

# Interim Report

## Foreword

Thank you to all who took the time to respond to the 2020 National Policy Forum Consultation.

Your insight has enabled the NPF to provide a set of grounding principles to shape our policy for the challenges and opportunities ahead.

The principles outlined in the report are based on the values that bring us together as a Party and lay the foundations for the work we will do together over the next four years. Labour wins when we offer a vision of the future that is optimistic and gives people hope that things can and will change for the better, and these principles reflect this.

From empowering citizens to fighting the climate emergency, rebalancing Britain to supporting the nation's mental health, the principles demonstrate that our Party is rooted in the values that the public share, and outline the kind of change that we know is so needed in our country.

This report could not have been developed without listening to views from across the Labour movement, from our members to affiliates, all of whom play a vital role in developing our policies. But this engagement doesn't stop here – we now want to hear what all parts of our Party think about these principles.

While the world around us is changing fast, the common bonds between us have been strengthened as a result of the challenges we have undergone. By working together, we can rebuild our country and ensure a fairer Britain for all.

Yours,



**Keir Starmer**  
Leader of the Labour Party

# The next steps for the National Policy Forum (NPF)

Thank you to all members, affiliates and stakeholders who took part in the NPF (National Policy Forum) consultation this year, whether you submitted your ideas through Labour Policy Forum or attended one of the online roundtable events.

Social distancing measures meant that consultation activity looked a little different this year. The Consultation was held solely online, with all eight documents hosted on Labour Policy Forum, and eight member policy roundtable events on Zoom in lieu of our usual roadshow of events. This was an opportunity to trial new methods of engagement, and we hope to be able to continue to do this as the work of the NPF evolves over the next few years.

This work will be laid out in more detail in the following report. While it was not possible for this report to be taken to Annual Conference and debated on Conference floor, we hope that it will be of interest to inform and explain the work of the NPF this year.

The report lays out a set of principles that the policy commissions will build upon over the course of the election cycle looking to 2024.

**We want to hear your views on these principles,  
and welcome you to submit them via Labour Policy Forum:**

**[www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/make-a-submission](http://www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/make-a-submission).**

Your comments will be considered by the policy commission and will inform a fuller report covering two years of NPF activity, which will be taken to Conference in September 2021. If passed by delegates it will form part of our policy platform.

Thank you again for your involvement with the National Policy Forum this year. Your insights will help us to shape our policy platform so we can win again and ensure a fairer Britain for all.

# Membership 2020

## HM Opposition

Steve Reed MP\*  
Thangam Debbonaire MP  
Jim McMahon MP

## NEC

Jayne Taylor\*  
Wendy Nichols †  
Ian Murray  
Mick Whelan

## CLPs and Regions

Elly Baker – *Greater London Region*  
Lorraine Beavers – *North West Region*  
Simon Foster – *West Midlands Region*  
Nicky Gavron AM – *Greater London Region*  
Alice Grice – *East Midlands Region*  
Neil Guild – *South West Region*  
Carol Hayton – *South East Region*  
Emily Horsfall – *West Midlands Region*  
Caitlin Kane – *Scottish Labour Party*  
Denise Robson – *Northern Region*  
Maggie Simpson – *Welsh Labour Party*

## Affiliates

Mick Carney – *TSSA*  
Collette Gibson – *ASLEF*  
Dean Gilligan – *GMB*  
Linda Hobson – *UNISON*  
Sina Lari – *Socialist Societies*  
Chris Bain – *Co-operative Party*  
Tony Woodhouse – *Unite*

## Elected Representatives

Angela Cornforth – *Association of Labour  
Councillors*  
Lib Peck – *Local Government Association*  
Michael Payne – *Local Government Association*

\*Co-convenor

† Joined commission in May 2020

## Overview of the work of the Housing, Local Government and Transport Policy Commission

The Housing, Local government and Transport policy commission was this year tasked with giving particular attention to the future of local government in the aftermath of the coronavirus.

The coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has exposed the deep inequalities that scar our country. Poor people, older people and BAME communities have all suffered disproportionately from infection just as they suffer disproportionately from other forms of inequality.

Inequalities of power underpins the inequalities of wealth and opportunity that visibly afflicts our country. This creates a big challenge for Labour – how do we open up power to more people? Can we reshape our society to give people a real voice at work, in their neighbourhoods and over the public services they use, so we can build fairer communities as part of a fairer country? In particular, how do we make sure the most vulnerable – those who often have the weakest voice – are able to influence the decisions that affect their lives instead of being subject to decisions taken about them by others? At a time when trust in politics and politicians is broken, can Labour rebuild trust by showing that we trust people to take back control and have a bigger say for themselves?

This opens up a debate about the future relationship between citizens and the state. Britain is one of the most centralised states in the world, and many people feel that model has failed them because it is too top-down, remote and unresponsive.

Does Labour believe decisions are best taken as close as possible to the people affected by them so those people can better influence them? If so, which decisions should be taken centrally, and which should be devolved? How do we ensure devolution isn't just about shifting power from one tier of politicians to another, but is instead about giving people a real voice over the decisions that affect them at work, in their communities and over the public services they use?

Labour can choose to remake politics around people, creating a more open, participative and responsive democracy that gives people a voice and the power to make it heard. There's evidence to show that more empowered communities are happier and more resilient in dealing with the challenges they face. Instead of seeking power for ourselves, should Labour instead seek power to empower everyone else as part of a more democratic society?

On these topics the Commission heard from a variety of voices including members of the public at a well-attended e-roundtable event held in mid-June. In addition, the Commission wishes to extend its thanks to Mayor of Bristol Marvin Rees, Leeds Council Leader Judith Blake, and academics Will Jennings and Jessica Studdert (New Local Government Network) who came to give evidence to Representatives over Zoom.

Devolution, civic engagement and council funding were recurring themes. Whilst some touched on the need to have a clearer relationship between national and central government, others highlighted the need for a rebalancing of power between the two democratic institutions. One thing is clear, Labour's challenge is to shape a vision of a fairer future. And part of that will be rethinking the role of local government as part of a renewed democratic settlement in a more secure and sustainable world.

## Principles:

1. Reducing inequalities through the power of local communities by building back better and greener
2. Level up held-back areas
3. Deliver fair longer term funding for councils
4. Collaborate with local communities to deliver devolution that works
5. Create a renewed relationship of equals between central and local government
6. Ensure everyone receives at least the Living Wage
7. Increase community control over local public ownership
8. Build the council and social homes our country needs
9. Establish new mechanisms to engage locally
10. Encourage more diversity of those engaging in local democracy

## Consultation responses

Communities have been devastated by Covid-19 with the long-term effects still unknown, especially its effects on mental health. One thing that's certain is that we can't simply go back to how things were before. Inequalities in our society are ever existent. This is wrong and the next labour Government will make tackling inequalities a fundamentally core principal.

Whilst our attention has been focused on one crisis, another - the climate emergency - is still an ever present growing danger. Labour is guided by the principal that not only must we build back our public services, social spaces and community projects, we must also do so in a greener, more environmentally friendly way. Every policy decision, ministerial statement or funding commitment will be judged against its environmental impact so we can truly leave behind a better country for future generations. Labour will build a truly fair and equitably country where no one is left behind.

"We know that a recovery which attempts to merely build back a semblance of what we had will fail, burdened by global slowdown, lack of demand and a huge shift in consumption patterns. The ongoing climate emergency and this crisis have both exposed deep-rooted failings and we now demand a new type of economy."

**CLES (the National Organisation for Local Economies)**

Submissions were clear our economy is incredibly unbalanced. Whilst there are deprived parts of London and affluent areas of say, Greater Manchester, there remains a North/South funding divide. With transport funding for example, the North is set to receive £2,389 less per person than London over the coming few years. Unlike the Government, Labour's levelling up agenda will amount to more than just soundbites or the Prime Minister name dropping a constituency. We will rebalance our economy and country so held back areas can reach their full potential.

“Funding for the measures taken during the crisis by local government has to be met by central government – not result in consequent cuts to local services. The future funding of local government must be increased and secured at a level where services – such as public health, social care, child and youth services, as well as environmental services and arts and leisure – that have been cut and underfunded can finally be provided at the level local communities deserve. This must also include funding being provided with an additional weighting towards local areas that are currently socio-economically deprived and need additional services to ‘level up’.”

**Unite the Union**

Local councils are at the heart of their communities. They provide the services and provisions we all rely on to live a better, healthier life. But over the last decade, local authorities have borne the brunt of Tory austerity measures. The Commission heard from Councillors, Council leaders, Metro Mayors, Police and Crime Commissioners, council employees and residents who were all desperate for an end to the cuts and a commitment to fund councils fairly. This is part of Labour's DNA: a belief that you can't have the public services communities need unless you give councils the resources they need. It's clear and evident that council run public services are vital for people of all ages, from baby classes to social care and the youth clubs that are integral for crime prevention. Delivering fairer funding and fair distribution of council funding is a central tenant of Labour's ambitions in power.

“The government's “Fair Funding Review” has been anything but fair, seeking to shift the funding emphasis away from one that is deprivation linked which will largely benefit Tory-run councils. Labour needs to fight against this now but also ensure that a future system is fair and helps those in our society who need it most.”

**Local Government Association, Labour Group**

In addition to fair funding and ensuring local services are well funded, they also must be responsive to the needs and wishes of those they seek to service. For too long devolution has simply been a decision for Whitehall. Ministers deciding what powers to devolve and to where. This whole process is largely not an exercise to empower local communities but passing on cuts to councils. This is wrong. The patch work, ad hoc attitude towards devolution does nothing to empower residents. Labour will collaborate with local communities to deliver devolution that works, underpinned by our commitment to give councils the funding they need and empower local communities.



"I would like to propose a shift away from centralised government in favour of greater autonomy for local areas and devolving power to local individuals/groups.

At the moment, local issues are under-appreciated and under-funded. We are faced with a chance to re-shape our societies at the moment and a move to greater local power would be a positive step. It would allow local areas to make decisions over how land is used, where health centres are (and they are purposed) and how to invest in their community. This would require greater funding to local areas, but, also, a removal of centralised power from Westminster. We have seen the success of devolving powers to Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland; I believe we are now at a stage where this should go further, giving local authorities much greater power to administer budgets and funds for local projects."

**James, London**

The commission heard time and again that local or regional government is seen as second class by Whitehall. This unbalanced view from Westminster impacts upon how they are treated both in funding and devolution terms. So Labour affirms its commitment that there will be a relationship of equals. No one tier of government more important than the other. No one council or body in a tier more important than another. Equality and fairness, core Labour values, mean just that - decisions of funding and devolution will be made in collaboration with councils and communities.

"We have to get to a place where local, regional and national government are understood as equal partners. Where national government steps back from command and control and acknowledges there are spheres, not tiers of government. Local government needs to be given respect, a seat at the table, and a real devolution settlement with dependable, long term fair funding."

**Mayor Marvin Rees, Mayor of Bristol**

We're proud that Labour councils were the first local authorities to become Living Wage employers. Everyone deserves to be paid enough to live off. An estimated 14.3 million people are in poverty in the UK, and 8.3 million of them are working age adults. This can't be right. Something must change and Labour will be the ones to do it. Whilst we look towards our next manifesto, we recognise the excellent work Labour councils are doing

to get there faster. We're proud of our councils' innovative policies and projects, such as those councils that have become Living Wage landlords, insisting that all new tenants in the commercial properties it lets commit to paying at least the Living Wage to all staff working in their buildings. This is the sort of pioneering work that shows the best of what Labour in government can do.

"We do believe that all local government workers deserve a proper reward for the work they are putting in now and the work they will need to put in to re-build local government and communities when this crisis is over."

**UNISON**

Much of our transport system doesn't act in the interest of passengers but rather profit. To be more precise much of our system, including rail and most bus services outside of London, are run by private companies. They are responsible to their shareholders, which particularly in the rail sector is ironically often foreign governments. The Commission heard from members across the country concerned that local voices were ignored in decision making, local bus routes closed or rail timetables changed with no local consultation. Labour's ambition for our public transport is more than just about who owns it but also who benefits from it. When we say a transport system that works for passengers that has to be our guiding principal: a responsive, joined up public transport system that is better delivered with greater public control.

"In order to prosper, local economies and high streets need transport networks that are accessible, affordable and integrated across towns and communities."

**USDAW**

Our country faces a stark housing crisis. This was the universal message from housing experts, councillors and members. Housing is unaffordable whether to buy or to rent. Homelessness is rising. The production of social and council housing is slowing especially because of this lockdown. Under the Tories, the number of new social rented homes has fallen by over 80%, so we are now building 30,000 fewer socially rented homes each year than when Labour left office. There are now almost 200,000 fewer council homes than there were in 2010, in part caused by the destructive right to buy policy. The Tories have caused this mess, yet have no plan to fix it. The Tories have failed to recognise the value of co-op housing, or housing where tenants own a share of the property they live in and

can live for as long as they wish. Whilst we can't be prescriptive about numbers this far out from an election, unknowing of the political landscape we'll inherit, we can set out a clear principal because the ends will guide the means. Labour fundamentally and unequivocally believes in the value and need for wholesale council and social housing and we will deliver it in office.

"Democratically accountable local authorities should be at the centre of policy as both enablers and providers of social housing over the next 10 years. Labour Housing Group believes that local authorities should be given the means to acquire land for housing development and internal resources to enable them to have the skills and expertise to build new homes."

#### **Labour Housing Group**

Submissions and evidence to the Commission was clear that for many they don't feel they can engage on local decisions that affect them, and planning is a key example of this. Under new permitted development rules, developers are able to totally disregard the wishes of local communities or local elected officials. Whilst local forums and neighbourhood groups with local councillors sitting on them exist, they can be too formal or difficult to engage with. Whilst some councils are engaging in innovative ways, the truth is we still engage in much the same way as we did a decade ago, or in the case of neighbourhood forums a century ago. New technology and our experience of video calls over the past six months has shown us that more can be done to modernise the way residents and communities engage. Whilst it wouldn't be right for central government to dictate what to use or how to do it, it is right that government gives communities and councils the tools, training and resources to make this possible. If residents want to engage we must break down all the barriers to them doing so and ensure that central government impose policies which circumvent this. This is one of our guiding principles and we will make it happen.

"To encourage engagement in local politics, and ownership of decisions, more public involvement in planning and decision-making is needed, such as citizen assemblies, youth councils, sub-divisions of council departments, more use of online interaction.

Recruit community champions for roles at ward level, e.g. parks, library, pools, safety, building social capital, mental health, fitness, food growing, etc. More support for volunteers, (e.g. Friends of parks, etc), targetting areas of deprivation."

**Jean, West Midlands**

Local councillors are time and again the last defenders of the most vulnerable in society. The people those most in need turn to. Those of all political colours give up their evenings and weekends and all the times in between to attend meetings and respond to casework. We reaffirm our thanks to them for their tireless efforts and recognise that when Labour comes to power it will be local government that has to deliver many of our manifesto commitments. The Commission heard too of the value and role that democratically elected and directly accountable Police and Crime Commissioners play in local communities. They are vital local representatives along with our councillors. We recognise too that we need to encourage a more diverse range of councillors and local representatives. We know it's an extremely challenging time to be an elected local representative at the moment and our party will continue to work with the Local Government Association to provide potential and existing councillors the best support and training.

"The national census of local authority councillors, showed that local government is not representative of the people they seek to represent:

63 per cent of councillors were male, and 36 per cent female.

The average age of councillors in 2018 was 59.

96 per cent described their ethnic background as white.

88 per cent described their sexual orientation as heterosexual or straight;

Whilst the Labour party leads the way,  
Labour can do more to bridge this divide."

**Anne, Eastern**

## Concluding remarks from the co-convenors, Steve Reed MP and Jayne Taylor

On behalf of the Commission, we want to thank all of those who have engaged in the work of the Policy Forum over the past few difficult months.

We had some interesting and informative discussions with members, experts and the wider public from across the country. These have educated and shaped our principals and thinking as we set off on the path towards the next election.

It's right that we lay the foundations of our thinking and gain buy-in from as broad a range of people as possible before honing in on more specific policy areas, which we will do over the coming years. However, there are some fundamental truths that have rightly been spelt out. The housing crisis is exacerbating, so it's appropriate to be clear that we'll build the homes, particularly council and social, we need to get ourselves out of this and help tackle the growing homelessness crisis, in part, caused by the unaffordability of the private rented sector.

A future Labour Government will ensure we listen to local communities and it was pleasing to see so many contributions highlight the need for greater local engagement, none more so over planning rules which the Tories have stripped away from communities. Standing up for communities in opposition and delivering for them in power is central to Labour's values.

Submissions also wanted Labour to acknowledge and challenge Tory funding cuts which we will of course continue to do as the Party has for the last 10 years. In addition, they highlighted Labour's ambitions to creating a world class affordable transport scheme, which is always great to see.

Finally, the Commission and the whole Party is left in no doubt that we must and can do more to make our local leaders more representative of the communities they serve. The Local Government Association, colleagues at the Party and Trade Unions do a fantastic job in encouraging greater diversity but there is always more to do and that's rightly a core ambition for the whole Labour movement.

To conclude, we look forward to continuing to engage with members, stakeholders and the wider public as we develop our policy platform going forward.

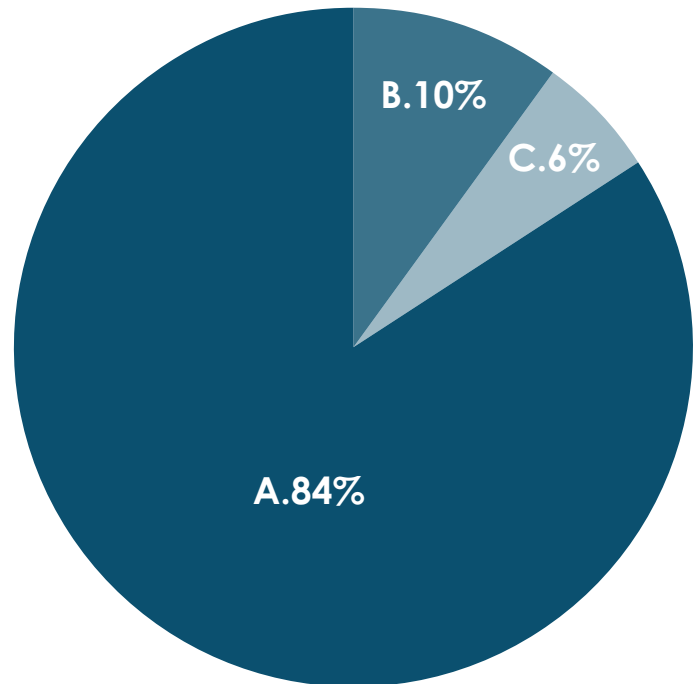
# Submissions

In 2020 the Housing, Local Government and Transport Policy Commission has received and considered submissions on the following topics:

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| <p><b>A</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adult education</li> <li>Agriculture</li> <li>Airports</li> <li>Armed Forces</li> <li>Art</li> <li>Austerity</li> </ul> <p><b>B</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BAME</li> <li>Bed shortages</li> <li>Bedroom tax</li> <li>Benefit cap</li> <li>Bereavement support</li> <li>Buses</li> <li>Business rates</li> <li>Businesses</li> </ul> <p><b>C</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Care homes</li> <li>Child poverty</li> <li>Citizenship</li> <li>City regions</li> <li>Class</li> <li>Clean air</li> <li>Climate change</li> <li>Community ownership</li> <li>Cooperatives</li> <li>Coronavirus</li> <li>Corporation tax</li> <li>Council housing</li> <li>Council Tax</li> <li>Countryside</li> <li>Crime</li> <li>Cycling</li> </ul> | <p><b>D</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defence</li> <li>Devolution</li> <li>Digital</li> <li>Disabilities</li> <li>Disability equality</li> <li>Discrimination</li> <li>Doctors</li> <li>Domestic violence</li> </ul> <p><b>E</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Electoral reform</li> <li>Electric Vehicles</li> <li>Electricity</li> <li>Emergency Services</li> <li>Emissions &amp; air quality</li> <li>Employment protection</li> <li>England</li> <li>Environment</li> <li>Equality</li> </ul> <p><b>F</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Food</li> <li>Food poverty</li> <li>Funding</li> <li>Further Education</li> </ul> <p><b>G</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender violence</li> <li>Green economy</li> <li>Green New Deal</li> </ul> <p><b>H</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health and safety</li> <li>Help-to-Buy</li> <li>Higher Education</li> <li>Homelessness</li> <li>Hospitals</li> <li>Housing</li> <li>Housing benefit</li> <li>HS2</li> <li>Human rights</li> </ul> | <p><b>I</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Immigration</li> <li>Income tax</li> <li>Industrial strategy</li> </ul> <p><b>L</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Land Registry Database</li> <li>Land Tax</li> <li>LGBT equality</li> <li>Living standards</li> <li>Local economies</li> <li>Local Government</li> </ul> <p><b>M</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mental health</li> <li>Mortgages</li> </ul> <p><b>N</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Education Service</li> <li>National Social Care Service</li> <li>Nationalisation</li> <li>NHS Funding</li> </ul> <p><b>P</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parliamentary reform</li> <li>Pedestrians</li> <li>Planning laws</li> <li>Policing</li> <li>Poverty</li> <li>Primary schools</li> <li>Private rented sector</li> <li>Privatisation</li> <li>Public services</li> </ul> | <p><b>R</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Race equality</li> <li>Rail Freight</li> <li>Railways</li> <li>Regional development</li> <li>Renewable energy</li> <li>Resource scarcity</li> <li>Right-to-buy</li> <li>Road Safety</li> <li>Rural communities</li> </ul> <p><b>S</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School systems</li> <li>Secondary schools</li> <li>Shared ownership</li> <li>Sheltered housing</li> <li>Sixth form colleges</li> <li>Social Care</li> <li>Social housing</li> <li>Student accommodation</li> <li>Sure Start</li> <li>Sustainability</li> </ul> <p><b>T</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tax</li> <li>Technology and science</li> <li>The Constitution</li> <li>The economy</li> <li>The media</li> <li>Trade Unions</li> <li>Transparency</li> <li>Transport</li> </ul> <p><b>U</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilities</li> </ul> <p><b>V</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Voter engagement</li> </ul> <p><b>W</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walking</li> <li>Women's rights</li> <li>Worker's rights</li> </ul> |
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## Breakdown of who sent in submissions

- A.** Individuals – 84%
- B.** Local Parties – 10%
- C.** Organisations – 6%



## Breakdown of how submissions were received

- A.** Labour Policy Forum – 95%
- B.** Email – 4%
- C.** Post – 1%

