



**One Nation Pathway to Recovery**

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## Introduction



For the last five years we have lived on a political knife edge, from referendums, to elections, to minority governments. We believed that after Boris Johnson's stunning 2019 election victory we would get Brexit done and move forward. Instead, we have spent the last year living through this incredibly challenging pandemic.

We owe our thanks to the Prime Minister, Matt Hancock, Nadhim Zahawi, and most importantly, our incredible NHS, that we may be able to emerge from the worst days of the pandemic. Our 'non-essential' economy is finally being allowed to reopen, and we will soon begin to try to rebuild the economy.

To recover we need to acknowledge the state of the damage.

This global pandemic effect has had an unequal effect on our society. Although we have all made sacrifices, it is undeniable that younger people and children, lower income essential workers, and people in developing nations, are more disadvantaged than those of us who have been able to shield and maintain our incomes.

As One Nation Conservatives we have a proud heritage of delivering better outcomes for all British people. To do this, we must target our limited resources to those that need our help the most.

This may not be easy to do. It may not poll well to invest in catchup education, assist renters, help inner city dwellers, or to support international aid. But what is building back better if not attempting to better our society, and Britain's position in the world.

Drawn from the One Nation Caucus and the Tory Reform Group membership, our report: One Nation Pathway to Recovery sets out ambitious proposals to bring our country back together and deliver a recovery that serves those most hurt by the pandemic.

Yes it's unequal, but we need to be unequal to level us all up.

*Julian Green*

## Executive Summary

To set our country back on the pathway to a One Nation recovery, the government should consider action in the following nine key areas.

### Economy

To reboot our economy and sustainably reduce national debt, the government should:

**Embrace borrowing over tax rises for the short to medium term** by refraining from introducing or increasing taxes with revenue raising as the primary objective until at least 2022.

**Empower local communities with tools to drive growth** by expanding the number of freeports planned; complementing freeports with new Economic Development Zones inland; and requiring every regional mayor, Local Enterprise Partnership and Economic Development Zone to devise a Fourth Industrial Revolution strategy.

**Introduce mechanisms to gradually recover Covid debts** by establishing realistic criteria and categorisation of the post-Covid indebtedness of businesses; creating a Covid Resolution Trust to help manage repayment plans for companies in receipt of Covid loans; and setting up a 'Bounce Back Loan Company' to secure repayments of the Covid Bounce Back Loan.

### Savings

To support those on lower incomes to replenish their savings, the government should **bring forward the Employment Bill** to better protect agency and 'umbrella company' staff in low-paid and insecure work; **consult on introducing a new sidecar savings mechanism** with automatic enrolment; **make the £20 uplift in Universal Credit permanent**; **boost savings accounts via government backed financial incentives**; and **provide a Covid relief payment** to those hit the worst financially by the pandemic.

## **Digital**

To harness the digital revolution while supporting businesses and employees to adapt to the digital age, the government should:

**Roll out digital infrastructure and skills** by accelerating plans to reform permitted development rights to support the rollout of 5G; simplifying and fast tracking community fibre partnerships; and investing a further £8 million to increase the number of digital skills bootcamps.

**Support digital companies to grow their capital and talent** by prioritising plans to modernise R&D tax credits; unleashing pension fund capital for high-growth businesses by adjusting the pension charge cap; reducing the Tier 2 Visa Salary threshold and extending the Tier 5 Youth Mobility Scheme to European citizens; and maintaining the rates of the Business Asset Disposal Relief.

**Encourage flexible working for the digital age** by launching an independent review to consider ways to ensure all businesses are providing flexible working and training opportunities and offsetting the impact of at home working on high street stores by removing Sunday trading laws.

## **Education**

To catch-up children's education and support aspiration, the government should:

**Boost catch-up learning** by shortening the 2021 school summer holidays to support left behind pupils and providing a £20 million BAME catch-up fund.

**Consider wider-scale reform of our education system** by commissioning an independent review to consider wider-scale reform of our schools, such as school hours and examinations, and developing a Bachelor of Education or Postgraduate Certificate in Education specifically for early years.

**Ramp up career support** by creating a new national community alumni scheme and introducing career guidance in primary schools.

## **Environment**

To drive down our emissions and tackle climate change, the government should:

**Accelerate decarbonisation in key sectors** by creating a £20 million Green Skills Fund; extending the £1.5 billion per year Green Homes Grant scheme through to 2024 and launching an urgent review to improve the mechanisms of the scheme; and improving cycling safety through tougher penalties for dangerous drivers and car-free zones around schools.

**Negotiate international action on climate change** by seeking an international agreement on border carbon adjustment tariffs and building a global coalition to tackle illegal deforestation at COP26.

**Utilise carbon capture and storage techniques** by publishing a Greenhouse Gas Removal Strategy; prioritising carbon capture technology within ARIA's research programme; and incentivising soil carbon sequestration through the Environmental Land Management scheme.

## **Conservation**

To protect our natural world, the government should:

**Safeguard wildlife from exploitation** by buttressing existing international frameworks to reduce the illegal trade of species that are most likely to transmit zoonotic diseases to humans; banning the sale of fur in the UK; extending the Ivory Act beyond elephants; and ending the transit of whale meat through UK ports.

**End the throwaway culture polluting our planet** by introducing an Extended Producer Responsibility levy on clothing.

**Empower communities to protect their local environment** by investing £50 million in establishing a network of environmental volunteers and developing a code of best practice for species reintroduction projects.

## **Housing**

To support more people to feel at home in their house or flat, the government should:

**Improve home quality** by raising the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards for privately rented buildings to EPC band D and consulting on introducing a stamp duty incentive to offer discounts for energy efficient properties.

**Provide a fairer deal for renters** by bringing forward the proposed Renters' Reform Bill to enhance renters' security as soon as possible.

**Support first-time buyers** by accelerating leasehold reform with a Leasehold Reform Bill in the new parliamentary session; introducing mandatory estate agency qualifications; and making shared ownership schemes more flexible.

## **Health**

To support healthier bodies and healthier minds, the government should:

**Boost mental health and well-being** by providing a £20 million dedicated green spaces fund to support better mental health; requiring the labelling of digitally altered body images; and reintroducing a £500,000 per annum fund to support bullied LGBT+ children.

**Tackle the root causes of addiction** by accelerating the wider roll out of Housing First programmes; setting up an industry advisory group to support the availability of alcohol-free and low-alcohol products; banning gambling advertisements on sports kits and at sports venues; and introducing a "digital right to opt-out" of advertising for specific addictive products and services.

**Empower people to lead healthier lifestyles** by implementing the Better Health strategy as quickly as possible; launching a consultation on stricter portion control policies; and standard rating for VAT all foods and drinks high in fat, salt, or sugar.

## **International Affairs**

To support democratic values and human rights across the world, the government should:

**Facilitate greater coordination between the world's democracies** by expanding the G7 to include Australia, India and South Korea as the "Democratic 10"; setting up a new organisation to deepen trade ties between democratic nations; exploring opportunities for setting joint standards

on network security and creating industrial capacity programmes; seeking participation in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue; and establishing a framework for foreign policy cooperation with the EU.

**Stand up to autocratic regimes and human rights abusers** by levying Magnitsky-style sanctions against state officials in Iran responsible for human rights abuses and seeking to amend the 1979 Hostages Convention to define State Hostage Taking.

**Maintain our commitments to the world's poorest** by investing £4 billion in UK aid to restore spending to the 0.7% target; reforming our 0.7% aid commitment to take place over a multi-year period; seeking reforms to OECD aid rules to allow greater security spending through Official Development Assistance funding; and negotiating with allies to create a new international body to support prosecutions against those who commit sexual violence in conflict zones.

## Economy

### What

If we do not want to bequeath the largest ever generational debt legacy, a return to sustainable sound monetary policy must follow in the future. We should encourage economic recovery and jobs across the country through an approach to the economy that targets the key industries driving UK growth, value, and employment. These efforts should be focussed on underserved areas of the country, to ensure that the recovery is shared by the whole United Kingdom.

To achieve this we must:

- **Embrace borrowing over tax rises for the short to medium term;**
- **Empower local communities with tools to drive growth;** and
- **Introduce mechanisms to gradually recover Covid debts.**

### Why

#### Embrace borrowing over tax rises for the short to medium term

In the post-Covid economy where many people and companies have made significant sacrifices, it is unlikely that all of the usual economic levers will be available to the Chancellor. Firstly, in order to allow a battered and bruised private sector to recover, it is likely that the space to increase corporate taxation will be limited. Similarly, personal taxation could impact both economic confidence and demand so is unlikely to provide any short-term source of income. Equally the appetite for further and larger public expenditure restraint is unlikely to be politically viable or economically possible.

In the short to medium term, this means borrowing will take the largest burden of securing economic recovery. We should therefore be mindful in this period of economic difficulty, that our economic levers should be focussed on valuable areas of the economy, those that offer better prices for consumers, jobs, sustainability and societal benefit, and growth.

### Empower local communities with tools to drive growth

We need to ensure that our nation's economic recovery from the pandemic is not driven solely by the strength of our urban centres like London. As part of the government's levelling up agenda, we need to devolve more economic levers to local communities and regions across the UK, empowering them to drive local growth.

The Chancellor's plans for Freeports are an excellent step towards this, but we can be more ambitious in creating new bodies to drive local growth and improving existing structures like the combined authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships.

### Introduce mechanisms to gradually recover Covid debts

While the focus of our country's economic policy must be on driving growth, we also need to start thinking about how to recover some of the loans provided through the government's generous Covid support packages.

As a first step, we should define the pandemic debt, not only into the usual cyclical and structural elements, but into a 'Covid' or 'exceptional' element like the debt associated with World War 2, which had a much longer repayment period, and set up the structures to encourage loan repayments.

## **How**

### Embrace borrowing over tax rises for the short to medium term

- **Refrain from introducing or increasing taxes with revenue raising as the primary objective until at least 2022.** The government should avoid seeking to recoup revenue by introducing or increasing taxes and focus on driving growth. Taxes which seek to encourage behavioural changes - for example environmental taxes - should still be considered.

### Empower local communities with tools to drive growth

- **Expand the number of freeports planned.** At present, the government has committed to introduce up to ten freeports, but there is no reason for such an artificial constraint on their number, provided the areas selected are appropriate.
- **Complement freeports with new Economic Development Zones inland.** Similar to freeports, these new zones could incentivise growth within inland areas of the UK and could be overseen by regional mayors.

- **Require every regional mayor, Local Enterprise Partnership and Economic Development Zone to devise a Fourth Industrial Revolution strategy.** Each strategy should set out how that region will embrace the Fourth Industrial Revolution and could be complemented with government funding to support local SMEs who wish to accelerate their adoption of technology.

Introduce mechanisms to gradually recover Covid debts

- **Establish realistic criteria and categorisation of the post-Covid indebtedness of businesses.** These criteria should be based on the understanding that there is a distinction between repayable, sustainable and unsustainable debt.
- **Create a Covid Resolution Trust to help manage repayment plans for companies in receipt of Covid loans.** The Trust could support businesses at risk of defaulting on their Covid loans by working with them to deliver tailored recovery plans, converting the existing government loans into new commercial debt or allowing the government to take an equity stake in the business.
- **Set up a 'Bounce Back Loan Company' to secure repayments of the Covid Bounce Back Loan.** Such an approach, modelled on the Student Loan scheme, would allow companies to repay the £50,000 loan on an agreed schedule after they have returned to profitability.

## Savings

### What

We must support those on lower incomes to not only recover economically but replenish their vital savings that have been decimated by the consequences of the pandemic.

This can be done by encouraging consumers to set aside money by default through opt out schemes, making it financially more advantageous to save through boosting savings schemes for those on lower incomes, and providing targeted payments to those hit the most by the pandemic.

### Why

As we emerge from the pandemic British people are facing the huge challenge to recover their finances. There are particularly acute areas of impact, with those on the lowest incomes having seen the greatest drop in household earnings. Three particularly acute areas of challenge are:

- Those shortly to retire who have seen their pension pots decrease, with reduced wages negatively impacting their contributions;
- Families with caring responsibilities on lower incomes who have seen spending rise while wages have been reduced; and
- Younger people who have lost or had their work reduced, but that still face fixed outgoings like rent, bills, tuition, and transport costs.

### How

- **Bring forward the Employment Bill to better protect agency and ‘umbrella company’ staff in low-paid and insecure work.** This Bill, committed to in the December 2019 Queen’s Speech, promises to better protect those in low-paid work and the gig economy, and should be prioritised in the forthcoming Parliamentary session. The legislation should introduce an entitlement for the self-employed to accrue annual leave in real-time - as proposed in the Taylor Review’s “Good Work” report - or purchase annual leave.
- **Consult on introducing a new sidecar savings mechanism with automatic enrolment to encourage employees to build up emergency savings.** A pilot initiative by Nest Insight has shown both employers and employees are attracted to the idea of a payroll deduction emergency savings tool. The government should consult on introducing such a mechanism nationally and consider building it into the existing pension auto enrolment policy.

- **Make the £20 uplift in Universal Credit permanent.** The increase in Universal Credit has thrown a vital lifeline to people on low incomes throughout the pandemic, whether in work or not. Removing this uplift in just a few months' time, while our economy is still recovering from the pandemic would be a mistake. The government should commit to making this increase, which costs around £6 billion per year and supports the most vulnerable in our society, permanent.
- **Boost savings accounts via government backed financial incentives.** The government should bring forward new schemes to boost saving accounts, distributed via private savings and deposit taking institutions. An option would be to create a new "Help to Save" scheme to support those particularly disadvantaged by the pandemic.
- **Provide a Covid relief payment to those worse hit financially by the pandemic.** The government should consider following President Biden's lead and issue Covid relief payments for those worse affected by the pandemic. A £500 stimulus for every 18-24 year old in the UK, one of the age groups worst affected, would cost around £2.8 billion.

## Digital

### What

To ensure a One Nation recovery we must harness, empower, and invest our fastest growing industries through enabling technology. New advanced technologies, from clean energy and advanced manufacturing to driverless vehicles and precision medicines, all driven by machine learning, Big Data and artificial intelligence (AI), are already changing our economy.

At the same time, we must help businesses and employees adapt to the demands of the digital age. Even before coronavirus, the job market had started to undergo huge change as new technologies in automation, data analytics and mobile connectivity began to revolutionise ways of working and transform the skills required by employers. Coronavirus has only accelerated this trend.

To achieve this we must:

- **Roll out digital infrastructure and skills;**
- **Support digital companies to grow their capital and talent; and**
- **Encourage flexible working for the digital age.**

### Why

#### Roll out digital infrastructure and skills

Boosting our technology will turbo-charge productivity, strengthen our manufacturing base, help SMEs, and drive growth and high quality jobs. This is especially important in our regions where our commitment to Level Up is the foundation of our One Nation approach.

#### Support digital companies to grow their capital and talent

Over the last four years we have seen a 35% rise in the number of high growth businesses in the UK. With the effects of Covid-19 highly likely to impact that trajectory, support to help digital companies grow their capital and talent is more important than ever.

### Encourage flexible working for the digital age

Flexible and in some cases remote working and learning also presents the government with a considerable opportunity for the levelling up agenda, enabling people to live and work in their home towns without necessarily commuting to the more traditional urban centres. In addition, reducing the need to commute and improving broadband availability enables those often excluded from the traditional workplace, including some disabled people and older or returning employees, to continue or return to work.

### **How**

#### Roll out digital infrastructure and skills

- **Accelerate plans to reform permitted development rights to support the rollout of 5G.** The government should bring forward the technical consultation on amending permitted development rights for broadband improvements committed to last year as soon as possible, and aim to have secondary legislation in place to achieve its proposed reforms by the end of the year.
- **Simplify and fast track community fibre partnerships.** The government should launch a call for evidence to seek views from local communities and the telecommunications sector on what can be done to simplify and fast track the process for registering community fibre partnerships.
- **Invest a further £8 million to increase the number of digital skills bootcamps to ten.** Last year the government announced £8 million for expanding successful pilots of digital skills boot camps in Manchester and the West Midlands, providing lifelong learning opportunities in important skills like coding, to four new locations. The government should go further and expand the number of digital skills boot camps to ten, prioritising new boot camps in Yorkshire and the North East of England.

#### Support digital companies to grow their capital and talent

- **Prioritise plans to modernise R&D tax credits.** The recently launched consultation on R&D tax credits is a welcome step towards reducing the costs of innovation. The government should bring forward reforms as soon as possible after the consultation concludes.
- **Unleash pension fund capital for high-growth businesses by adjusting the pension charge cap.** The Chancellor's commitment at the Budget to consult on whether certain costs within the charge cap affect pension schemes' ability to invest in a broader range of assets is

welcome, but more can be done to support pensions funds to invest in venture capital. The government should reconsider adjusting the pensions cap itself, opening up the high returns of venture capital to everyday investors and turbocharging our tech economy.

- **Reduce the Tier 2 Visa Salary threshold and extend the Tier 5 Youth Mobility Scheme to European citizens.** Liberalising restrictions on skilled workers will help ensure emerging digital companies have the talent they need to expand.
- **Maintain the rates of the Business Asset Disposal Relief.** Removing or reducing this relief on Capital Gains Tax would drive up taxes for entrepreneurs selling their business and could result in early stage high risk employees moving overseas.

Encourage flexible working for the digital age.

- **Launch an independent review into distance working to consider ways to ensure all businesses are providing flexible working and training opportunities.** All businesses should continue to provide their employees with distance working and training opportunities. The government should commission an independent review to examine the extent to which this is taking place, and what steps they can take to remove barriers to distance working and training opportunities.
- **Offset the impact of at home working on high street stores by removing Sunday trading laws.** Flexible working is putting our high streets stores, already pressured by online shopping habitats, under further strain. Brick and mortar stores need to be able to operate more flexibly to compete in the digital age. Providing a level playing field in operating hours by removing Sunday trading laws would help to deliver this.

## Education

### What

The government has been right to try to keep schools open where possible and to provide support to families of key workers, striking a balance between safeguarding children's education and development and reducing transmission of the virus. The vaccine is a gamechanger, and it is crucial that schools return to pre-crisis norms as soon as possible.

However, this alone will not address the gap that children now have in their education. government and local authorities are going to have to take targeted action to help minimise this gap and support those from disadvantaged backgrounds who have been most affected.

To achieve this we must:

- **Boost catch-up learning;**
- **Consider wider-scale reform of our education system;** and
- **Ramp up career support.**

### Why

#### Boost catch-up learning

For a whole generation of children and students their academic experience has been irretrievably interrupted if not broken over the last year. Exams delayed or cancelled, classes shifted online, relationship with teachers and classmates changed.

It is vital that the government does everything it can to close this attainment gap through catch-up learning, targeted towards disadvantaged children, with research showing that the poorest children in our society have been the ones most badly affected.

### Consider wider-scale reform of our education system

Like with so many aspects of our daily lives, our response to the pandemic provides an opportunity to address some of the long-term problems in our education system, such as the length of school days. As we build back better, we should keep all options for reinvigorating our education system on the table.

### Ramp up career support

In many areas of the country, more also needs to be done to encourage children to have more self-confidence and aspiration. The government's levelling up agenda must include levelling up ambition, through stronger career advice and mentoring opportunities to show children across the UK what they can achieve if they set their minds to it.

## **How**

### Boost catch-up learning

- **Shorten the 2021 school summer holidays to support left behind pupils.** By shortening the 2021 school summer holidays to reflect reduced school hours over the last year, left behind pupils will be given the support they need to catch up with their peers ahead of the 2021 academic year.
- **Provide a £20 million BAME catch-up fund to provide support for schools in areas with high BAME populations.** This would build on the government's generous £1 billion catch-up premium to provide targeted support for BAME pupils whose education has been most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

### Consider wider-scale reform of our education system

- **Commission an independent review to consider the costs and benefits of wider-scale reform of our schools.** Potential areas to consider reform include the age at which pupils start school, extending the school day to fit with modern working patterns, permanent changes to school holidays, and the future of examinations for assessing pupil progress.

- **Develop a Bachelor of Education or Postgraduate Certificate in Education specifically for early years.** Potentially including not only teaching best practice, but also child brain development, the science of play, and skills for spotting issues requiring early intervention, such a qualification could upskill the early years workforce.

#### Ramp up career support

- **Create a new national community alumni scheme.** Encouraging successful people to return to their hometowns can help inspire people in deprived areas by showing them what local people can achieve.
- **Introduce career guidance in primary schools.** Introducing career guidance earlier in schools will ensure pupils start thinking about their future while they still have open minds and before they begin to develop fixed ideas limiting their ambitions.

## Environment

### What

As destructive as the pandemic has been, the loss of human life and the damage wrought to our economy and society is likely to pale in comparison to that of climate change if greater action is not taken now. We owe it to future generations to build back greener after the pandemic.

To achieve this we must:

- **Accelerate decarbonisation in key sectors;**
- **Negotiate international action on climate change;** and
- **Utilise carbon capture and storage techniques.**

### Why

#### Accelerate decarbonisation in key sectors

In order to decrease our emissions as fast as possible, we should focus on decarbonising those areas of our daily lives that contribute most to climate change. For example, transport is the largest emitting sector in the UK, responsible for more than one-quarter of our total emissions, and is a key area to prioritise. Another is household energy, responsible for around one-sixth of our total emissions.

#### Negotiate international action on climate change.

Climate change is a global challenge which requires global solutions. With our presidency of the G7 and our hosting of COP26, the UK has a golden opportunity this year to lead on developing these solutions.

Areas where there is scope for concerted action include international cooperation on carbon taxation - which both President Biden and the EU have expressed interest in - and tackling illegal deforestation in supply chains.

### Utilise carbon capture and storage techniques.

If we are to tackle the climate emergency, we need to go beyond simply slowing climate change and seek to reverse it. This will require an innovative carbon capture strategy, including tree planting, soil sequestration, and making the most of emerging technology in this space.

## **How**

### Accelerate decarbonisation in key sectors

- **Create a £20 million Green Skills Fund.** The government should fund new training opportunities for the green economy, helping them prequalify from sectors impacted by Covid. This would build on the government's £32 million Public Sector Low Carbon Skills Fund which recently closed for new applications. Key areas for a new fund to upskill workers include electric vehicle charging point installation and maintenance, energy efficiency installations, and battery technology.
- **Extend the £1.5 billion per year Green Homes Grant scheme through to 2024 and launch an urgent review to improve the mechanisms of the scheme.** While the Green Homes Grant scheme had a number of difficulties, with many households finding it difficult to access, the scheme was still an excellent opportunity to drive down emissions and household energy bills. Rather than abandon the scheme, as the government has now done, they should extend it through to 2024, and launch an urgent review to assess and address problems in its delivery.
- **Improve cycling safety through tougher penalties for dangerous drivers and car-free zones around schools.** Half of UK adults report that they would be worried about cycling on busy roads. Introducing tougher financial penalties for dangerous drivers and increasing the number of car-free zones around schools can help to address these fears and get Britain on its bike to drive down our transport emissions.

### Negotiate international action on climate change

- **Seek an international agreement on border carbon adjustment tariffs.** Raising the price of carbon at home can act to shift manufacturing overseas, effectively offshoring our emissions. The government should negotiate an international agreement with the United States, the EU, and others on border carbon adjustment tariffs. Levied on carbon-intensive imports such as steel, coal and electricity, these tariffs would reduce carbon throughout Western supply chains.

- **Build a global coalition to tackle illegal deforestation at COP26.** The government should promote their forthcoming new law on tackling illegal deforestation in UK supply chains as the global standard for protecting the rainforest, and encourage other countries to adopt similar measures at COP26.

#### Utilise carbon capture and storage techniques

- **Publish a Greenhouse Gas Removal Strategy.** The government should expand their planned England Tree Strategy to cover a wider range of greenhouse gas removal policies, and include support for emerging carbon capture and storage technology.
- **Prioritise carbon capture technology within ARIA's research programme.** The new Advanced Research and Invention Agency should have new carbon capture technologies, including direct air capture, as one of the main focuses of its research programme.
- **Incentivise soil carbon sequestration through the Environmental Land Management scheme.** The government should list carbon sequestration in soil as a public good under their forthcoming Environmental Land Management scheme and provide subsidies for farmers who sequester a minimum amount of carbon on their land.

## Conservation

### What

As the Prime Minister has said, the pandemic we are currently grappling with is ‘the product of an imbalance in man’s relationship with the natural world.’ If we do not want to suffer the same devastating consequences from further zoonotic diseases transferring to mankind and from climate change, we need to urgently readdress our relationship with nature.

To achieve this we must:

- **Safeguard wildlife from exploitation;**
- **End the throwaway culture polluting our planet;** and
- **Empower communities to protect their local environment.**

### Why

This is an auspicious time to make progress in protecting our natural environment. Our country’s hosting of the COP26 and the G7 this year provides an opportunity for Britain to set the pace on international action to protect the environment. If we truly want to be the first generation that leaves our natural world in a better state than we inherited it, our country must make the most of this opportunity through action in the following areas.

#### Safeguard wildlife from exploitation

The exploitation, poaching and trafficking that wildlife is subjected to enables the transmission of zoonotic diseases to humans. Aside from our moral duty to end the exploitation of wildlife, in some cases doing so will also make it harder for further zoonotic disease to infect mankind.

#### End our throwaway culture polluting our planet

Our throwaway culture results in millions of tonnes of waste each year, particularly in the textiles industry. Leaving aside the impact that such waste has on climate change and wildlife, the resulting pollution results in direct risks to human health too. Studies show that the microplastics clogging our rivers and oceans are being ingested by fish and other seafood, risking the health of human beings. To reduce climate change, prevent further damage to wildlife, and protect human health, we must tackle our throwaway culture.

## Empower communities to protect their local environment

Many people across our country care deeply about their local communities and the environment they live in. Whether by planting trees, clearing up litter, or removing invasive species, people across our country are willing to volunteer their time to preserve their local environment. The government should do all it can to encourage this.

### **How**

#### Safeguard wildlife from exploitation

- **Buttress existing international frameworks to reduce the illegal trade of species that are most likely to transmit zoonotic diseases to humans.** The government could lead on reforming the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) to include public health and animal health criteria, or adding a new Protocol to the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime to criminalise wildlife trafficking.
- **Ban the sale of fur in the UK.** The role of farms in supporting zoonotic diseases was shown last year when a novel strain of Covid-19 developed in a Danish mink farm. While we have already banned fur farms in the UK, we should go further and ban the sale of fur, as Israel and the State of California are preparing to do. This would stop demand in the UK from sustaining fur farms overseas.
- **Extend the Ivory Act beyond elephants.** There are a multitude of animals besides elephants that bear ivory, such as hippos, walruses and narwhals. The government should introduce secondary legislation to extend the protections of the Ivory Act 2018 to these species.
- **End the transit of whale meat through UK ports.** Amending the Harbour Act of 1847 to restrict the transit of whale meat through our ports would make it harder for Nordic whalers and Japan to trade in whale products, putting pressure on the international whale trade.

#### End the throwaway culture polluting our planet

- **Introduce an Extended Producer Responsibility levy on clothing.** The government should make the fashion industry take responsibility for the environmental costs of their products, through an Extended Producer Responsibility levy on each piece of non-recyclable clothing they sell.

### Empower communities to protect their local environment

- **Invest £50 million in establishing a network of environmental volunteers.** A new network of environmental volunteers could support local communities to protect habitats and biodiversity across the UK.
- **Develop a code of best practice for species reintroduction projects.** In their 25 Year Environmental Plan, the government committed to develop a code of best practice for assessing the merits and risks of species reintroduction projects. Such a code would support local environmentalists to restore endangered British wildlife, like water voles, pine martens and red squirrels in their local areas.

## Housing

### What

With millions of Britons spending the last year in lockdown, the importance of a safe and comfortable home has never been so clear. The challenges of living and working in our homes has helped us to see what and where our current homes and housing mixes are failing.

There is no doubt we need more homes, across the length and breadth of the UK but the coronavirus crisis has shown us all the importance of building not just more homes but more and better homes. As the Prime Minister said in May 2020, “we owe it to future generations to build back better.”

To achieve this we must:

- **Improve home quality**
- **Provide a fairer deal for renters;** and
- **Support first-time buyers**

### Why

#### Improve home quality

One of the key areas for building back better post-Covid is energy efficiency. Too many of the houses and flats across our country are poorly insulated, resulting in both eye-wateringly high energy bills and unnecessary carbon emissions. The latest figures show that the average household in a band E energy efficiency home will pay more than double a household in a band C home in energy bills, while household energy accounts for around one-sixth of our emissions.

#### Provide a fairer deal for renters

Coronavirus has helped highlight that increasingly for many, home ownership isn't everyone's ambition nor experience of 'home'. Whether students, young professionals, or the vulnerable in sheltered accommodation, an increasing number of people across the country, and across

generations, are at some point in their lives requiring rental accommodation for both short and longer term. Levelling up requires the government to work with local authorities and private landlords to improve the standards and security on all tenancy agreements.

### Support first-time buyers

With house prices continuing to rise, aspiring homeowners are increasingly turning to shared ownership schemes and leasehold tenures. While these schemes and tenures can be a good way for first-time buyers to get their feet onto the property ladder, they are poorly regulated, allowing rogue landlords and their agents to fleece buyers. Although the government has made a number of commitments in this area to protect buyers, they have been sluggish in implementing these policies and should redouble their efforts after the pandemic.

### **How**

#### Improve home quality

- **Raise the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards for privately rented buildings to EPC band D.** At present, residential landlords only have to ensure their properties meet Energy Performance Certificate band E. Raising this standard would boost property insulation, improving the quality of tenants' homes and cutting carbon emissions.
- **Consult on introducing a stamp duty incentive to offer discounts for energy efficient properties.** Introducing such a stamp duty incentive for energy efficiency could incentivise the market to build greener homes.

#### Provide a fairer deal for renters

- **Enhance renters' security by bringing forward the proposed Renters' Reform Bill as soon as possible.** The government committed to new measures to enhance renters' security in both their election manifesto and the Queen's Speech. They should bring forward their proposed Renters' Reform Bill as soon as possible to achieve this.

#### Support first-time buyers

- **Accelerate leasehold reform with a Leasehold Reform Bill in the new parliamentary session.** The government should include a Leasehold Reform Bill in its forthcoming Queen's Speech, introducing its commitments to ban the sale of new leasehold houses and reduce

ground rents to zero for new leases within the next session of Parliament. They should also consult on wider reforms, including the wholesale replacement of leasehold tenures with commonhold tenures.

- **Introduce mandatory estate agency qualifications to professionalise the market.** In 2018, the government committed to professionalising the estate agent market through mandatory qualifications. They should bring forward legislation to implement these reforms as soon as possible.
- **Make shared ownership schemes less bureaucratic and more flexible.** Reforming the legal framework for shared ownership to minimise staircasing costs, ensure shared owners only pay a proportion share of maintenance costs, and extend the scheme to pre-owned properties would make shared ownership more attractive for first-time buyers.

## Health

### What

The Covid pandemic has both highlighted the consequences of our obesity epidemic and exacerbated levels of poor mental health. For health policy, building back better after Covid will require taking action to support both healthier bodies and healthier minds.

To achieve this we must:

- **Boost mental health and well-being;**
- **Tackle the root causes of addiction;** and
- **Empower people to lead healthier lifestyles**

### Why

#### Boost mental health and well-being

Covid-19 and the measures taken to contain the virus have had a dramatic impact on mental health and well-being. As we seek to undo the damage that the past year has inflicted on mental health, we need policies that support both the average person and that provide target support for the most vulnerable. The latter include young people struggling with poor body image, which research shows can often be worsened by unrealistic pictures on social media, and LGBT+ people, with self-harming common among young LGBT+ people.

#### Tackle the root causes of addiction

While the evidence is still being collected and analysed by experts, there have been concerns that the pandemic has worsened harmful behaviour among those struggling with addiction. For example, deaths caused by alcohol hit a new high during the first nine months of 2020, the biggest toll recorded since records began in 2001.

Although the government has committed to bringing forward a comprehensive cross-departmental strategy on addiction later this year, they should also take action now to support people struggling with addictions.

### Empower people to lead healthier lifestyles

As Conservatives, we believe in personal responsibility and empowering people to turn their lives around through effective regulation. Health Secretary Matt Hancock's Better Health obesity strategy puts these principles front and centre, by requiring calorie labelling on menus to help people to make healthier choices while eating out.

That said, we also recognise that the government has a role to play in funding opportunities for people to pursue healthier lifestyles and that taxing unhealthy foods and drinks is a way to raise the necessary funding. An area ripe for reform is VAT, with some unhealthy foods zero-rated, for example cakes and biscuits, while others are not.

### **How**

#### Boost mental health and well-being

- **Provide a £20 million dedicated green spaces fund to support better mental health.** Studies have repeatedly demonstrated the mental health benefits of visiting green spaces and the government's pilot for tackling mental ill health through 'green social prescribing' is to be welcomed. The government should create a small, dedicated fund for supporting green spaces in urban communities to capitalise on these benefits.
- **Require the labelling of digitally altered body images.** The government should require advertisers and publishers to label digitally altered body images in order to support positive body image, and consult with social media companies on the best way to achieve this.
- **Reintroduce a £500,000 per annum fund to support bullied LGBT+ children.** Between 2014 and 2020, the government spent £4 million on targeted support for bullied LGBT+ children through the Homophobic, Biphobic and Transphobic Challenge Fund. While a case can be made for the Fund's suspension when schools were largely closed, this should be reintroduced now they have reopened.

#### Tackle the root causes of addiction

- **Accelerate the wider roll out of Housing First programmes.** The three Housing First pilots have been successful in helping rough sleepers with complex health concerns, including substance misuse, to rebuild their lives off the streets. The government should prioritise the wider rollout of this approach, as committed to in their 2019 Manifesto.

- **Set up an industry advisory group to support the availability of alcohol-free and low-alcohol products.** The government’s planned roundtable with industry early last year, was postponed by the pandemic. Once the virus has been defeated, the government could consider accelerating efforts in this area, through a standing advisory group from industry to help roll out greater availability faster and reduce alcohol harm.
- **Ban gambling advertisements on sports kits and at sports venues.** The government should use their review of the Gambling Act 2005 to reverse the growing links between gambling and professional sport by banning gambling advertisements on sports kits and at sports venues.
- **Introduce a “digital right to opt-out” of advertising for specific addictive products and services.** Online browsers and social media companies should be required to offer users the right to easily opt-out of all advertising for specific addictive products and services, such as alcohol, tobacco, junk food, and gambling. This is already possible on some platforms, but offering this option should be made mandatory for all platforms and all kinds of addictive products and services.

#### Empower people to lead healthier lifestyles

- **Implement the Better Health strategy as quickly as possible.** The government should bring forward legislation to implement their planned calorie labelling requirement and ban on unhealthy food adverts as swiftly as possible.
- **Launch a consultation on stricter portion control policies.** Research suggests that portion control policies, such as removing single-serve portions over a certain calorie threshold from packed food ranges and restaurant menus, are among the most impactful and cost effective interventions for reducing obesity.
- **Standard rate for VAT all foods and drinks high in fat, salt, or sugar (HFSS) and use the extra revenue to fund school sports clubs.** The government should commission a wide-scale review of VAT rates on food and drink, with a view to move all HFSS products to a standard-rate. The revenue raised should be earmarked for investment in school sports clubs, to empower children to lead more active lifestyles.

## International Affairs

### What

The events of the past year have exposed just how fragile the flame of democracy is. Hong Kong, the Capitol Insurrection, and the coup in Myanmar all show a weakening of support for democracy and human rights, both in Western countries and around the world.

Global Britain should redouble its efforts to support democratic values and human rights to make our world a safer, more secure and prosperous place.

To achieve this we must:

- **Facilitate greater coordination between the world's democracies;**
- **Stand up to autocratic regimes and human rights abusers;** and
- **Maintain our commitments to the world's poorest.**

### Why

#### Facilitate greater coordination between the world's democracies

Democracy is strongest when those who value democracy work together. In recent years, existing pillars of international cooperation, from the United Nations to the World Trade Organisation, have been severely weakened by autocratic regimes and by the erratic behaviour of the Trump administration. We need new structures of cooperation between democracies to buttress, not replace, these ailing systems.

#### Stand up to autocratic regimes and human rights abusers

Throughout history, we have seen that when a country is able to commit human rights atrocities with impunity, they will continue to do so. The West needs to be far more robust in challenging human rights abusers.

### Maintain our commitments to the world's poorest

In the developing world, the Covid pandemic is exacerbating existing problems of poverty, conflict, and gender-based violence, reducing support for democratic values and making our world a less safe place. Leaving aside moral obligations, poverty and conflict overseas are the root causes of issues like mass migration and terrorism that directly impact our country and cost our taxpayers millions. Therefore, it is neither ethically acceptable nor financially prudent to turn our backs on the world's most vulnerable at their time of greatest need.

### **How**

#### Facilitate greater coordination between the world's democracies.

- **Expand the G7 to include Australia, India and South Korea as the “Democratic 10”.** By expanding the G7 to include the world's ten leading democracies, the group will be better able to coordinate and respond to threats from autocratic regimes.
- **Set up a new organisation to deepen trade ties between democratic nations.** Such a body would reduce the West's trade reliance on China and limit their economic influence over the democratic world.
- **Explore opportunities for setting joint standards on network security and creating industrial capacity programmes.** Whether through NATO, Five Eyes, or a new “Democratic 10” alliance, joint standards on telecommunications security would help wean Western countries off high risk network vendors like Huawei.
- **Seek participation in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue.** Participating in the joint military exercises of India, the US, Japan and Australia in the Indo-Pacific would strengthen our ties with our allies in the region and help deter greater Chinese assertiveness in the region.
- **Establish a framework for foreign policy cooperation with the EU.** From Russian imperialism in Ukraine to terrorist activity in North Africa, there are a number of security threats within the European Neighbourhood. We should work together with the EU to respond to these threats, perhaps by seeking a form of associate membership of the EU's Political and Security Committee.

#### Stand up to autocratic regimes and human rights abusers.

- **Levy Magnitsky-style sanctions against state officials in Iran responsible for human rights abuses.** The government's bold new Global Human Rights sanctions regime should be used to target state officials responsible for the Bloody November crackdown in Iran.

- **Seek to amend the 1979 Hostages Convention to define State Hostage Taking.** Amending this Convention to define State Hostage Taking and call out this practice, would provide additional tools for responding to rogue states engaging in ‘hostage diplomacy’.

Maintain our commitments to the world’s poorest.

- **Invest £4 billion in UK aid to restore spending to the 0.7% target.** The Spending Review cut our Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget from 0.7% of GNP to 0.5%, a shortfall of around £4 billion. The government should reverse this cut and maintain our commitments to the world’s most vulnerable.
- **Reform our 0.7% aid commitment to take place over a multi-year period.** Adopting a more flexible target would allow the government to miss the target in exceptional years and smooth arbitrary deadlines for funding decisions, resulting in more effective spending.
- **Seek reforms to OECD aid rules to allow greater security spending through Official Development Assistance funding.** Peacekeeping missions are crucial to preventing conflict and allow fragile states breathing room to improve their governance, but OECD rules restrict the amount of peacekeeping funding that countries can allocate as ODA spending. The government should negotiate with other countries on the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee to lift this cap, allowing us to fund more peacekeeping missions through our aid budget.
- **Negotiate with allies to create a new international body to support prosecutions against those who commit sexual violence in conflict zones.** In order to meet the government’s ambitious aim of ending rape as a weapon of war, more must be done to bring perpetrators to justice. The UK should push for a new international body of experts to collect evidence of sexual violence in conflict zones and inform prosecutions against those who commit these atrocities.

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