

## Written evidence submitted by Ms E Dovey (PEG0221)

*What core/guiding principles should the Government adopt/prioritise in its recovery package, and why?*

The government should:

- get rid of GDP as a (failed) measure of progress
- move from a linear to a circular economy
- disabuse itself of the myth of perpetual economic growth
- stop using house building to prop up the economy
- reduce the wealth gap
- adopt the principles of doughnut economics, which would ensure that people's needs are met, within Earths' boundaries. The theory of doughnut economics has been around for years – it is currently being trialled in Amsterdam and Oxfam produced a report on it for the UK in 2015. See for example <https://www.kateraworth.com/2020/04/08/amsterdam-city-doughnut/>, <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/the-uk-doughnut-a-framework-for-environmental-sustainability-and-social-justice-344550>.

*How can the Government borrow and/or invest to help the UK deliver on these principles?*

- Stop investing in fossil fuels.
- Stop effectively subsidising fossil fuels.
- Stop locking-in developing countries to fossil fuels.
- Invest in R&D for renewable tech.
- Invest in eco-friendly building materials.
- Invest in eco-friendly agriculture.
- Invest in enterprises that repair items.

*What measures and support will businesses need to rebuild consumer confidence and stimulate growth that is sustainable, both economically and environmentally?*

- Support for schemes where businesses work together to benefit the environment, for example, reusable takeaway containers that can be taken back to any participating restaurant, to be cleaned and reused.
- Cheaper rates for businesses that are sustainable and/or contribute to sustainability, such as zero-waste stores.

- More trustworthy inspecting, for example the recent incident of terrible conditions at a pig farm that had been given the Red Tractor standard. You could start by not announcing a visit in advance!
- Greater transparency about products – where their source materials come from, how they are packaged/delivered, what happens to them at the end of their life. How can customers choose a good quality, long-lasting product when they have no way of identifying such an item? How can they avoid buying food with plastic when even food that is plastic-free on a shelf might have been wrapped in multiple layers of plastic as part of its journey to get there. How can people avoid products that involve environmental destruction or slave child/labour when there is no way of knowing. It shouldn't be the responsibility of charities to investigate and report on such issues.
- Make manufacturers produce better quality items that last longer and are repairable. The EU has already made some steps in this direction.

*Whether the government should give a higher priority to environmental goals in future support?*

There's absolutely no question that environmental goals should have not only higher priority but be near the very top of all priorities. Without an environment, there is no life. The future we are currently facing is extremely grim precisely because the environment has been given no priority at all – it has simply been exploited with no thought for the consequences.

*Whether the Government should prioritise certain sectors within its recovery package, and if so, what criteria should it use when making such decisions? What conditions, if any, should it attach to future support?*

- Building industry – new homes must be carbon neutral. Labour proposed this in a plan which would have taken effect in 2016, but the Conservatives squashed it and now don't expect carbon neutral new homes until 2050, the date when the entire country is supposed to be carbon neutral! (Though that date gives us only a 50% chance of avoiding the worse effects of climate change anyway, and that was before scientists realised that ecosystems are degrading faster than previously thought).
- Planning - the "build back better" planning changes are a load of rubbish! They will lead to even more environmental damage. The obvious thing to do, which the government should have done many years ago but inexplicably didn't, would be to force developers to develop brownfield sites first, which would save greenfield land and would also generate more jobs and put more money into the economy, and force them to actually develop after they get permission. There is a concrete wasteland in my nearest town that has been so for over 30 years. It had permission for 211 houses granted ~15 years ago, and so far the developer has built just 11 houses. They are deliberately sitting on the land in order to increase the pressure on the local council to

grant permission for more difficult sites, like the designated Site of Importance for Nature Conservation at the end of my road, which became a housing estate about 5 years ago. So much for environmental protection.

- Housing – there are too many abandoned homes, second homes, holiday homes, and properties being deliberately left empty for tax reasons. Second homes should be only for those who actually need them. Holiday homes should be chalets, caravans etc, not permanently-habitable houses. Entire communities are dying because of the quantity of holiday homes. No property should be allowed to be left deliberately empty for tax reasons. Furthermore, houses are frequently too big. No-one needs a house with 6 times as many bedrooms as people living in it. To allow the rich to build massive mansions with private cinema, pool, games room etc, is to give them licence to destroy the planet and the rest of us along with it.
- Food and farming – we need more locally-produced food, more organic food (only a few percent of UK farms are organic), more environmentally-friendly farming practices (such as not spraying everything in sight, not using artificial fertilizers, not endlessly ploughing the soil into a dry, dead dust). No factory farming (which could lead to another pandemic besides being bad for the environment with their run-off etc and guilty of animal cruelty). Encourage a more plant-based diet, which would not only be better for the environment, but also for the NHS and personal health.
- Energy industry – ban coal, ban fracking, invest in renewable energy.
- Transport – we need better, cheaper, more frequent, more reliable, greener public transport. More investment in cycling and walking. Less emphasis on cars. No subsidising of airline fuel, or consider rationing of flights. I heard a man on television say he flew within the UK at least once a week! (As part of his work as a property developer). Even Network Rail was telling its employees to fly across the UK rather than go by train, because it was cheaper! A few months ago I research the cost of going by train to the south of France – a significant proportion of the cost was just the 60 miles to London – travel on the continent was much, much cheaper.
- No bailouts without environmental conditions. The government failed to do this after the 2008 crash and it looks like it will fail to do it this time round as well, which would be disaster for our future and that of everyone else on the planet. Other governments are attaching conditions – it's not that hard!
- The environment sector. We need more trees, more rewilding, more kelp forests, better protection for peatlands, rivers, etc. Roosevelt's recession recovery package included a "tree army" and the improvement of national parks, so this is not a new idea either.
- Communications – as more people are likely to work at home in the future, we will need better communications. The broadband improvements proposed in Labour's last manifesto would be good.

*How can the Government best retain key skills and reskill and upskill the UK workforce to support the recovery and sustainable growth?*

- Transition workers from old, polluting industries such as coal, oil, and gas by retraining them and guaranteeing them work. The renewable energy industry will need more workers.
- Train those in the building industry in renewable tech, so they are more comfortable with installing ground source heat pumps, for example.
- Encourage architects to learn about carbon-neutral homes and apply those skills, including the investigation of rarely explored materials such as hempcrete.
- Educate people about the climate and ecological emergency, so they are aware of the dangers and the need for change. Workers are more likely to avoid destructive companies as a result.

*How should regional and local government in England, (including the role of powerhouses, LEPs and growth hubs, mayoralities, and councils) be reformed and better equipped to deliver growth locally?*

- Maybe actually listen to local councils and support them!
- There should be a single, countrywide policy on recycling. It's too confusing across councils at the moment.
- More control over planning, in light of the recent, daft "build back better" planning proposals.
- If more people work at home in the future, local energy grids could help reduce carbon emissions. Local councils could become energy providers. The housing stock has to be made more thermally efficient and eco-friendly though.

*What opportunities does this provide to reset the economy to drive forward progress on broader Government priorities, including (but not limited to) Net Zero, the UK outside of the EU and the 'levelling up' agenda? What should the Government do to ensure that delivering on these priorities does not exacerbate the vulnerability of businesses, consumers and communities/workers that have been impacted by COVID-19?*

- The post-COVID-19 recovery provides a rare chance to really make an impact towards achieving Net Zero, which the government is currently failing spectacularly to do.
- Reduce the wealth gap – protect the people not the money. This would help small businesses, start-ups etc, and help produce a strong, local economy, giving life back to high streets and increasing resilience. Put a cap on salaries and make corporations pay their fair share of tax. Abolish tax havens (the UK is one of the worst countries in the world for allowing tax evasion and avoidance).

- Invest in areas outside of London and the South East, which would help “level up” people across the country.
- Stop giving contracts to cronies.
- Don’t give in to unfair trade demands from the US, which would damage British business. For example, the lowering of food standards that the government recently voted to allow. Similarly, protect the NHS and do not allow the Conservative party to dismantle it, or the US to destroy it so they can profit from the sick and the poor as they do in their own country.
- Homes should be built with bigger gardens, which would give people space to grow food as well as get exercise and exposure to nature.

*What lessons should the Government learn from the pandemic about actions required to improve the UK’s resilience to future external shocks (including – but not limited to – health, financial, domestic and global supply chains and climate crises)?*

- Listen to the science. A pandemic was inevitable. Investigations were done years ago, reports were created, stockpiles were started, but the Conservative government ran down the supplies and the NHS. I’m frankly surprised the NHS hasn’t collapsed. Thank goodness for all those migrant workers who wouldn’t be able to enter the country under the government’s new post-Brexit immigration plans.
- Learn from other countries rather than pushing your own agenda/equipment/track and trace app because “it’s British” (or, possibly more accurately, because it makes someone in government some dodgy money).
- Local communities are important – local business, local food growers, local communication. Local energy, via energy grids, would also be good in the future.
- Education about the climate crisis is one of the most important things the government must do. Whoever heard of a country declaring an emergency but then not telling anyone what that means (or indeed, actually doing anything about it). Previous governments ran public information campaigns back in the 90s – now we are feeling the crunch and yet....nothing. The government is happy to send everyone a leaflet about COVID-19 and about Brexit, yet nothing for the greatest crisis humanity has ever faced? One that is infinitely more dangerous than either of those two things?

*What role might Government play as a shareholder or investor in businesses post-pandemic and how this should be governed, actioned and held to account?*

How about a state-owned company (or two, for competition) for building houses, so the help-to-buy scheme doesn’t end up funding bonuses of tens of millions of pounds for CEOs of

property developers, and people can get decent housing without every corner being cut to make more money for those at the top.

Some more examples generally at <https://ipolitics.ca/2020/07/22/green-infrastructure-can-revive-post-covid-19-world/>.

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