting small in commuter towns and in areas which saw the most growth from the urban exodus would be a good place to start and grow from there. While I have no doubt that this would be a difficult initiative to launch, I think it has great potential for improving the economies and lives of people across our country.

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ID: 903-11 - Category: City Centres

## **Delivering an enduring response to the impact of Covid on the quality of home life**

### Summary

Housing should not be regarded as an investment vehicle, to increase the wealth of some at the expense of others. It should not be sold to the highest bidder. It is a basic human need, that should be enjoyed by all. My vision is an ambitious one - to ensure safe, secure and affordable homes for all. This paper does not provide the space to do more than briefly outline a range of measures which could realise this. We owe that to nurses, care home staff and others who have toiled through the Covid epidemic on minimum wages. If it can be realised, by whatever means, it would in my estimation, represent a bulwark of social stability which, as a Nation, we can be as proud of as the NHS. Turning the vision into reality

There are three main steps - tackling affordability levels, delivering secure homes, and financing them.

#### Step 1: Tackling affordability levels

The planning system is charged with delivering sufficient new homes to meet expected market demand. It does not however halt the steadily rising affordability gap which increasingly prevents people accessing and retaining the homes they need. The only effective method is through some form of mandatory price control. For every household, lower housing costs would

release greater discretionary expenditure into the wider economy. If formulated and exercised in a manner that gives significant social benefit, and is enforced fairly and consistently, there is therefore no reason why it should prove politically unattractive. It could operate by:

1. Setting a base date from which price control would be introduced. Allowing housing costs (sale prices and rents) thereafter to grow only in line with a national House Price Index, which reflects factors such as wage growth, cost of living indices and/or a fixed percentage in much the same way as the State Pension's "triple lock";
2. Fixing the price/rent at which individual properties can then be marketed after the base date (perhaps using Council Tax bands rather than individual valuation, unless unless warranted) and applying the relevant growth index as years click past.
3. Applying the price control at the time of sale or rent review, binding sellers, buyers, landlords and renters. If using Council Tax bands, the offer and purchase price could be within the range of the index adjusted band, not exceeding the maximum of the band. Any breaches could be rectified when the sale is identified at then time of registration by restorative taxation attaching to both buyer and seller/renter.

## Step 2: Delivering secure homes

Avoiding a dependency culture requires as many households as possible fully fund their own housing costs themselves, as most do now. I do not envisage a return to widespread building of social housing. Those approaches have been seen to expose divisions in society, force restraint on tenants' aspirations, and have proved to be unfair, inflexible and uneconomic. Rather, I propose a fluid "estate" of measures that can be tailored to support those who, for whatever reason, find themselves needing a helping hand to obtain or maintain a suitable roof over their heads. This "estate" would be managed by a "home security agency", engaging the existing network of existing social housing players (local government departments, housing associations and licensed charities, such as "Shelter", "St Mungo" and "Crisis"). Its remit would be to initiate timely solutions for all who are homeless or face potentially chaotic disruption and distress to family life when facing unavoidable need to leave their existing home (such as into care). The agency might provide traditional social housing (for rent, sale or shared ownership) by commissioning or buying "new build" homes, or acquire suitable existing properties "bought in"

for re-sale or rent and perhaps, after refurbishment, conversion into larger or smaller units or adapted from other uses. Loans, discounted mortgages and payment breaks may all be considered, as well as grants and temporary or permanent rent subsidies and the operation of hostels. Innovation is the key, and might, for example (for those part way through their mortgage term) negotiating part or whole ownership of the home concerned as a form of community “equity release” or temporary tenancy. Indeed, anything that enables households to get back on their feet and be helped to “staircase” to a suitably secure tenure, or elect to move to more affordable accommodation when ready. Conversely, some cases might involve no more than helpful counselling or advice.

### Step 3: Financing the secure homes

Although the secure homes could be financed by taxation, my own suggestion is that the system should have “community ownership” to transcend party politics and fixed parliamentary terms. For that reason, I suggest a form of insurance typified by NHS funding, but with the option of voluntary additional contributions. There is no room here to expound this in detail, but I envisage three main components:

1. A one-off capital gains tax on the equity held in mortgage-free homes (generally over and wealthier, who might benefit in return from the help to access to retirement accommodation). For fairness and palatability, it should be applied only to equity accrued after a fixed date (past, present or future) and made payable only at the time of sale.
2. A compulsory deduction from earnings from those in work - as with NHS, but effectively paid by by a part of each household' s increased spending power released by the house price control mechanism.
3. Voluntary contributions, attracting individuals and institutions seeking a replacement secure option for long term investment. This would match closely with pension savings, especially if the return was paid in a way that provided greater choice of accommodation and care in old age (for individuals or employees).

## Conclusion

There are no doubt other approaches that might come forward from others. My purpose is to stimulate constructive discussion having identified some fundamental principles and opportunities. Importantly, evolution of suitable policies must be pursued in a spirit of “how we can....” rather than “why we can’t.... ” Be bold. Let's do it!

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ID: 2278-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Turning over a new leaf: a plan for cleaner air**

To tackle the problem of air pollution, particularly in urban areas, we need to improve our green infrastructure. In particular I am suggesting that urban hedges should be planted to reduce air pollution.

In the 2019 general election political parties competed in their pledges to plant millions of trees to combat climate change and to achieve Net Zero suggesting that there is political will to improve the UK's green infrastructure. However, it was predicted that the scope for these planting initiatives was relatively low in urban areas due to lack of space and the cost. 99% of Londoners live in areas exceeding the World Health Organisation's recommended guidelines for air pollution levels and the European Court of Justice ruled that the UK has broken legal limits on air pollution for a decade. Already one nine-year old Londoner has air pollution as a cause of death on their death certificate. There is a significant need to tackle the problem of air pollution and specifically in urban environments where there is a lack of green infrastructure to absorb air pollution, such as emissions from cars on busy roads.

A solution to the problem of air pollution is to plant and manage hedges in urban areas to create a dense filter to absorb air pollution at its source and to provide protection to those effected by air pollution. In particular urban hedges should be planted alongside high level sources of pollution, such as busy roads, and alongside areas frequented by people particularly vulnerable to air pollution, such as schools and in residential areas.

A recent study by the Global Centre for Clean Air Research suggests that trees are not effective at reducing roadside pollution at breathing height whereas hedges are. Unlike trees, hedges are able to trap air pollution at the level it is produced and provide a barrier at breathing level between the pollution sources and the person breathing. Simply brushing up against a roadside hedge will demonstrate the volume of dust and particulates that the mesh formed by the hedge's leaves filters. Trees, on the other hand, can sometimes trap air pollution at street level as the mesh of leaves of trees can trap the air. Hedges are a more effective and immediate solution than trees as they are quicker to grow and take less long-term development planning than trees in terms of size and shape. Additionally, managed hedges are more suitable for urban environments as they can easily be shaped to the needs of urban spaces.

Beyond improving air quality and air pollution reduction, urban hedges have benefits such as carbon sequestration which would help contribute to UK Net Zero initiatives; they can improve biodiversity and can be a source of pollination support; they can help with water management and rainfall capture; and they can reduce soil pollution. Urban hedges can also have insulating properties and in summer can help keep air cool; they can also reduce wind speed in streets that have high buildings that create a wind tunnel. Some studies also suggest that urban hedges can reduce noise pollution. Depending on how they are implemented, for instance between a footpath and a road, urban hedges could provide pedestrians and possibly cyclists protection from cars and reduce traffic accidents by preventing pedestrians from jaywalking. Urban hedges can add aesthetic value to built-up areas that lack green spaces with some studies suggesting that there are psychological and mental health benefits associated with proximity to plants and green infrastructure.

Planting and maintaining urban hedges may also have the advantage of creating new jobs. These jobs would be green jobs and providing more technical skilled opportunities in urban areas while preserving the technical skills in hedge growing and maintenance that otherwise might be at risk of being lost.

In terms of the practical implementation of urban hedges as a policy, this is an active area of research with experts and academics already specialised in this issue who could consult on the best way to implement it as a policy. There is a growing field of research as to the most effective plants to be used as urban hedges. Consideration has already been paid as to which plants are the most effective at absorbing roadside pollution with the Royal Horticultural Society suggesting *Cotoneaster franchetii*. Other studies look at how issues like allergenicity can be managed. Thought will still need to be paid as to how to manage invasive species and prevent issues like excessive shading. There may be some areas with urban planning requirements, such as the need for driver visibility on roads, that prevents the policy being utilised in some areas or may cause it to take a different form, for instance plant boxes as opposed to hedges in the ground. However, at a minimum urban hedge can provide a great deal of benefit to schools, playgrounds, and community centres.

A concern might be the cost of urban hedges as a policy but in the long-term the monetary saving made by the reducing air pollution levels would almost certainly outweigh the initial start ups costs of urban hedges as a policy. The long-term running costs of urban hedges are likely to be low and these are costs that are already incurred in the countryside maintaining hedgerows and in cities maintaining trees and other green infrastructure so there is data that can be consulted to estimate a cost. Depending on the implementation of the policy it may also be the case that local community members would volunteer to help with the maintenance of urban hedges thereby reducing the cost. Ultimately, the improvement to public health and quality of life by reducing air pollution through this policy make the cost of the implementation and maintenance worthwhile.

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ID: 1533-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Levelling the retail playing field to rejuvenate town centres**

The move from High Streets to online retailing has been accelerated by the pandemic. High Streets need to be repurposed, but retail shops will remain integral to town centres, and a greater variety of shops would help to regenerate interest and activity.

High Street shops face disadvantages compared with online retailers - high business rates in town centres, lower costs for online retailers operating from out of town warehouses, and avoidance of taxes on profits by international online operators. These inequities are a

disincentive for people to open shops in town centres.

My solution is to change the cost structure of retailing to create a fairer environment and to encourage the opening of bricks and mortar shops in rejuvenated , vibrant town centres which will be seen as centres of creativity and interest.

The solution is this - firstly, abolish business rates for retail operations of any sort. The exemption from business rates for charity shops enables them to open on High Streets and now there are many of them in many town centres. Their number proves that the absence of business rates acts as a strong incentive to open a shop. Abolishing business rates across all retailers including online removes some of the cost advantages of operating from out of town warehouses.

Total income generated from business rates amounts to c £22bn per annum. I don't know the proportion represented by retail, but an assumption could be 50%, ie £11bn. This would need to be recouped in some way, and the second part of my policy addresses this.

The second policy plank is to introduce a levy on UK sales (not profits) across all retail operations, both bricks and mortar and online. This levy would create a level playing field whereby multinational online retailers would contribute based on their sales in this country, countering their practices of avoiding taxes by moving profits offshore.

The results of these 2 policies would be:-

Reducing costs to bricks and mortar retailers, encouraging them to open on High Streets because of zero business rates. I would hope that smaller, niche and creative retailers would be

likely to open in smaller retail units, creating an interesting and attractive mix of shops and helping to rejuvenate town centres. While the sales levy would impact on profits, for many retailers the abolition of business rates would more than offset this cost.

Removing some of the unfair advantages enjoyed by online retailers. The attraction of online shopping is here to stay, but the playing field is tilted in favour of online and this needs to be redressed. The sales levy would capture a contribution from online retailers which they currently escape.

The sales levy removes some of the distinction between bricks and mortar and online, potentially encouraging retailers to operate in both spheres, possibly from the same premises in town centres for smaller operators.

Retail sales in the UK are c £400bn per annum. A sales levy of 3% would raise c£12bn, replacing my assumed £11bn lost through the abolition of business rates. This makes the changes cost neutral, and a higher levy could raise further funds. This could be a good thing to do, if the levy is used in a creative way, and this forms the third plank of my policy.

The third policy plank requires that the retail sales levy would be ring fenced and released to councils with the purpose of improving and repurposing the ambience of town centres. This would include the creation of leisure areas, parks, arts centres, exhibition areas, performing spaces etc. , making town centres attractive in a number of ways, including but not restricted to shopping and hospitality.

To repeat the main policy points :-

1. Abolish business rates for retail operations.
2. Replace business rates with a levy on UK retail sales, irrespective of the form of retail operation.
3. Use the revenue raised by the sales levy to change the physical attributes of town centres in creative ways, transforming them into places with a broad cultural attraction.

Clearly , more work needs to be done on the financial calculations, but in principle I believe this policy would have a real and immediate impact on the problems besetting our town centres.

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ID: 1209-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Help people, help nature - fairly**

The proposed Community Areas of Landscape Value (CALV) will be part of a national network – a grid – of green spaces that are accessible to us all wherever we live. People will not have to travel to find green spaces, the green spaces are already amongst us where we live. CALV will be areas that complement the existing ‘family’ of designated green spaces. They will inevitably have considerably lower levels of legal protection than the leaders such as National Parks and AONBs but their importance should not be seen as diminished. In order to make CALV fulfil their purpose of being available for everyone they will need some security through designation. This must be organised at grass-roots level. It is for communities to identify and nominate the green and grassy spaces that matter to them, rather than potential places to be judged or allocated at a national level. Neighbourhood Planning has successfully shown how this can be done, and the same framework and process could be extended to designating CALV. Once the CALV are identified by the local community, they will then be managed by local people drawing on the knowledgeable, often passionate, expertise that comes from people who feel they are part of a place. This concept is not new. To quote Baba Dioum, 1968: In the end we will conserve only what we love, we will love only what we understand, and we will understand only what we are taught. The pandemic has shone a light on the natural assets that are an essential part of people’s lives – the places where they go to sit in the sun, walk the dog or build a snowman. These are urban as well as rural, and encompass, for example, a canalside, a redundant

cemetery, moorland or wetlands. It will not be difficult to involve communities in creating and managing CALV. It will build on the learning of the success of over 9000 community businesses, approximately 100,000 social enterprise companies and the growing number of Community Land Trusts which are all legally structured, supported by professionals working for organisations like Co-ops UK, Locality, Plunkett, Community Land Trusts, many supported by Power to Change. The monolith of central government can be slow to react to the needs of individual communities. But in order to make CALV work the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) must provide sufficient national oversight to allow communities to move forward and be more self-sufficient. The benefits of CALV are considerable - Health: The evidence base linking health and greenspace is compelling, and supports innovative thinking about its potential to help achieve local priorities. Already there are successful health interventions, such as green social prescribing initiatives where people are helped to begin using greenspace and at the same time get to know other people in their community. Education: When children are engaging with the natural environment, both formally and informally, they develop specific knowledge. They show appreciation and concern for the natural environment when they explore the relationships with other living and non-living things, and develop an awareness of the impact that human activity has on the environment. Resilience of communities: Communities will be brought together in the care of a protected landscape. They will understand how shared actions and a connected management of resources can develop resilience. For example to help protect homes with water management, improve river quality, link people with local food producers and suppliers or find opportunities for community green energy schemes. Climate Change: Biodiversity loss and climate change present significant risks to everyone's well-being and way of life. The creation of nature-rich greenspace and the restoration of habitats will help mitigate and provide adaptation to the environmental and economic impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss. Each CALV may be relatively small, but their combined acreage across the country will be significant. The enterprise and capabilities of local people working in their communities will make a considerable difference – for example: • Urban greening – from planting street trees to the creation of pocket parks and vertical gardens on buildings – can provide habitats for wildlife at the same time as keeping our cities cool. By linking these areas we create valuable wildlife corridors. CALV could extend along rivers and canals in towns to link the urban with the rural. • Restoring upland habitats such as peat bog and woodland removes carbon from the atmosphere, protects soils, helps replenish aquifers and can reduce the severity of flooding thus protecting communities and businesses. • Restoring nature in the countryside can improve food security by reversing the losses of bees and other pollinators. New nature-rich areas are attractive to people as well! • Accessible, protected Community landscapes will encourage more people to walk and cycle around these areas thus reducing the use and reliance of the car to access green spaces. Economy: Local

Authorities have shrinking budgets and are finding it harder to manage even the current protected greenspace; another solution has to be found. Communities are resourceful and here is an opportunity for them. Investing in nature generates future employment opportunities and supports economic productivity in the tourism and related environmental goods and services sectors. The opportunities post COVID 19 CALV will become a vital part of our national natural asset. They will connect more people more closely with nature – one of the aims of the recent Planning White Paper. They will increase the natural capital of the places where we live and help us achieve Climate Change targets. But above all there is a fundamental moral imperative that drives this initiative. National Parks and AONBs emerged after WWII when the country ‘built back better’. The traumatic year, or more, of COVID 19 has ruthlessly exposed the inequalities in our society. By creating CALV we have an opportunity to help people, help nature - and to do it fairly.

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ID: 1030-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Levelling the retail playing field by replacing Business Rates with additional standard rate VAT**

There has been an increasing relation during the pandemic of the value of local bricks and mortar businesses, with research from Deloitte Digital showing that 59% of consumers in Britain have used more local stores and services to help support them during lockdown, and 46% of consumers say they are more likely to spend money at a shop that supports local charities, such as food banks, once the lockdown has lifted. However, these are the same businesses that have borne the brunt of restrictions, including none-essential retails, and hospitality/cultural venues. One way to support these businesses by lowering their fixed costs would be to replace business rates (and equivalent property taxes) with an increase in the standard rate of VAT to 25%.

One of the actions taken by the government to support businesses during the pandemic has been providing business rates relief/holidays to help businesses forced to close for extended periods. This support provides the opportunity to review and reform the business rates and wider business tax regime to help those businesses which bore the brunt of the impact of COVID-19 restrictions: “bricks and mortar” retailers and other businesses with high fixed costs due to large property portfolios. The current business rates system has proven to be problematic in an increasingly digital world. This problem was apparent before the pandemic, as highlighted by the House of Commons Treasury Committee Impact of business rates on business report published on 22 October 2019. This report outlined possible alternatives including an online sales tax, a new sales tax, or additional tax on profits. However, an increase in the

standard VAT rate provides benefits not realised by those options. There are benefits for both businesses and individuals, with those hit hardest by the pandemic in both groups being among those who benefit the most.

The measure could be roughly cost neutral, in 2019 business rates (and equivalent business property taxes) raised £31 billion of UK government income, whilst VAT raised £130 billion. With the current standard rate of VAT set at 20%, a 5% VAT rise would be roughly equivalent to the income raised by business rates. This does not consider the contribution of lower rated VAT goods such as domestic energy, but the breakdown of figures for this are not as easily available, therefore my arguments are caveated with this impact uncalculated.

The benefits for businesses are:

1. Lower fixed costs, which makes businesses more resilient to economic downturns.
2. Fairer taxes between digital and physical retailers, with reduced tax burden on businesses with large/high value property enabling them to cut prices to compete with digital competitors.
3. No increase in tax on essential items such as food, sanitary products, or energy which are 0 or 5% rated for VAT.
4. As well as helping physical retailers, it will also help cultural venues, as extension of government plans to reduce business rates for some cultural venues. Some cultural venues would also benefit from their admission charges being VAT exempt.
5. Simplification of business tax regime by completely removing business property taxes, and replacing with a system already used by the majority of retailers
6. A proportionally lower impact on alcohol prices due to duty making up more of the cost of alcohol, therefore reducing the impact on hospitality venues.

The benefits for individuals are:

1. Lower prices for essential items sold by physical retailers due to no VAT increase and lower business tax burden. Businesses in the highly competitive markets for food, health/sanitary products, and books, are likely to pass on savings due to competitive pressure.

2. More competitive pricing for individuals who are unable to shop online due to either lack of digital skills or access.

Benefits for government are:

1. Reduced cost of tax administration due to removal of business rates valuation and collection

2. Boost local retailers which benefit local economies more than online sales which are disproportionately skewed to multinational or drop shipping companies with no local or national economic benefit.

The benefits above are more substantial than those generated by an online sales levy. This is because an online sales levy applied on all online sales would discourage physical businesses from offering digital sales in addition to physical sales due to increased tax and administrative burden. VAT is often characterised as a regressive tax because low-income households spend a greater proportion of their income than high-income households.

However, this change would not increase the regressive tax burden because it only applies to standard rated items which make up a lower proportion of the spending by lower income households. One potential problem of this change would be the need to split VAT income between local and national government. However, this could be done either based on VAT income being split by the location of the sale (for physical sales) or another formula being created entirely. Given that business rates income is currently split between local and national government, according to a formula, it is not beyond the ability of government to create a suitable formula for VAT income.

Another problem is government income would suffer during economic downturns due to reduced public and business spending generating lower VAT receipts. However, this could be negated by more businesses surviving these downturns due to lower fixed costs, and the change also enables governments to take greater advantage of growth in spending during better times. Prior to the pandemic VAT income had grown for a decade and once more “normal” times resume, the higher VAT income generated by the increased VAT rate could provide a boost to public finances to help pay down the massive debts incurred during the pandemic.

This change would create a fairer market between physical and online retailers, without discouraging digital innovation, whilst benefitting lower income families, and encouraging local spending with the increased economic benefits that it brings. This will help Britain recover from the impacts of the pandemic and aid the country’s development in an increasingly digital world, whilst ensuring government income is not significantly affected.

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ID: 1828-11 - Category: City Centres

**Sharing our energy saving knowledge for existing buildings.**

Having designed and carried out all the practical work on eco/energy refurbishment of my own house I have realised that what most people want are both local examples of what can be done and easily accessible technical information which relates to their building. Across the country now are a growing number of low to zero energy conversions of existing buildings but the how to do it is not readily accessible to most people because it sits on the hard drives of architects, surveyors, and services engineers. The solution is to set up a website loaded with real examples from such experts arranged as a 3-D spreadsheet with house type along one axis and house age on another. When you find a house of very similar age and type to your own you can then drill down into the detail of the scheme, perhaps paying a little more for each stage. A proportion of the income would go back to the contributing experts. The different professional bodies would need to be on board with setting this up.

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ID: 1287-11 - Category: City Centres

**Build a car-free city to set a template and an aspiration for wider future change**

What if the focus was changed? Instead of diluting all of that effort, focus it. Find an existing town or city, or even build a new one, radically committed to removing private car ownership as a cultural norm. A community in which private vehicles are prohibited, and the roads, parking

spaces and driveways are reclaimed for human beings. Find the scattered individuals across the nation who would embrace this change, and collect them together, providing support for relocation - and don't just take things away (cars and roads) but actively replace them with the ingredients for a community where it is possible to live and work locally: the businesses, the infrastructure, the governance to make it work. Use that chance to build a society that will inherently be more engaged in local community and local government, where civic leaders will walk to work, and see and talk to the ordinary folks they will meet on the way. Build a city where mobility is not about transit of people and goods over large distances, but where as much as possible is produced and consumed locally, and mobility is about interconnectedness of local individuals and businesses, community groups and service providers - where belonging is transformed from a marketing cliché to an authentic reality. And then publicise the result; let the rest of the nation see what they are missing out on; showcase those people who can safely let their children walk to school; who can throw spontaneous gatherings in the streets without hindrance; who can wake in the morning and open their windows to nothing but the peaceful sound of birdsong. Play on that social-media fuelled culture of a fear of missing out; if lockdowns can persuade hundreds of thousands to run out and get a puppy, then seeing the safer and better city their own children are missing out on might inspire people elsewhere to push for change where they live. Use this experiment to prove what can be done, and set a model which the rest of the UK and the rest of the world will be jealous to follow. It would need care and planning, for sure. If an existing town or city was selected, there would need to be a way to help those relocate who are not ready for that level of change; and provision would be needed for those with reduced mobility to still get the support they needed. For sure, some vehicular transport, private or state controlled or both, would still be needed - but the first lockdown showed that it is possible to have a functioning society with a hugely reduced movement of people and products by motor vehicle. Would a public-hire EV fleet be the answer? Would every 'street' need a road down the middle, or could every other street be completely greenscaped? How would visitors to the town/city and links to the transport network beyond be handled: park-and-ride type schemes, mobility-as-a-service interconnects, or exclusively traditional large public transport hubs? Many researchers and planners have already speculated on all these questions. The point is, select one place, focus in the effort, and make it happen, in full and not in part, reinventing from the bottom-up, not tweaking with minor changes and trying to tiptoe through a minefield of public opprobrium. It would still be controversial of course; it would be challenging, but it could be so much more worthwhile and impactful than the scattered small changes we are seeing across the country. And by showing what was possible; by proving that life could be better if reinvented with a focus on local engagement and local connectivity - it might do something more important: it might really start to change the hearts and minds of the vast majority of people elsewhere in the country, to accept the changes which are so essential for the sustainability and stability of our nation

through the 21st century.

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ID: 729-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Utilizing empty shops to launch 'E-bay Elves' -providing work opportunities & training for the homeless**

'E-Bay Elves' supports city centre regeneration, utilizes empty shop spaces and provides training, support and a living wage for the homeless community. Vacant town-centre shops (initially starting in the industrial NW) are converted into collection, reclamation and 'upcycling' centres in which items are rejuvenated, repaired and ultimately sold on via e-bay. Items will be provided by the local community on either a voluntary, or cash-upon sale basis. These are then up-cycled by a workforce trained by the local trades & artisan community. Fundamentally, the hope is that much of this training will be done on an accredited volunteer basis. Employees will be trained in various roles including IT literacy, woodwork and metal work skills, marketing, packaging and basic accountancy. Employees will also participate in a series of life-skill workshops such as financial management, developing interview skills etc. The organisation is based on the 'non-profit' co-operative principle with employees being paid a weekly wage as well as the long-term incentive of a profit-share system. At the initial establishment stage the workforce (in one training shop) will consist of : • A general manager • 2x receptionists • 2x IT technicians • 4x Maintenance Personnel • 2x Packaging, delivery and logistics As the business becomes established staffing would increase to 20 + staff with business premises extending to different parts of the country.

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ID: 115-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Local power generation**

Why not make it a requirement that all new build commercial and domestic properties must include solar panels on their roofs? This would: provide more jobs; contribute towards the UK Carbon net zero targets; provide for a more robust, distributed power generation base; stimulate UK manufacturing in the "Green" sector.

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ID: 1879-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Make museums and galleries throughout Britain once again a focus and source of excitement**

In an age of streaming TV and social media, it is short term sensationalism that captures peoples attention, while old-school sources of wonder such as museums and art galleries are left behind.

Britain has some world class museums and art galleries. Unfortunately for the majority of the population, they are mostly in London. A huge volume of artefacts and artworks are not even on display in the museums and galleries because there is not capacity. They therefore languish in the store rooms. They do not benefit the museums/galleries, the public, the artefacts/pictures or their rich tapestry of background stories.

Engagement with museums outside of London (perhaps better to say, outside this small elite number of institutions) is muted. Localised displays that remained relatively unchanged with the passing of time, mean there is little engagement with them from the local community other than mother/baby coffee mornings and some school trips. This is a tragic waste of what could and should be a wonderful framework for excitement and learning.

Solution... national programme of participating larger London institutions and smaller local ones, whereby annually (quarterly???) each of the smaller museums/galleries (those than can offer sufficient security) receives a small but absolutely world class display from the backrooms of the National museums/galleries.

Engage the local media and schools to whip up anticipation and engagements, telling the backstories, context and the thrill that might have existed about these items when they were first commissioned or made.

Bring the public back to local town/city museums before they disappear into obscurity.

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ID: 1065-11 - Category: City Centres

**Exercising mind and body with hands-on education of countryside biodiversity.**

We are all familiar with the yellow arrows indicating the general direction of a footpath across a

field. What we don't know is what we are likely to encounter as we cross that area of land. If we are not sure where the true path runs do we walk around the perimeter or walk the quickest route across the middle? Are livestock grazing? Are the grass-like fronds a crop or are they weeds on fallow land? Should we care? After all, it's not our land, but we have a right of way through it.

Yes, we should care. Our success as a species is inextricably linked with all others. The more diverse an ecosystem, the more chance we will have of adapting to climate change and all the challenges it brings.

COVID-19 is impacting us all, but especially parents who are learning, perhaps for the first time, how their children acquire knowledge through play and hands-on experience. By educating and engaging with their children, parents also seek to become better informed themselves. Let us use this opportunity of increased family activity outdoors to instil respect and wonderment of the countryside and all organisms that live within it whilst adhering to the country code to reduce negative effects on crops and livestock.

At each entrance gate/stile of a footpath a small information sign will inform the public what is being grown or grazed in the field. The route should also be named, or referenced by map references eg TQ 663 446 'River Walk'.

Placing upright wooden marker posts at strategic, visual points approximately 250 metres apart along the footpath will help direct walkers. If constructed within the path itself they shouldn't impact on the farmer's management of crops, but could be removed if/when necessary. Each post shall have its own unique reference or QR code.

On each of the post's four sides, laminated inserts can be attached containing basic facts pertaining to the area around the post. For example:

Side 1 - WILDLIFE - Look for Grey wagtail (shallows), mink (under river banks). Observe birds circling in the sky and note tail shape - buzzard/ red kite. Watch for deer on woodland edges - roe/fallow deer.

Side 2 - BIOLOGY - Observe holes in sandy soil by path - home for mining wasps. Listen for buzz of bee fly. Find flowering plants - comfrey - observe small holes at base of flower made by short-tongued bees to access nectar. Observe which trees are flowering and look for pollinating insects. Listen and identify birdsong eg chiffchaff and blackcap. Feel the bark on the trees - which is rougher, ash or oak?

Side 3 - GEOGRAPHY - State longitude/ latitude and altitude. Name the geographical features observed eg meanders and soil type found

Side 4 - ENVIRONMENTAL - State ecosystem services of the nearest tree (Treezilla has an interactive website) - eg, this oak tree removes 57kg per year of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere by photosynthesis and intercepts 7 cubic metres of water through its roots.

All factual statements will have a link to enable further studies. A website would be created that could eventually be connected to all regions of the UK. The information shown should be chosen at student level from primary through to GCSE and A-Level students.

It would be hoped that when out walking, information on the posts would be read and the posts reference number logged. Some parents would have prepared ahead to have information to hand, but the majority of families are likely to record the post number and explore what was found on their return home. For instance, a large bee fly - triangular in appearance, may have been observed by a mining bee's entrance hole. Exploring the web page later that day would explain the action of the bee fly 'kicking' its eggs into the mining bee's home. The next time the family go for a walk, their children will already be looking for more 'cool' insects!

Another example could be if a large bird was seen circling overhead. Observational skills will help identify it - a fork tail = red kite, rounded wings and tail = common buzzard, same size as buzzard but with a distinctive call in flight and black = raven. Checking on the website will indicate if any of those species have been logged at that location previously.

Using map references on the posts at each end of the field will also help with map reading skills, as the location can be verified if compass skills were used rather than just following the posts!

Schools could encourage pupils of all ages to become involved, through wildlife/environmental biodiversity clubs or utilising skills needed for exams in a number of subjects including IT, biology, geology and geography. Duke of Edinburgh and Scouts/Guides skills of compass and map -reading would also be covered!

All of these laminated information tabs can be replaced depending on the interest of those monitoring the posts. 'Eco-warriors' could decide what information to place on the posts. If other wildlife is observed, updates can be added to the website too.

Farmers will benefit as walkers will stick to the footpaths, especially if keen to see the information on the next post. The visitors will gain a greater understanding of nature and of its interconnections with farming practices eg pollination of crops and fertilization of soil. Children will learn through use of all their senses, expanding their horizons beyond their smart phones. Walking with mum and dad will be more fun and will instil confidence if they can educate their parents with the information they have gleaned about the bugs and plants they find on their walk. Greater knowledge of the countryside around them will create a desire to protect and preserve the natural environment promoting continued enjoyment of the local footpaths for years to come, knowing it is the responsibility of us all to maintain biodiversity and preserve the countryside by taking home only memories, not mementoes.

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ID: 437-11 - Category: City Centres

### **City centres: the new local neighbourhoods**

This is, therefore, not the time to panic-build new housing on greenfield sites, distant from services and public transport; rather, it is an opportunity to reclaim unwanted space in our town

and city centres for housing, and create new, vibrant, low-traffic liveable neighbourhoods with clean air, new integrated green space and well-connected walkable communities. These neighbourhoods would still have many attractive employment, leisure and retail offers to pull in those living in the surrounding suburbs, but also a large population in the local neighbourhood to ensure a vibrant and thriving economy. Reform of the Planning laws is already underway, with new proposals to encourage more housebuilding in cities rather than on green field sites, through the 35% uplift on the cap for cities and urban centres, when calculating local housing need. However, with some joined-up thinking this opportunity could turn around the way we use cities, not just pack extra people in to pockets of new homes as they become available. This proposal, then, seems obvious.

- ban new housing developments in the green belt
- convert space in the city centre to housing for the whole spectrum of needs (allowing for different income brackets, family sizes and disabilities)
- require that, as a priority, developers re-purpose buildings where they are suitable for conversion to housing (much Victorian industrial architecture, for example, makes highly desirable homes)
- ensure all housing development in urban centres is designed with integral infrastructure for high-quality, attractive and well-planted walking and cycling experiences, using Section 106 agreements. The long-term economic future of the city and the health of residents needs to be given a higher priority than one-off profit-making opportunities for developers.
- where opportunities for new-built walking and cycling infrastructure within a development are limited due to the size of the site, to additionally fund active-travel infrastructure that will enable safe walking and cycling for significant distances to and from the new housing
- ensure all such development is either substantially car-free or works on the principles of a low-traffic neighbourhood, to prevent through-traffic and so improve air quality and promote active travel
- Where new schools are needed to support increased populations, build these with sufficient car parking for disabled staff/visitors only: have sufficient vehicle access for deliveries, emergency vehicles and drop-off/pick-up of disabled pupils only. Prevent all daytime parking within 5 minutes' walk of the school gates.

To summarise: rebuild our city centres with the health and wellbeing of residents in mind, and both environmental and economic benefits will follow.

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ID: 2237-11 - Category: City Centres

## **Create a more sustainable country – build comprehensive pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure without additional expenditure**

The vision

Despite the suffering, Covid-19 has been a wake-up call. Reduced motor traffic has helped us

rediscover the convenience, pleasure and health benefits of walking and cycling to work, shops, and other essential activities, as well as to parks and the countryside.

We have glimpsed a different way of life, free from car-dependency with its congestion, noise, pollution, environmental damage, injuries, fatalities, inactivity-related illnesses, and its erosion of community and neighbourliness; not to mention the £4,500 yearly cost of owning a fast-wasting asset which spends 95% of its existence parked, usually in public space.

All we need is safe, attractive and convenient alternatives to the motor car, and people will use them. For 40 years we have been talking about building more pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, but now Covid has opened our eyes. Public support is strong. Never has the need for action been clearer.

### The challenge

All we lack is the political will to make this a clear spending priority. To date our disjointed scraps of permanent walking/cycling infrastructure have been financed piecemeal by bits of section 106 funding, money remaining from abandoned roundabout plans, plus the odd LEP grant. This is no way to provide the steady, long-term investment needed to change the travel habits of a nation and make our villages, towns and cities quieter, healthier and more welcoming.

Contrast the Netherlands where they've built a dense network of cycleways and footpaths, and plentiful bike storage. There, 50% of schoolchildren cycle to school and 30% of all journeys are by bike (a mere 2% in Britain, including in flat areas). Britain has made no such national investment, even though we've seen how examples of limited cycling infrastructure in Cambridge, London, and York have hugely increased bicycling as a way of getting to lectures, work, the station and the gym.

## The opportunity

In one small area of Britain, however, we are truly doing it right - the renowned 20 mph-limited Waltham Forest 'mini-Holland' with its low traffic neighbourhoods, segregated cycleways and plentiful bike storage, all planned as a whole. The cost of transforming the entire borough to Dutch standards will be about £175m, less than 6 miles of motorway and just £632/resident. Still only 25% complete, it has already resulted in a 15-20% 'modal shift' from car to walking and cycling, a 90% reduction in illegal air pollution and a renaissance of local shopping and neighbourliness.

Make the same £632 per capita investment for all 56m urban-dwelling UK citizens over the next 20 years and we will transform British towns and cities to a similar standard for less than £36bn, about 10% of our expenditure on tobacco during the same period, assuming current rates.

And here's how we can find £36bn and a whole lot more in the next two decades without a penny of extra spending.

## Making a start – a down payment on change

Britain is deeply ambivalent about its transport priorities. The government's recently published £27.4bn '2020-2025 Road Investment Strategy 2' allocates £14bn for new roads and enhancements. Yet the same government department has recently published 'Decarbonising Transport Plan' and 'Gear Change', which advocate reductions in car usage and 'making public transport and active travel the natural first choice for daily activities'. These recommendations make sense because all over the world we see that building roads to expand capacity leads only

to more cars and increased congestion. In this changing political climate now is the time boldly to re-allocate these £14bn to pedestrian/cycling infrastructure and make a wholehearted commitment to a healthier approach.

The rest of the money

Where will additional funding come from, and can we afford it? Surely we can. Consider the costs of not doing it. Let's look at three examples of the costs to society of our current car-dependent lifestyle.

Congestion costs 6.9bn/year (INRIX, 2020) with the average motorist spending 115 hours/year in traffic jams. 42% of trips are just 1-2 miles, yet 62% of them are by car. As our build-out of walking and cycling infrastructure starts to change people's travel choices, removing many of these car journeys would progressively reduce congestion costs over the next 20 years.

Then let's look at the £10bn annual costs of fatalities and serious injuries from collisions (DfT). Lowering vehicle numbers and speeds (20mph in residential areas) will pay dividends not only in lives saved but in costs reduced.

We also know that healthcare costs could be greatly lowered by a more active lifestyle. One-third of children and two-thirds of adults are overweight (Public Health England Obesity Statistics February 2021). The yearly cost to the NHS of obesity alone is £7bn and to the wider society £27bn, total £34bn. Just 40 minutes a day of walking or cycling greatly reduces susceptibility to inactivity-related illnesses.

Over the next 20 years reducing these total costs of £1.018tn by just 10% – a very conservative

estimate and an eminently achievable goal – would yield savings of £101.8bn.

The result – a better future

Building out the Waltham Forest-style project to the whole of Britain for £36bn will bring about dramatic improvements to our lives. And that might only be a beginning. The £101.8bn in savings – and it could be considerably more – provides a funding stream for an even more comprehensive re-imagining of our national transport priorities, including linking up the country with a network of cycle routes and footpaths as in the Netherlands, and investing in bike-carrying low-carbon buses and trains to enable integrated long-distance non-car journeys.

This vision is no pipedream but already achieved in the Netherlands. Embracing this more holistic vision will lead us fully to appreciate our uniquely beautiful countryside and historic villages and towns, hear the birds sing and breathe in fresh air as in the May 2020 lockdown, achieve our 2050 Co2 net-zero target (27% of UK emissions are transport-related, mainly cars), and bequeath our children a country where people meet their neighbours and their children play in the streets.

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ID: 1852-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Living wage, better job opportunities, unfair recruitment practices**

The Cardiff Bay area has been well developed over the last two decades, with lots of big-name businesses and organisations having a presence. However, many living nearby in Butetown, Riverside and Grangetown still feel underrepresented; be it at the National Assembly, Local Authority or within the many of the major businesses. The Butetown Employment and Action Team is a local initiative made up of frustrated residents and leaders in Cardiff who have been taking action on major employers on their door-step by primarily bringing local people together to get more involved with their community and negotiating for change. The purpose of this action was to raise awareness of the issues that local people have felt strongly about and have expressed to us – these were employers paying the living wage, offering better job opportunities and stopping unfair recruitment practices. We gave a number of employers letters explaining this and included 10 questions to collect information from them. These included:

Does the employer have ethnic minority people working in their firm and if so, how many? Do they pay the living wage? Do they issue zero-hour contracts? We were surprised to receive a response from one company via email right away asking to meet with us and interested in looking into paying the Living Wage. Other companies we approached were happy to engage in conversations and return the surveys to us in due course. As a result, we have our The Bay Citizens' Community Jobs Compact is a reciprocal agreement between the local community and the employer, co-produced by employers and communities together, and signed by major employers such as Ikea, ITV Wales, Careers Wales, and Welsh Parliament. It aims to combat such incidences by bringing local people and employers together to tackle poverty, unemployment and under-representation in the workforce. The compact is an agreement with employers where signatories are obligated to accredit as a Living Wage employer, to recruit using name-blind and address-blind CVs and/or guarantee an interview to residents who meet the criteria. Also, to introduce unconscious bias training for interviewers. The Compact will ensure all staff have the option of a permanent contract, and demonstrate opportunities for growth and development, for instance through internal career progression and mentoring. Our solution is to support local people by bringing them together with major employers in the Bay and City Centre to tackle poverty, unemployment and under-representation in the workforce. BEAT has been busy building positive relationships between people of different ages and backgrounds across the Butetown neighbourhood with the ultimate aim to get local businesses to become aware of the issues from local people, build relationships with each other and the local community, and work towards a different type of relationship. As it brings communities together who are not usually united to be united around a common issue and work together in solidarity to bring about effective change and make a difference for the better by developing opportunities for all.

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ID: 1851-11 - Category: City Centres

### **The wheels of change: building better bicycles for a better Britain**

A revolution in bicycle design could be kick-started by a government-run competition. Entrants would be instructed to submit designs for a radically new model of bicycle, which would have to meet a strict set of requirements, including (but not necessarily limited to): truly puncture-proof wheels (perhaps moving away from the inner-tube and tyre combo), non-slippable chains (or an alternative to the chain altogether), a much more durable braking system, and a simpler alternative to the gearing system. The bike should also be lightweight, and extra credit would be given to designs which made use of sustainable or recycled material.

The prize money would have to be of sufficient value to incentivise professional engineering outfits to enter; however, in the spirit of the Heywood Prize itself, students and garden-shed inventors would of course be encouraged to participate as well. The government should also emphasise the significant kudos that society would accord to the winning designer – this would not just result in their short-term financial gain, but it would also offer them the chance to be immortalised as someone who contributed to society in a truly meaningful and long-lasting way. Think the Wright brothers on two wheels.

We have recently seen the incredible success of the teams of scientists who created the COVID vaccines at top speed, something that many had predicted would not be possible and certainly not in such a short time frame. This example should act as a great motivator and also as a check on the naysayers – negativity and pessimism should fall by the wayside in the face of the past year’s scientific achievements. Two centuries’ inertia in bicycle design could be swept aside by the spirit of the vaccines.

A shortlist of promising entries – selected by a pre-appointed panel of experts – would be drawn up, with prototypes made and tested. Once the winning design was chosen, the bike would then be manufactured in Britain, forming part of the government’s ‘levelling up’ agenda: the production of these new bikes could create hundreds of jobs in parts of the country particularly badly hit by the economic consequences of the pandemic, and would become a symbol of the rebirth of the country’s long-neglected manufacturing base. The finished bike would be sold through existing bike retailers, with the cost subsidised for those in receipt of welfare payments in order to ensure that it was affordable to all sections of society.

Mentioning cost raises the elephant in the room. Yes, this would be an expensive venture, however the expense should not fall on the government alone. There are increasing numbers of enormous companies looking to improve their image – BP (oil spills, fossil fuels) and Amazon (tiny tax contributions, poor working conditions) both spring to mind, to take just two examples. If the government played its cards correctly, it could strike a deal with a company of this sort to defray the cost of the project. This would be a win-win partnership: the company would get to burnish its image through close association with a non-polluting, obesity-busting, affordable mode of transport, while the cost to the government (and therefore taxpayers) would be

significantly reduced. What's not to like? Private companies regularly make significant financial contributions to government-run projects like the Olympics, for instance, and if the government were to emphasise the historic importance of this scheme, I don't see why it should be any different here.

Finally, I am aware that the success of this whole project would rest on breakthroughs in engineering which of course can't be guaranteed – no one has managed to come up with a less error-prone gearing system in 200 years, for instance, so why should now be the moment? There are two reasons why I think the time has come. First, because of the example of the scientific breakthroughs of the last year: as mentioned above, the spirit of the COVID vaccine will animate many different endeavours in the coming years, and this could be one of them – if ever a reminder were needed of human ingenuity, the vaccinators have provided it. Second, because we have got too used to accepting mediocrity in bicycles and have never demanded better. It suits bicycle companies to continue manufacturing bikes as they currently are, because broken bikes require new parts, and new parts equal big profits. It's time to break that cycle, and if 200 years of the market haven't done it, decisive government intervention could.

We've shrugged our shoulders for too long about bad bikes, such that they have just become accepted as one of the irritations of life. It need not be like this, and society's growing concerns about climate change and poor public health will mean that it's imperative that it isn't like this for much longer. We need better bikes, and this could be the way to do it.

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ID: 1728-11 - Category: City Centres

### **How to help eliminate crossover virus transmission at the Channel Tunnel?**

It seems to me to be bizarre in these days when transmission of virus and mutations are something that we have to be vigilant about, to have free passage of drivers from different countries travelling through the tunnel and onwards throughout our lands. Equally it is perplexing to maintain a system whereby UK drivers also travel across the Channel and drive throughout Europe. If UK shipments could be taken to the channel tunnel in containers ready for loading and European drivers collect at European ports, the viral transfer is mainly reduced. There could also be a new raft of workers at the tunnel whose jobs were to manage container transfer, checks and all of the necessary paperwork. Once completed electronic transfer could occur of papers to operations in France to be forwarded on to the nominated driver (reference

numbered). The time of transfer could be calculated as a norm for all systems to work too. This would have the effect of reducing waiting times at the tunnel for drivers and would make the whole process more efficient. Without the aid of computers and algorithms I understand this would be difficult - but we do have these technologies. Ships and Trains and Aircraft have always over time managed supply lines in such a way that there are no empty returns. This would need cooperation across the waters but that in its self may appear to be a win win solution. In practical terms consortiums of uk teams would need to be managed to do the driving and collection of goods in the UK and similarly consortiums of drivers operated from European countries. These changes would build on systems already in operation in logistics. Driver time would be better utilised and managed in ports at both ends. Transfer and paperwork tasks become managed through one system by other employed government teams. Ecologically - there must be savings. However in the short term there is a much reduced chance of transmittance of viral load and mutations from one trading partner to another.

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ID: 1604-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Reviving towns, enhancing education.**

There is an asset at the heart of British towns and cities: historic civic infrastructure. Grand municipal buildings, Victorian town halls, fine libraries, museums, galleries and theatres. To return crucial footfall to city centres, those assets are available to be used in imaginative ways that will make people want to go to their town centres. These projects would be aimed primarily at families and children, although some projects, building on existing work in libraries, could be aimed at unemployed people, and those wishing to start small businesses.

Museums and libraries have staff with skills and experience in doing exciting things, from family-friendly interactive exhibitions, to story-telling, reading groups, local history, etc. Theatres, too, and orchestras, dance companies, all usually have associated educational projects. Most have been run for years on small budgets, but the possibility of scaling up, if necessary using highly-skilled unemployed people (on FDR's New Deal model, which used actors, photographers etc.) is likely to be realisable in a short time frame.

A relatively small amount of cash (compared to wider pandemic spending) from central government under both national and (critically) local leadership from professional partners could provide a programme of exciting events, tailored to local needs and resources that draw

in visitors, both as individuals and families, and through partnerships with schools and colleges. Perhaps even BBC local radio could be part of the mix?

Reorienting centres previously dominated by retail to focus on civic assets could provide a quick boost to footfall which would have benefits for the private sector, too, particularly if coupled with imaginative tax breaks. And the educational benefits of such projects would give children more structured and educational opportunities for socialisation with their peers to add value to resumed formal schooling. Whilst this idea is arts dominated (not everywhere- there are many good science and industry museums), access to music, drama and reading has a well-established capacity to improve performance in all subjects, not least through focus and discipline. The popularity of TV talents shows, and practical skills formats suggest that there is an appetite for participation, and a popular narrative into which these ideas could be slotted and sold.

But to work, this would all need to be done to the highest standard. Citizens need to be excited by these projects. Fortunately we already have the physical assets, we have the personnel, and we have the proven need. It wouldn't take long to creat National, and local plans, ready to go in weeks.

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ID: 1557-11 - Category: City Centres

**The title for the project is, "Re-connection".**

A. "Talk Shop" - the first proposal is for the government to rent (at a moderate rate) empty retail properties on high streets (the properties involved in the project would be zero-rated). These properties would be converted into inviting spaces for people to talk and re-connect (possibly with the assistance of existing charities with expertise in this area). Established groups e.g. craft groups, could use the facility, but there would also be space for strangers to talk ("new connections" areas), either individually or in groups, and space for the retired to connect with the young ("wisdom corners"). The use of mobile phone, laptops or computers would be forbidden (except for those devices used for the administration of the project). Facilitators / moderators would be employed to assist with the project and to safeguard against abuse or grooming. Security personnel would also be required to prevent any untoward incidents. "Social prescribing" has become increasingly common in recent years. G.P.s and social workers could recommend attendance at a "Talk Shop", as part of a social prescription for the lonely. In the

"wisdom corners", the skills and life-experience of regular attendees could be publicised, and young people who are looking to develop a career in a particular area could be encouraged to speak to a retired individual who has worked in that area. The co-operation of schools in the project would be desirable and, any regular attendees, would have to be appropriately vetted. Careers advice at school is often sub-standard due to the limited experience of the advisors, which is why it may be beneficial to involve a wider pool of retired people. The project could start small as an opportunity for the lonely to leave their houses and talk with other people in a curated, safe space. However, if successful, the project could be expanded. For example, in a larger ex-retail property, there could be space for a formal citizen's advice service with trained, volunteer, citizen advisors providing advice to anyone who needs it (which may provide an opportunity for the retired and those who have prematurely lost their jobs to find a new, useful role in society). In addition, there could be space for trained, volunteer counsellors to provide advice to those who have suffered due to the pandemic (e.g. N.H.S. workers). Although there are many challenges, such a project might not only help to tackle loneliness, but also the challenge of youth unemployment, the need to re-vitalise town centres and the need to care for those suffering post-pandemic trauma. Ground rules would need to be set for interactions in "Talk Shops" and public consultation on the proposals is recommended. Government investment would be required, but the benefits may more than out-weigh the costs.

B. Not all of the elderly / retired would be able (or wish to) travel to the facilities described above. In such cases, new technology (such as Zoom) could be used to connect elderly / retired volunteers (appropriately vetted), with young people, in a mentoring and coaching capacity. This could potentially be of benefit to both age groups. once again, the project would have to be carefully curated and monitored, but there is no reason that it could not be successful. The co-operation of central government, local government, charities and schools may be required for the establishment of such projects.

I have worked in local government, for the civil service, for the pharmaceutical industry (in the U.K. and abroad), and run my own business. As I approach retirement, I feel that it is a great pity to waste all of the knowledge and experience that I have acquired (I would also like to continue to be useful to society for as long as I can be). There must be a great many people who feel as I do.

Future challenges require innovative thinking. The pandemic has taught us how important connecting with other people is to both our physical and mental well-being. We now have an opportunity to make the world anew.

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ID: 1472-11 - Category: City Centres

**A reverse-auction: distributing house-building obligations among local authorities.**

New homes are needed, and they are needed more in some places than in others.

Successive governments have repeatedly acknowledged the need for new housing, setting targets with no real eye for how to achieve them. Often we hear that hundreds of thousands of new homes must be built somewhere, but nowhere will accept them. Meanwhile, the very local authorities that attract the most development also resist that development. Therefore, we should stop asking local authorities "will you build new homes", and instead ask "what would it take to get you to build new homes".

So, invite councils/local authorities to a reverse-auction: rather than "how much money would I pay", it's "how little money would I accept", and instead of things you want, it's things you don't want (or claim you don't want).

Each lot in the auction is an \*obligation\* to build 1 house, or 10 houses, or maybe 100 houses. Starting bids are \*negative\*, and local authorities bid each other \*up\*. As a starting point, houses might be priced at 5 times the average cost to build a house, so that if the Edinburgh council area wanted this money (about £1.25 million), they'd have to build 1 house. Then, if Barking and Dagenham council wants money, they'd bid it up to £1.20 million for that 1 house, and so on (assuming there are no lots left at starting bids). Edinburgh council might then say "well we don't need the money that badly anyway, you can have the house". Because it's an auction, councils who really want housing and money would get plenty of housing and money; those who want housing OR money would get a bit; and those councils which resist housebuilding, and have more than enough funding, could simply sit the whole thing out.

This has several advantages:

1) As stated, everyone gets what they want: councils that want money and housing get a bunch of both, others get a little of both, others are happy with none. The auction efficiently determines what housebuilding is worth to each council.

2) When too much housing is constructed in one place (e.g. mid-century city-centre council housing, or modern luxury boondoggles), it creates homogenous places where people don't want to live. By contrast, this proposal spreads housing very widely, throughout the country, so most councils will just build a little, and those that do build a lot will be compensated to offset the possible disadvantages of over-building.

3) Councils have faced severe restrictions to their budgets for decades now. This is a great way to give them money outside the poorly-designed and regressive Council Tax system,

4) What is built can be sold or rented, allowing this proposal to pay for itself over time at the council level. Essentially, it's an investment where the national government takes the risks, while local governments (which can tolerate less risk) accept the rewards. If the price tag is too high, the national government could get some of the sale or rental income back (although it could just as easily raise debt, which is a power local authorities lack).

5) Just build more houses! Everyone knows we need them.

That's my proposal. I don't think the government would need to specify much about the houses themselves, except maybe by defining the minimum size and number of separate rooms in "1 house" (after all, you wouldn't want a 3-bedroom house getting labelled as 3 houses).

Obviously, you'd also need to check that they're actually building the housing, maybe work starts within 6 months and finishes in 3 years. Beyond that, the design, quality, and location of the housing can be determined by the combined political and economic pressures that councils will face when drafting their plans.

Thanks for considering my idea!

Best wishes,

Jake

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ID: 1164-11 - Category: City Centres

### **How do we break from the 9-5 and 3 school terms a year and why?**

How then do we capitalise on this opportunity of society's obvious ability to rapidly shift away from its traditional operating norms, such as the 9-5-day, 5 day week, fixed bank holidays, 3 school terms a year, regulation of opening hours for retail and hospitality - and why would we want to?

There are several reasons why - levelling out the peaks and troughs of demand will:

- Reduce the massive strain on our infrastructure and work force.
- Reduce the amount of investment needed in our infrastructure.
- Increase the capacity of our infrastructure and work force.
- Make it easier to manage our lives and achieve a happy work life balance.
- Improve our efficiency and effectiveness.

As an example, it is worth looking at the impact that rigid operating hours, times, and holidays of the Education and the Office workplace sectors alone have on our infrastructure, economy, and lives. The education sector's three-term year and the peaks and troughs that it creates along with the 9am to 3pm class times and long summer breaks impacts us, our lives and economy in the following ways:

- School run time rush hours, increased pollution around schools, and congested roads.
- The capacity of schools, class sizes and availability of positions for teachers during term time.
- Lack of and high cost of childcare for working parents during holidays. • Crowded airports and stretched airline fleets during peak holiday times.
- Overpriced holidays during peak times, pushing parents to remove children from school in term time.
- Businesses forced to follow the peaks and troughs imposed on them by the education timetable.
- Negative impact on children's learning. Some studies have shown that the long summer break is too long an interruption and different age groups are suited to different school start times.
- Long waiting lists for schools, whilst their facilities, and staff, lie unused for 13 weeks a year.
- The need for airlines, airports hotels and holiday accommodation to have capacity in their fleets, airports, and hotel rooms to meet peak holiday requirements.

If the education sector were able to shift away from its current timetable to a more fluid model, and the office and workplace was able to mirror and support this change with its evident ability and willingness of employees to adapt to a more flexible way of working and commuting, then these two sectors alone would have a significant and positive impact on our lives our economy, infrastructures, and transport systems.

The Education sector has embraced home schooling during the pandemic and it should do so more even after COVID with a central DOE website and improved infrastructure. A local Government Association review was set up in 2002 to look at the benefits of a 5-term year. It looked at the impact and benefits that it would have on children but opposition from teaching unions felt that it would rob its members of their holidays (which it would not- it would just spread them out and remove the long summer break). The review though failed to consider the

huge trickle-down effect that a move to 5 terms a year could have on the overall economy and way of life.

So how could the education sector/schools change their model in order to “spread the load”.

- Schools should consider moving away from a 3 term year to a 4, 5 or 6 term year, maintaining existing holiday days and children’s vacation time, retaining existing staffing levels and simply spreading the curriculum across the year, with more, but shorter holiday periods spread across the year.
- A hybrid of the above options incorporating a radically improved home learning offer so as to further increase the flexibility of the schools, parents, and children.

The office The Office/workplace sector has indicated that it can shift away from the historic norms of 9-5 working. After moving slowly over the last 40 years towards "flexible working" , last year the entire sector embraced home working overnight. Working hand in hand with the education sector to ensure that each support each other will enable huge opportunities.

This should be incentivised further by the government and the following should be considered:

- Availability of flexible season tickets for public transport to support new commuting patterns.
- An increase in annual holiday allowances linked to a reduction in fixed bank holidays bank holidays which cause their own peaks.
- Tax incentives to encourage the mass take up of local small work drop in spaces (for those who cannot work from home)
- Tax incentives for business that adopt flexible work practices. • Investment in the broadband backbone on the UK

If the Education and Office workplace sector could adopt changes as suggested, then we will see the following benefits:

- Reduction in overall levels of commuting, and peak time commuting, putting less stress on our transport infrastructure and on ourselves.
- Growth in local neighbourhood economies through supporting home workers.
- Holiday and hospitality industry would see growth through all year demand and lowered prices.
- Aviation industry would experience less congestion and more efficient airports, increased all year passenger numbers, reduction in fleet sizes and cost savings.
- Increased capacity of our schools.

The end goal could be that of a 24-hour society, where we choose when we go to work and where we work, when we can shop, how where and when we educate our children and when we go on holiday.

A levelling out of our working and non-working times will allow us to operate with fewer resources and with smaller more efficiently used schools, offices, transport systems, retail and hospitality sectors.

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ID: 969-11 - Category: City Centres

### **A government scheme to turn empty retail units into employment hubs for the disabled**

The empty shops that now line our high streets, with more certainly to come before this pandemic is over, are a source of despair to retailers who have lost their livelihoods, and of concern and disappointment to shoppers and citizens, threatening individual and societal wellbeing. However, might there be an opportunity not only to provide employment for people with disabilities, but also to regenerate our high streets? Most people with disabilities want to

work; they are held back because they cannot find suitable jobs. Although the number of people with disabilities in work has been steadily rising since 2013, they are still far less likely than their non-disabled peers to be employed. The so-called disability employment gap in the UK is currently 28.1%. Unfortunately, government plans to launch a national strategy for disabled people during 2020 have been put on hold due to the crisis. Existing support strategies include Access to Work support for individuals; the Disability Confident scheme for employers; the Work and Health programme; and forms of personalised employment support. Although all have laudable aims, and some successes have been reported, a significant impetus is needed to address the scale of the problem that will be facing us post-COVID. My solution is this: use the empty shops to create retail outlets such as shops, bakeries and cafes to provide employment and work experience opportunities for people with disabilities. There are presently many inspiring examples around the four nations of individual charities and social enterprises that run repair shops, garden centres, cafes or retail outlets employ people with disabilities. These provide people with valuable training and development along with employability skills in a nurturing environment where tasks can be tailored to people's abilities, creating a sense of meaning, purpose and achievement. These can act as a springboard for employment in mainstream organisations for those who wish to go down this route, or provide a more long-term employment solution. Unfortunately, these examples remain isolated and piecemeal, with no central organising forum, underlying principles, or source of funding. Many small, local charities and care providers may well be interested in creating such opportunities for their clients and service users, but lack the knowledge, time and resources to set something up. My proposal is to establish a new government-funded scheme that provides grants, incentives and information to organisations seeking to set up outlets in vacant retail units aimed at employing individuals with disabilities. These might be taken up by, for instance, smaller care providers who provide supported living to individuals with a range of different needs. These outlets could include cafes or bakeries selling bread, cakes and biscuits made by people with disabilities; shops selling crafted products made by people with disabilities and/or local makers; repair shops; garden centres – whatever is most relevant to local individuals and communities. This scheme could be run in collaboration with local authorities and relevant charities, to ensure that local needs are addressed and support is available on the ground. Such a scheme would help to address changing consumer priorities as well as the disability employment gap; it would assist in revitalising high streets and local economies, and foster better integration of disabled people within their local communities.

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ID: 965-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Rent to Buy | A win win solution to escape the rental trap**

There are a few things that must be done to try to fix the afore mentioned problem:

- 1) Encourage transactions of housing from landlords to tenants
- 2) Support a mechanism that allows a % of tenants rent to go toward purchasing the property

Landlords would opt into the 'rent to buy scheme' after completing a property purchase. The rent to buy scheme would calculate a fixed % of property growth per year (based upon CPI). When a tenant rented a property, they would opt into the rent to buy scheme if available. This would give the tenant the opportunity to exercise a sale on the property after 2 - 5 years at the agreed price agreed as per the schemes annual growth formula.

At the end of the rental tenure, should the tenant wish to exercise the purchase option, 20% of their rental fees over the period will go toward their house deposit. (The 20% could be kept in a safe government backed account).

Should a landlord operate through this scheme, they would be eligible for CGT relief on the sale.

The lost CGT relief given by the treasury should be offset by the increase in Stamp Duty receipts as a result of the increased property turnover encouraged by this scheme.

Should a tenant not wish to exercise the buy price and wish to move out the property, the 20% will be released to the landlord. Should the tenant wish to extend the purchase opportunity and continue to live in the property, the option could be extended upon agreement of both parties.

Key benefits of the scheme:

- 1) Allows renters to save their deposit whilst renting.
- 2) Give landlords/investors a modest guaranteed return whilst also giving back to the community
- 3) Controls UK house price inflation ensuring it doesn't continue to outstrip earnings growth.
- 4) Increased transactions in the housing market, positive knock on effect with estate agents, solicitors, trades people etc.
- 5) Government tax relief of CGT offset with increased tax receipts from SDLT.
- 6) Gives tenants the opportunity to live in a rental property whilst making it a home.
- 7) Gives tenants an opportunity to test an area whilst also saving toward a deposit.

Who could be the schemes investors:

- 1) Institutional investors looking for fixed returns
- 2) Private landlords wanting to de-risk the property market
- 3) Companies with property wishing to give employees the chance to purchase.

If you would like to hear more about this scheme, I have both a presentation and example calculations for tenant savings & landlord returns.

The %'s mentioned in this policy are up for debate and could be discussed with policy makers to ensure the best outcomes of the scheme.

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ID: 962-11 - Category: City Centres

To protect employees from the more negative aspects of working from home or the potential opportunities they miss, the Government could set up local work-desks. These would essentially be offices that the Government provides with available work space campuses for people to book out.

This would first and foremost assist people who don't have the ability to work from home and are as such excluded from the job market. They would be provided with desk space to work as well as adequate facilities like computers, webcams, printers, telephones, etc. These are already all available with standard local libraries, but these would just be an extension to boost the work of working individuals.

These spaces may also solve the lack of social interaction with remote working by allowing people to still engage and meet other people at their workplace and could be crucial in solving the problems of loneliness and mental wellbeing. Furthermore, with a variety of different people working in the office with different companies and different industries, we could perhaps see greater collaboration among these different firms and industries. Simply by talking to each other at the coffee machines, individuals who may have never otherwise come into contact with each other may end up realising how the polar opposite things they are respectively working on, can instead be linked together to create the next world-changing idea. If not a revolution in ideas, the spaces could simply boost productivity for the individual working there, with an environment in which they can thoroughly focus, properly attend virtual meetings and have the equipment to do their work. It would make it easier for someone to ask

someone else for help with a certain blockage or for someone to copy someone else's work style that they think is particularly effective. These would all help to boost productivity within British businesses which have been on the back foot since the 2008 recession and have been hampered further by the COVID crisis.

The office spaces themselves could also be tailored to different individuals and their working styles. While some are fans of the modern, open plan office spaces with furniture lying around to promote interaction and pool tables and table tennis tables to allow for cooldowns when working. Others, may prefer the more traditional office space, with well allocated and neatly aligned desk space or designated individual cabins. The office space the government sets up could have a variety of these in each campus so that people can chose which they prefer and which they think they would be more effective in. This prevents the culture clash seen in many offices today where some prefer one to the other but there are wholesale changes to either side. If these office campuses are super-sized they could perhaps have these different layouts on different floors. Alternatively, there could be different offices at different locations with different layouts. For example, a campus based in Shoreditch could be of the more modern format, but a few miles away in Canary Wharf there could be a more traditional office. Perhaps, these campuses could come with healthcare arrangements or other services like gyms which are increasingly seen in offices, which would all help to make working more efficient.

These initiatives are already being championed by the private sector with companies like HubbleHQ, but the Government could step in to create a more inclusive job market to extend current support such as that provided by libraries already.

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ID: 958-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Roadside air pollution displays**

We create real-time roadside displays illustrating pollution levels at busy junctions and crossroads. I own a wine shop in south east London, where the pollution levels are regularly 55mg. The legal level is 40. I think if there was an electronic board which showed what that day's pollution was, and what that meant, people would take notice. Similar to the smiley face traffic speed signs, the display could give Nitrogen Dioxide levels, blue when safe, red when over the legal limit, and a sad/indifferent/smiley face could reflect PM levels, and give some common sense context for what the numbers mean. Initially people might not understand, but once

they've seen them a few times they may research them or hear about them. Once they realise what they mean, I think sitting in a traffic jam (maybe with your children) knowing that you are sitting in illegal/high levels of pollution, and contributing to them, it will start to connect people's abstract understanding of air pollution and the reality. They could be implemented all over the country, particularly in places with high levels of air pollution, and start a conversation which is harder to ignore than invisible air pollution.

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ID: 268-11 - Category: City Centres

**Roadside litter - time to govern.**

It is clear that the current system of cleaning the nation's trunk roads does not work leading to the UK's roads being amongst the dirtiest in Europe.

Cleaning of the trunk roads should be a normal part of overall maintenance and for this to happen effectively the duty should be transferred from local authorities to Highways England. This would enable a streamlined service to be provided tied in to vegetation cutting schedules and other road maintenance programmes. Experienced teams and specialist equipment can then be employed moving seamlessly along the routes with one overall body co-ordinating all aspects including road closures.

Such a system would have the added advantage that members of the public will have one point of access to lodge complaints or observations rather than the current situation where different authorities can blame each other for failings.

This proposition has been raised in detail with the Secretary of State and with Baroness Vere at the Department for Transport (DfT) by the A27 Clean Up Campaign and is supported by key MPs and all local authorities along the route. It has also been recommended by others in the past including by consultants Atkins in their 2009 Roadside Litter Research Strategy and in 2015 by the Communities and Local Government Select Committee in their report on "Litter and fly-tipping in England".

In response to the A27 Group, the DfT on 17 July 2020 said, amongst other things, that a transfer of responsibility to Highways England can only be made if Highways England makes such a request. This is a surprising response as, surely, it should be for the Government to decide who undertakes the cleaning of our national roads and not a government company. As far as is known Highways England has not volunteered to take responsibility for cleaning and there is therefore no apparent progress in achieving the optimal outcome.

Local authorities receive no extra funding for cleansing the trunk roads so additional costs would probably be encountered in any transfer of responsibility to Highways England. However, should this prove problematic, there is always the prospect of sponsorship for such important work although this would require a change of approach by Highways England who currently do not permit sponsorship.

A further issue that needs to be addressed is to ensure that the new Office for Environmental Protection has powers to investigate and, if necessary, penalise where authorities (whether local authorities or Highways England) have failed in their duties regarding roadside litter. As currently drafted, the Environment Bill may exclude roadside litter despite this being a major source of environmental damage.

With good will and a more committed approach than heretofore it should be possible to achieve a speedy transfer of responsibility to Highways England, at least in relation to a pilot project such as the A27 could provide. (One interesting point here is that the Havant section of the A27 is cleaned by Highways England at no cost to the local authority – so why doesn't this apply to the other 6 local authorities along the route?)

It is imperative that we have, at the top of Government, someone who is committed to cleaning up this country. This is particularly appropriate in the year when the UN Climate Change Conference will be held in the UK and when the whole world will be watching.

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ID: 724-11 - Category: City Centres

## **A National Landscapes Foundation should unlock philanthropic resources to expand national green space.**

### Summary

There is a pressing need to rejuvenate the nation's green spaces, both in the countryside and especially to extend them and improve them in urban areas, closer to where most people live. The green space divide contributes to the nation's health inequalities. To encourage more purposeful actions and regular physical activity, a step change in the amount and accessibility of green space is needed. To support hard-pressed charities, local authorities and agencies, a new National Landscapes Foundation should be created to increase markedly the funds available for green space management raised from philanthropy and professional fund-raising.

### Rising to the Challenge

How do we fund a green renewal in cities, towns and countryside and how do we make this truly a venture for all? We should create a National Landscapes Foundation with a mission of funding a green renewal across the whole country.

England is blessed with many organisations that promote green lifestyles, manage nature reserves and the countryside and promote countryside access. Our network of protected areas, schemes to support nature-friendly farming and nationally protected landscapes are generally widely regarded and successful. Our public footpaths, open access land and the numerous countryside sites managed for people and nature are exemplars. This national effort has been achieved by decades of evolution, partnerships and dynamic and effective voluntary agencies, local authorities and national agencies. But the emphasis of this work has been on land management, rural space and nature and it has left many urban people behind.

The Covid pandemic has shone a light on a terrible divide, between those whose access to green space enables healthier lifestyles and those whose local environments lack green space and the benefits that this brings to health and wellbeing. Over the last few decades

conservation and countryside charities and government bodies have begun to refresh their missions, so encompassing the green space needs of a wider, more urban society. These efforts have been piecemeal and the bodies are now hard-pressed to respond fully, coping with falling incomes and austerity.

The Covid 19 pandemic has sadly sharpened the focus on this. During the lockdowns, people confined to local areas had limited opportunities to access safe and inspiring green space in contrast to wealthier, rural or suburban residents with gardens, parks and countryside at hand. We know what can be done with city and town parks whose partial renaissance has been funded by national lottery-funded projects. We know that gardens, urban rivers and lakes, woodlands, grasslands, canal banks and allotments improve the lives of those who visit them, volunteer in their upkeep and who take exercise in them.

The widely respected Glover review of national landscapes (of which I was a part) called for a see-change in the quality and accessibility of the specially designated National Landscapes and argued for a National Landscapes Service.

The challenge is how, at a time of falling charitable income, a period of tight financial settlements and super increases in demand, can we fund a green renewal in our rural and urban green spaces? How can we turn the nation's love and connection to green space into a national calling and programme which expands the actions of the many voluntary bodies and agencies managing existing and potential new green spaces?

I was incredibly lucky in 2019 to visit Washington and the US National Parks Service and their National Parks Foundation. Faced with falling funds and growing demands, successive US administrations have helped the US National Parks Foundation to grow, focusing its efforts on a substantial, national-level programme of philanthropy. I saw at first-hand the contribution what a dedicated, highly professional and successful philanthropy programme has achieved for US citizens in their National Parks network, raising over \$40m in 2019 with ambitious plans for growth.

Our situation in Britain is different, not least that our network of volunteer and government agencies is more complex. However, there is no reason why our ambition should not be as great and as in the US. Philanthropy is an important part of our natural environment, heritage, arts and educational provision. It should become part of our national landscapes and green space policy.

I propose here that the Government should seed-fund a National Landscapes Foundation, contributing to the green renewal of our towns and cities. To start this process, the Government should consider the correct legal framework, find some initial seed-corn funding and build key relationships with agencies and parts of Government to garner support for the new Foundation. This should be followed by the following 5 key steps:

- i. Appoint a dynamic, well-connected and articulate Chair of the Foundation and a well-connected Board and create the legal and (if necessary) legislative basis for the organisation.
  
- ii. The Board should advertise for a highly experienced, commercial Director with relevant expertise in high level partnerships, funding and philanthropy.
  
- iii. A small, highly empowered and skilled staff of relationship managers should be appointed to support the Director in approaching and building productive relationships with high net worth individuals, companies, trusts and other funding agencies.
  
- iv. A clear policy for dispersing funds should be developed, drawing on overseas and established UK trust funds and a small executive team should be appointed to administer and communicate

this to applicants, the public and decision-makers. Detailed programmes would be developed by applicant bodies, such as the National Trust or local authorities.

v. There should be close relations with local fundraising groups concerned with individual places (such as the foundations being established in some National Parks) such that synergy and not confusion is achieved in fund-raising goals.

Drawing on experience from overseas and the established UK philanthropic sector, clear pathways, policies and communications would be developed to bring likely successful propositions to the NLF Board.

With resolution and vision, a new and sustained stream of funding will enable the rejuvenation of a much more accessible green space for all.

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ID: 645-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Plastic waste recycling**

A problem is our oceans are filling up with about 8 million tons of plastic waste each year leading to a prediction of more plastic than sea water in the oceans by around 2050 - 30 years hence - which waste is getting into the seafood chain. So I propose to get items like plastic bottles discarded on our pavements, streets and parks etc picked up and deposited in special containers which in return deliver a token for a tea or coffee in a local outlet. The solution is to incentivise people out shopping, walking, socialising etc to pick up and deposit plastic into specialised containers and in return receive a non-plastic token to use for a tea/coffee/etc in a local coffee shop. I've seen this in operation in Berlin and the majority of folk who do this are the city's rough or outdoor sleepers. The container could be funded by local authorities and local retail businesses especially as all stakeholders 'win' in this scheme - less street cleaning by local authorities, more footfall trade in cafes, a perceived freebie by citizens, a warm drink and sense of local involvement by rough sleepers, a reduction in ocean plastic pollution.

The scheme could be extended to bottles for a token to use in local bars, pubs, retail drink outlets.

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ID: 2052-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Improving the environment to promote active travel and reduce car-dependency**

The increase in active travel during lockdown shows there is suppressed demand. Transport and spatial planning that promotes diversity of destinations within shorter distances, to facilitate active travel; a presumption against private car use as the default; and better information about travel options would all help. The traditional transport mode hierarchy is being inverted by many local and regional transport authorities, with pedestrians at the top and single occupancy car use at the bottom. What is needed now is for funding to match this. At the moment, huge budgets go on road widening and building, despite the good evidence that all this does in a saturated system is release suppressed demand and move the 'pinchpoints' to before and after the new/wider roads. Meanwhile, the level of funding nationally and locally to support active travel is miniscule. Around £20 per head per year is needed - easily funded by diverting the road budget to environmentally sustainable travel modes, greening streets, and making life better for everyone. This would also reduce inequalities in access and in health. Those who truly need individual motor vehicles would benefit from less congestion.

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ID: 1769-11 - Category: City Centres

### **If it Pays it Stays - Solving the Illegal Wildlife Trade**

Summary:

Effectively addressing the Illegal Wildlife trade (IWT) involves two key activities: increasing the economic gain from conservation by generating more funding and more jobs for people living around wildlife so they no longer poach, and; developing well-trained and intelligence-led counter-poaching operations to counteract organised criminal poaching groups.

Policy:

At the moment the IWT is worth up to \$23 billion a year, a massive market financing the murder and destruction of wildlife and our natural world.

While hundreds of millions of dollars are spent on conservation each year, wildlife and habitats continue to disappear.

We need to create a market for conservation at least as large, if not larger, than IWT, which would directly fund the protection of the natural world by providing jobs to people living around wildlife and funding highly effective counter-poaching operations against organised criminal poachers.

IWT is fundamentally an economic issue.

Poaching and deforestation are cheap and quick to carry out, and an ivory tusk, rhino horn or pangolin can readily be converted into cash.

In contrast, conservation generates little revenue or jobs, and counter-poaching operations are very expensive to conduct.

There is therefore a pool of people living in poverty who poach because they have no other way to feed their families, as well as organised crime groups poaching high-value products. At the same time, teams of rangers need salaries and supplies and must be everywhere, all the time to stop poaching, whereas the poacher need only be in the right place at the right time once.

The economics are therefore tilted in favour of IWT.

It is that economic equation that we need to change, generating jobs to stop poaching driven by poverty, and generating revenue to fund more effective counter-poaching operations to stop organised crime poaching.

To change the economics of the trade, the government should carry out the following three key activities:

1) Engage with businesses to develop products and services that will directly help wildlife by generating revenue and jobs from conservation. In its simplest terms, this is about creating sustainable commercial buffer-zones around national parks, employing thousands of local people and creating a barrier between people and wildlife. The intent is that, for example, a tea plantation around a national park could help save elephants by employing former poachers, so every time someone drank a cup of tea they would be protecting elephants. Examples of this already exist around the world on a small-scale, but a blueprint to deliver this more widely needs to be developed.

2) Engage with marketing teams to develop new sponsorship models. Every sports stadium in the UK is sponsored by a large company, so why not do the same for national parks? We need to work with marketing teams to develop sponsorship packages that appeal to those businesses like sports sponsorships do, then work with developing countries to implement those sponsorships to fund conservation. This will help generate the increased funding needed for conservation, and marketing budgets are far larger than charity budgets, so there is more finance available.

3) Work with investors and entrepreneurs to develop products and services that include donations to conservation organisations. Individual donations alone do not provide enough funding for conservation, so we need to find other ways to enable people to support the cause.

By way of example, if WWF owned the rights to The Lion King franchise, they need never fundraise again. We need to setup a UK challenge to develop and publicise a range of products that will help raise funds to save wildlife.

Those three activities would have a major impact on changing the economics of the IWT to make conservation pay.

A simple rule in life is 'if it pays it stays'. If we can find ways that national parks generate significant revenues and jobs, they are likely to be well-protected.

Even as revenue increases, however, there will still be some criminal elements seeking to poach high-value wildlife, so highly effective counter-poaching operations are required to stop them.

The British Army's Op CORDED shows the way forward in this area.

By training rangers to be much more effective, they are better able to deal with the poaching threat. However, the British Army's current work could be improved; short term training teams delivering basic infantry skills training misses much of the value that the Army could offer.

Op CORDED should be expanded, with small teams working with rangers in national parks to not only enhance the field-skills of rangers, but also to develop intelligence-led counter-poaching capabilities.

Highly trained rangers, directed by effective intelligence, have been shown to rapidly reduce

poaching to near zero.

The Army has the capability and experience to provide that training, all at a relatively low cost to government as the wages of soldiers (the largest expense) are sunk costs. It will also help recruitment and retention and be a great way to utilise infantry and intelligence corps soldiers on small operations.

Generating more jobs and revenue from parks will make conservation pay, and will solve 80-90% of the poaching problem, if not more; most poaching is carried out by people with no other choice. Give them a job and they stop poaching. The remainder can be controlled by effective counter-poaching forces, which are intelligence-led.

To put this into context, if each household in the UK could spend just £10 per week on products that saved wildlife, we would create a £14 billion annual market to save wildlife, creating jobs to stop poaching and funding highly effective counter-poaching operations.

That's almost as much as the entire current IWT market, just from UK households spending £10 per week.

It's simple; if we can enable people to pay, then we will ensure wildlife will stay.

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ID: 2033-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Amen to decades of motoring damage**

For decades the number of cars and commercial vehicles on the roads has increased rapidly. There are far too many. The virus has had a positive effect on miles driven but unless firm action is taken now, chaos and pollution will return.

Banning cars or lorries is ridiculous, greatly reducing their numbers is very sensible. Democratic governments are pusillanimous and afraid of the 'motoring lobby'. However, the tobacco lobby was once, like the motoring lobby now, extremely powerful. Eventually government determination was triumphant and without prohibiting smoking, drastically reduced it. Repeat that for cars and lorries!

Too many vehicles, whether powered by petrol, diesel, electricity, hydrogen or steam cause traffic jams and will always force huge sums of money to be spent on road upkeep. Driving everywhere in cars does nothing for the obesity which shames Britain. So . . . .

1) Transport ministers should hang a large notice on their walls which asks a question they could never answer - 'Just why should railways make a profit?'

Railways should be a service for all, not a source of funding. We gave railways to the world and should cherish them. Beeching was madness. Rail, whether passenger or freight, should be the first choice for medium and long distance transport. Subsidising them where necessary makes sense.

2) One car per household should be enforced within 5 years. Britain and Taiwan (USA too?) should receive government orders for 20 / 30 million or more conventional and electric bikes to be made available to the public at 50% or less of current prices. People could then ride to work or to a railway station and every train would have a dedicated coach / wagon for the free carriage of bicycles at all times and secure sheds at stations for their storage (some progress already on this latter point).

3) Despite some lovely rural areas and attractive towns, Britain has to be one of the worst places in western Europe to ride a bike. Cycle lanes, if they exist at all, may often be nothing more than a faded white line somewhere near the kerb with a surface of drain covers, pot holes, litter and broken glass.

4) Every bike should have a licence and its owner insured. Irresponsible riding should be punished and all bikes kept roadworthy. Until proved otherwise motorists should be deemed at fault if they hit cyclists or pedestrians and cyclists if they hit pedestrians.

5) Ambulances, fire engines and taxis do not threaten us, vast excesses of cars and lorries do.

6) The NHS would gain hugely from the above proposition and so would mental health and overall quality of life in Britain. Is there a single cogent argument against it?

### **Narrowing the Have and Have Not divide through a train and self-build scheme**

The pandemic will mean less demand for retail and office space. Large swathes of the population may be permanently displaced from their roles in the service sectors. With the U.K.'s departure from the EU, labour for construction will be less available. These factors combined with a crisis in the belief in the fairness of capitalism and the desperate need for more homes presents the U.K. with an opportunity. To give the have not's capital through the conversion of Underused land to homes as part of a huge 'train and self-build' scheme. Construction is not a popular career choice amongst younger generations. Having a stake in what you are building in the short term as well as skills and experience to earn in the long term could change this. As retail and office space is converted to residential, construction workers should be offered capital in the form of a small percentage of a home that they helped to build. Tying a person's efforts to a home makes them stakeholders and gives them reason to produce high quality work whilst training. Developments above a certain size will be obligated to offer a percentage of the homes that they are building to this scheme, in a similar way to how Housing Associations are given a percentage of some developments. House builders rely largely on sub-contractors for labour so new contracting methods that account for time on specific developments will be required. Modern technology can make this easy, with swipe in and swipe out of sites being mandatory as part of the scheme. Skills tests at the end of a package of learning will be mandatory to avoid members being used as unskilled labour. Those applying for the scheme must have been furloughed, unemployed, from a disadvantaged background and without capital or the means to obtain it. They will need to qualify in either one high-skilled (plumbing or electrics) and one low-skilled trade (dry-lining, carpentry, ceramics, painting and decorating, scaffolding, ground works, demolition), or three low-skilled trades. The requirement to multi-skill will increase the number of skilled individuals and may reduce dependencies on additional sub-contractors, anecdotally the cause of much delay in construction. Planning permission must be revised. The guiding principle should be 'is there any reason that this cannot be used for residential'? For example, some land is reserved for light industrial units, such as warehousing or storage space often near prime locations such as transport hubs in cities. This is overly restrictive. These sites should be converted to sandwich buildings. The bottom two or three layers could be reserved for commercial use. The next layers, for parking. Floors above this, of which there should be many, for homes. Having planning permission denied for virgin builds or for creating sandwich buildings should be subject to rapid independent, challenge. A tax on any land commercially owned that is zoned for home development but that is idle should be levied. Its rate should increase with every year that the land sits idle, irrespective of ownership. Local councils should be offered a portion of stamp duty that is yielded from any new development. This percentage

should be linked to the amount of time taken to make a planning decision. The longer they take to give planning permission, the lower their percentage. These measures incentivise both parties to make planning decisions quickly, a bottleneck identified by developers. Currently, construction takes place, by and large during the working week, with weekend work limited. The construction industry should move to the Oil Rig model. A skilled construction worker can travel and work for three weeks, with a mandatory break afterwards, regulated by a mandatory swipe card. This would rely on a change to allow work on weekends. A Saturday could be limited to 10am-6pm and Sunday from 11am-5pm. These changes, alongside flexible, mobile accommodation allows labour to move freely throughout the country reducing long daily or weekly commutes. Someone beginning work at 16, could work for 53 years at the current state retirement age. But the average length of a mortgage is 25 years. If the norm for mortgages was linked to the difference between age and state retirement age deposits could be made smaller, which might give have not's a better chance of gaining a mortgage. The average salary multiple could change to something more realistic in the current market. The government should push its lenders to do this. In return it could accept some limited risk that comes with smaller deposits. The 'train and self-build' scheme should offer 2.5% of the value of a property, with this being sufficient deposit to qualify for a longer mortgages. The government could accept the risk on another 2.5% for a limited period. Stamp duty is a punitive tax that presents a barrier to a dynamic labour market. Individuals should be allowed to pay this off either over a period of time or from the profits of the eventual sale of their property, with a suitable interest rate applied that encourages them to pay this down quickly. Implementing the above will require political courage. Home owners typically vote Conservative. Renters, especially in the social sector, Labour. This scheme might push prices down for mainly Conservative home owners. But it would create more home owners. So whilst there may be some financial pain for the current Conservative have's, this may convert many more have not's, to voting Conservative. The UK has needed to build more homes for decades but no government has taken sufficient action to rectify the current situation. The aftermath of the pandemic will provide space for homes as demand retail and office space lessens.

A 'Train and self-build' scheme creates stakeholders and gives them capital and skills simultaneously. Providing easier access to mortgages, changing stamp duty and allowing a longer working week allows for a more dynamic property sector. A courageous government will see that turning more have not's into have's is the biggest opportunity presented by the pandemic.

Word Doc contains links to references

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ID: 1336-11 - Category: City Centres

### **How to tackle the issue of continuity of children's education and their mental health**

In answer to the problem of disruption to the continuity of children's education and their mental health I propose the following ideas:

- 1) Repurpose high street retail spaces that are no longer in use into outdoor spaces that could include specific areas for educational purposes and
- 2) Incentivise and reward physical activity to promote wellbeing and to tackle the obesity crisis.

One of the by-products of the COVID19 crisis is that consumers have changed the way they shop and, as a result, a significant number of major retailers went bankrupt (Debenhams, Top Shop etc) during the pandemic. So, there is going to be a lot of unused retail space because their new owners are just going to use online selling platforms. My idea stems from the German "Waldkindergarten" (forest kindergarten) concept where pre-school children are taught outdoors whatever the weather.

However, rather than identify green-field sites for these projects, you could redevelop swathes of inner-City areas into green spaces and equip them with some useful features that children of all ages could access. Some sheltered areas would be provided in the form of eco-pods that had charging points and were WiFi enabled.

There could also be catering trucks providing wholesome food in the parks too which would help the beleaguered hospitality industry and encourage people to support their local suppliers again. Children who are entitled to free school meals could present a QR code on their phones or a card at these trucks and get a nutritious hot meal. And of course, all members of society could benefit from the sites outside of school hours (ie: evenings and weekends.)

In most cases, the transport infrastructure would already be in place so everyone could easily access these zones. In doing this, no child should have to go without education or decent food and, in the year when the UK is hosting COP26, it would also boost our green credentials amongst the global community.

One of the observations I made from looking at photos of the victims of the COVID19 pandemic was that a large proportion of them were overweight/obese. This is an entirely preventable, social problem and one which, if tackled, could save the NHS a lot of money further down the line by reducing the number of people suffering from heart disease and some forms of cancer.

From an early age, we know that children respond well to being rewarded for doing something that they are told to do and/or for doing something well. Why don't you task someone to create an App that tracks activity (like Strava for example) and then reward children when they have reached certain milestones.

The reward should not be cash per se but should have some monetary value. Eg: they would receive a voucher which could be redeemed for reduced leisure centre/gym membership or perhaps some equipment to use at home. This would give the child a sense of achievement and also boost the gym sector economy which has been hit badly due to closures throughout the pandemic.

It is also widely acknowledged that there is a link between physical activity and a greater sense of wellbeing. So, if we can encourage more young people to be active then it follows that fewer of them will be depressed. Or at least, if they are still depressed, hopefully, it will be less often/less severely as a result of taking exercise.

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ID: 1103-11 - Category: City Centres

**Redistributing population to alleviate inequalities and overcrowding residential clusters utilising unused land made affordable.**

My proposal is to create smaller and more distributed new eco housing communities.

This will need to be supported by Central Government, by reassigning unused and under-used land resource nationally and commissioning large scale house builders to take on these projects.

If we also incorporate the current advancements some European countries already have by shifting to vertical farming from current horizontal farming. First and foremost this will automatically free up vast areas of current farmed land allowing for more trees to be planted (increasing sustainability), whilst also contributing to both current climate change efforts as well as more efficient use of our existing land resource. This will lead to much higher productivity in produce and variety of produce given it is then in a controlled environment (unaffected by weather – floods etc) and creates jobs, helping the economy in its recovery and serving the National need for home grown fresh produce.

Secondly, the reassigned land can be reclassified and apportioned accordingly through “change of use” to serving the current National housing need and thereby getting a wider distribution of population habitation especially with the current working format where there is larger remote working options available, tackling the density of high population clusters.

To put this proposal into perspective, assume that there are 500 new houses built equating to a new “village”. If there are a 100 “villages” newly created, each consisting of “500 houses” with the assumption that there is a family of 4 living in each house; this will mean possible redistribution of upto 200,000 people. Then if you further assume that single adult studio type structures are also made available, this redistribution count further increases. This will inturn create more jobs as people will naturally set up more commerce to meet the needs of these newly created regions also boosting localised economies. To put this in perspective, currently the UK needs to build 340,000 new homes a year until 2031, simply put, the demand for housing will only be met if some development takes place via the above proposal. This proposal will play an instrumental role towards this National need of new affordable, ecological, residential homes along with more controlled efforts for farming with technological

advancements creating more home grown produce, as well as a Global need, inline with the Paris Climate Accord.

This proposal gives a chance to solve not just the national housing shortages, affordability issues, wealth inequalities but also combats far greater efforts from Climate Change to Sustainable Living and Green Efforts as well as solving the issues that arise from dense population clusters including those experienced in the covid-19 pandemic of high infection rates and unfortunate deaths.

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ID: 738-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Provide incentives to encourage us to fly less**

We need a combination of stick and carrot to keep us weaned off flying:

The sticks:

Substantially increase the tax on all flights (commercial, freight and private) coming into or going out of the UK;

Compulsory health warning on all advertising and online booking platforms for commercial flights. Keep it simple eg "Flying contributes substantially to global warming" then ramp up the message over time

The carrots:

use 75% of the revenue raised from the flight tax to invest in sustainable public transport eg cycle lanes, subsidies to buses, coaches, trains; and providing funds for airlines who have contributed to the tax raised, to research and develop less polluting forms of flight.

£100 grant payment to anyone over 18 who can prove that they have not flown in any calendar year. Applicants for the grant would self certify online with a declaration, and provide their NI and where available their passport numbers. This incentive will generally favour the less well off. A virtue bonus. For companies, compare their 2019 level of air travel as a percentage of profit with the same ratio in 2022 (assuming normal life has resumed by then). Self declaration via tax return. Where there is a reduction there will be a cash payment back to the company which must be used by the Company for the benefit of all employees, ideally linked to a green

initiative.

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ID: 526-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Resuscitating the Dying Hearts of Britain's Towns and Cities**

Whilst the hearts of our nation's cities and towns may have suffered cardiac arrests as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is the opportunity to bring about change in such a way that it not only revives these hearts, but also the urban bodies, to provide greater health than ever before.

The hospitality and retail sectors of the economy have particularly suffered as a result of the virus. Shopping centres have most of their shops shut and, in the case of Nottingham, a shopping centre is to be demolished, with plans to transform it into a place of retail and leisure abandoned. Whilst the reduced number of city centre workers has been a major contributory factor, with businesses having fewer customers, the solution to this problem is not to expect office workers to return to their old desks, but instead to transform our central business districts into neighbourhoods. The new way of life that see people working from home brings too many advantages to individuals, as well as to the environment and to businesses, as is discussed shortly, for it to be abandoned. Offices blocks and other buildings have, in many cases, been closed for most of the period since March 2020 and these empty offices, and shops, now are the vessels with which rejuvenation is possible.

The transformation is achieved by converting empty offices and other vacant central properties into residential space and utilising brownfield sites for residential developments. According to the Office for National Statistics, approximately 16 percent of Britain's population lived on or around a high street in 2018. Increasing the number of people living in city centres achieves a number of things: 1) it helps support the very businesses which have been affected by reduced footfall; 2) it reduces pressure on housing, and land where housing would otherwise be built, in suburban areas and the urban fringe, helping to preserve the Green Belts which are going to be all the more vital in a future that better considers the environment in which we live; 3) those suburban areas will benefit from greater space, with opportunities for parks and green spaces; 4) if more people live in central areas, and work from their homes, using retail and hospitality which is within walking distance, then there will be fewer cars on the roads.

Inevitably some city centre businesses will not survive even if the number of people living in city and town centres is significantly increased. A move of population is likely to be far lower than the number of office workers, and those living and working from home are less likely to buy their morning coffee given that their journey to work will be from one room of the house to another. However, their proximity to shops will undoubtedly increase the amount of trade that some of the businesses require to make them viable.

This proposal offers greater opportunities beyond central areas of towns and cities. Indeed, there has been too much focus on the negative impact of home working on city centres, when there should be consideration of the effects, many of which are positive, of homeworking on the entirety of towns and cities. Whilst many people will undoubtedly return to their old offices when transmission rates are low enough to allow this, for a sizeable number of people remote working will be a permanent aspect of their lives. Rather than ending remote working, it should be encouraged. With more residents in the city centres, the businesses there are better supported and many will not only be viable but will potentially thrive. Enabling the continuance of people to work from their suburban homes, or on the urban fringe, will allow more people to shop locally, not just in their own urban centre but within their own neighbourhoods, enabling businesses to grow there. The experience of 2020 has shown that local shops have experienced a surge in business, given the convenience of shopping close to home. Some of those businesses no longer viable in town and city centres could move into accessible parts of the suburbs, in areas they have never before (or at least not recently) traded in what would be a redistribution of commerce across urban areas.

By moving into other areas of towns and cities, to where people live and work, businesses will benefit from lower rents. Not all cafes, or indeed small restaurants or eateries would survive in central areas under this the proposed redistribution, but they may instead prosper by moving to easily accessible areas out of the centres in those areas where large numbers live and work. Lunches may no longer be with our colleagues but instead with our partners, friends or neighbours. Rather than after-work drinks in city centre bars, this new normal will see the reverse of the decline of local, neighbourhood pubs. Prior to the pandemic, local pubs were closing across the country. Indeed 5473 pubs and bars closed in the five years up to December 2019, most of these being located out of town and city centres. Working and living from home,

in all areas of towns and cities, will therefore allow pubs to be sustainable and the revival of the 'local'.

This vision of redistribution of people and businesses across towns is good for business and good for our towns and cities, enabling them to become more vibrant places in which to live, work and play. It is a vision which offers a greener environment, with fewer car journeys, resulting in fewer carbon emissions and cleaner air. It is a vision of greater happiness, encouraging working from home thereby offers more free time, with the end to commuting, opportunities for greater flexible working, and a better work-life balance. A redistribution of people and businesses will also enable a better quality of life for all, with more leisure and hospitality across towns and cities. Resuscitating the dying heart of our towns and cities will protect businesses and enhance quality of life.

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ID: 3052-11 - Category: City Centres

### **UK Retail - Town Centre Challenge and Opportunity - Retail reality**

As we emerge from our final lockdown no-one really knows what the full effect of the pandemic will be. What we do know is that there has been a significant shift to buying online and the pandemic has been a catalyst in this regard. If an average of 30 to 40% of purchases can now be made online and fulfilled from out-of-town fulfilment centres what hope is there for town and city retailers, especially independents, to cover costs and hopefully make a living now that they have endured an on-off year of being open. Many will emerge with landlord arrears, debt and uncomfortably high stock levels. Once these retailers close their doors the risk, and fear, is that these premises will remain empty for years to come.

Unlike a website that digitally disappears when a shop closes in the physical world the premises still remain. There is a considerable risk that the fabric of many towns and potentially certain cities will fray as the heart disappears with each closure. What will be left will be coffee shops and many other services that you can't find or enjoy online.

From this potentially bleak picture could emerge an opportunity. Rather than seeing the digital world as competition embrace it within physical retail to get the best of both worlds.

How can this be done?

Set up a pilot concept of local manufacturers, food producers, independent retailers to sell within one space, probably a closed department store. These merchants will retail their wares around a central café / eatery. Customers can buy certain products then and there but also be shown a full collection online as each merchant will have their own terminal. This will also avoid the necessity to carry and display high inventory of stock. Customers can take pictures of

themselves against certain themed walls, designed by local interior designers, and shared via social media. This will put the buzz back into retail. People like local, they like buying from and supporting local creative talent. This is a crucial dynamic in supporting this concept. There is also a move away from the online behemoths such as Amazon who are necessities during lockdown but a large section of society will know that local businesses will need supporting. Crucially each centre will carefully manage the mix of their tenants to keep the offering fresh and vibrant. As the merchants are not shackled by huge inventory they can be relatively fleet of foot.

Landlords will have an exciting opportunity to embrace this concept and so offer preferential terms to the company that runs this new venture. Flexible terms, probably turnover related, and exits via breaks will allow the new Company not to be overly stretched and so repeat the onerous fixed costs of many retailers.

This pilot store will provide the template for a nationwide network of stores and allow many merchants to trade cost-effectively in localities where they have never had exposure before and hence helping the country to level up.

If we do not find an original solution to this looming issue then the physical retail world will continue to suffer and so we need a fresh approach to syringe out the best of physical retail and combine it with the huge opportunities that exist in the digital world.

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ID: 1113-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Unused office buildings can be repurposed as homeless shelters**

To capitalise on this opportunity, local councils should ask businesses whether they are using their office spaces or not. If they are no longer in use, they should be asked if they mind allowing a homeless shelter to be set up in the building either on a temporary or permanent basis.

The council can offer to pay a minimal fee to the company for use of the building. At the same time this will create an additional income channel for firms that may be suffering due to the economic effects of the pandemic. In this solution both companies, local authorities, and the homeless benefit.

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ID: 1549-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Seaside regeneration areas**

Summary

A series of seaside regeneration areas could be designated for interventions to improve their competitiveness – particularly with overseas destinations. These areas could benefit from interventions such as:

- reduced VAT and business rates on tourism related businesses; • improved transport links, such as direct trains and lower fares;
- upgraded accommodation; and
- improvements to the local environment, including bringing empty buildings back into use.

#### Seaside regeneration areas

A series of priority seaside resort locations could be identified and designated for Government assistance in improving their competitiveness. These seaside regeneration areas could include any of the following resorts: Ayr, Blackpool/Lytham St Annes, Rhyl, Colwyn Bay, Porthcawl, Barry Island, Morecambe, Whitley Bay/Tynemouth, Redcar, Scarborough, Bridlington, Cleethorpes, Skegness, Great Yarmouth, Clacton-on-Sea, Margate/Ramsgate, Folkestone, Hastings, Sandown/Shanklin, Dawlish/Teignmouth, Torquay/Paignton, Newquay and Weston-super-Mare.

#### Measures to raise resorts' competitiveness

To improve the resorts' competitiveness with overseas destinations the critical issues of price and customer experience will need to be addressed.

Price.

Many choices of family holiday destinations are made on price. This includes the cost of travel, accommodation and food.

#### Travel costs.

Family railcards currently offer a 33% discount on standard class fares. This could be increased to 50% for travel to the priority destinations. Inclusive deals involving local bus travel and possibly discounted admission to visitor attractions in the priority areas could be developed. Free, convenient parking for coaches could also be provided in the priority areas.

#### Accommodation and food costs.

Overseas resorts are competitive on price partly due to lower taxes. To change this, within the seaside regeneration areas, the rates of VAT on hotels/bed & breakfast accommodation and eating out could be reduced to 5%. Business rates on tourist industries could also be reduced. This will enable businesses to reduce prices to levels that are competitive with overseas resorts, where tax rates are often lower.

#### Customer experience.

This covers travel, accommodation and location experience.

#### Travel experience.

To improve visitors' journeys, the need to change trains en-route, which is awkward when encumbered with luggage, should be minimised. Direct trains could be run to the priority resorts from the main population centres of London, the Midlands, Northern England, South Wales and Glasgow/Central Belt, where warranted by travel demand. These could be run seasonally, in the summer and Bank Holidays. Passenger facilities could include seat reservations, extra space for luggage, refreshment trolleys and Wi-fi. These services could

replicate the convenience of air travel. Other rail services to the areas could be enhanced as required by increasing service frequencies and reducing journey times.

#### Accommodation experience.

In the possible priority areas listed above, some of the older hotels do not provide accommodation that meets present visitor expectations. Regeneration grants could be provided to upgrade and modernise hotels to current standards.

#### Location experience.

Some of the priority areas have a neglected appearance, which affects the visitors' experience. Regeneration grants could be provided to purchase and repurpose or remove, unused buildings. Disused hotels, which are common in depressed resorts, could be restored and reopened. Seafront attractions such as piers and iconic historic buildings could also be improved by grants for restoration, repairs and maintenance. These local environment improvements could make places attractive to visitors.

#### Duration of the measures

The designations should remain in place for as long as the areas remain economically depressed relative to inland areas with non-tourist-based economies.

The subsidies and tax breaks could be maintained as long as is necessary to restore the economic performance of the areas. Thereafter, any withdrawal should be gradual. Incorporation into wider tax changes covering other areas could be needed to maintain competitiveness while avoiding tax anomalies. The transport improvements should become financially self-supporting as visitor numbers increase and can therefore be continued.

ID: 1104-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Redistributing population to alleviate inequalities and overcrowding residential clusters utilising unused land made affordable.**

My proposal is to create smaller and more distributed new eco housing communities. This will need to be supported by Central Government, by reassigning unused and under-used land resource nationally and commissioning large scale house builders to take on these projects. If we also incorporate the current advancements some European countries already have by shifting to vertical farming from current horizontal farming. First and foremost this will automatically free up vast areas of current farmed land allowing for more trees to be planted (increasing sustainability), whilst also contributing to both current climate change efforts as well as more efficient use of our existing land resource. This will lead to much higher productivity in produce and variety of produce given it is then in a controlled environment (unaffected by weather – floods etc) and creates jobs, helping the economy in its recovery and serving the National need for home grown fresh produce. Secondly, the reassigned land can be reclassified and apportioned accordingly through “change of use” to serving the current National housing need and thereby getting a wider distribution of population habitation especially with the current working format where there is larger remote working options available, tackling the density of high population clusters. To put this proposal into perspective, assume that there are 500 new houses built equating to a new “village”. If there are a 100 “villages” newly created, each consisting of “500 houses” with the assumption that there is a family of 4 living in each house; this will mean possible redistribution of upto 200,000 people. Then if you further assume that single adult studio type structures are also made available, this redistribution count further increases. This will inturn create more jobs as people will naturally set up more commerce to meet the needs of these newly created regions also boosting localised economies. To put this in perspective, currently the UK needs to build 340,000 new homes a year until 2031, simply put, the demand for housing will only be met if some development takes place via the above proposal. This proposal will play an instrumental role towards this National need of new affordable, ecological, residential homes along with more controlled efforts for farming with technological advancements creating more home grown produce, as well as a Global need, inline with the Paris Climate Accord. This proposal gives a chance to solve not just the national housing shortages, affordability issues, wealth inequalities but also combats far greater efforts from Climate Change to Sustainable Living and Green Efforts as well as solving the issues that arise from dense population clusters including those experienced in the covid-19 pandemic of high infection rates and unfortunate deaths.

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ID: 2244-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Hydro Hamlets, Passive Houses.**

Passive Houses are the highest (voluntary) standard of ultra-low energy efficient housing. Only 1,000 or so have been built to date in the U.K. My proposal is to allow these, and carbon positive settlements of up to 100 people to be built under a new section of the Permitted Development Rights, i.e. without the need for Planning Permission.

There are many hundreds of water mills left derelict at the start of the Industrial Revolution and as many textile mills left empty at the end of it. Mostly they have Listed Building status and/or on the buildings at risk registers.

The idea is to allow development on these properties with the proviso that the mills be restored with new functions. Also, that mini-hydro plants or other forms of renewable energy be installed on site to provide excess energy generated to the National Grid.

In the case of water mills they stand sentinel in rural locations. The natural hierarchy of settlement is for hamlets to cluster around them. Passive buildings should be the norm for developments of this nature.

By default, Passive Houses are of the highest standard of design but limiting criteria such as scale and height should be incorporated in the legislation.

It is usual to limit the choice of building materials in the PDRs but there should be a mechanism to encourage innovation in the use of materials and construction methods - a new "vernacular".

Hydro Hamlets could be oases of beautifully crafted buildings, literally if there is a mill pond incorporated. Infrastructure will be needed to link them, like a string of pearls.

This is a small-scale approach to the massive housing demand but will help to redress imbalance in rural and urban living.

Skilled artisans, green engineers and technicians will require training and they can in turn help to retrofit existing housing stock.

Further incentive could be to have the best designed developments bid for new eco-villages and even eco-towns thus attracting major house builders to the cause.

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ID: 1036-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Where to next? Slow building is the future**

When it comes to reconstruction, it is time to put a stopper on the idea that the best thing we can do is Build Build Build.

The construction industry, although given a fairly free hand during this year, is actually one of the least of our worries. It can be slowed down and restarted without losing much in the long run. It can always be redirected into saving the infrastructure we've already got. And let's face it, we are going to end up with a smaller population.

Housing and highways are two big impactors on our lives, our environment and our futures, which are beyond democratic control. Nobody ever questions the need for more housing: the politics is all about who can build most. Nobody ever gets a vote on the latest expansion of the network of tarmac and lights. There is room here for a pause for thought.

Big questions are arising about the homing of the frail. Housing policy plays a big part in the

push and pull of migration. And it is a huge driver of energy consumption.

One thing which might help is planning permissions conditional on local sourcing of raw materials in some counties. Instead of cement and tiles produced by burning fuel from start to finish, we should be using local stone and slate, cut and hauled by manual labour, and bricks made with local clay and coal. Perhaps, here and there, we should be encouraging log cabin communities hewn from local timber and paid a little to live off grid.

Supply would be a kind of natural, you might say a healthy, brake on consumption. And the houses you built would be worth more as national investments.

Maybe railway construction could be devolved in a similar way. Devonshire, for example, wants a railway across Dartmoor. Used to have one, built with granite and Irish muscle, and it lasted 100 years. Now it would cost impossible numbers of billions in reinforced concrete. How much cheaper could Devon do it with its own resources - including a lot of unemployed Cornishmen?

Quarrying is a sensible way to make employment. You can measure the output and the carbon savings you are getting for your bucks. And you end up with a resource you can store - and eventually use more than once over the lifetimes before it is rubbish. But it doesn't have to be stone. Here is an equation I like, from an argument for using thatch. It takes 40 hours of hard labour to crop three acres of reed, which is enough roofing material for a house. Nobody has dug anything up or used any electricity. And it's hard to fiddle it.

There are other practicable options for tipping the balance a little between people and Earth's resources - in, for example, manual crop control in farming, highway maintenance, hedging, litter clearance, canal dredging and fishing - all areas where we can see what we are getting for our money, rather than furloughing jobs which will never come back.

Post-Covid, possibly, we are all more in a mood to wind back a bit on what used to look like progress. Given pause before we nip out for a new dishwasher, do we really need one? One of the lessons of lockdown in my house is that you don't, but you do need a full-time galley hand. There is already growing demand for local kitchens, as opposed to fast food joints. Do we really need a washing machine and a tumble drier in every house, eating up half a room, to do what the local laundry used to do? Has anyone worked out how much metal and energy and international transportation it would save if we employed somebody local to wash our sheets?

My argument is that we should be making small but directionally definite shifts like these rather than setting targets for electric cars in the hope of a miracle. Out here in the real world, we see Boris's plan to suddenly dump 200 years of engineering as a giant version of the law against old lightbulbs - a footling diversion which has achieved bugger all at great expense, just like smart meters, building regulations, loft insulation, and all the other mistakes which will never be put right.

Outside the city, we also all know that tree planting is another nonsense. Either you are putting them back where your ancestors spent a thousand years digging them out, or you are putting them where they don't really want to be and most of them die.

We have to drive less. Start from there. Maybe we could try making it electric vehicles only on some roads.

Maybe we should all deal with our own dog shit in our own neighbourhoods rather than solemnly ferrying it across the county to be incinerated. Maybe we don't actually need all the flying to come back. Almost certainly we don't want the cruise industry any more. And if all those visitor centres have a future, it is as unit spaces for repair shops.

The labour market is already making massive shifts and there are more to come and we need to help. Politics tends to be about protection of the vulnerable - which is sometimes as it should be but sometimes looks like a competition for the teddy bear vote. Equally important is encouragement of the strong and able - those we will need for reconstruction.

A minimum wage for doing any job at all does not make sense and is a barrier to having a healthy grey economy, which we need now more than ever. But there should always be a minimum reward for honest hard work. How would we pay for it? The flip answer is, the same way as Rishi is paying at the moment, only with more popular support. But there would be savings and gains to set against a subsidy for labour.

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ID: 198-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Sort out the UK's exercise and commuting habits - COP 26 Legacy powered by Beeching**

Open up the railway lines closed by Beeching and make them into cycle, walking / jogging and inline skating routes. They don't need to be over complicated - just simple, wide paths linking villages, towns and stations. Safe spaces for families to exercise and for commuting. People in general want to be healthy and they want to use their cars less but safe spaces don't exist. If they did, people would develop better habits and we would have a great legacy initiative to link to COP 26 (Cycle lanes alongside roads aren't the answer - they're often noisy, busy and are perceived to make things more difficult for drivers. They also only work if you live close to a city centre)

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ID: 1659-11 - Category: City Centres

### **THE GREAT LITTLE YEAR-LONG EXHIBITION all things for all seasons**

This is a kick-start idea in which local Councils (along with retail advisors) would take over all empty retail spaces (could offer council tax relief to landlords?) for a 1 year period, and fill those spaces with micro-businesses, craft groups, start-up ideas, everything considered -the most obvious being fashion in all it's forms -made in the local area. First 6 months at a peppercorn rent. Second six on a 10% of profit. Contracts beginning at 3 months. To be advertised this year, for next. Press, Online, Worldwide, Great Websites. The Councils are going to have to offer temporary employment to a lot of new skills.....to be employed in-house, not farmed out. Temporary contracts.

Employment of jobless retail workers to operate the scheme, avoiding the most highly-paid levels unless they offer on a voluntary basis. 10% of employees from long-term unemployed sector. Each sector to be consulted on 2wk basis for troubleshooting purposes. Everyone from designers to security

Wages should be set at dole -plus-extra, so that the unemployment payments may be kept in situ and there be enough financial incentive to get people back into active involvement, albeit at a lesser wage than before. If this is going to work, everyone must expect to earn a bit less, from the top down to but NOT including minimum wage earners.

ART -there will be a lot of this, much of it either amateurish or incomprehensible. Let there be exhibition spaces charging a small hanging fee. Let there also be a Salon de Refusee/s for the less obviously saleable stuff. ( Hanging fees at £5 -£10 per week or more for the larger stuff -worked very well at Brighton Festival 1996)

Let all sales be recorded and 20% go to offset costs of project.

Let there be archived records of all exhibits, objects, and ideas, along with maker, contacts, prices etc, and let them be available online.

to man this City-wide project, use talents previously employed in the now-defunct multinationally-supplied retail stores.

Involve schools, Colleges, Universities, and other stakeholders.

DO NOT SHUNT OUT all those fruit n' veg sellers, old lady-shoe merchants, and purveyors of sensible knickers, wigs and surgical stockings who are still hanging in there just because they make the place look less stylish. GIVE THEM A RENT REDUCTION.

let there be singers and street musicians, fashion shows and film-making, jugglers and piano-players, street theatre and morris-dancers. allocate slots and advertise. let them pass the hats.

Let there be stewards and a benign police presence.

Let every first Saturday include stalls and circus acts (no lions).

When the dust dies down after Year 1, there will be some successes, some failures, and some who feel safer online. There are likely to be many who have established themselves and will continue their places in retail, using our city spaces for their intended purpose, continuing to trade in the quality and craftsmanship which built these cities in the first place.

We, in the North, were the powerhouse of manufacturing and export. We, as a Nation, allowed ourselves to be overtaken by other economies who were not plagued by escalating costs, so that now we import almost everything from China and other similar nations. It's time to take back our manufacturing capacity -and we do this by getting creative. This will be a showcase for grass-roots creativity, which otherwise isn't likely to be noticed. Sadly, a creative maker on the physical, hands-on side of things isn't generally the one with online marketing skills. This would be a way of generating initial interest and probably linking skills so that fertile partnerships develop.

The idea, then, is as far as I can see, a way of beginning to solve a whole raft of problems both social and economic which were pending before, but have now begun to emerge, from the extended lockdowns precipitated by the emergent Covid virus. This is a golden opportunity to reset our retail economy so that it serves our social, creative, and economic needs. We have left the shelter of the European Union, our exports have been affected and our service sector will be affected also. Many adaptations will need to happen before we can establish a general prosperity and begin to employ that section of our society which is so badly "left behind".

We could be the top shopping destination for shoppers from all over Europe . Better than Bangkok. and we could do it using our own manufacturers. This is the way the textile trade started which built all our wonderful Northern Cities in the first place. Although I'm sure that a ruined Leeds would look just as good as a ruined Florence or Rome (we nicked their ideas, after all), I should hate to see it.

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ID: 2201-11 - Category: City Centres

**Building Opportunities- Fixing the problem and making an opportunity of it.**

The pandemic has highlighted the unity of the U.K. with the clapping for the N.H.S. , food shopping and deliveries to the housebound, Captain Tom and numerous charitable acts which kept our spirits up. At the same time disunity was reflected in the different rulings which confused and did indeed lead many to agree that devolution in this case had been "a disaster".

Longer term problems have been side-lined: the ongoing housing crisis, youth unemployment, climate and greening commitments.

Now is the perfect time to bring all this together and unite The U.K. in building 7 new towns -carbon free, broadband infrastructure using renewable energy sources. Four to be built in England and one each in Scotland, Wales and N. Ireland.

The integrated housing would be 60% private owned and 40% social housing all built to the same standard using the latest energy saving techniques. This would avoid the issue of builders erecting virtual ghettos after tendering for contracts parliament by this time, hopefully, having already banned the use of non-disclosure agreements in the industry.

New estates could be gated and staffed by security employed from within the community ensuring only non petrol/diesel cars ,vans and lorries are admitted whilst making people feel safe. Shops, leisure, power, gardening, security and roads can all be managed internally giving real meaning to the word devolution. The hope is that these new towns would inspire many other cities and towns to look and take action on their own infrastructures.

These developments would give strong credibility to the The United Kingdom's assertion of it's Green credentials going into the Carbis Bay G7 meeting in June and the U.N. Climate Change Conference (Cop 26) in Glasgow come November.

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ID: 1112-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Buses repurposed as mobile vaccination centres for remote communities**

The problem is that remote communities are unable to reach vaccination centres safely as these tend to be located in large towns and cities often a number of hours drive away. To tackle this problem, I suggest using buses that are not required due to lockdown and repurposing these to become mobile vaccination centres. They can then drive around remote communities and reach vulnerable members of the public without them having to travel to a large vaccination centre in towns and cities which might put them at risk.

ID: 454-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Plastic lockdown**

I appreciate this is hardly a new topic but it is one that appals me every time I shop at a supermarket. For years now I have been forced unwillingly to be one of the planet's polluters. There has been enough coverage of the problem for us all to know the devastating environmental impact of plastic.

Over the years I have tried to "do my bit" by writing to those at the top of my particular supermarket; packaging up my single use plastic to illustrate just how much waste two pensioners create in one month. The response has always been lame.

We are a wonderful country whose scientists have produced a life saving vaccine in nine months. Surely, with a dedicated will, the supermarkets should be able to get on top of this problem. They have all benefitted financially from lockdown. Now is the time for them to put something back - and if not spontaneously and willingly, with a helpful push from Government who should not be satisfied to think that increasing the charge on carrier bags by 5p is the answer to all the ills created by plastic.

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ID: 399-11 - Category: City Centres

### **The Open Office**

Is there an alternative to the insular lifestyle that is being foisted upon us by the global giants who want to sell technology that locks us inside our homes with the likes of data streaming, home banking and the internet. Sales Tax is one way to restore the fortunes of the High St. where transactions (and returns) are face-to-face. Replace commercial rates with Sales Tax, the revenue going to the local authority. Sales Tax for all online sales would include a component for the increased carbon footprint and be at least 5% higher. Local authorities can set their own tax levels - big cities with the big shops maybe at a reduced level.

We already have libraries and internet cafes - perhaps using such a blueprint the commercial properties in our towns and cities left empty because of the pandemic, could be refurbished into "Open Offices" where employees, students, men & women and the unemployed can make use of the WiFi facilities already installed (screened off with clear perspex for privacy/security/infection control). Open them up; install dumb PC's (ie no games); provide

cafes and clean toilets. Migrate the Job Centres there where people can sign on and enroll to perform meaningful tasks while waiting for a job to turn up.

"Working from home" doesn't have to mean staying at home: it could be going to the nearest "Open Office" using local public transport instead of commuting halfway across the country. Kids can do school work / homework in a secure environment without the need for schools/parents to provide the expensive technology. The many benefits include: getting out of the house, reduced pollution, increased social interaction, business opportunities for local cafe operators (ie not Starbucks), avoid the problems associated with "lone working" and insurance overheads. Will it catch on? Just cast your mind back to pre-lockdown days when the restaurants of the big stores were filled with multitudes of people enjoying lunch together. Such a non-affiliated restaurant facility could find a niche inside the "Open Office" and make a profit.

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ID: 389-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Transportation of products to and from Europe.**

The sight of thousands of lorries at Manston airport and on the M20, snaking it's way through Kent, with their drivers having to wait for a clear Covid test before being allowed on to the cross channel ferries just before Christmas and Brexit was reminiscent of the escape of the British expeditionary force at Dunkirk.

My response would be to develop infrastructure to accommodate the movement of all goods being imported or exported to and from the UK be containerised and moved by rail through the channel tunnel, preferably at night, to and from hubs at various locations around the UK. This would relieve the traffic on Britain's roads and the damage to the surface caused by the heavy lorries, saving cost of repair. It would avoid the movement of thousands of drivers who could be harbouring the virus. It would save the cost of policing the build up of traffic, the cost of the removal of litter left behind and the cost of the Covid test itself (only a handful of Covid tests to those driving the trains). All paperwork could be handled at the hubs making the movement of goods far speedier. I am sure, in this world of "just in time delivery", that transportation times and costs could be cut significantly.

British firms would benefit from infrastructure projects to construct the hubs bringing about new construction job opportunities too. The fields used to construct lorry parks could be

returned to farmland. Gone would be the danger of getting tangled up with overseas lorries in accidents on our roads as the railways have proved far more safer. If we are to embrace self driving electric cars of the future surely it would be safer and more popular if we were to remove as many HGVs as possible from the roads.

We would also benefit greatly by avoiding the emissions caused by the current fleet of vehicles as it would be electricity driving the trains instead. This would surely contribute greatly to our reduction in emissions target. Smaller and less invasive, possibly even electric, delivery vehicles could then distribute from these hubs.

We already live in a containerised world with massive container ships moving the worlds goods so why not use our electrified rail system to do the same?

Kent plays host to most of the "roll on roll off" freight for the United Kingdom and it seems only right and proper to share this with hubs throughout the country.

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ID: 266-11 - Category: City Centres

### **The UK's Industrial Estates Solar Power Grid!**

It's SHOCKING that driving on the A14 around Cambridge you see vast acres of PRIME Grade 1 land covered in...solar panels instead of growing crops!

The answer is not to use prime land or any fields for that matter, to set up solar panel farms but to use a huge existing available resource...the roofs of all the warehouses and industrial buildings in the UK!

The government provides 100% right down of the costs in Year 1 to all companies adding solar panels to their roofs. All companies must comply within 5 years. The companies benefit from the free electricity and the excess production goes into the grid. Imagine if EVERY warehouse roof in the UK had solar panels! Imagine the quantity of FREE electricity that it would produce! And because they are fitted on these roof they are not unsightly!

Even in winter, cumulatively the amount of free energy would still have a significant production impact and positive environmental impact. It's staggering to see the opportunity is staring us all in the face. It's a win, win - a win for businesses, a win for consumers and win for the environment!

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ID: 50-11 - Category: City Centres

**With the right approach, Britain's railways can come out of the pandemic stronger**

This potential for increased efficiency on the railway will not be realised without action from policymakers and railway managers to capitalise on it and adapt to the new situation.

As the shape of the new daily demand curve emerges in the years following the pandemic, the timetable should be rebuilt around it. As this happens, managers should be on the lookout for efficiencies related to an expected reduction in demand at peak time.

These may take some time to emerge and are likely to be related to asset renewal, such as purchasing a new fleet of trains or designing a piece of infrastructure.

Expected gains in efficiency from the reduced peak should be used to reduce fares, which will help drive demand and fill trains at other times. Passengers would of course directly benefit from a lower cost of travel.

Existing proposals for ticketing reform, offering flexible season tickets for employees who may not commute every day with new temporary home-working, should also be taken forward. This will require coordination between the industry and government, which regulates many fares.

A permanent change in the shape of the daily demand curve does not necessarily mean permanently lower passenger numbers overall.

Passenger numbers have continuously increased sharply since the 1990s despite the concurrent growth of home working, mostly off the back of leisure passengers in the off-peak offsetting lower growth in commuting.

For context, a cut in passenger numbers to, for example, 84% of pre-pandemic levels (from 426 million passenger journeys in a quarter to 385 journeys) would actually only represent a cut to the level of journeys found 2013, according to statistics from the Office for Rail Regulation. While this would present a challenge, it is not the apocalypse.

Rail passenger levels will probably be somewhat lower immediately post-pandemic thanks to reduced peak time commuter travel, but the potential for steady passenger growth at other times of day will still be there and with the above approach, passenger levels can soon exceed pre-pandemic levels.

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ID: 203-11 - Category: City Centres

**Making house prices affordable; the key is reversing residents fear of change.**

Making house prices and rents once again affordable needs local residents to support more housing. Is there a solution so existing communities welcome new families and reverse existing residents fear of change in their neighbourhood? History has some useful lessons from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Landed estates, whether in urban or rural areas took generations to notice that beauty and popular appeal both need to be understood and carefully nurtured. Acting as long term investors, not short term traders they became wealthy by consistently following tried and tested estate management principles. The core of these principles is simple: follow the market. The clues are what re-sells well, what sort of places connect with popular appeal? Doing so works well for investors. Simply it creates wealth for the suppliers.

What went wrong in the twentieth century? The planning system was broken. Local residents see the quality of so much new housing and turn their backs. They are disillusioned and express their anger by forming local groups to oppose every project for a thousand reasons. Local councillors, who wanted the coalition government (2010/2015) to give them control of local housing supply found they had in fact taken over a land supply issue with a lot of pitfalls. The result was predictable. Housing supply has fallen; quality has not improved, residents are angrier than ever and their children cannot afford to buy whilst rents creep upwards. A growing number of the young are alienated as they realise they cannot have what their parents took for granted, a home of their own.

In 2012 spatial housing policy was devolved to local authorities. Councillors and residents thought they would now control where and when new housing was built. Believers in unfettered open markets expected when the first Calls for Sites went live six or seven years ago the result would bring forward the right sites at the right times. This is what markets free of intervention are supposed to do. Others with market experience knew land owners would act in their own commercial interest. Planners were left with the task of building a housing land supply policy for their local plans out of a mixed bag of good, bad and unrealistic sites. Planning controls cannot turn poorly located, badly served sites into places where people want to live. Some councils began to think the alternative was new settlements and urban extensions, which is sensible if councils have the insights on location and timing that landed estates have acquired to look far ahead. Few councils have these skills and the hard earned expertise that is needed. One local council endorsed a new community for more than 10,000 homes promoted by the owners without first undertaking a survey of their entire travel to work catchment area to confirm it was the most sustainable option.

The lesson of failure is that local plans, and planning control powers alone cannot prevent new housing which local residents dislike being built. The 2012 devolution of power to unprepared local councils has made a bad supply situation worse. The way forward is for councils to take back spatial control of their areas. Land for large scale new housing development must first pass into the ownership of local councils. Local authorities must be motivated across the political divide locally and across local council boundaries spatially to take on the mantle of the landed estates. Currently they lack the expertise. Funding will be easier, if far sighted long term land purchase policies are adopted as valuers will point out that hope value for higher value uses remains low ten or twenty years into the future.

Landed estates needed generations to put themselves into the wealth league without the powers of planning control. Councils with planning control powers and ownership of the building land will be in a position to fast track the delivery of new housing sites, with land sales

following a master plan. Milton Keynes is one example of an authority with a long term land control policy. The Crown Estate is another example of a 'private sector' which also seeks to act in the public interest.

Some will say allowing local councils to take back control of the building land in their areas by councils direct intervention in the market for housing land will distort the market. The other view is that the current system allows land owners and their partners to act as an oligopoly that takes advantage of a broken system. Provided that all land is acquired at its full open market value, inclusive of hope value if it exists, accusations that an asset is being confiscated are avoided. A policy decision to offer compensation above existing compulsory purchase rates would also go far to block opposition from this direction.

Giving and supporting local councils in high demand areas with these new powers will enable them, once they have understood their new responsibilities to block the release of housing on weak sites, and will enable them to adopt shrewd long term land supply policies which return the added value to their local communities. Massive added value follows planning consent.

The white paper, Planning for the Future published in August is the obvious starting point for introducing a policy which encourages councils to take control of their own destinies, and work with their residents to understand that when the current cycle of local plans expires in ten or fifteen years new long term land supply policies will take effect. It has taken four decades to undermine the foundations of the housing land supply market. It will take one or two decades to rebuild it in a community led long term consensual way.

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ID: 1101-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Build much-needed social housing in place of ailing shopping malls**

Covid-19 has fuelled the online ecommerce market to the point that many high street shops no longer require a physical presence. Early evidence suggests that this trend is here to stay. In light of this, I propose that brownfield shopping sites are repurposed to make space for much-needed social housing. Social housing projects of this scale require large government funding and can create thousands of jobs as well as meet social housing needs.

Ultimately, it could significantly reduce homelessness and rapidly reduce poverty amongst families currently living in the private rented sector. It would deliver substantial economic benefits across the country, and unlock productivity improvements across the homebuilding

sector. Given the pressures facing the housing market, it is also the only route to reaching the government's target of building 300,000 homes per year.

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ID: 786-11 - Category: City Centres

### **A new model for taxation of the private motor car**

To build on the opportunity outlined in 1b above the government should consider a variable system of taxation for private motor cars.

Rather than taxation based on a vehicle tax, taxation should be based on the miles traveled and the nature of the journey. For example variable tax rates per mile could be applied with a disproportionately higher tax rate for the initial miles travelled to encourage reduced use of private motor cars for short journeys, which can easily be replaced with walking or cycling. Similarly variable tax rates could be used in different locations with higher rates applying in congested urban areas or areas of outstanding natural beauty.

Government should provide seed capital to develop this idea within the uk tech sector. Combinations of digital payment systems, GPS and other existing technologies can provide a tech solution to be adopted by car manufacturers. Retro fitting would also be possible.

Penalty notices should be incorporated into the system to encourage greater adherence to speed limits (i.e. the payment rate increases further if travelling over the speed limit). In addition to improved road safety the use of more 20mph speed restrictions would enable certain lanes and streets to become areas for primarily leisure and recreation activities by reducing the dominance of the private motor car.

It is noticeable how changes of behaviour can be encouraged through making the user aware of the cost of the activity through 'real time' charging. This has been shown through smart meters and the plastic bag tax.

Taxation of fuel reduces the use of private motor cars to some extent but it doesn't specifically target usage for short journeys which should be replaced by walking/cycling.

Whilst uptake of electric vehicles will reduce emissions, congestion and the dominance of the private motor car in our residential streets and lanes still needs to be addressed.

There is a tremendous opportunity to explore this concept further building on some of the positive changes in behaviours brought about by the pandemic.

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ID: 226-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Reinventing our high streets post Covid-19**

Britain's high streets have been in decline since before Covid-19 as a result of a number of factors, not least the rise of online shopping, focus on out of town shopping, stifling business rates etc. This trend of decline has been significantly accelerated by Covid-19 and this competition entry puts forth a series of proposals in order to reinvent our high streets for the 2020s and beyond. High streets are typically managed by local councils with varying degrees of success. Although there are examples of successful high streets across the country, the vast majority of Britain's high streets are, in 2021, overrun with empty shops and in a perennial state of decline. The stark reality is that people only visit high streets (or shops in general) for the following reasons:

- To partake in activities they are unable to do online (eg eating/drinking whilst socialising, haircuts, etc);

- For convenience (eg buying a pint of milk due to an urgent requirement, popping out for a sandwich during one's lunch hour);

- For unique purchases or experiences not available online (eg independent shops selling handmade products only available in store);

- In certain circumstances, for financially significant consumer purchases that require a level of interaction either with the product or the service (eg buying a sofa, new car etc).

Consequently, trying to compete directly with online retail is only going to result in one winner – and it is not the high street shop. Local councils have been left too long to mismanage high streets and are failing to realise the reality of the situation. Action must be taken centrally in order to address this. This proposal sets out below the following initiatives for addressing this:

- Encourage conversion of empty buildings peripheral to main high streets to residential premises by immediately relaxing change of use planning permissions. This will result in more people living within walking distance of the high street which will have numerous benefits, including increased footfall for convenience purposes and socialising, reduced traffic (as those using the high street will be within walking distance), and reducing Britain's housing shortage as a byproduct. This proposal envisages our town centres moving towards mixed use residential/leisure/retail/office space peripheral to the main high street, with a mostly-retail/leisure concentrated town centre high street, and may even go so far as repurposing tired old purpose built shopping centres to become residential or mixed use properties;

- Encouraging service sector/office based businesses to relocate to the high street by offering zero business rates/business rates incentives for taking over empty retail or other high street premises and improved planning permissions. High streets are generally visited during weekends; in order for a high street to thrive, it needs to be in use during normal working hours, and the only way to ensure this is to have large numbers of people working in the vicinity, who will then use the high street shops for convenience or essential purchases;

- Encourage independent businesses (eg cafes, restaurants, pubs and shops) to locate to empty retail units. This can be through relaxing change of use planning permissions (allowing conversion of empty shops to cafes or pubs, and vice versa) and reforming business rates (for example so that retail businesses with two or fewer physical premises and/or turnover below £1 million are exempt from business rates).

This proposal is intended to be largely self financing, through the additional economic activity that it will create. However, balancing the books must be considered at the national level and that may require a more holistic view to be taken (eg loss of business rates for local councils must be refunded elsewhere centrally). To the extent additional funding is required, this should be by additional taxes on larger more profitable out of town retailers and/or additional taxes on online retailers.

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ID: 225-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Reducing CO2 emissions with sustainable, home grown biofuel**

Reducing CO2 emissions with sustainable, home grown biofuel

Drax Power Station in Yorkshire, currently generates 6% of the all U.K. electricity from biomass in the form of wood pellets. More than 5 million tonnes, is imported annually, from the USA and Canada. Shipping this quantity of wood pellets across the Atlantic, in a continuous stream in bulk carriers, is simply not sustainable. We could and should be, producing our own biomass here in the U.K. and ensuring that it is truly carbon neutral.

I propose the planting the equivalent of a New 21st Century Forest, to produce this biomass. This new forest would not be a conventional one in a specific place, rather spread out across the country. The trees planted, would not replace the conventional conifers planted in upland areas, but be native species including willow, which is fast growing and can be planted in poor quality flood plain areas, alongside rivers and streams. Willow grows 60cm a year and could be

harvested as a biofuel crop, every five or six years. The willow being pollarded, the stumps remaining to regenerate themselves. Done in rotation, there would always be sufficient cover for wildlife to flourish.

Government subsidies would encourage farmers, with methane emitting beef cattle, to reduce their herds and replant some of their less productive land with biofuel crops. This new bio crop industry would generate new jobs here in the UK and help ensure we meet our our target to reduce CO2 emissions.

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ID: 3034-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Why Is Nobody Doing Anything To Stop Our Towns and Villages Being Destroyed?**

One of the features that makes the UK such an amazing place to live is the number and variety of small and midsize towns and villages. Many of these are steeped in history, beautiful to behold and are pretty much perfect just as they are.

Now however the requirement for additional homes and the indifference of the majority of developers to anything other than profit, means that the essence of what made most of these towns so quintessentially British, is being annihilated as every last inch of land in and around most towns is developed. The roads are overloaded, moving from one part of a town to another with no planned ring road is choking the towns not only with traffic jams but fumes as well. The lack of additional schools, hospitals, social areas or access to shops without using a car, are all having a detrimental effect on living within almost any town one knows. However since much of this is happening a couple of houses here, a few hundred there and over years little opposition is mounted nationally to the overall damage that is occurring and as a result no large scale alternatives are floated for discussion.

Now, as we look towards more sustainable environments, is the moment to look again at the bigger picture. How can we best supply the thousands of high quality, affordable, environmentally friendly homes that the nation needs? The answer is not to keep shovelling more and more homes around the edges of existing towns.

Expandable Towns And Cities Are The Sustainable Option Of The Future

Many of the geological features that made the locations of our historic towns so idea are no

longer the idea features of a modern town. We know longer have to worry about fording a river, looking out for attacking tribes, or being on an existing trade route. The issues that effect us today are very different and so new plans and indeed new towns and cities are required to answer todays issues not least to avoid the destruction of our existing towns.

Scaleable towns come cities need to be conceived. Ones that work perfectly not only as small, mid and large towns but also as they transition from one size to the next. These might be circular, with ring roads planned outside ring roads to cope with expansion, school locations allocated ready for each stage of growth, green spaces left undisturbed to connect each area with the next and act as corridors for wildlife, shops and social spaces always only a short cycle away and a multitude of employment options situated where most appropriate.

Planning new towns would allow not only the very best social and town planning to be included but also the most sustainable homes and buildings to be built. Perhaps all buildings could have south facing roofs made entirely of solar panels. They might not be carbon neutral, but actually carbon negative, achieved by supplying electricity back to the grid to assist neutralising the need for the production of non eco power. Competitions could be organised to allow the best and brightest designers and architects to provide inspiration and innovation for both a wide range of homes, the planning of expanding towns, sustainable environments and economic opportunities. The best ideas and people could then be pulled together to finalise a vision.

These towns would be designed not only as beautiful places to live, but also as economic entities in their own rights ready to power the careers of the future. With the correct allocation of affordable housing the young would not have to move away but gradually progress from smaller properties to grander options as their careers allowed.

Unfortunately bold action is what is needed, and to be frank, this is no doubt why this has not be undertaken before. New locations for these town need to be found and yes every site that is considered will be extremely controversial. However there comes a time when everyone needs to look into the future and consider what our towns might look like in thirty or forty years time. We need thousands and thousands of new homes and most of these are now being built on green fields on the outskirts of our existing towns. Surrounding villages are being swallowed up with no real foresight. This is not a problem that can be answered by local planning departments, it is government that needs to step forward and visualise this brave new world. Choosing a new location will not mean more green belt agricultural land is used, it is already being used. New towns have the potential to be so much greener that current developments and far better to live in.

Who would build and fund these new towns you might be asking. Well that would depend on how bold the government wanted to be. It could simply be build as most existing expansions are by developers who earn close to 50% profit on everything they build. Or the government could build the towns itself which would allow the homes to be more affordable while still making a profit to help pay for the schools, hospitals and many other buildings which would otherwise be government funded. A compromise could be that the companies that would otherwise make billions from this scheme agree a far more realistic profit cap with additional income from house sales going to the government to help it fund the infrastructure, the options are in fact endless.

Expandable towns are needed but they will only become reality if there is an expansion of vision, foresight and determination by those able to make them reality.

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ID: 1942-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Local repair centres for broken machines and appliances on every high street in the UK.**

This proposal could provide jobs and training for many of the people who have lost their jobs during the pandemic, and would also utilise many of the shop premises which have become vacant due to businesses failing. Moreover, the huge success of the BBC's The Repair Shop, suggests it would also prove popular with the public, whilst at the same time bringing new life and footfall to Britain's declining high streets and town centres.

The Problem: What do you do when the small machines and appliances that you use in your home break down? (Think toasters, microwaves, shredders, computer printers.) If you cannot find a local firm who will repair it for you, you may have to post it off to the manufacturer at great expense, or travel many miles to take it to a repair centre, if one is available. The alternative is to throw it out and replace it, even if the problem could be quite simply fixed, given the right expertise and components. This is not only frustrating for the owner, it is not environmentally friendly, adding yet more items to waste tips, and wasting precious components and materials which could usefully be recycled. It also affects the least well-off most: the elderly, those who cannot afford huge repair bills or postage costs, and those who do not have a car.

The Opportunity: One result of Covid is the huge number of people who have lost their jobs, who tend to be those who are younger and less well-qualified. Another result has been the large number of former shop premises now lying empty, particularly in high streets and town centres, after the shops have been forced to close. Now imagine this. In every high street and every town centre throughout the country, there is a place where local people can take their broken appliances to be mended, or if unrepairable, buy reconditioned models at a price they can afford. Imagine these workshops staffed by a team of people who have been trained in the specialist skills needed to repair the appliances. Priority could be given to providing jobs for the unemployed, the disabled, the homeless, who could be trained by experts, possibly in the form of an apprenticeship.

I believe that centres such as these, as well as utilising empty property and providing jobs for the unemployed, would also be extremely popular with members of the public, who would appreciate the convenience of one location to take all their broken appliances to, near to their home, which was also an environmentally friendly option. Where larger premises are available, the scheme could be extended to include bigger items such as bicycles and small pieces of furniture.

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ID: 1385-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Reducing hard surfaces such as tarmac and block paving in our urban and suburban areas**

The UK is currently blighted by a burgeoning of hard and intractable surfaces, tarmac and block paving in particular. Not only is this sterile and dispiriting to look at, but it is increasing the likelihood of flooding by allowing rain nowhere to run off to. There is also no doubt that the sight of trees, plants, grass and hedges and the animal life they attract is good for our mental and spiritual health. It is especially important that children grow up seeing as much of the natural world as possible.

In order to replenish our urban environment I suggest we look at our front gardens. There are many medium-sized houses, for example the millions of semi-detached homes built in the mid twentieth century, which in recent years have lost their front gardens to hard surfaces for parking. More and more often front gardens are completely done away with so that not a single blade of grass, not a weed or ant can thrive. Landlords of shared rented housing are particularly guilty of this kind of ruthless devastation.

I would like the preservation of the British front garden to be incentivised. Local councils should reduce council tax by 5% for a period of ten years for houses where at least 60% of the front garden has been returned to a natural state. Conversely, council tax should be increased by 5% for ten years for houses where more than 40% of the front garden has been paved over. In each case the ten year rule would apply even if the house is sold within that time.

To incentivise this innovation further, there should be a government allocation of funds so that householders can apply for financial assistance of up to £1000 for the purpose of restoring their front gardens. Evidence would of course need to be provided.

I'm not thinking here about promoting front gardens that are excessively manicured, prim or municipal in appearance, but simply green spaces in any style that have trees, hedges, grass, flowers – all of them drinking in carbon dioxide and pouring forth oxygen.

These innovations should apply only to front spaces that are above a certain specified size, big enough to park a car.

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ID: 220-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Friendship Apartments**

Friendship Apartments.

Purpose built apartments for one or two people, featuring an open plan living, dining and cooking space leading onto a generous balcony, with a single en-suite bedroom. Meeting areas on all floors, with communal gardens including rentable vegetable plots. The top floor is open to all residents to come together to socialise and enjoy the roof garden.

Tenure rented. Financial model based on servicing a 50 year PWLB fixed rate loan which means rents will be able to be offered at about 80% of market value. Offered initially to local people who are over 55 years young. The intention is that the target tenants then rent out their own larger homes which helps creates the family homes in the areas we most need them. The tenants thus retain their capital asset and it provides them with more than enough income to pay the rent at the Friendship Apartment.

Tenants can buy additional services such as meals, housekeeping, laundry etc.

The apartments should be built in or near the centre of towns which allows the tenants direct access to health services, shopping and entertainment.

None of the above is totally new thinking and many projects around retired living have been tried. The difference with this idea is that the residents continue to own their own home which is the singular main reason why the elderly cling on to their homes. They feel a duty to keep it and maintain it so that they can pass it on to their children. The enormous benefit to them is creating a community in which they can live and interact with people, thus reducing the isolation we have witnessed during the pandemic. Increasing their well-being in this way will inevitably lead to a reduction in the cost of care for this growing sector of the community.

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ID: 1752-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Delivering a localised approach to policy delivery**

The Covid pandemic has demonstrated the need for a more localised approach to delivering policies. There have been many examples during the last ten months of situations where local delivery has been shown to be highly effective in addressing specific issues.

One example is the track and trace system. The national system never really effectively took off and was dogged by issues. However, there are examples of how rudimentary and basic local track and trace initiatives have worked effectively. One of these was in July 2020: following the reopening of pubs, a landlady in Somerset kept a list of all customers and their telephone numbers and was able to contact them when another customer informed her that they had tested positive for Covid-19, a simple system that worked effectively.

The devastating economic impact to the local economy could be minimised by adopting a more

local approach, for example, keeping open those local businesses that strictly adhere to Covid restrictions. One way of doing this could be the increased use of local council enforcement officers, such as Trading Standards or Environmental Health, who could inspect and enable compliant businesses to continue to trade while shutting down those who are breaking the rules. An initiative like this would enable small businesses that do not attract large numbers of customers in groups or crowds, and which can control the flow of customers by appointment systems, to continue to trade. Dental practices continue to work successfully like this, and so could many businesses that are closed under the present system, like hairdressers, beauticians, bookshops, picture framers, printing and copying services.

The NHS Covid App allows users to “sign in” by scanning the QR code of the shop or service that they are attending or using. If all shoppers and service users were required to “sign in”, literally or using the NHS App, then real-time sharing of the data with local public health and District Councils would inform and enable a much more responsive local track and trace capability.

Another example of a poor delivery of a central government policy, combined with the award of national contracts without a robust and fair tendering process, was the sourcing and delivery of free school meals. This was outsourced to a large company for delivery across England; the result was poor quality, unappetising and nutritionally inadequate food delivered to those in society who at this time most need fit-for-purpose nutrition. A more localised approach, using local business and supply chains, including locally sourced produce, could, in this instance, have led to better quality and more nutritional food being delivered to those who needed it, together with opportunities for local businesses and the development of local stakeholder relationships. Local knowledge and the involvement of local voluntary and statutory agencies could have ensured a targeted approach to reaching those in need.

Local targeted delivery and provision ensure that resources are allocated effectively. There is a gap between policy theory “at the centre” and the delivery of services at ground level, and the intended policy becomes divorced from the reality at local level. Problems and solutions emerge together, not one after the other; policy needs to be more immediately reactive, whereas a more centralised approach can be slow to react, thus reducing the effectiveness of the intended

policy. Local areas are different, some rural, some urban, some with high ethnic minority populations, some with elderly populations all with different access to local amenities and transport links, unemployment levels and health requirements to name a few, and a national centralised approach can mean that policy becomes ‘lost in translation’, with the effects taking time to be seen and materialise. Policies rarely achieve success on their own but are interlinked with other policies which may be easier, and more efficient to deliver at local level. There is more propensity, capacity and capability for joined up thinking and delivery at local level than at national level – so government should capitalise on that, and trust local organisations to serve their communities effectively.

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ID: 1052-11 - Category: City Centres

**A Structure for the Rail Industry to provide an integrated service of excellence.**

Proposal for The Restructure of the Rail Network

1. Reasons for Failure of the current arrangements.

There are 24 companies providing Rail and associated business services.

Railtrack, the organisation with responsibility for managing the network of rail and track facilities has been taken back into public management to prevent further deterioration.

The catalogue of “Franchise” failures and changes since Privatisation proves Government’s and the Private Sector’s inability to establish a Rail Network fit for purpose.

Privatisation caused fragmentation and dysfunction. Private sector opportunism disregarded the need to create services for travellers and business communities, and minimised investment while increasing fares for Passengers and Freight.

Each Franchise or Contract performed as a separate entity. There was minimal attention to planning or promoting integrated growth and no recognition of the multiplicity of separate needs facing the incredibly complex organism that is the Rail Industry.

## 2. Capitalising on Recognising a Problem.

The change to commuting as a result of COVID-19 and the suspension and projected review of contracting methods, provides a unique opportunity to revolutionise Rail services. “The Government initially suspended rail franchising in order to maintain service, as passenger demand fell due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On 21 September 2020 the rail franchising policy was permanently abolished. Emergency arrangements remain until Government legislates for a replacement to the system”.

(Comment from the Department of Transport).

Now is the time to restructure the framework to provide an outstanding Rail Network fit for the present and future needs of this country.

## 3. What is needed?

A) A New Overarching Managing Company to ensure the integrity of a de-nationalised organisation, with the implicit and sole intention of managing the Rail Industry on behalf of Parliament and the country. This company will ensure that the Rail Industry, however it is contracted, has a conduit between the Secretary of State, (sic Govt Policy) and the companies contracted to run the systems.

B) A Redefined Railtrack is the heart of the rail industry. To honour de-nationalisation, responsibility for the Network should be managed through a Company linked with the Federation of Companies proposed.

C) A Federation of Rail Industry Boards would ensure that every contracted section of the Industry would be coordinated. Each Company would retain and operate under the integrity of its own Terms of Reference whilst ensuring that it remained part of a bigger operation

“Federation is the coexistence of independent companies with a shared vision and at the end of the day, to a large extent a common Profit & Loss” (Definition).

## Organisation

### A) The Management Company

1. The Secretary of State would have political responsibility for this company and appoint a Chairman answerable to his or her department.

2. The directors of the company would to be appointed from members of the contracted Companies including Railtrack and include a representative from the Department of Transport.

3. This company would exist to

a. ensure dialogue between all those responsible for providing an effective Rail Network within the Government's declared policy for the Rail Industry.

b. identify of the needs of the users (paramount).

c. integrate the services dependent on crossing and using multiple miles of Railtrack which requires understanding multiple commercial plans.

4. The role of the Main Company Board must be accepted by the leaders of the companies contracted for their operation. Terms of Reference/Articles of Association should reflect this.

5. The Secretary of State and the Chairman of the Board will be responsible for establishing and agreeing the requirements determined by Government and their delivery.

#### 6. Board Membership

Chairman Director of Finance Director of Public Affairs Representatives from Dept of Secretary of State Director of Health and Safety Director of HR The Chairs of Boards of every Federated Company, and/or their Chief Executives and Finance Directors. (Minimum 1 Representative for each company)

#### B) A Redefined Railtrack.

The Terms of Reference and the relationship with the Department of Transport will need careful planning and drafting. Its relationship with all "Federated Companies" is critical.

### C) Federation of Rail Industry Boards.

A Federation would ensure that every contracted section of the industry would work for the whole structure. Each company would retain and operate under the integrity of its own Terms of Reference but remain part of a bigger operation.

Representatives on the “main board” from the franchised companies will ensure that government determined requirements are achievable within their own company. Each company will be required to resolve differences of opinion and objectives, mindful of the needs of other Companies in the Federation. Federated Companies should be autonomous and answerable to their shareholders, clients and business partners. Their Terms of Reference should acknowledge that their operation is answerable to Parliament and the Community. In addition, they should bring any problems to the main board for resolution so that disruptions, such as those arising in the last few years, are reduced to the minimum.

### The Trade Unions.

Establishing a new relationship with the Unions is vital. Substantial disruption to travellers’ services over a number of years has cost millions of pounds.

Discussions with Unions should introduce an invitation for each Federated Company to have a non-executive Union Board member appointed bi-annually. There should also be a Recognition Agreement with agreed terms of reference as part of the HR operation of each Company.

## 2. Occupational Health and Safety.

About 250,000 staff are employed by the Rail Industry. A Director of OH&S and a support department should be available to advise all companies. This would reduce inconsistencies. The costs should be offset by the reduction of “incidents”.

3. Diversity. The Rail industry has an ethnically diverse workforce. Diversity Targets and supportive procedures should be set and agreed with the Unions.

Anthony Austin CFIPD (Retd)

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ID: 774-11 - Category: City Centres

**A fund for communities to develop community solar or wind orchards, owned as a cooperative**

Large providers are creating large scale solar or wind farms around the UK, but these often do not benefit the local community

The idea is to create a fund of Gov backed loans and grants to allow communities to purchase or lease local land close to a village and install solar panels and possibly small scale wind turbines to create a supply of green electricity directly for the benefit of the community

The orchard would be set up as a cooperative with a board of Directors mostly volunteers (possibly a couple of paid individuals depending upon work load) and shares issued (or at least offered) to every household within the community based on the electoral register or similar, Shares cannot be sold on or given away, if you move away you have to give up your share and if you move into the community you are automatically entitled to a share after a qualifying period. The solar orchard is run as a non profit business with either subsidised electricity or else dividends possibly in the form of discount vouchers for electricity

The grant element would cover the cost of consultants for the appraisal of land and connection to the supply and the technical side of what equipment to buy to suit the particulars of the site

The loan element would cover the initial purchase of the equipment and the professional install to be paid back from the electricity produced

Initially, prior to setting up the fund, the business model would have to be confirmed to ensure that there is sufficient revenue generated and that the model is viable

The idea is to encourage the community to come together to provide Green energy, but this could also allow other small industries within the site such as the use of bee hives, or grazing around the solar panels which are generally elevated on a metal framework

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ID: 749-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Meeting Emissions Targets by Capitalising on Work from home innovations**

Britain has stated it wants to reduce CO2 emissions by 68% by 2030, we can't achieve that without really thinking outside the box. Rush hour traffic contributes significantly to our emissions, but no matter how many taxes or new parking charges we apply, people continue to absorb costs and still use their car to get to work. This is where I think the pandemic has forced our hand, it has shown companies how productive they can be with a large chunk of their workforce working from home. Many companies have sunk a considerable amount of money into facilitating home workers so why let that go to waste. Globally countries have seen decreases as large as 26% because of reduced traffic on the roads.

The pandemic has created an infrastructure that we can now capitalise on. I propose the chance to offer companies incentives in some way to maintain this infrastructure, let more flexible and homeworking become the new norm and force a lot of traffic off the roads and create a healthier environment for everyone.

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ID: 440-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Bicycle transport on buses**

Local rural buses tend to have low passenger numbers (at least in Dorset) and usually a designated space for wheelchairs and buggies. By removing one or two more seats - or replacing them with folding seats as on some trains - bicycle spaces could be provided. A company might test the potential demand by experimenting with one or two designated and well-advertised routes - for example to the nearest cycleway at a weekend, ie. a non-school day. Of course, the idea applies in other contexts, not only rural: cyclists might want to use public transport between towns, taking their bikes to local journeys at each end. Some companies on the Scottish borders (Border Buses, I think) have this facility as do those on some routes in Switzerland, although these carry bikes externally on hooks at the rear.

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ID: 1948-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Repurposing and rethinking housing**

This is an opportunity to reinvigorate the north where homes are plentiful and cheap. They may need upgrading and insulating but that will provide jobs in places where people need them. Let's make sure there is a great broadband connection and fast trains into London for those odd occasions when an office worker does need to go to London.

Let's take the empty office building and convert them to homes or demolish and rebuild homes so those that do need to live in cities can find somewhere affordable. This should reduce destruction of the greenbelt. Let's rethink housing. Pretty much everyone will need a space that can work as a home office and we learned from the pandemic that a garden or green public space nearby is necessary for mental health. This is an opportunity to build houses that are zero carbon emitters. Some of the unused office block spaces could be returned to parkland. We could start to implement the 'everything you need within in a 20 minute walk from your home' idea. For those that want company while they work local offices where home workers can go for company and better facilities and a chance to get out of the house would offer a business opportunity

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ID: 1333-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Bringing the Sale & Purchase of Domestic Property in England into the 21st Century**

The current system of buying & selling property in the UK is an expensive time consuming mess which often only benefits solicitors and surveyors. Covid 19 has made an already frustrating process even slower and less efficient than normal. A large proportion of transactions fail and it's time something was done about it.

These are my suggestions;

- 1) Anyone who wants to sell their property should have to provide an independent survey carried out to accepted standards within a set period of time before the property is listed for sale. This survey would be available to potential purchasers and their mortgage providers. Any buyer would be able to see exactly what they were getting and the mortgage provider would be

able to make an offer of finance based on this document.

The current system slows things down because surveys happen after an offer is accepted. Problems are found, people re-negotiate or withdraw. A mortgage offer can be made more quickly because the survey is part of the sales pack and the mortgage company don't have to send out a surveyor each time (there is currently a three week delay waiting for surveys to be carried out). Each property is surveyed once for each sale instead of multiple times if the property is not sold to the first person who makes an offer. The seller will recoup their costs when the sale happens.

2) When an offer is made the purchaser must demonstrate the money is available to complete the purchase - mortgage offer, cash or investments which can be realised within the time frame.

At the moment buyers can make an offer without really knowing whether they will be able to move to exchange let alone completion. This will ensure everyone can see exactly what the situation is before proceeding.

3) Once an offer has been accepted both parties have entered a contract which is legally binding with penalties if the sale fails.

This is in operation in Scotland and there is no reason it shouldn't happen here. There could be insurance policies if people want to protect themselves against failure, but the aim is to make sure that once an offer is accepted there is no going back except in exceptional circumstances.

4) When the contract to buy/sell is agreed there is a standard time frame in which the sale must be completed. In some situations this may be varied if agreed by both parties, but it is written into the contract and once again there would be penalties if completion doesn't happen.

This is another way to stop people being left in limbo waiting for things to happen. If the money is in place then there is no reason for a lengthy gap between agreeing the sale and completing.

5) Parties could be insured against failure to be able to complete the sale or there could be reasons written into law - loss of income, serious illness, death etc

6) Should stamp duty be paid by the seller rather than the buyer?

I'm not sure about this, but it would probably be a good idea to consider it a part of the

process.

This is a heartfelt plea - we have been trying to sell my mum's house and have fallen victim to someone messing us about at every stage. What started out as an apparently straightforward process has turned into a stressful convoluted series of lurches from hope to despair and it's all so unnecessary.

The government has set about reforming the planning system which is a good thing , but a lot more people buy and sell houses than want planning permission. If this was sorted out there would be a lot of very grateful people in the country, except maybe solicitors and surveyors!

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ID: 1119-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Unused energy resource**

Large car parks at supermarkets and railway stations could be roofed with solar panels instead of wasting valuable food-productive areas of land for 'solar farms'. The areas for car parks have already been concreted over so there would be no loss of land. It would also greatly benefit shoppers and commuters by keeping them dry whilst loading their shopping and walking to and from their vehicles. Some of the resultant profits could be shared between the supermarkets or railway companies as an incentive and the electricity produced could be used to power houses in towns within the immediate vicinity.

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ID: 898-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Encourage Marine Permaculture to Rejuvenate Fishing Communities and Improve Marine Ecology**

Several important challenges which seem to be in competition with each other may be addressed at once. UK coastal towns which have historically relied on fishing have suffered greatly in recent decades, both due to decreasing fish stocks making fishing less profitable, and to the offshoring of the processing of fish.

At the same time over fishing has significantly reduced fish stocks, having a knock on impact on marine ecology. The loss of marine ecology, particularly fish spawning grounds such kelp forests, further reduces the fish stocks.

At the same time we are facing a potentially catastrophic climate change crisis, and despite our

best efforts it seems unlikely we will fully decarbonize our economy in time to prevent the world going past the tipping point.

A further, smaller challenge is that due to the current low oil prices and the near depletion of North Sea oil reserves there is an unprecedented increase in the decommissioning of offshore oil and gas rigs. This is an immense financial burden on the asset owners, and the requirement to remove the foundation removes the artificial reefs that these foundations have become over many years in the sea.

My proposal is that government policy is put in place to fast track licensing and encourage the development of large scale offshore marine permaculture. Marine Permaculture is the growing of large scale seaweed forests, with a wide variety of benefits. In deep sea areas the kelp can be grown from seeded nets anchored to at a depth of 10m-15m, supported by the pumping of cold, nutrient rich water from deep sea areas.

Kelp/seaweed forests grow extremely quickly and can be harvested for use for human consumption and animal feed. When used as animal feed it will have a significantly lower carbon footprint than soy (the most used animal feed which the leading cause deforestation of the Amazon). The seaweed/kelp will need to be harvested using ships (similar to fishing vessels) and will need onshore processing to be suitable for its end use. Kelp forests create sheltered, nutrient rich spaces which are exceptional fish spawning and developing areas.

This combination of kelp for consumption and as a fish spawning ground has the potential to introduce a huge new industry to historic fishing communities, whilst also making fishing more profitable by increasing fish stocks.

The secondary benefit of growing kelp is that it draws down large quantities of carbon whilst growing, with each dry ton of kelp sequestering a ton of carbon. Although the carbon in the kelp used for consumption will remain in the system, excess kelp which falls from the kelp forest will drop to the sea bed, with the carbon being stored in deep sea areas (and therefore being

removed from the carbon cycle for the mid to near future).

The extension of this, is that large scale offshore kelp farming would require power supply and pipelines to draw cold, nutrient rich water from deep sea areas, and would benefit for offshore bases for operations. This is where the use of offshore oil and gas platforms could become useful. If the existing top sides are decommissioned and replaced with lighter, smaller platforms, supporting accommodation and small renewable energy set-ups, the life time of the subsea structures can be extended (due to lower loading) and the required power supply for pumping can be created.

The use of kelp for feed, the growing of kelp from midwater platforms, the reuse of oil and gas structures and the use of marine protected areas (especially kelp forests) for rejuvenating fish stocks is all accepted science or in practice elsewhere in the world.

In terms of policy, it would require the joined up legislation to support licensing of the reuse of large areas of the north sea (and associated interface with other north sea users), the licensing for pumping cold nutrient rich water to the surface (which is a natural process being reduced by warming seas), the licensing to permit Oil and Gas companies to leave assets in the water even if no longer pumping fossil fuels (not currently legal) and the seed money to spearhead commercial trials to minimise the delay in the starting of a new industry.

Despite the challenges, if the funding and support is considered by for a range of benefits - including mitigating climate change and bio diversity, improving UK food security, rejuvenating fishing communities and reducing the financial burden UK north sea Oil and Gas companies - then this could be an excellent opportunity for the UK.

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ID: 798-11 - Category: City Centres

### **Revive Retail, Simply!**

Retail is dying because both of lockdown and the natural evolution of retail.

Lockdown has hastened the fact that people are moving to shopping online, and increasingly shops are closing both on the High Street and even in villages and secondary shopping places.

My idea will stop this by taking the power of the Internet to give the shopper the genuine retail experience. It's simply this:

The retailer or shopworker wears a headset with microphone, and the shop is equipped with web cameras. Both the headset/s and cameras are linked to a website where the customer logs into and converses directly with the shop-person who uses his/her sales ability to describe and sell the product, which is delivered to the customer in the usual way.

This utilises the setup that is already there, and the shopworkers who are already there and just adds the equipment, marrying the best of retail, and the best of online, simply.