

Renewing Grassroots Mainstream Politics

9 Ideas across politics/economy/society

Do the turning or be turned upside-down

The consensus is that we are at an Atlee 1940s or Thatcher 1980s historical moment - with complex 21st century spoilers around globalisation, the accelerating pace of very disruptive change, identity, unacceptable inequalities, societal cohesion, unprecedented mass migration, and worsening internal and external security.

Those continuing to deny that our politics, economy, and society are in deep trouble will be turned upside-down. Now is the time for a very bold, imaginative and radical agenda. An agenda that captures the imagination and hearts of the many, including those beyond any one political party.

Politics

Putting the next generations first:

- Put in place the framework and resources for a world-leading education and skills development support programme for every school leaver and under 30 year old - incentivising public-private match funding, and a broad range of organisation, charity and foundation partnerships.
- Significantly increase technical colleges and apprenticeship scheme places.
- Replace current university tuition fees/student loan scheme with a graduate tax.
- (See housing ideas below).

Tackle state failure

Less Whitehall, top-down, and one size fits all:

- UK remains the most centralised top-down developed nation state. Devolution has been timid and hotchpotch. UK is the most economically and culturally imbalanced nation in Europe, with most of the other regions performing far behind London and the South East which account for 40% of UK output.
- Each region requires its own boss and champion giving it the love and leadership that Whitehall has consistently failed to deliver. The regional bosses require senior cabinet level status so they can stand up to Whitehall's vertical departments of state.
- Dedicated regional bosses will be best placed to harness the potential of their region and drive forward significant devolution of political and economic powers (bespoke approaches and timetable, encouraging innovation) – better integrating top down with bottom up.

Replace the House of Lords and with a 21st century-proof second chamber:

- The House of Lords is an iconic symbol of political cronyism and undemocratic patronage of a bygone political age.
- Appoint eg John Major and Gordon Brown and two under 40 year old next generation leaders to head a commission to recommend viable options and implementation timetable for a thoroughly modern second chamber - with many younger members and representation from all the key sectors of our society and economy.

- Gripping this 100 plus years old big political issue will transform and energise politics and represent a litmus test of government vision, drive and competence.

It is more than just 'it's the economy, stupid' – lay out the vision in a national covenant:

- We need to know where we are heading, our collective 21st century purpose, what sort of nation we seek to be.
- In our pluralistic society, we need to summarise the rights, responsibilities and obligations of all citizens, the government and major subordinate state authorities.
- The covenant must enshrine core British values including democracy, the rule of law, obligation to others and to the vulnerable.... It must be a compelling narrative. It must inspire.

Economics

Create an enabling innovative, entrepreneurial and winning economic model

Re-boot British capitalism, making it work for the many:

- UK leads (by a long way) other advanced nations in new firms/start-ups – reinforce this success and huge opportunity by increasing resources and enabling clout into the tech accelerators, incubators, and innovation hubs. Prioritise beyond London and the South East.
- Listen and act on top entrepreneurs and business leaders number one priority – education and skills development.
- Spend more on innovation, R&D and business-university partnerships – we still lag comparable economies by an extraordinary margin. Link to imaginative sovereign wealth fund and modern 'war bonds' scheme ideas.

Root and branch replacement and simplification of the tax code:

- The current 21,100 pages tax code and gross inefficiencies must be replaced by a smart 21st century-proof 100 pages code: simpler, fairer, digital economy-effective, bringing in significantly more revenue (eg turnover in country tax, extend Government gateway to corporate registrations).
- Implement many of the leading think tank – including IFS, CPS, IPPR – recommendations for radical tax reform.
- A new tax code is a critical enabler for a better economic model: incentivising innovation and start-up enterprises, and freeing-up an army of lawyers, accountants and bureaucrats often engaged working against the system and common good.

Society

Actually, for many it is 'It's housing, stupid'!

Build 250,000 new homes each year by 2020:

- 164,960 new homes were started in the last 12 months. Meeting the Barker Review 250,000 new houses annual target should be set as a major test of government competence.

- Do much more to reduce planning restrictions and delays, including development to commence within 1 – not the current 5 years – from grant of planning permission. Strictly enforce genuine ‘commencement of building’ and deter token commencement.
- Tackle building development cartels and monopolies, incentivise and encourage start-ups and innovative public-private partnerships and match-funding schemes.

Radical key-worker share-ownership and affordable housing schemes:

- Bring in a radical and generous key worker share-ownership scheme (extending definition to comparable groups eg foster parents) and incentivise a wider range of affordable housing models.
- Pay for this from ring-fenced new sources of revenue: higher charges for properties left empty and those purchased from abroad as alternative investment platforms; replace stamp duty with CGT to be paid on all property sales before the proceeds are distributed – sensitively nil rated and calibrated for first time buyers and other deserving categories; update council tax band property values.
- Get tough with rogue landlords and with councils and developers who dodge their responsibilities to build a fair proportion of key worker and affordable homes.

Enable and financially incentivise citizens and organisations to work for the common good:

- Unleash the full potential of the social enterprises, churches and faith groups, charities and foundations that already provide billions of pounds worth of care to the community and environment; provide financial offset incentives for volunteers, and devise a student loan draw-down scheme for those who contribute on a regular basis.
- Strictly limit Whitehall’s role to enabling and incentivising; success will be proportional to the extent this is bottom-up and civil society-led.
- Grab the energy and passion for change, a healthier society and environment and help nudge a mainstream culture shift from ‘selfie’ to active citizenship.

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