

# BRITAIN

**Know your enemy!**

JOIN THE NEW HOME FRONT  
& HELP STOP CLIMATE CHANGE

**SWITCH OFF  
THE LIGHT**

**THE NEW HOME FRONT**



**Policies for ecological, social  
and economic renewal**

Front cover artwork: Adapted from a 1930s London Underground poster designed to attract people to London's rapidly expanding suburbs.

Commended design  
New Home Front poster competition



by Stig

# THE NEW HOME FRONT II

## Policies for ecological, social and economic renewal

The winning entry in the  
New Home Front poster competition



by Phil Wellington



Other commended poster designs: (Clockwise from top left) Finn Beales, Co-operatives UK and Sheffield City Council.

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# Foreword

Caroline Lucas MP

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Much has changed since I commissioned Andrew Simms to write the first *New Home Front* report. Inquiries into our broken banking system have come and gone with little indication of serious reform. Climate change has slipped further down this government's agenda in spite of the promise to be the greenest government ever. International conferences on the climate have passed, as yet, with no agreement on action. As our leaders procrastinate, levels of concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere are rising still higher, taking us ever closer to the point at which potentially irreversible changes become much more likely. An alarm bell has been set ringing this summer, as Arctic sea ice levels reached a record low. Some now suggest that we are likely to the Arctic completely free of ice during the summer within the next decade. Previous reports had led scientists to believe this wouldn't happen until 2100.

Achieving a more secure, sustainable energy system, in line with the goal of limiting the rise in global temperatures to under 2°C, is still just possible but requires urgent action by the world's governments. (In fact, the most recent science suggests that to reduce the risk of passing irreversible "tipping points" we need to hold temperatures rises to nearer 1.5 degrees). Action requires honesty with the public about the risks of inaction for example to the economy, health, agriculture, food production, water resources, coastal flooding, and extreme weather events.

Since the 1980s, successive governments and their expert advisers have accepted the seriousness of the threat, and have known what actions are needed to avert it as far as possible and to prepare for the consequences. But they have not acted with sufficient commitment either to prepare the UK or to build an international agreement on reduction. And with every passing year, the threat to our country becomes more severe.

I commissioned the first *New Home Front* report to explore what lessons we could take from history. There were many. In the 1930s, some politicians of all parties ignored the threat of war brewing in Europe and failed to take the necessary steps to deter aggression or prepare early enough for defence. At the time, the two main excuses put forward to justify inaction and appeasement were that there was not enough money to pay for proper defences, and that the British public would not support a government that took tough measures

British society has changed radically since the Second World War. The 1930s and 1940s were anything but a golden age and it would be wrong to romanticise those times. Yet many institutions which were active then in mobilising popular opinion and action, remain important actors today: voluntary and campaigning groups; churches and other faith organisations; schools, colleges, and universities; and public services such as fire, police, and health.

In wartime, government engaged the brightest and the best minds, and the most practical of people in meeting the pressing challenges that faced the nation. Today we are told that there is no alternative to the path that the coalition government is currently following. The reality, I believe, couldn't be further from the truth. There are a myriad of innovative, practical policy proposals waiting to be put to work. That is why I have asked a range of leading thinkers and practitioners for their suggestions of what could be done. This collection is by no means exhaustive, it is not a comprehensive plan, but it is an illustration of just a few of the wide range of proposals that might be implemented if the courage of government matched the will and imagination of the people of Britain.



# Be Just And Fear Not

Andrew Simms

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How often does a nation come together? Increasingly rarely it appears, and then mostly in extremis. The rapid growth of personalised social media, coupled with the proliferation and diversification of online, television, and radio channels create cultural fragmentation. Unifying moments of collective joy, grief, or purpose seem harder to create and experience. But, if the structure of how we communicate militates against a sense of common purpose, the moments when, culturally, we do come together are all the more powerful because of it. Then, instead of fragmenting, our myriad modern communication channels can amplify the sense of being part of something bigger quite spectacularly.

One event remains irresistible to all forms of media, the Olympics. It is one of the very few truly global events, in which even the world's poorer countries have some stake. It is controversial, too, with its high Olympic ideals standing in jarring contrast to many of its commercial sponsors. Junk food giants complicit in pushing an obesity epidemic burnish their reputations with the Olympic rings, ironically symbolic of the highest level of sporting fitness. A pharmaceutical company found guilty of bribing doctors to give inappropriate anti-depressants to children provides the drug-testing kits used by athletes, and a giant fossil fuel company is its 'sustainability partner'.

But in the largely brand-free interior of the London 2012 Olympic Stadium, a global audience of billions found themselves watching something extraordinary when the opening ceremony began: it was a witty song of praise to the triumph of bold, creative, and collective endeavour. The person in charge, film director Danny Boyle, had asked himself a simple question – what is good about this nation, the United Kingdom. In a culture seemingly obsessed with fashion labels, football, and reality television, his answers made many people think twice about themselves and the world around them. The performance celebrated the establishment of universal primary health care, the creation of the open, public domain of the World Wide

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Web, children's literature, music, and comedy; it lauded industrial development (while noting its costs) and held up the struggle for justice and universal suffrage. A single Suffragettes' banner held aloft seemed to capture the tone of the whole show, 'Be Just, And Fear Not.'

Perhaps most shocking of all for many, was the fearless and bold reminder that something other than markets and commercialism was axiomatic in our lives and how society gets the best from itself. Here was a very different way to appraise the true wealth and success of a people, far from the size of bonus pay, car model, or the trajectory of national income – its GDP. A London billboard advert to thank sponsors said that none of the pulsating, breathtaking moments of achievement would have happened without them. A flattering, deceiving fiction as the vast majority of costs, not just of the games, but the raising and training of the athletes themselves on the rapidly disappearing school playing fields of childhood, was down to the work and support of families and public infrastructure.

The celebration showed that it is possible for a people to be enterprising without the nature of the enterprise needing to be captured by the selfish individualism of the markets made by conventional economic theory. That said, there is something prior, deeper, better, and which has a more optimistic and hopeful view of human nature that can bring more good out of ourselves.

Many of the great achievements were in the face or aftermath of adversity. When we published the first *New Home Front* pamphlet, we showed that history could be our friend when approaching the daunting scale of the challenge of global warming. It imagined what a contemporary effort of bold, vigorous, and creative mobilisation might look like if we adopted at least the verve, focus, and ambition of past, successful attempts to face down enormous odds.

In this sequel pamphlet we move further, asking several key individuals, each expert on different subjects, to imagine what contribution their field of expertise could make to a new home front.

Learning to thrive on and share a finite planet will be our greatest act of common endeavour in which the past can inspire us, even if the

challenge is new. Learning new skills as well as relearning old ones will help us build the path, not least in reinventing passive, disposable consumerism, with a richer, more rewarding culture in which we are more engaged in the production of the stuff of life, whether it is our own entertainment, food, clothes, or other things, each to their own. A Green New Deal is a modern vision to replace memories of the industrial revolution. And the greatest lesson, perhaps, is to follow the advice of those campaigners for universal suffrage to ‘be just, and fear not.’

Several contributions address one of the greatest concerns of the original Home Front, namely, how to mobilise resources to pay for what needs to be done. Collectively they make clear that the resources are there for necessary action if the political courage to allocate them can be found. Whether through clamping down on tax avoidance and evasion, or through issuing new credit earmarked for productive green investment, lack of money is no excuse. There is also the potential to redesign existing financial institutions and manufacturing industry for new purposes – just as was done successfully on the Home Front. It has become common to speak of the burden on society of our currently aging population, but the New Home Front sees the older generation as a rich bank of knowledge and skills that we can learn from and be put to meaningful use.

Knowing how to avoid waste and live well with less is one of the simplest lessons they can pass on; the importance of community and how to value time too, striking better balances between formal work and life. As we re-imagine transport and food systems, their long view will also be vital to avoid the mistakes of the past, and in remembering a world in which car ownership wasn’t treated as a human right. Perhaps most important of all, the voices in this pamphlet invite us to do the most important thing of all if change is to come. They ask us to break free of the conditioning that says the world cannot be meaningfully different from what we already see around us, and imagine how much better life could be if we did many of the things that must, in any case, be done. As the poet Carol Ann Duffy put it in her appreciation of the collective experience of the 2012 Olympics, “We sense new weather. We are on our marks. We are all in this together”.

# Know your neighbours

Bill McKibben

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In time of great threat, it's important to know your neighbours. Not so you can turn them in for disloyalty, so you can work with them to build a new world.

If there's one thing that's marked the high consumer society of recent decades, it's a retreat into hyper-individualism. We've wasted much of our economic wealth building bigger houses farther apart from each other. In America, polls show that the average citizen eats meal with friends, family, and neighbours half as often as they did 50 years ago. The average American has *half as many close friends* as 50 years ago. Three-quarters of Americans don't know their next-door neighbours.

Given that we're social primates, this is a recipe for unhappiness (people's satisfaction with their lives has eroded, even as living standards have soared). It's a recipe for wasting resources: not only do you have to heat and cool all those starter palaces for entry-level monarchs, you also have to fill that hole in your soul with stuff.

It's also a recipe for powerlessness. The reason we lose the truly crucial fights to big industry is because we're separated, used to thinking of ourselves as individuals. In Margaret Thatcher's most telling words: 'There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families.'

If we let her theory rule, then we have no chance. But the fight back has begun. Take farmers markets, which in the USA have doubled and doubled and then doubled again in the last 15 years. They're the fastest-growing part of our food economy. That's good news ecologically – the five-mile tomato beats the 5000-mile tomato. (And good news culinarily – If I've travelled 5000 miles and I know how I feel when I stagger off the plane, that's how the tomato feels too.)

But the really good news is this: a couple of years ago sociologists followed shoppers, first around the supermarket and then around

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the farmers market. You know the supermarket: you fall into a light fluorescent trance, visit the Stations of the Cross around the perimeter of the store, and somehow fill your cart with the same things as the week before. When they followed shoppers at the farmers market, they found that they were having *ten times as many conversations per visit*.

In other words, they were beginning to re-knit the society we've let unravel. They were doing the unconscious work that will make it easier to do everything else we need to do, including stand up to the corporations now wrecking the planet. We need a farmers market in electrons (solar panels on every roof!) and a farmers market in currency (local money systems!). And happily, we're evolving a farmers market in ideas: the Internet, where we all put in and take away.

But we've got to build this new society fast, because the physics and chemistry of global warming don't give us much time. And we've got to use this new society to make political change.

Know your neighbour. Knowing your neighbour is the key to the world you want.

# Mobilising the next generation

Rina Kuusipalo

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The idea of sustainable development began with the rights of the young and future generations. The 1987 Brundtland Report stated: 'We borrow environmental capital from future generations with no intention or prospect of repaying... We act as we do because we can get away with it: future generations do not vote; they have no political or financial power.' John Rawls saw this intergenerational inequity as requiring government intervention to manage 'social saving and investment' for the benefit of the least advantaged generations – the youth of the present and those yet to come.

In the summer of 2012, Rio+20 re-committed 'to ensuring the promotion of an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for our planet and for present and future generations'. The conference might not have achieved much on paper, but for the youth who mobilised around it, and for those who have been part of the global *Occupy* movement, the realisation of systemic failure, the need for transition, and the articulation of alternatives – that go 'beyond GDP', respect 'planetary boundaries', and integrate a 'social protection floor' – have become a more pressing reality ever before.

The planet's limits remain fixed, but social institutions to distribute fair shares and ownership within these limits mustn't. In keeping with the notion that we only borrow the Earth, intergenerational equity fundamentally places timeless collectivism instead of individualism as the heart of policy-making and law. The pending legacy of deteriorating ecosystem services requires a deep, concrete reflection on what it is legitimate for the present to take from those who will face the future.

In practice, this would mean enabling institutions to act as 'the guardians of the future against the claims of the present', as economist James Tobin argued. Actively integrating systemic and long-term planning, implementing this will also need legal guardians such as an Ombudsperson for Future Generations. To redistribute resources intergenerationally, the financial system should be actively

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harnessed to save for, and to deliberately invest in, the long term, rather than gamble for the short term.

If this generation has a chance of inheriting a world in which we can all flourish, an alternative accounting of prosperity and progress needs to be employed now. The economy must practically shift from the primacy of economic growth – which serves the short-term material interests of those vested in the system, excluding most youth – to long-term, well-being-focused objectives and indicators.

We can't do this alone. The government needs to foster and legitimise measures of alternative prosperity, so that the mobilisation for transition can reach all of us. This would begin with integrating systems thinking and new measurements into education to open new possibilities for young people, as Bhutan is demonstrating with its Gross National Happiness plan. This could shift us away from cultivating humans' selfish impulses to encouraging cooperative and social ones.

We also need to make sure that transition works for *all* young people. What last year's London riots and cuts protests revealed was the condition of a significant proportion of young Britain – that portion of my generation with little to lose, at odds in a world that doesn't hold much prospect. With one of the most unequal education systems in the global North, Britain must begin fixing its notably low social mobility by making initial allocations of prospects and possibility fairer. Investing in a more equitable childhood and youth would not only bring down child poverty rates, but also counter class divisions that are extremely detrimental to chances of *collective* mobilisation. Youth employment is also an issue where the state must take action. A Green New Deal, including good green jobs and provision of start-up capital for social enterprise, could help resolve the double crisis of unemployment and unsustainability, while directly engaging youth in the national transition.

To truly enable the young generation to collectively mobilise for the transition that our planet and societies direly need, the empty throwing about of the term 'youth' must be replaced with policies and laws that enable and empower youth to engage with hearts and minds in the daunting challenges faced by this young generation and those to come.

# Lessons for a new land army

Ruth Bond

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The Women's Institute (WI) movement in Britain began in wartime. Established in 1915, the movement encouraged countrywomen to get involved in growing and preserving food to help to increase the supply of food to the war-torn nation.

By the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, the WI was a well-established and expanding network with an independence that the then Chairman, Lady Denman, was keen to maintain. Many WI members went into uniform, some joined the Land Army, others met the need for workers in the armaments industry. Tens of thousands of WI members, especially older women and young mothers, responded to the need for increased agricultural production by working on farms whenever and wherever help was needed. Many WI members became air raid precautions (ARP) wardens, firewatchers or joined such services as the Red Cross and St John's Ambulance Brigade.

At government request, the headquarters of the WI drew up a detailed plan for the evacuation of mothers and children from cities under the imminent threat of bombing. The evacuation was organised by the newly established Women's Voluntary Service and children arriving in villages were largely housed by WI members. The National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI) went on to publish a report based on a survey carried out amongst WI members: *Town Children through Country Eyes*. The report stimulated a national debate about support for families ultimately leading to the setting up of family allowances after the war.

WI members also initiated a number of projects designed to help the war effort. A War Savings group was formed, which among other activities organised house-to-house collections of rags and bones for government. Cotton reels were collected and surplus vegetables sold to the Navy. Lady Denman was asked to take charge of the Women's Department of the Ministry of Agriculture. Together with Mrs Inez Jenkins, a former WI National Secretary, she devised the plan for

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the Women's Land Army with her house at Balcombe Park as the headquarters. Lady Denman organised correspondence courses on aspects of agriculture – ensuring that the women of the Land Army were qualified for better jobs once the war was over.

As the war continued, WI members were taught how to grow fruit and vegetables more intensively in their gardens and allotments. Fruit bushes and packets of vegetable seeds from WIs in Canada were sold through the newly established Guild of Produce. The Ministry of Food gave the National Federation a grant to administer the National Fruit Preservation Scheme. Five hundred home canners, oil stoves, preserving pans, and other equipment were sent from America to be distributed to WIs who 'fought on the jam front with pans, spoons and weighting sales and sheer stickability'. About £1400 worth of sugar for preserving was distributed to the Federation offices, and teams went from village to village canning what fellow WI members had picked. By end of 1940, the WI had cooked, bottled, and canned 1630 tons of fruit and vegetables in preserving centres set up in village halls and sheds, kitchens, or mobile canning vans.

WIs also continued their musical, dramatic, handicraft, and other cultural activities 'to relieve the strain of war' and maintain health, strength, and good spirits in the village. This spirit of participation survives to this day, the WI is once again growing and the organisation continues to be actively engaged in campaigns and projects around local food, growing and preserving vital preservation and cooking skills. Our war-time heritage is an important, and overlooked, national resource, demonstrating just how much can be done by a network of dynamic and well-organised women called to action.

# Learning from our grandparents

Mike Davis\*

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Ideas as well as commodities were recycled in the war years. Much of the idealism of the early New Deal re-emerged in wartime housing, fair employment, and childcare programmes, as well as in the post-war economic conversion from military to civilian production. One particularly interesting example was the ‘rational consumption’ movement sponsored by the Office of Civilian Defense (OCD), which encouraged ‘buying only for need’ and set up consumer information centres that gave advice on family nutrition, food conservation, and appliance repair. The OCD consumer committees challenged the sacred values of mass consumption – the rapid turnover of styles, the tyranny of fashion and advertising, built-in obsolescence, and so on.

With millions of women wielding rivet guns and welding torches, traditional concepts of gender roles were increasingly contested. In April 1942, for example, the *New York Times* visited a trailer park near a Connecticut defense plant, expecting to find young wives yearning for the post-war future of suburban homes and model kitchens that the 1939 New York World’s Fair had prophesied. Instead, they found female war workers who liked their industrial jobs and were content to live in simple quarters that demanded little or no housework.

Conservation also warred with luxury lifestyles. Although defense production was adding billions to the net worth of America’s plutocrats, it became harder for them to spend it in the usual conspicuous ways. In order to force builders to meet the acute demand for affordable housing for war workers, the War Production Board (WPB) banned construction of homes costing more than \$500 (the median value of the average home was then about \$3000). Simultaneously, thousands of servants fled Park Avenue and Beverly Hills to take higher-paying jobs in defense factories, while many of those who remained joined the Congress of Industrial Organizations’ new United Domestic Workers Union. Some millionaires retreated to their clubs to grouse about Franklin D. Roosevelt’s latest outrages, but others accepted the servant shortage and moved into smaller

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(although still luxurious) apartments while allowing their mansions to become temporary war housing. In a typical story, the *Chicago Tribune* in July 1942 described the adventures of seven young Navy petty officers and their wives who were sharing an old robber baron's mansion. (Today we would call it 'cohousing'.)

The total mobilisation of the time was dubbed the 'People's War', and while it had no lack of conservative critics, there was remarkable consistency in the observation of journalists and visitors (as well as in later memoirs) that the combination of a world crisis, full employment, and mild austerity seemed to be a tonic for the American character. *New York Times* columnist Samuel Williamson, for example, monitored the impacts of rationing and restricted auto use on families in commuter suburbs that lacked 'the self-sufficiency of the open country' and the 'complete integration of the large city'. After noting initial popular dismay and confusion, Williamson was heartened to see suburbanites riding bikes, mending clothes, planting gardens, and spending more time in cooperative endeavours with their neighbours.

Without cars, people moved at a slower pace but seemed to accomplish more. Like Welles in *The Magnificent Ambersons*, Williamson pointed out that American life had been revolutionised in a single generation with many good things seemingly lost forever; the war and the emphasis on conservation were now resurrecting some of the old values. 'One of these', he wrote, 'may be the rediscovery of the home – not as a dormitory, but as a place where people live. Friendships will count for more.'

An alternative future lurked in Williamson's hopeful comment, but it was swept away by the backlash against the social and economic reforms of the New Deal and the post-war euphoria of abundance. Few of the core values or innovative programmes of the People's War survived either the Cold War or the cultural homogeneity of suburbanisation. Yet, even a few short generations later, we can find surprising inspirations and essential survival skills in that brief age of victory gardens and happy hitchhikers.

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\* This is an edited version of an article first published in *Sierra Magazine* July/August 2007 and is published with the permission of the author.

# Making time for the New Home Front

Anna Coote

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More than 70 years ago, the great economist John Maynard Keynes imagined that by the beginning of the twenty-first century, the standard length of the working week would be just 15 hours. He thought technological progress would cause such a formidable growth in productivity that we would no longer have to work long hours to satisfy our material needs.

He was right about many things, but spectacularly wrong about that. Since the Second World War, our definition of how much is enough to satisfy our needs has grossly expanded. In the last decades of the twentieth century, two-adult households added six hours a week to their combined paid workload. And most of us in the developed world are now consuming well beyond our economic means, well beyond the limits of the natural world and in ways that ultimately fail to satisfy us.

However, Keynes was right to envisage the need to think differently about how we use and value time. In the twenty-first century, moving towards much shorter hours of paid employment could be a critical factor in heading off environmental, social, and economic catastrophe.

We could get off the consumer treadmill and leave a smaller footprint on Earth. We could spend less on energy-intensive ‘convenience’ items designed to save us time – from processed foods and household gadgets to cars and airline tickets. We would have more time to care for friends and family, and to look after our own health. We could leave employment and claim our pensions later, with a much gentler transition to retirement. We would have more time to keep learning and take part in local activities. We might begin to reassess how we value different kinds of work, regardless of whether or how it is paid. We might give a higher rating to relationships, pastimes, and places that absorb less of our money and more of our time.

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There could be benefits for business too, with more women in paid employment, more men leading rounded, balanced lives, less workplace stress and greater productivity hour for hour. The driving force towards a prosperous economy would no longer be credit-fuelled consumerism, which has proved so destructive, but financial stability and good work distributed fairly across the population.

This has to be seen as part of a bigger transition, over a decade or more, that will involve a radical shift in values and expectations. We shall need to put measures in place to ensure that work is fairly distributed, that everyone has enough to live on, that employers are encouraged to take on more staff, and that public attitudes change to support less materialist lifestyles and a revaluation of paid and unpaid time. These options are explored in more detail in the report, *21 Hours*.<sup>1</sup>

Social norms that seem to be firmly fixed can sometimes change quite suddenly. Take, for example, attitudes towards slavery and votes for women, wearing seatbelts and crash helmets, not smoking in bars and restaurants. During the Second World War, as Giorgos Kallis and others have pointed out, investments were shifted suddenly from private consumption to war effort: 'Cars were shared, hitchhiking became a popular way of transport, bicycles made a comeback, urban food gardens multiplied and recycling and thrift reached unprecedented levels. As a voluntary communal spirit reigned, conspicuous consumption became socially ostracised.'<sup>2</sup>

The weight of public opinion can swing from antipathy to acceptance, usually when there's a combination of new evidence, changing conditions, and a strong campaign. Our political imagination has been dangerously subdued. So much depends on how soon a critical mass of people can be convinced that the current combination of social, environmental, and economic crisis, is real, unprecedented and utterly toxic. Changing the way that work is distributed might just provide us *all* with the time, and the imagination, to bring in the New Home Front.

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1 Coote A, Franklin J and Simms A (2010) *21 Hours: Why a shorter working week can help us all to flourish in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. London: nef (the new economics foundation).

2 Kallis G (2011) In defence of de-growth. *Ecological Economics* 70: 879.

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# A green ‘golden age’

Nick Robins

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The era of financialisation is dead, but the flourishing of a new economy is obstructed by a litter of obsolete ideas. Amid the wreckage lie the broken theories of ‘rational economic man’ and ‘efficient markets’,<sup>3</sup> a quaint but dangerous naiveté about the fundamentals of financial biology (‘where does money come from?’),<sup>4</sup> a policy focus that favours temporary schemes over enduring institutions as well as a strategic vision that continues to sideline the imperative of delivering enduring well-being.

Taking the long-view, the credit crunch which precipitated the current crisis forms part of a cycle of technological revolutions and financial bubbles.<sup>5</sup> It was the age of mass production driven by electrical appliances and the automobile which pumped up stock markets in the 1920s and whose consequences Keynes dissected in his 1936 *General Theory*. Keynes’s insight was that the laissez-faire economy on its own was unable to match this new productive potential with sufficient demand, resulting in structural unemployment and human misery. His remedy was ‘a somewhat comprehensive socialization of investment’ to harness private initiative to deliver the full package of economic goals.<sup>6</sup> Tragically, it took the Second World War to drive through the economic frameworks that delivered steadily rising living standards in the age of welfare.

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- 3 John Kay in his analysis of Britain’s investment markets concluded, for example, that the efficient market hypothesis provides ‘a poor basis for either regulation or investment’. Kay J (2012) *The Kay Review of UK Equity Markets and Long-term Decision Making*/ London: BIS.
  - 4 Ryan-Collins J, Greenham T, Werner R, Jackson A (2011) *Where does money come from?* London: **nef** (the new economics foundation).
  - 5 Perez C (2002) *Technological Revolutions and Financial Capital: the Dynamics of Bubbles and Golden Ages*. Cheltenham: Elgar.
  - 6 Keynes JM (1973) *The General Theory of Employment, Interest & Money*. London: Macmillan, p.378.
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As we know now, a break came in the early 1970s with the onset of a new technological wave led by information technology, the deregulation of credit and capital markets, the first resource shock that ended the long run of falling commodity prices in the twentieth century<sup>7</sup> and the erosion of institutions to deliver broad-based benefits. After the inevitable bubbles and excess which punctuated the 2000s, the current task is to create the conditions for a green 'golden age' which deploys the technological logic of cheap information in place of cheap energy, which channels finance towards investment in environmental infrastructure, and which targets this at human priorities at home and abroad.<sup>8</sup> Britain faces a particular urgency to move along this path given the failure of its growth model relying on excess credit creation coinciding with its passage from a North Sea energy exporter to structural importer.<sup>9</sup>

Exiting the slough of stagnation will require not just a spring-clean of this intellectual litter, but also a set of decisive moves that propels the economy into new areas of activity that prepare the ground for an era of resource scarcity. To escape the prevailing 'paradox of thrift', individuals and institutions need confidence in these future markets if they are to invest at sufficient scale and speed.<sup>10</sup> Three mechanisms are needed that could help achieve this:

- The first is to create the demand via a comprehensive national programme to renovate the housing stock, transport system,

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7 See Grantham J (2011), *Time to Wake Up*, which argues that 10 years ago we entered a new era of rising resource prices after a century of commodity deflation. See also Grantham J (2012) *Welcome to Dystopia! Entering a long-term and politically dangerous food crisis*, both via gmo.com

8 Carlota Perez has expertly laid out the potential for this transition; Perez C (2010) *The Advance of Technology & Major Bubble Collapses: Historical Regularities and Lessons for Today*. Available at: <http://www.carlotaperez.org/download/PEREZTechnologyandbubblesforEngelsbergseminar.pdf> [19 August 2012]. Jorgen Randers also lays out why the investment rate is set to increase in his *2052: A global forecast for the next 40 years* (2012) Vermont: Chelsea Green.

9 The UK shifted from a positive trade balance in energy in 2001 of £5.6 billion to its first recent deficit in 2005 of £4.4 billion which expanded to stand at £18.7 billion in 2011. See DECC Energy Statistics, Dukes Annex, 26 July 2012 update

10 Zengelis D (2012) *A strategy for restoring confidence and economic growth through green investment and innovation*. London: LSE.

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energy network, and agricultural industry to twenty-first-century standards of resource efficiency and resilience.<sup>11</sup>

- The second is to provide the means by replacing undifferentiated ‘quantitative easing’ with targeted allocation of Central Bank money for the purchase of bonds issued to co-fund this programme. The aim would be to use the proceeds to drive down the effective cost of capital for individuals and institutions investing in these areas to compelling and attractive levels.
- The third is to mobilise the financial sector through an overhaul of the fiscal system to reward long-termism. Each year about £30 billion – equivalent to c.2% of GDP – in tax relief is awarded for savings and pensions. But sustainability plays no part in the allocation, and much is allocated to the assets of the past (such as fossil fuels). As soon as possible, only investments that make a positive contribution to the green economy should be eligible.<sup>12</sup>

Three centuries ago, Bernard Mandeville shocked his age with his rhyming *Fable of the Bees*. Keynes quoted Mandeville approvingly towards the end of his *General Theory* for his prescience in understanding the need for effective demand to make economies flourish. For Mandeville, ‘the enjoyment of all Societies will ever depend upon the Fruits of the Earth and the Labour of the People’, two capital stocks that have been marginalised, depreciated, and liquidated in recent decades. There is no doubt that we have the technological capacity and financial potential to build a green economy, learning from Mandeville that ‘they who would revive a Golden Age, must be as free, For Acorns as for Honesty’.<sup>13</sup>

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11 Spencer T, Bernoth K, Chancel L, Guerin E, Neohoff K (2012) *Green investments in a European growth package*. Paris: IDDRI.

12 Robins N (2012) *Financing the Future* in Randers J (2012) *2052 – A Global Forecast for the Next Forty Years*. London: Chelsea Green. Hewett C (2012) *Saving for a Sustainable Future*. London: Green Alliance.

13 Mandeville B (1705) *Fable of the Bees* in Keynes (1973), p.361

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# Taxation for the New Home Front

Richard Murphy

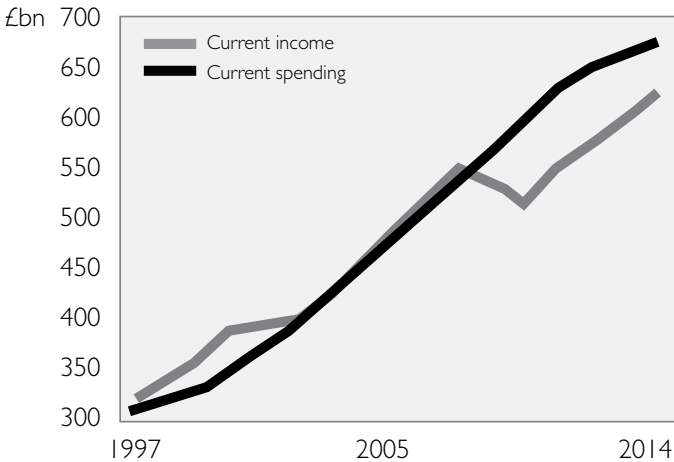
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Unfettered global capital is assaulting our state and undermining our democracy through concerted attacks on our stability mounted from tax havens. It is capturing our resources through bank subsidies and is threatening our future by undermining our environment. A minimum four-part plan is needed to reclaim our democracy, and our economy:

## I. Mobilise resources

From 1997 to 2008 government income exceeded spending by £146 billion. The cumulative deficit since the end of this period is expected to be £397 billion. If we are serious about meeting the deficit and stopping the assault on our economy, we have to mobilise resources to collect tax revenues owing to us.<sup>14</sup>

Government income and spending in current prices 1997–2014



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<sup>14</sup> Current government tax income and current government spending in current prices from 1997 to 2014 (the last two years being forecasts) based on HM Treasury data.

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We lose maybe £25 billion a year in this country to legal, but morally reprehensible, tax avoidance. A further £70 billion may be lost to tax evasion and at any time there is up to £25 billion of uncollected tax.<sup>15</sup> Despite this, since the crash, the number of people employed at HM Revenue & Customs has been cut from about 90,000 to a little over 60,000. Another 10,000 are scheduled to go by 2015.<sup>16</sup> This is absurd. Parliament has reported each member of staff engaged on tackling tax abuse can raise at least 11 times their cost in tax revenues.<sup>17</sup> We need to mobilise a whole army of new tax collectors to tackle the tax gap and stop the disastrous attack on our economy and its tax revenue.

## 2. Pull together

People pulled together for the Home Front and must do again now. This means all taxpayers must contribute their fair share:

- Multinational corporations must be made to account on a country-by-country reporting basis so we know where they are, what they're doing there, and how much tax they are and, as importantly, are not paying in each country in which they work.
- Banks need to report to HM Revenue & Customs whenever they open bank accounts for companies, businesses, and maybe individuals so that those who refuse to pay what they owe can be tracked more easily.
- A general anti-avoidance principle must be included in UK tax law to stop the tax avoidance schemes that have the sole aim of undermining the government's tax revenues.

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15 See details in Murphy, R, (2010) Tax Justice and Jobs: The business case for investing in staff at HM Revenue and Customs, Tax Research LLP, Available at: <http://www.taxresearch.org.uk/Documents/PCSTaxGap.pdf> (August 2012)

16 BBC News, HM Revenue and Customs staff striking over job cuts, 25 July 2012. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-18575439> (Accessed August 2012)

17 Kuchler, H, HMRC job cuts 'undermining' tax crackdown, Financial Times, May 24 2012. Available at: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/423ece70-a57b-11e1-a3b4-00144feabdc0.html#axzz20mTf7147> (Accessed August 2012)

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### 3. Tackle the havens

Tackling tax abuse in the UK is essential, but the assault on our revenues has come from offshore too, enabled by the world's tax havens. Tax havens exist to undermine regulation in other countries. Their sole purpose for passing tax haven laws is to let people who don't live in the tax haven use their laws to get round the law in the places where they live.<sup>18</sup> We have to tackle tax havens, and we can. We can demand country-by-country reporting that shows which companies use them.<sup>19</sup> We can demand the automatic exchange of information on who has accounts.<sup>20</sup> And for those places that refuse, we could impose economic sanctions – including deducting tax at source on all payments going into such places or denying banks that work there licenses to trade in London. Sanctions were suggested by the G20 in London in April 2009. Now is the time to impose them. We can no longer afford the tax-haven-based assault on our economy.

### 4. A new, green, world

We need to know what world we want when our work is done. So, as this process is going on, we have to prepare for the world that could be ours. That means we put in place the structures and infrastructure we need for a new, green, world.

- We must build a proper progressive tax system that taxes capital properly, frees the least well-off from tax, and ensures that 'bads' are taxed and 'goods' aren't. We have to create new taxes to ensure the tax system is fair, including land-value taxes to replace the iniquity of the current local tax system.
- We have to make our major companies accountable. They need employees on their boards, an obligation to pay living wages, a duty to recognise unions, and a requirement to provide pensions.

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18 Palan R, Murphy R, Chavagneux C (2010) *Tax Havens: How Globalization Really Works*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

19 Research briefing: Country by country reporting, Tax Justice Network, October 2010, Available at: <http://www.taxresearch.org.uk/Documents/CBC.pdf> (Accessed August 2012)

20 Murphy, R, (2009) Information Exchange: what would help developing countries now, Tax Research LLP. Available at <http://www.taxresearch.org.uk/Documents/InfoEx0609.pdf> (Accessed August 2012)

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- Pension funds must be invested for the good of pensioners, and not the City. So pension money must be committed for the long term and a significant proportion of pension-fund money must be invested to create jobs and the long-term infrastructure we need in the economy.
- We urgently need a Green New Deal – unleashing a carbon army who can turn the UK into a low-carbon economy through energy efficiency and new forms of generation, and by emphasising the need for design for longevity that will reduce consumption.

# Pension funds for transformation

Colin Hines

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Britain funded its involvement in World War Two by domestic taxation and by borrowing, both foreign and domestic. The National Savings Movement created to raise funds from the public to finance the war effort provided the framework for domestic borrowing. Now the UK government borrows by selling government bonds (gilts) to raise money internationally and domestically and most people save via the £ trillion pension industry and personal saving mechanisms such as tax-free individual savings accounts (ISAs).

Building and adapting these funding measures to help pay for the enormous transition in society's infrastructure needed to meet the challenge of climate change will require Green Quantitative Easing (QE) and mobilising finance from the pension funds.

The biggest intergenerational problem of all is our present destructive approach to the environment. This problem can begin to be tackled by an act of intergenerational solidarity between those baby boomers born before the mid-1960s to start supporting younger job seekers through investing some of their pensions and other private savings in a massive labour-intensive, energy-saving programme, with the repayments coming from the resulting lower energy bills.

This multi-billion pound initiative would cut carbon by making every building in the country energy-efficient, while maximising the UK's use of small, medium, and large-scale renewables. Younger people would be the main beneficiaries through the hundreds of thousands of jobs and business opportunities created, particularly in urban areas where the vast majority live. A 'carbon army' of graduates and school leavers would need to be created and trained with skills ranging from energy finance and analysis, large-scale engineering for combined heat and power projects, through to draught stripping and loft lagging.

Since such a Green New Deal initiative would also include a fairer taxation system, it would ensure that all pay their share. The huge jobs programme and higher taxation from those who were responsible for the present economic crisis, or who benefited more from the boom that preceded it, will reduce inequalities and enable the replacement of intergenerational sniping with intergenerational solidarity.

Pensions funds could help finance the government's 'Green Deal', potentially a huge energy saving programme involving up to 14 million homes, by working with large-scale local authority programmes, such as the one underway in Birmingham.

### **Birmingham shows the way**

Birmingham City Council is the UK and Europe's largest local authority. It plans to invest £75 million in a £100 million programme at no long-term cost to the tax payer to carry out energy efficiency improvements in 15 000 homes and at least 40 public buildings in the City by 2016, with a further 45 000 homes and 1000 commercial buildings by 2020 funded through private finance

The initial £100 million scheme is the largest so far proposed in the UK. The Council also plans to work with over 20 other local authorities and 10 public sector bodies including police and fire services and housing associations in the West Midlands and aims to bring £275 million of investment to the local economy over the next three years. The eventual goal is a £1.5 billion self-financing initiative in the region by 2020.

The Council estimates that 12 000 jobs could be created and safeguarded by the initiative, ranging from installation engineers, to manufacturers and designers. Aston University and Birmingham City University are involved as they are seen as being at the cutting edge of research into and development of new green technologies.

It is expected that if banks are involved in funding the Birmingham scheme, then they will want to sell their interests in the first set of energy-efficiency programmes. It is at this point that the big players in the form of the pension funds could become involved. Provided around £300 million of capital is involved in these types of projects, there is a big enough pot that a bond issue could be raised against it and the pension funds could then be the purchaser. Their funds will then be used for the next round of investment in an even larger-scale energy-efficiency programme.

# Moving our money for good

Danielle Paffard

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Infuriated by the lack of action on bank reform following the global financial, in January 2012, Move Your Money UK began to raise awareness about local, mutual, and ethical alternatives to the big 5 banks. While the banks have failed to learn lessons from the devastating crash of 2008 – scandals continue to escalate in almost all aspects of their activities – and the government and regulators have yet to take appropriate action, more and more people are discovering that they have the power to change the banking system by voting with their bank balances.

Since our launch, Move Your Money estimates that 500 000 people have switched their current accounts to ethical alternatives such as Co-ops and mutuals. Building societies such as the Ecology Building Society have reported a massive 266% increase in website visits compared to 2011 and the peer-to-peer lending network Zopa has seen funding from lenders increase by 56%. Charity Bank reported a 200% increase in new customers during the first six months of 2012 compared to last year. And, according to our calculations, around 50 000 people have joined one of the UK's credit unions since January, taking their membership to over one million for the first time.

For many people, the seemingly unending series of banking scandals – from the crippling computer malfunction that denied people access to their accounts, to the mis-selling of products to small businesses, the serious systemic corruption revealed by the manipulation of Libor rates, and revelations of institutional involvement in money laundering on an unprecedented scale – has been the final straw.

In many ways, Move Your Money is providing a public service that should have already existed. We are a vibrant and dynamic public information campaign that has helped to raise awareness of the range of local, mutual, and ethical financial alternatives that exist in the UK – a message which is now being repeated, re-tweeted, and taken up by the mainstream media.

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As more and more people choose to move their money, the tide is turning. Inquiry after inquiry has found the system wanting, but the authorities have proven to be long on talk and short on action. From civil right activists creating local banking in the USA, to Barclays pulling out of Apartheid South Africa – change happens when ordinary people act. By acting together and moving our money, we can begin to change British banking for good.

People are not only sending a message to the big banks that business as usual is not going to be tolerated anymore; they are actively using their money to increase investment in projects that improve our environment and our communities, strengthening the ecology of finance that can help ensure that resources are irrigated through the system in challenging times to come. In wartime, government created schemes to channel savings into public projects – in the absence of government action and in response to financial and ecological collapse, this time, we're doing it for ourselves.



# A Post Bank for the people

Lindsay Mackie

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What we know of the banking crisis is that it was driven by some simple things like greed, carelessness and arrogance. It was sustained by some very complex things: re-racinated finance, insane computerised systems, the abdication of the idea of what governments are for.

One thing upon which all are agreed is that the results are further draining the remains of economic life from most of our towns and cities. Small businesses are not receiving the financial support – which would include advice and assistance, not just loans – they need. The Treasury is interested in macroeconomics and is evincing precious little interest in sustaining the conditions in which most communities live.

But we who are interested have a golden opportunity to both protect our local economic environments and strengthen them. A Post Bank, a People's Bank based on the Post Office network, is an over-looked resource ready to be mobilised. It would use the trust in our Post Office and the financial and business skills of the staff and sub-postmasters.

Despite the cuts of recent years, there are still 11 500 post offices across the UK. The Post Office has successfully built up its financial services over the past few years. If it were allowed and encouraged to do more, it could build them up to be a strong revenue stream, and a local convenience.

Instead, the government, in all its purblind ideological myopia, is withdrawing public funding from the reliable Post Office network, and insisting that by 2015 it will need to be self-supporting. This at a time when the main high street banks which failed so badly in 2008 still enjoy substantial, and often hidden public subsidy.

Imagine what a Post Bank could do. It would obviously be able to provide banking services locally – something our major banks now signally mostly fail to do. It could be innovative and helpful, providing debt-management schemes, mobile-phone-based information and accounting. It could build a management structure where managers knew their local businesses and could lend or not, accordingly. It would welcome small customers and could save many from the preying hands of payday lending, and worse.

New Zealand has a highly successful Post Bank in the Kiwi Bank. It exists in Europe. We should demand – at the very least – that the government sets up a working party to examine seriously the potential of this idea.

We know, thanks to research by **nef** (the new economics foundation), that the impact of having a post office on the high street or anywhere else, increases footfall and business for other establishments. A post office can both create and sustain a healthy and convenient local ecosystem.

We have a sound, trusted, local network with the potential to grow, respond, and offer services which are new, necessary, and popular. The government and the management of Post Office Ltd seem to have other ideas. The new scheme, undertaken with minimal consultation, is to turn 2000 sub post offices into ‘Locals’ – based in supermarkets, petrol stations and the like, with no dedicated post office counter, and a much-reduced range of services. Banking and financial services at such counters are out of the question. They could be provided at 4000 main post offices – but these by definition do not cover all localities.

The Post Office is 500 years old. It has lasted because it has always responded to what the people needed. The banking crisis has shown in brutal relief that what we need now is a trusted, local banking system. A People’s Bank at the Post Office would help provide it.

# A National Business Rescue Service

Ed Mayo

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Competition rules, we are told. Market economies are shaped by ideas of the survival of the fittest, with companies that can't compete, driven out of business so that those who can compete can win. If that sounds Darwinian, then that is no surprise, as economic policy has long borrowed the mantle of evolution as a way of explaining what works.

The trouble is that it is not only a partial reading of economic life, but an outright misreading of Darwin and evolutionary science since. It is a model championed by the winners, even though it rarely even describes their own journey to success. It is welcome, therefore, that economists such as Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, authors of *A Co-operative Species*, are developing the theoretical and empirical base for a more rounded view of evolution, society, and economy that is based on co-operation, alongside the dynamic of competition.

Why does this matter? Because business policy tends to start with assumptions about how markets should work and then elevates those assumptions into the goal of policy. Liberalised energy markets, for example, should in theory be characterised by switching in order to keep firms competitive. But when consumers don't then switch, no-one questions the model, just the reality. The focus of policy moves to encouraging people to do what they don't want to do rather than addressing the cartel-like behaviour of the big six firms.

There are thriving UK businesses that exemplify co-operative principles. Around 6000 co-operative enterprises operate in the UK, owned by over 13 million members. They operate on the basis of one member, one vote rather than one pound, one vote. In fact, the co-operative economy has grown by around 20% since 2008, compared to a static economy overall.

The regions of the world that are most effective at harnessing the co-operative model are those that build it into the fabric of business life. In Italy, small businesses come together to get access to finance through co-operative guarantee societies. In France, farmers share machinery or marketing costs and win more of a food pound that is captured in the UK by the big supermarkets. In Spain, the Mondragon co-operative network runs a model of support for enterprises that are failing, in order to help them survive and turn around, generating a far more resilient local economy.

This model of saving business is one that the UK could benefit from. Administration is often a wasteful and costly process, both to employees and to the economy at large. Company insolvencies in the UK are currently running over 7% higher than a year ago, at around 17 000 businesses per annum. There are many companies that, on economic grounds, could be saved. A large number, 44%, are wound up because of poor management prior to insolvency. This represents a potential in theory to save up to 7500 enterprises.

With economic prospects poorer than ever, there may be an opportunity for the UK to learn from the responses to austerity elsewhere, including countries like Argentina where, in tough, over-indebted times over a decade ago, businesses were occupied and taken over by their workforce as an alternative to bankruptcy and unemployment.

This approach has been enshrined in a 'right for workers to buy out the company' in crisis in Spain. The programme to create *sociedades laborales* has resulted in 120 000 jobs being saved or created through the formation of 12 000 worker co-operatives. Enabling legislation also exists in Italy, in the form of the Marcora Law. Both countries based the legislation on encouraging workers to become entrepreneurs in saving their jobs by taking their entitlements, and three years of projected social security payments, in a lump sum payment, and investing this in the new company. This is supported by government loans and advice.

Clearly, it is not straightforward to save businesses that are entering insolvency. Acting early matters; deciding whether there is a viable business if reorganised, getting good advice and access to supportive

finance are all critical. But if these conditions are in place, then the evidence from across the world reflects the fact that the workforce has expertise and ideas that traditional investor-ownership fails to unlock.<sup>21</sup>

The National Business Rescue Service for the UK would be focused and selective. It would target businesses where the workforce<sup>22</sup> could have the opportunity to run the enterprise as an employee-owned co-operative business. There are risks of stigma – after all, the co-operative and employee-owned model is highly successful at present, so aligning it with previously failed enterprises can be challenged. But, the idea is gaining interest. The *Nuttall Review of Employee Ownership* for the UK Government in July 2012 commended the idea of a right to request for workers and a pilot scheme in the context of insolvency.

The waste in terms of energy and materials of an economy focused on a linear model of production is mirrored in the waste in terms of people and livelihoods of a linear model of business success or failure. A circular model for our economy would stress business models that are more resilient and focused on meeting needs, taking steps to help new businesses and save existing business wherever that proves possible. To achieve this will take the simple step of giving a workforce the right to take democratic control of the enterprise they are part of.

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21 As Anthony Jensen of the University of Sydney has concluded: worker cooperative buyouts of insolvent businesses are successful across many countries as measured by their longevity, job saving and job creation and performance impact.

22 The workforce is currently excluded from the process around insolvency.

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# A home front vision for renewable energy

Leonie Greene

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The UK currently produces under 4% of its energy from renewables. This is nearly a quarter of the EU average and a fifth of the global average. We sit almost at the bottom of the EU renewables league table. Yet we boast truly exceptional natural resources for renewable heat, power, and transport – and excellent engineering know-how on which to build.

Many credible analyses – including the Department for Energy and Climate’s own Pathways Calculator – show a renewables pathway is no more expensive than business as usual, and that’s *before* we factor in the huge environmental and social damage climate change is bringing. The benefits of investing in renewable energy are tremendous and far wider than is generally appreciated; not just diverse jobs and sustainable ‘growth’, but a lower-inflation more steady-state economy and a host of profound international relations benefits.

The failure to mobilise renewable energy solutions is in danger of becoming a distinctly British problem. More precisely: a Westminster problem. The regions and local government take renewable energy seriously. From Scotland to Cornwall, many local leaders have grasped the tremendous employment opportunities offered by the renewables sector in their own back yard.

But the regions can’t do it alone. It is vital that central government sets out an enabling framework for investment. This needs to happen not only to meet binding renewable energy targets, but to cost-effectively replace our ageing energy infrastructure and tackle our increasing dependence on importing fossil fuels. It would be crazy to lock ourselves in to a new generation of old technologies – when modern solutions are at our fingertips – and when the threat posed by climate change becomes ever more apparent. A strategic overview is essential. Climate change, after all, is ultimately an infrastructure issue.

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There are hard economic reasons for taking local renewables generation very seriously indeed. In Germany, the great majority of investment in renewable power has come from over a million smaller-scale investors. Last year, they invested billions of pounds, and for rates of return of around 7% – notably lower than returns expected by utilities. The smaller scale of investors makes them responsive to local renewable resources and makes innovation affordable. Their motivations are much more complex and holistic than satisfying shareholders. They might be farmers looking to diversify their income, or companies keen to take control of their carbon footprint, forward-looking pension funds, or enterprising councils spotting ways to help vulnerable homes save money while going green.

The UK government's slow and complex energy policy framework still treats this myriad of new entrants into the energy sector as nice-to-have, but marginal. Policy for renewable power under Electricity Market Reform is directed squarely at the old big utility model and at big projects. The popular and successful Feed-In Tariff scheme has been constrained by a very modest budget, and by old thinking. There is better news for renewable heat, which is often overlooked, yet energy for heat is the UK's biggest source of CO<sub>2</sub>.

As with the Home Front, a mixture is needed of both big central initiatives, but also the mobilisation of thousands of communities, that meet the challenges of climate change and growing energy insecurity. This needs to be supported by a stable policy framework that makes it easy to invest in practice. And it means enabling the full spectrum of renewable energy technologies and understanding how complementary many of these are. There is a tendency to focus on the 'sexy' solutions like wind and solar, but bioenergy is the biggest contributor of renewable energy across Europe. Done sustainably, bioenergy can bring double-wins, for example preventing methane from agriculture or bringing our long-neglected woodlands back into active management for the benefit of biodiversity.

But something else is missing. The Home Front was guided by a compelling narrative and a clear message from central government about what needed to be done in the face of a clear threat, and why. That's what we need for renewable energy: an inspiring vision to galvanise a collective national effort. Climate

change presents us with a challenge so profound it must transcend party politics. What we have is some patches of good leadership from Government – for example on offshore wind – but not a comprehensive programme covering the very wide spread of renewable technologies, and addressing the huge skill needs across the sector.

An Olympian Team GB effort is needed, guided by a determination to succeed on the international stage. The solutions to our climate and energy crisis are not in short supply. Polls repeatedly show that the great majority of the public are fully behind the expansion of the renewable energy sector. What are missing to date are the all-too-human ingredients of will, courage, and determination.



# A climate budget for a fairer future

Sean Chamberlain

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The Climate Change Committee sets carbon budgets for the UK, but one key question remains unanswered – how can we actually achieve these budgets, ensuring that the whole UK economy remains within the cap while allowing society to thrive?

In wartime the response to a similar supply/demand imbalance was rationing. Comparing contemporary challenges to the wartime experience, Historian Dr Mark Roodhouse, argues: ‘The use of taxes alone to control consumption was rejected in the World Wars, and they would not achieve the quick, dramatic cut in carbon consumption that we need now to avert environmental disaster. Tradable carbon rations would have a real impact, if the public could be persuaded that they are necessary, temporary and fair... Just as they do now, politicians and economists in the past debated whether rationing was really necessary or if taxation and other measures could achieve the same ends. They concluded that rationing was the only way to achieve swift and dramatic cuts in consumption without feeding inflation or causing social unrest.’<sup>23</sup> The core benefit of carbon rationing is that it provides a means of guaranteeing that carbon budgets are actually achieved, while providing an equal entitlement for everyone.

Modern carbon rationing (known as Tradable Emissions Quotas, or TEQs) would, however, have two important differences from its wartime cousin. First, the rations would be electronic, doing away with the need for physical coupons; and secondly, the rations would be tradable, learning the lesson of history that prohibiting the exchange of rations has always led to substantial black market activity and unnecessarily criminalised otherwise law-abiding individuals. Tradability is also essential as the demand for carbon-rated energy

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23 Roodhouse M (2007) Rationing returns: a solution to global warming?. *History and Policy*. Available at: <http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/presspr/pressreleases/carbonration.htm>

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differs from demand for food; while we all require comparable amounts of food, certain vocations intrinsically require more energy. For this reason, a *non-tradable* equal entitlement to carbon would simply destroy many professions.

The purpose of TEQs would be to fairly share out the necessarily shrinking carbon/energy budget across the whole economy, while allowing maximum freedom of choice over energy use. Everyone would be guaranteed a basic entitlement, and those who lived within their TEQs entitlement could sell their surplus, rewarding their carbon-thrift and providing for those who needed to purchase additional units. Since the poor use less energy than the rich, numerous studies have confirmed that the scheme would have social benefits too, through redistribution. The alternative of continuing the present arrangement of ‘rationing by price’ (i.e. the richest get whatever is in short supply) brings only inequity, suffering, and resentment in times of constraint.

TEQs would also bypass the endless costs, complexities, and compromises of the current piecemeal approach of embodied emissions calculations, carbon labelling and emissions trading. As the Chair of the Environment Agency, has said: ‘Rationing is the fairest and most effective way of meeting Britain’s legally binding targets for cutting greenhouse gas emissions.’<sup>24</sup>

With supply fixed, any reductions in national demand would lead directly to lower prices for all, making it transparently in everyone’s interest to work together in finding ingenious ways to reduce collective energy demand and increase low-carbon energy supplies. This cooperation will be essential, since the transformation in infrastructures necessitated by climate change requires collaboration between households, businesses, local authorities, transport providers, national government, etc., united in a single comprehensive scheme easily understood by all.

TEQs are explicitly designed to engender the same sense of common purpose that in wartime Britain was known as the ‘Blitz spirit’, with the fluctuations in the single national price at which rations are traded providing a clear indicator of how successfully the country is moving towards the shared goal of thriving within our emissions constraints.

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24 Webster M (2009) Carbon ration account for all proposed by Environment Agency. *The Times*. Available at: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/environment/article6909046.ece>

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# A Royal Bank of Sustainability

## PLATFORM

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In the years since it was effectively taken into public ownership, the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) has used public money in ways that often look little different to its use of private money previously. This has included extending billions of pounds in loans to companies that own or are building infrastructure to extract tar sands oil in Canada – an endeavour that has been slammed for its devastating impact on climate change, local ecosystems, and indigenous peoples. This is just one example of RBS's post-recapitalisation finance of fossil fuels.

In the same period of time, the British Wind Energy Association publicly called for some form of targeted government intervention for the UK to achieve its renewable targets. We approached a number of green energy associations looking to speak to someone who had attempted to obtain finance from RBS for their projects, but we were told that no one would waste their time in such a fruitless effort.

The report that Platform and others commissioned at the end of 2009, *Towards a Royal Bank of Sustainability*, was about attempting to democratise financial institutions. We, as taxpayers, have paid for it, so we should have some say in how the RBS is run. Financial institutions should exist to finance the needs of society rather than as a means of making large amounts of money for small numbers of people. The political opportunity to assert the public ownership of RBS comes at a time when there is a stark contrast between the social need for low-carbon and the business-as-usual approach of fossil-fuel finance.

The hands-off approach of the Treasury is looking increasingly untenable – far from maximising the public good in terms of Return on Investment, RBS shares have slumped to new lows. It's not just progressive economists and environmentalists who are challenging this position. Jeremy Scott, the global financial services chairman of PricewaterhouseCoopers, has said: 'Governments need to accept, given the limited likelihood of a quick extraction from the sector, that

their main focus needs to be on the positive role they can play given they are “inside the tent”.’

If we put aside for a moment the obsession with short-termist profit maximisation that characterises our economy, there is a clear business case for banks to divert the flow of capital away from new fossil fuels and into clean energy. The government-commissioned *Stern Review* on climate change clearly laid out that the longer we delay the changes we need to make to our societies and our economies, the higher the annual percentage of GDP we will have to pay to adapt to the consequences of the destabilised climate.

Since the idea of the Green Investment Bank was first mooted, people have discussed the idea of transforming RBS into the Royal Bank of Sustainability to suit the purpose. Some argue that the change in institutional culture might be too great for a bank like RBS, and that new financial architecture would be necessary. The fact remains that any new green infrastructure will need to be accompanied by the withdrawal of banks such as RBS from the fossil-fuel sector. An infinite number of windmills won't help if they continue to extract and consume coal, oil, and gas at the same rate.

The spectacular losses caused by reckless financial practices have been socialised. But the banks continue to insist that the profits remain privatised – and, importantly, the decisions as to how to go about creating those profits remains firmly in the hands of the banking executives. The fact that RBS is majority owned by the public provides an enormous opportunity to demand a much-needed dose of public involvement in financial institutions that up until now have been entirely unaccountable and opaque to the wider public.

The UK taxpayer has paid and will keep paying an enormous price to have kept the banking sector afloat. Possibly the only silver lining to be found in this situation is the political potential to take major steps in dealing with the threat of climate change at the heart of one of the biggest financial structures in the country.

# A transport system for all our futures

Sian Berry

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It is well known that, despite shortages of some foods during the Second World War, or rather because of them, people's diet and health improved significantly. But it's less well known that an equivalent transformation occurred in transport.

Mobilisation didn't just mean a massive expansion of the armed forces but also a substantial adjustment to the transport system. Car manufacturing almost ceased on both sides of the Atlantic and there was strict petrol rationing. Even on public transport people were urged to restrict their usage. One of the most famous UK propaganda posters asks: 'Is your journey really necessary?' The 1940s marked a peak in the proportion of journeys to work made by bicycle and the proportion made by bus, train, and underground were also close to their all-time highs.

Clearly, the transport system could easily adapt to meet such a challenge again. Climate change provides the challenge: ground-based transport currently accounts for roughly a quarter of UK carbon emissions and cars for about half of that.

The top priority should be to tame traffic, returning the streets to people, which would then create a ready-made network of safe walking and cycling routes. Social spaces and low-cost homezones could be provided so children could play securely outside their homes. This would help foster a revival of local shops, town centres, and educational, health, leisure and other amenities that could be reached on foot, by bicycle, or by local public transport. And it would free much of the massive amount of space currently allocated to car parking for more productive use such as food growing, or playing fields.

Of course we don't need to restrict ourselves to twentieth-century technology. There is a larger place for the application of modern technology to transport: smart-phone technology can help to provide

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public transport information that eliminates waiting and uncertainty or enable people to call up services on demand. We've hardly begun to explore the potential of so-called smart measures, such as workplace travel plans, that create the space for new travel habits without the need for expensive new infrastructure. For some people, and for some journeys, cars are essential or at least very helpful, but they could be more efficient and less polluting. We can also use new technology to reduce the pressure to be full-time owners of cars through car clubs and other forms of sharing

Mobilising the transport system to cut carbon emissions would need a big change in the costs of travel. Over the last 20 years, public transport fares have increased significantly while motoring costs have fallen. This has suppressed demand for public transport and boosted car travel and these incentives must be reversed. Meanwhile, a 'feebate' scheme, as Campaign for Better Transport has proposed, would reward buyers of low-carbon cars, including hybrid and electric vehicles, while owners of gas guzzlers would pay more.

Transport resources have been mobilised before to help meet an ambitious common goal. There's no reason we can't organise such a transformation again. And as with the 1940's diet, we might find we're all the better for it.

# Bring back British Rail

Ellie Harrison

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It is essential to remind ourselves that transportation is not just a question of how an individual gets from A to B. It is a social question; an ethical question. An outstanding public transport system (based on a fully integrated train, tram, and bus network) offers the potential to help solve many of the problems we face – from climate change, to inequality and social unrest. Not only could it prove vital in reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by supplanting many of the individual journeys made by car and plane, it could also improve the living environment in our cities, offer us better air quality, and assist with social cohesion, as people from all walks of life become accustomed to travelling together.

There is no better place to look for this reminder than post-war Britain. It's no coincidence that British Railways was inaugurated in 1948, the same year as our National Health Service. Both were part of the Labour government's revolution inspired and supported by the real sense of community engendered by the war effort, to ensure that government had control over the infrastructure it needed to provide the essential services that we all need to live happily and well (health care, transport, communications, and fuel).

These huge initiatives were driven by a desire for moral success and progress, rather than financial gain. On opening the NHS, Nye Bevan declared that it made us 'the moral leaders of the world'. Even in this stricken, bankrupt, war-torn country, there was a clear future vision. The founding statement of our new publicly owned rail service proclaiming 'Plans for modernisation and improvements are ready and are being carried into effect as materials become available. Difficulties will be overcome; the plan is to make British Railways the best in the world.'

Prior to British Railways, our trains were run by lots of privately owned companies. Although these had been responsible for building the foundations of the system as a means of facilitating the Industrial

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Revolution, they had left our country with a railway network that suffered from uneven regional investment and lacked an overall cohesive structure or long-term plan for development. This core public service had been left to the whim of private interest. And yet, since the misguided and opportunistic privatisation of our railways in 1993, we have allowed ourselves to retreat on the moral ambition of our ancestors and have been left with an expensive and dysfunctional public transport system as a result.

Think of the frustrations you have experienced buying tickets and travelling on our trains today and dare to imagine a radical policy – the creation of a fully integrated public transport system spanning the nation, run by proud employees as a service for the people. Imagine knowing that you could walk up and buy a ticket to go any where in the country at a fair price. Imagine a universal and comprehensive ‘National Rail Service’, providing the basic human need to travel to work and for leisure. How much less stressful would this be? How many more journeys would you choose to make by train?

The two commonly cited hurdles – public support for the idea and cost – are not in fact hurdles at all. The popularity of the *Bring Back British Rail* campaign (and others like it) shows that there is widespread dissatisfaction with the present system and a massive desire for a radical rethink of the way our railways are run. And there is clear evidence (in the recent *Rebuilding Rail* report and other studies) that renationalising the system – removing the inefficiency and added bureaucracy caused by fracturing the system, not to mention the private profits continually being leaked out – would actually save us billions each year. The only real challenge is convincing those in power that there are some things in life – some basic public services – which should remain ring fenced from the profiteers. We need to popularise the notion of nationalisation, so that it no longer a dirty word but rather plain common sense. Because this is the only way we can be sure that we – the people – have the control necessary to build that outstanding public transport system, which will make all our lives better in the future.



# Yes in my back yard: guinea gardens and a design for plenty

Molly Conisbee

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*Let every beginner remember that...superior gardening...is the result of **collective** experience*

**Peter Kropotkin, *French Gardening*<sup>25</sup>**

*...a generall and universall Plantation of such wholesome fruit...as might be for the relief of the poor, the benefit of the rich and the delight of all...The light of nature will teach us that a common, and publike good is to be preferred to all private profit*

**Samuel Hartlib, *A Designe for Plentie*<sup>26</sup>**

One of the most popular, and enduring images of World War Two, was the *Dig for Victory* campaign, which helped to drive a national narrative of food self-sufficiency. The United Kingdom, as one of the first economies to industrialise, with its concomitant dependencies on women working outside the home, had pioneered mass-produced, industrial food (canning, battery production, and pre-packaged convenience food, amongst other innovations). This made the pre-war food system very vulnerable to external shocks, which were quickly exposed once imported supplies became blockaded.

The *Dig for Victory* campaign while driven by necessity was enthusiastically embraced. The attraction of domestic food production has not been lost on contemporary diggers and growers, and although the martial language of war and national self-sufficiency does not sit entirely comfortably, (equitable and sustainable trade, of food as well as other products, is surely a part of our eco-

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25 Kropotkin, P, in Smith, T (1909) *French Gardening*, London: Utopia Press

26 Hartlie, Samuel ,(1652) *A Design for Plentie*

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cosmopolitan future) connecting communities to food production and its pleasures is a worthwhile enterprise for any progressive landscape.

The health and well-being benefits of allotments and other forms of domestic food growing are well documented. Given our essential need for food, our divorce from its means of production within a few short generations has been striking. If nothing else, better knowledge of how to grow it ought to lead to less waste and a deeper appreciation of the soil and environment.

But there is also potentially a deeper gain, which is why a policy of *guinea gardening* should be core to a New Home Front. As well as celebrating the allotment for its practical benefits, the earlier incarnation of the guinea garden – so named for its modest cost of rental – builds on a Commonwealth idea of planting fruit trees and other edible and beautiful plants in hedgerows and publicly accessible herb gardens. Identifying new, publicly accessible spaces to grow – such as railway sidings and canal banks – was one of the liminal practices of Victorian radical gardeners. And a less well-known feature of war-time victory digging was to plant roadsides and other cracks in the urban fissure with flowers and herbs for everyone to enjoy. It is an approach that has been taken up, and rapidly spread by the *Incredible Edible* project. A design for plenty has the potential to transform our relationship with the food we eat and with our communities.

Food is essential. But so are aesthetics, joy, and proximity to growing things. While today's 330 000 allotments must be protected, and further opportunities for domestic and local food production actively pursued, the space for play-ground and pleasure gardening – central to the philosophy of the guinea garden – should be reclaimed for communities everywhere.

# Eat the excess: a celebratory vision for waste reduction

Caitlin Shepherd

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Food unites humanity through the common experience of eating, and ties people to the natural world. Natural resources such as water, soil, organic matter, land, and ecosystems, underpin the production of food; yet these resources are under increasing pressure from human activity. Buddhist economics views excess production as a sign of a disfunctioning system. In the UK, we currently throw away more than a third of the food that we produce; industries edible excesses must be redirected, and feasted upon.

The global food system is estimated to account for 30% of global greenhouse gas emissions while 10% of the greenhouse gas emissions from the West come from growing food that is never even eaten. Food waste is a big problem for climate change, and a sign of an economic system that just isn't working for people or the planet. The UK alone generates between 16 and 18 million tonnes of food waste every year. Globally it is estimated between 30 and 50% of food produced is wasted, while one in seven people in the world still do not have enough food to be healthy. What can be done to set such injustices and inefficiencies straight?

*This is Rubbish*, an energetic food waste campaign, wants to see large-scale food waste stopped through the implementation industry-wide regulation. The campaign uses ceremony and experience to inform the general public, policymakers and businesses of food waste solutions. *This is Rubbish* invites people to digest the problem, and eat it!

Over 2011, *This is Rubbish* delivered an eight-date food-waste feast tour, and worked with government and the food industry to devise food-waste prevention plans. Curating community feasts that included a full programme of poetry, physical theatre, puppet making, cooking food waste prevention workshops, as well as pop-up food-waste feasts for between 30 and 100 people.

*This is Rubbish* campaigns for an alternative food supply chain on entirely inclusive and embodied terms by showing what can be done by what is currently seen as ‘waste’. Feasting is *This is Rubbish’s* preferred medium of communication that results in an experience greater than the sum of its parts. The sourcing, preparing, making, and serving of food all happens before the feast, and engages many people in the process. It is an effort based on contribution, co-operation, community, and creative thinking.

*This is Rubbish* believes that two key policies could dramatically reduce the environmental, economic and social impact of food waste:

- Introduce a mandatory annual food waste audit, assessed by an independent ombudsman. Annual accounts could be kept, and reductions in waste judged as a measure of national progress.
- Introduce mandatory ambitious annual food-waste-reduction targets. Targets could be set to reduce waste in the food system to minimal levels by 2020: the onus would be placed on industry, with householders and producers playing a part. Schools could include workshops on preservation and excess fruits and vegetables could be transformed by local groups for consumption and sale.

*This is Rubbish* continues to spread the foodwaste prevention message through mouths, bellies, and political proposal, uniting a common interest in the advocacy of a sustainable food supply chain that prioritises the prevention of food waste. Join the movement and speak our cultural foundations with your mouth full!

# Guaranteeing our cultural foundations

James Humphreys

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The 1930s and 1940s were hard times for Britain – but something of a golden era for the Arts in Britain. T. S. Eliot and W. H. Auden, William Walton and Benjamin Britten, Laurence Olivier and Peggy Ashcroft, Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore, Margot Fonteyn and Frederick Ashton: from literature to music to theatre, and even in fields such as sculpture and dance where there was no tradition to build upon, Britain was home to a host of artists with international reputations whose work remains part of our national inheritance.

Nor was this art produced by or for an elite. Penguin, the BBC, the Workers Education Association, local institutes, self-funding companies, and commercial impresarios all found eager audiences for the best of art and culture. Sometimes, particularly after the creation of the Arts Council in 1945, there was public subsidy. Often philanthropists would support the arts. But people were also prepared to pay for the best, even when money was tight, reflecting the value that ordinary people put on the arts. Even during bombing raids, it was a point of honour for patrons to stay in their seats – and musicians, actors, or dancers on the stage – rather than take shelter.

Today we still have outstanding artistic work in Britain, and still have companies and promoters who seek out audiences. There is still subsidy of a kind, though the Arts Council has been hacked back once again, and the BBC remains a colossal – though threatened – sponsor of the Arts. What has changed, though, is the value put on the Arts themselves. No longer are they seen as essential to people's everyday existence or to society as a whole. The time when off-duty soldiers read poetry or munitions workers flocked to watch the ballet seem an age away. Yet against the current backdrop of economic crisis and austerity, and the even deeper threats from over-consumption, pollution, and dwindling natural resources, the Arts matter more than ever.

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Partly this is utilitarian: just like sports, the Arts offer all kinds of economic and social benefits, from tourism and employment to mental and physical health and self-esteem. At a time when the desire for investment in school sports is at a peak, it would be a huge missed opportunity not to see a need to expand and secure all extra-curricular activities. Sport should not be in competition with the Arts, and neither in competition with the 'traditional' curriculum. All are needed to educate the whole child.

Gathering the social and economic benefits of the Arts needs other practical steps. One would be to secure existing Arts funding both through the Arts Council and the BBC, and for Arts Council funding to be guaranteed by law (rather than the good intentions of ministers) for a period of years, much like the BBC licence fee. This would give the sector more confidence as well as allowing for longer-term planning.

Another step would be for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to build and develop its expertise in the economic and social benefits of Arts investment, including developing the evidence base. Developers motivated by profit will always have the incentive to claim that extra jobs will be created, and the cash to pay for the research to prove it. Arts organisations need help and support so that their potential contribution to employment and sustainable development is not pushed aside.

We should also encourage individuals to support the Arts financially through more generous tax rebates, though companies who seek to whitewash their anti-social activities through giving should not benefit.

But it would be an error to see the Arts only in utilitarian terms. They enrich our lives so fundamentally, in so many different ways, and provide an increasingly vital alternative to a culture designed only to sell. And as they do not depend on consumption, they can benefit future generations rather than leave a legacy of pollution or depleted resources.

Perhaps the most vital role for the Arts in these increasingly threatening times is to help us – as individuals, and as a society – to make sense of those threats and explore how we should respond. In

the 1930s and 1940s, artists as varied as Orwell, Auden, Ashton, and Britten struggled with the transforming issues of the day – the fight against fascism, against the moral case for pacifism, or the balance between individual liberalism and social obligations. As we face similarly challenging issues – say, how to warn our fellow citizens about the dangers we face without creating disbelief or despair – we need the help of artists more than ever. They, in turn, need creative freedom. This may not bring economic benefits – it might be troubling if it did – but the social and moral gains could be immeasurable.

# From oil to art, liberating culture

## PLATFORM

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The UK Arts sector, like many other vital public services, has been a victim of the draconian cuts imposed by the coalition government. In March 2011, a quarter of the theatres, galleries, and orchestras receiving funding from Arts Council England lost all their government grants in cuts amounting to £100 million.

Many small, community-based or radical arts practitioners have little recourse in the face of these funding cuts. More high-profile arts institutions not only continue to receive public money, they also supplement it through corporate sponsorship. Oil companies have provided the most high profile and the most controversial of these deals. At the end of 2011, BP announced a £10 million deal for four arts institutions, including Tate, over five years.

Despite the sustained criticism of the cheap greenwashing provided to oil companies like BP, including a series of dramatic performance-interventions by groups like Liberate Tate in the gallery spaces, some art commentators are adamant that arts cuts means that now is not the time to discuss the ethics of corporate sponsorship. *Guardian* art critic Jonathan Jones went as far to suggest that the arts should take ‘money from Satan himself’ if it means that museums stay ‘strong and free’.

But is increasing the corporate sponsorship of cultural institutions really keeping them strong and free? *Capitalist Realism* author Marc Fisher in a recent critique of the corporatisation of the Olympics wrote: ‘The point of capital’s sponsorship of cultural and sporting events is not only the banal one of accruing brand awareness. Its more important function is to make it seem that capital’s involvement is a precondition for culture as such.’

Would our cultural institutions feel the need to see private capital as a precondition for their existence if they were properly funded

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from public coffers that in turn were properly resourced from a more appropriate level of corporate taxation? In July 2012, Chancellor Osborne announced a tax break of £500 million to oil and gas companies operating in the North Sea. The size of this public subsidy dwarfs not just the paltry amounts that BP passes off as cultural philanthropy, but also the cuts in public spending to the cultural sector as a whole.

State funding for the Arts is not without problems of its own – but the fundamental difference is that there is a semblance of accountability and transparency that makes democratic intervention to address those problems possible. Tate, as a public body, won't even reveal how much money it is getting from BP.

The Arts have a vital role to play in engaging with the most critical issues of our time, from the threat of climate change, to the extent of corporate power. We need to ensure that the cultural sector is publicly funded and independent so that can do this free from the constraints of pernicious parameters imposed directly or indirectly by corporate sponsors.

# Set Our Cities Free From Advertising

Ruth Potts

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*The world is full of magic things,  
patiently waiting  
for our senses to grow sharper.*

~W.B. Yeats

Freedom, according to the poet and theologian Thomas Traherne, comes not from having a choice, but from having made one.<sup>27</sup> Yet the advertising industry works by convincing us that whichever choice we may have made is not right, and even where we do make a choice, it is almost instantly outdated. Advertising encourages a state of constant anxiety about the way we look, the products we buy, and the company we keep. Edward Bernays, Freud's nephew, who took his uncle's insights and applied them to mass manipulation, described the purpose of advertising as the need to convince 'someone who is nobody that he is someone special'.<sup>28</sup>

No-one is a nobody, but even if we needed to convince ourselves that we are special, buying more stuff is one of the worst ways to go about it. Professor Tim Kasser has spent his academic life exploring the impact of a material culture on our well-being. Drawing on a vast range of empirical data across cultures and incomes, he finds that the more someone cares about money, status, and image, the less likely they are to have a 'good life', and the more likely they are to suffer distress, anxiety, and depression and have lower levels of personal well-being.<sup>29</sup> Once basic needs are met, additional consumption

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27 Inge D (2009) *Wanting Like a God: Desire and Freedom in Thomas Traherne*. London: SCM Press.

28 Bernays E, cited in Sennett R (2012) *Together: The Ritual, Pleasure and Politics of Co-operation*. New Haven: Yale University Press p146.

29 Kasser T (2003) *The High Price of Materialism*. Boston: MIT Press.

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doesn't significantly impact our well-being; the things that do make a difference are experiences and relationships... not stuff.<sup>30</sup>

During the Second World War, creative minds were applied not to encouraging people to buy stuff, but to do stuff. Wartime propaganda encouraged people to grow their own food, make do and mend, save bread, and not be 'fuel-ish' by wasting electricity.

We have a degree of choice about the newspapers we read and the Internet sites we frequent, but if we live in a town or a city, there is little chance of escape from constant bombardment by outdoor advertising. According to the advertising industry itself, we are exposed to up to 3500 adverts a day. The campaign group Scenic America, colourfully describes this as 'sky trash' and 'visual pollution'.

It was this description of pollution on a par with the pollution of the air and water that resulted in the passing of a Clean City Law which banned all outdoor advertising in one of the world's biggest cities, São Paulo, in 2007. Five years on, the law is still in place, and has had unexpected benefits. People report being able to see the city again, and rediscovering lost buildings. According to São Paulo journalist Vinicius Galvao, "The city's got now new language, a new identity."<sup>31</sup>

São Paulo is the biggest city so far to implement a ban, but the idea is not new. There are long-term bans on billboard advertising in four American states: Maine (1979), Vermont (1968), Hawaii (1927), and Alaska (1959). Scenic America cites over 700 communities banning new billboards on the grounds that 'control improves community character and quality of life – both of which directly impact local economies.'<sup>32</sup> As in wartime, people in the UK are already taking creative action. A London-based artist has been covering billboards in poetry, and Brandalism, a new collective of artists and

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30 Aked J, Marks N, Cordon C, Thompson S (2008) *Five Ways to Well-being: The Evidence*. London: nef & The Foresight Programme.

31 Harris DE (2007) São Paulo: A city without Ads. *Adbusters73: Carbon neutral culture*.

32 Scenic America, *Billboard control is good for business*. Available at: <http://www.scenic.org/billboards-a-sign-control/the-truth-about-billboards/100-billboard-control-is-good-for-business> [15 August 2012].

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activists has taken coordinated action to replace billboards with posters questioning the benefits of material culture and the reach of big brands.<sup>33</sup> People in Bristol have started a vibrant campaign to make the city the first in the UK to say 'no' to advertising.

To take a step towards a world where we live more with less, perhaps we need a dual strategy? Bans on advertising in public places would free our towns and cities, creating space where we have the freedom to connect, cooperate, and dream. Where we ostensibly have a choice, a tax on Internet advertising could be used to fund projects that place artists in schools and community centres to create public murals, perhaps even seconded from the advertising agencies themselves. Free from clutter, we might re-connect with the towns and cities we live in, and the people we share them with. And, as the white noise of advertising fades, we may have more space for ideas, plans, and dreams of our own. That really would make us special.

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33 The group describe its motivation as: 'We are tired of being shouted at by adverts on every street corner so we decided to get together with some friends from around the world and start to take them back, one billboard at a time.'  
[www.brandalism.org.uk](http://www.brandalism.org.uk)

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# About the authors

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Andrew Simms is a fellow of **nef** (the new economics foundation) and the author of *Cancel the Apolalyse: new paths for prosperity* (Little Brown, Spring 2013).

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PLATFORM is a collective of 13 campaigners, artists, and researchers who act together to achieve long-term, systemic transformation of the energy system and society.

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Caitlin Shepherd is an environmental artist and co-founder of *This is Rubbish*

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Ruth Potts is a co-founder of *Bread, Print & Roses*

# Further reading

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*The New Home Front. Showing leadership: How we can learn from Britain's war time past in an age of dangerous climate change and energy insecurity*, Andrew Simms, The Office of Caroline Lucas MP: London

*A Green New Deal: Joined-up policies to solve the triple crunch of the credit crisis, climate change and high oil prices*, Andrews Simms, Ann Pettifor, Caroline Lucas, Charles Secrett, Colin Hines, Jeremy Legger, Larry Elliot, Tony Juniper and Richard Murphy, nef (the new economics foundation) London

*TEQs: A Policy Framework for Peak Oil and Climate Change*, The All Party Parliamentary Group on Peak Oil and Climate Change and the Lean Economy Connection, House of Commons: London

*Deliverance: a Post Office fit for the future*, Lindsay Mackie, The Human Element: London

*Towards a Royal Bank of Sustainability: protecting taxpayers' interests; cutting carbon risks*, Nick Silver, PLATFORM: London

*21 Hours: Why a shorter working week can help us all to flourish in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, Anna Coote, Andrew Simms and Jane Franklin, nef (the new economics foundation) London.

*The Courageous State: rethinking economics, society and the role of government*, Richard Murphy, Searching Finance: London

*Think of me as evil? Opening The Ethical Debates In Advertising* (2011) Jon Alexander, Tom Crompton and Guy Shrubsole (2011) PIRC and WWF

# Related websites

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[newhomefront.org](http://newhomefront.org)

[thegreattransition.net](http://thegreattransition.net)

[greenewdealgroup.org](http://greenewdealgroup.org)

[350.org](http://350.org)

[moveyourmoney.org.uk](http://moveyourmoney.org.uk)

[thisisrubbish.org.uk](http://thisisrubbish.org.uk)

[bringbackbritishrail.org](http://bringbackbritishrail.org)





Other commended poster designs: (Clockwise from top left) Finn Beales, Co-operatives UK and Sheffield City Council.

Commended design  
New Home Front poster competition



by Stig

The winning entry in the  
New Home Front poster competition



by Phil Wellington



This is a follow up to the *New Home Front* report written by Andrew Simms a fellow of **nef** (the new economics foundation) and commissioned by Caroline Lucas MP and is part of the New Home Front Initiative. This report is a collection of progressive policy proposals that it designed to illustrate the breadth of policy that could be implemented if there was the will to act.

The New Home Front Initiative also included a public poster design competition. The winner of the New Home Front poster competition is Phil Wellington and it is his poster that is on the front of the report. We also made a special award to Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School in Kent and a Municipal Award for Sheffield City Council's 'Sheffield is My Planet' campaign, and highly commended the work of Stig, Co-operatives UK and Finn Beales.



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