

100 IDEAS TO CHANGE BRITAIN

THE DE MONTFORT UNIVERSITY
POLICY COMMISSION



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The De Montfort University Policy Commission

WHY CREATE A POLICY COMMISSION?

As a university dedicated to the public good, De Montfort University (DMU) has a commitment to use its knowledge and resources to benefit the public good beyond the campus. Its award-winning Square Mile project engages a network of students and academics to work with local communities to improve the lives of people in Leicester. Its Homework Club brings together 200 student volunteers to offer mentoring and learning support in 17 schools across Leicester.

Part of this sustained commitment to the public good, and to engaging with the world beyond the campus, the Policy Commission was designed to give students a say in the future of the country and a voice that will be heard by those in power. At the same time, it sought to challenge the stereotype that young people are less and less interested in politics. Indeed, final year student Jamie Osowski (20) who joined his peers at the Big Policy Brunch said: “The Policy Commission combats the idea that young people aren’t interested in politics. We have new ideas and just need a platform and a culture that encourages us to get involved.”

Importantly, the Policy Commission was also the opportunity to engage students in new ways of learning. Our approach has been to view students as co-producers of knowledge, working in collaboration with academic staff to enhance the student learning experience. Drawing on an activist political pedagogy, our project has created a community of action, which goes beyond existing notions of the lone student as a producer of knowledge working in isolation with academic staff.

It is our argument that the Policy Commission offers a new form of ‘praxis’, by which students are energised as a community of learners to enable them to maximise their learning outside of traditional curriculum boundaries. This praxis importantly mixes subject disciplines and brings together students from all levels of study across the university. Through such an approach, we believe that the model of a Policy Commission reasserts the intellectual curiosity that is central to the mission of Higher Education and reinforces learning as a ‘political act’ that not only transforms the lives of those that it directly engages with, but crucially creates a dynamic process with outcomes that impact on the lives of others and places universities as a force for the public good.

HARVESTING THE IDEAS OF DMU STUDENTS

The Policy Commission was open to all students at DMU on over 400 courses across four faculties. Over the course of five months, a programme of innovative events was put in place to harvest ideas of how to change Britain. The Commission was an active and dynamic body, taking the debate out to students rather than sitting in lecture halls.

LEADING THE COMMISSION: OUR STUDENT POLICY COMMISSIONERS

To drive forward the different streams of work, each of the five thematic inquiries was coordinated and led by a small group of student policy commissioners. These volunteer commissioners, mostly undergraduate students, were supported by two academics per theme and by a member of the University Executive. During the course of the Commission, they were trained in writing for policy-makers, attended thematic workshops, as well as collective writing days.

The work of the Policy Commission depended upon these engaged students and it is their efforts and voices that we see on every page of this report. Much of this work was undertaken during final examinations and assessment periods. Many students also had to juggle work and family commitments. We take this opportunity to thank them all for their involvement. The names of student policy commissioners are listed on the first page of each of the thematic chapters.

THE WORK OF THE THEMATIC GROUPS

The work and organisation of each thematic group was left to students to decide (in conversation with their academic support). Each group worked differently. Some students undertook appreciative inquiries, while others started with the formulation of problem trees, before engaging in forms of action learning policy inquiries. Some undertook interviews with key stakeholders, while all undertook critical reviews of existing policy programmes. All drew upon their personal experiences of policies and public services.

READING THE REPORT

In keeping with the student-led aims of this Policy Commission, no strict guidelines were given on how to report findings. In fact, there was only one criterion: each theme was to present 20 policy ideas. Unlike other standard formats of policy reports, this document thus brings together five different inquiries, united by the common objective of producing an agenda for change and ideas for policy.

The executive summary offers an overview of the 100 policy ideas that mark this manifesto for change in Britain. Each of the separate sections then presents a detailed analysis of the policy ideas for each theme, exploring the rationale for the selection of ideas and the vision for change that informs this selection.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The De Montfort University Policy Commission has benefitted from the support of too many people to mention. We wish to thank all the students, academics and members of the Executive Board who took part in this Commission. Of course, our special thanks go to our student policy commissioners.

Many others have also freely given their time to advise and coach students. We thank Ines Newman for her advice to students on how to write for policy-makers and politicians. Suzanne Walker has provided her usual excellent administrative support, while the Events and Communication Team at DMU has offered its valuable support in spreading the word of the Commission and engaging our students. Jason Senior has provided us with numerous photographs and a visual record of events.

We would also like to thank a number of people for their timely interventions and support for the work of the Commission. Our thanks go to The Rt Hon John Bercow for chairing a student debate on young people and voting at De Montfort University on 23 January 2014; to the US Ambassador to the UK Matthew Barzun for his Question and Answer session with students at DMU on 18 March 2014; and importantly to Jane and Jim Grant for their financial donation to assist the Migration and Communities stream of the Policy Commission.

Professor Alasdair Blair would like to acknowledge the support of the European Commission’s Jean Monnet programme.

Our special thanks also go to DMU’s Chancellor, The Lord Alli, who has given our student policy commissioners the valuable opportunity to present their 100 ideas at the House of Lords on 23 June 2014. We also thank the House of Lords for working with us to organise arrangements for the launch of the report.

Finally, we thank our Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dominic Shellard, for taking forward the initial proposal for a Policy Commission, shaping its mission of student engagement and working to find sponsors and funding for activities.

Executive Summary

On 12 February 2014, De Montfort University launched its student-led Policy Commission. Dozens of students, academics and members of the university Executive Board met at the Big Policy Brunch to discuss the policy challenges facing government. Over two hours, they moved from table to table, exchanging ideas and proposals for change. By the end, five poster boards had been filled with policy recommendations, challenges facing politicians, and alternative visions of society.

It was but the first step in five months of student engagement and dialogue across the university. Our students imagined themselves as 'Prime Minister for a day', setting out what they would change in 24 hours at Downing Street. They took part in a Festival of Ideas, with students and academics running market stalls on policy themes across the university campus. The Rt Hon John Bercow visited the university to chair a student debate on young people and voting and the US Ambassador to the UK, Matthew Barzun, delivered a Question and Answer session with Politics students. At each step of the way, Commission webpages and Twitter feeds were established and updated, while thematic posters were displayed in different spaces across the campus. Participating students even had the opportunity to compete for prizes for the best ideas.

This report presents the outcome of this university-wide dialogue. The objective at the outset was for students to produce 100 policy ideas to influence political debate and thinking ahead of the 2015 General Election. Here these 100 ideas are brought together in what is a distinct manifesto for change in Britain.

THE THEMES OF THE POLICY COMMISSION

The Commission addresses five key policy challenges facing government and communities:

- Future of our urban spaces and cities
- Citizenship and political participation
- Welfare reform and communities
- Young people and employment
- Migration and communities

These issues all represent 'wicked policy issues' facing politicians. They were selected, and confirmed, after an engagement with sponsors, academics and students. As the work of the Commission unfolded, it became very clear that the boundaries of these themes were somewhat porous, with key policy challenges such as housing straddling more than one theme. Indeed, one of the challenges facing policymakers, as recognised by the Commission, is how to deal with these policy issues that cut across more than one policy sector and resist neat and narrow definitions.



100 Ideas to Change Britain

The De Montfort University Policy Commission

FUTURE OF OUR URBAN SPACES AND CITIES

1. Open up the energy market through the decentralisation and re-municipalisation of energy provision.
2. Support local food production and community gardens.
3. Develop vehicle free zones and return our streets into social and community spaces.
4. Increase public investment in the infrastructure necessary to decarbonise transport.
5. Counter urban sprawl and the 'escape to the country' by building on brownfield sites.
6. Introduce a 'help to buy a plot' scheme and support intelligent design 'flat-pack' passive housing.
7. Implement conditional tax incentives for developers.
8. Support the retro-fitting of homes for renewable energy.
9. Offer new fiscal incentives to promote intelligent homes.
10. Reinvigorate the rationale for neighbourhood social welfare programmes.
11. A Speaker's corner in every city.
12. Communities and schools should adopt public squares.
13. Declare an annual national festival of music.
14. Experiments in DIY participation creating 'virtual public spaces'.
15. Revitalise city centres by supporting community currencies.
16. Reinvigorate regional policy and planning in the UK.
17. Bring in standard practices for fair banding and random allocation for school places.
18. Government should pump-prime the development of credit unions.
19. Use empty public buildings as 'meanwhile spaces' for local community businesses and activities.
20. Tackle public health inequalities by using design to promote active transport and active living.

CITIZENSHIP AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

21. Abolition of the deposit required for parliamentary candidacy and its replacement with the requirement for all potential candidates to secure the signatures on a nomination form of 5% of the registered voters of a constituency. Signatures could be collected at any point during the preceding year of an election. The idea is to ensure that all candidates must engage with voters.
22. Voting for elections at all levels to be held over a three-day period of Saturday, Sunday and the following Monday (which would become a voting bank holiday) to provide the voter with the maximum opportunity to attend the polling station and vote in person.
23. Mardi Gras elections: linked to the idea of a voting bank holiday weekend and the more 'festive' atmosphere of elections held decades ago, a PR company should be engaged for all elections to create not just awareness and knowledge of impending elections but an enthusiastic and carnival-like atmosphere. The creation of a carnival election atmosphere would stimulate greater engagement and turnout and also interest younger people and children in the process developing an interest in voting in the future.
24. A none-of-the-above option to be available on all ballot papers to enable voters to register an 'official' abstention if NotA receives over 50% of the vote in any seat, then the result is declared null and avoid and a by-election held.
25. Making voting easier through introducing online voting via secure websites or mobile phone apps; polling stations to be based in places where citizens gather naturally rather than placed where a separate and specific journey to vote is required.
26. Candidates to be allowed to place their photograph on the ballot paper for local and national elections to ease recognition of individual candidates and increase the visibility of the elected individual.
27. Developing an engaged and positive political culture must start in schools, and continue into further education. In addition to compulsory citizenship education in schools, democratic processes and experiences should be part of the normal school organisation. Elected school student councils, elected prefects, elected student representatives to be part of school decision-making bodies and deliberative opportunities available to all school students to consider school policy and wider political issues. The intention is not to shift power from teaching staff but to ingrain experiences of and develop a culture of political participation.

28. A compulsory three-week period of volunteering, in the community, for every school student to be spread across the secondary school (and FE) career. The period need not run consecutively as a three-week block but can be undertaken cumulatively.
29. Income tax reductions for all working age volunteers in employment in graduated bands depending on the number of hours 'volunteered' per year; and, volunteering not to affect the receipt of state benefits in any way.
30. Covered public spaces to be provided in every village, town and city for free use for 'speakers' and public meetings.
31. Citizenship classes to be made freely available for all adult learners, to be provided through local Further Education colleges.
32. Encourage citizen propositions by giving citizens the right to raise petitions (of an agreed percentage of the local or national electorate) to have any issue become the subject of a binding local or national referendum.
33. Local government to be given constitutional protection, through an Act of Parliament with a constitutional lock, so that central government cannot, without first securing the agreement of local government, make any changes that affect the roles, responsibilities, powers, functions or finances of local government.
34. Local government to have a free tax regime enabling it to introduce, in single localities, any taxes that the council think appropriate and spending of those resources to be at the discretion of the council and not subject to any capping from the centre.
35. The localisation of the proceeds of taxes such as car tax, inheritance tax and all local business rates, to be collected, maintained and spent within each council area.
36. Central government to have no control over the boundaries of councils, which are to be set by councils themselves after a binding local referendum agreeing those boundaries. Councils to be able to disaggregate and become smaller as well as to amalgamate with other councils.
37. Councils, individually and collectively, to have a right to appeal to an independent adjudication tribunal if a bill introduced by central government is felt, by an individual council, group of councils or local government to change the law in such a way as to affect the roles, functions, responsibilities, activities and finances of councils and councillors, which has first not been discussed and negotiated with local government and to which local government has agreed.

38. Councils to be free to choose their own electoral system subject to local referendum.
39. All councillors individually, entire councils and elected mayors, to be subject to recall petitions and elections by citizens.
40. All identifiable towns, villages and urban settlements to have democratically elected parish or town councils so that all of the country is parished, allowing for greater participation in elected office and for local decisions to be taken through a democratic mandate.

WELFARE REFORM
AND COMMUNITIES

- 41. The government must facilitate a significant increase in housing supply, i.e. 250,000 homes each year. By tackling the supply problem, so many other issues will be addressed and policies such as the bedroom tax will no longer be an issue.
- 42. There must be an increased supply of homes of all tenures, not just for owner occupation.
- 43. The government should promote alternative development models such as self-building, custom-building and community land trusts.
- 44. The focus on bringing empty properties back into use must be maintained but in combination with Policy Idea 42 above and with a focus on creating live/work spaces (as the idea of the traditional home and office are changing).
- 45. Homes need to be smarter and adaptable in order to continue to meet the changing needs and demographics of the population, e.g. people are healthier for longer, households expand and contract, and people want to remain in their own home as they get older.
- 46. Introduce policies that enable small-scale and local-level development by a variety of providers with private funding (such as institutional investors, pension funds and philanthropists).
- 47. Create a housing innovation fund and a housing investment fund that both the social housing sector and community groups can access. This could be funded through surpluses from the social housing sector, credit union/housing ISA-type initiative, crowd-funding, social impact bond, a 'buy-to-leave' tax, or by fining developers for land-banking.
- 48. Facilitate a housing pension fund that invests in housing development rather than unethical payday lending.
- 49. Enable local authorities to become developers, for example by lifting Housing Revenue Account (HRA) borrowing caps, reform borrowing rules, develop a sale and leaseback model for local authorities based on holding the assets in trust.
- 50. Reform housing tax policies so that 'buy-to-leave' owners are taxed more highly and high value property owners are charged a more appropriate rate of Council Tax.

- 51. The government should meet its own 'something for something' agenda by putting more support (non-financial) into the welfare system to ensure a true safety net that is supportive not punitive.
- 52. Focus on job creation, for example by using the welfare budget more wisely to create employment opportunities, particularly in emerging markets and modern manufacturing to ensure our workforce is fit for the future.
- 53. Legislate for the living wage and the living rent (where rents are linked to average earnings).
- 54. Give tenants their voice back after the National Tenant Voice was taken away after such a short existence, by expanding the scrutiny panel model to give tenants a place at national as well as local tables.
- 55. Modernise the support in the welfare system, e.g. help people discover the breadth of opportunities that are out there, emerging industries, be less prescriptive about courses, facilitate self-learning (such as the Hole in the Wall project in India).
- 56. The government should create housing champions in Parliament who can promote the role and great work of housing.
- 57. The government must make housing a ministerial and cabinet post again to demonstrate the centrality and importance of housing.
- 58. Ensure housing has a statutory seat at the table with health (e.g. clinical commissioning groups), education, employment, business groups (e.g. Local Enterprise Partnerships); this must be at executive, senior and front-line levels.
- 59. Set the social housing sector a challenge to work in wider partnerships to encourage new and innovative ways of working; this could be linked to the housing innovation fund as suggested in Policy Idea 47.
- 60. Enable time banking to become a main stream idea, so that communities can use it to be self-supporting, for example to source library volunteers, maintain public spaces, repair village halls in exchange for free hire. This would also recognise the hours of support currently given to friends, family and neighbours that is unrecorded. Engaging in time banking could be offered as a part of the Jobseeker Claimant Commitment. Support to implement this idea could be sought from the social housing sector and the voluntary sector.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND EMPLOYMENT

- 61. Define clearly the role and expectations of employers in relation to the initial education and training of young people.
- 62. Given that young people are an investment in our future, we suggest doubling current levels of public investment in schemes to encourage employers to take on and train the young unemployed, with wages guaranteed at the national minimum wage, funded through a tax on executive pay and bank bonuses.
- 63. A two-week period of work experience per year should be compulsory for every young person in education from ages 10-18.
- 64. Move towards a governance model for apprenticeships based on partnership between employers, trade unions and the education profession as typifies the best systems in continental Europe.
- 65. Employers should not be permitted to secure apprenticeships funding to subsidise the training of their adult workforce, with apprenticeship restricted to young people aged 16-24.
- 66. The requirement for 30% of training to take place 'off the job' should be re-instated and enforced.
- 67. Apprenticeships should last a minimum of two years as is the case for example in Germany and many other European countries (where the norm is usually three years).
- 68. Schools should run an alumni programme, where former students who are undertaking apprenticeships visit current students to share their views and offer advice.
- 69. Government should increase levels of subsidy to help SMEs take on apprentices.
- 70. Embed a strong core of general education in all vocational programmes, including apprenticeships. This should include not only maths and English but also history, civics, and physical education as happens in many other European countries.
- 71. Develop vocational qualifications through partnership among employers, trade unions and the education profession.
- 72. Policymakers need to acknowledge that youth transitions cannot be solved through an employability or education and training agenda alone. More attention needs to be given to measures aimed at growing the number of higher quality jobs and improving wages and job quality at the lower end of the labour market.

- 73. Regulate the labour market to abolish zero-hour contracts, make the minimum wage a living wage, and prevent employers exploiting young people through unpaid internships.
- 74. Broaden the UK's industrial strategy to include the upgrading of more ordinary sectors, not just the high-tech few, and link this to apprenticeships.
- 75. Launch a major public works programme prioritising investment in the UK's ailing infrastructure, and link this to high quality apprenticeships.
- 76. In addition to improving the quality of labour market information, high-quality impartial careers advice should be a priority area in all schools, with government providing schools with a dedicated budget for this purpose.
- 77. Explore the development of broad learning and career pathways, linked to a broader industrial policy strategy.
- 78. The government should provide more public funding for community work with young people, especially where this can demonstrate an ability to re-engage young people with learning and work.
- 79. The government should increase investment in school mentoring schemes and should establish schemes to encourage business leaders to engage in mentoring young people, particularly the socially disadvantaged.
- 80. The government should consider launching a scheme to help youth offenders by providing opportunities to access work placements and apprenticeships with the help of local employers. Employers should be actively encouraged and incentivised to take an interest in granting opportunities to this group.

DMU Vice-Chancellor Professor Dominic Shellard with children from the DMU Square Mile community

MIGRATION AND COMMUNITIES

81. Establish a National Migration Council, comprising representation from the main political parties, religion and faith groups, and employers and trade unions. The Council should establish plans to inform migration policy and enhance community cohesion.
82. Enhance the role of the Migration Advisory Committee so that it is akin to the Office of Budget Responsibility in importance and visibility.
83. Remove student migration figures from net migration figures into the UK.
84. Stress the importance of student migration to the health of the UK economy. Measure the influence of UK universities as an index of UK soft power.
85. Set clear policies in relation to economic migration and asylum, identifying need and cause effects.
86. The three main political parties should establish a set of policy proposals that they can agree on relating to Britain's position in the EU and this joint declaration should form the basis for the core of Britain's foreign policy towards Europe. This would increase British influence in the EU.
87. Increase the power of national parliaments in the European Union to balance concerns about European integration. Introduce a new COPARL network to link national parliaments and European Parliament together to assist in information exchange and dialogue on key policies.
88. Develop a clear identity of Britishness in a globalised world through the teaching in schools of Britain's contribution to the development of global trade.
89. Create a National Commission on Britishness to establish a discussion about what being British means in the twenty-first century.
90. Embrace cultural diversity by establishing a national immigrants day to mark the contribution that migrants have made to Britain.
91. Provide local authorities with the powers to set policies on key issues such as migration.
92. Fund economic studies of communities to investigate variations in experiences of migration and for this to inform future approaches to migration.
93. Provide tax breaks for employers to support up to one week of local volunteering by their employees in their local community.
94. Create community partnership boards to develop local strategies and approaches to enhance cohesion.
95. Increase public funding for community engagement with young people and establish mentoring schemes for socially disadvantaged citizens.
96. Establish a 'freedom to work visa' to ensure that movement of peoples across EU countries is linked to employment opportunities.
97. Launch a major 'Education All Areas' initiative in communities with low levels of education attainment.
98. Establish a common database for skilled workers across the EU.
99. Undertake an economic study on the costs of 'non-migration' comprising academics, policy-makers, and to be chaired by a former government cabinet minister.
100. Abolish zero-hour contracts which often exploit migrant labour and increase the fine for employing illegal workers from £20,000 per person to £50,000 per person to deter exploitation.



Policy Commission brunch where ideas were born



Future of our urban spaces and cities

STUDENT POLICY COMMISSIONERS

Patrick Bull

Ashley Collop

Suraiya Jagot

Kam Munir

Emmanuel Oyeniran

Rachel Wall

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Professor Jonathan Davies

Dr Steven Griggs

Professor Andy Collop (Executive Board Member)

THE URBAN POLICY CONTEXT

Cities are the heartbeat of life in the UK in the 21st century, just as they have been for centuries. They have risen and fallen, grown and declined since the war, but in 2014 cities contain some 80% of the national population. In the world at large, the pace of urbanisation slowed after the crisis of 2008; but by 2050, 75% of the global population will live in cities.¹ The future of cities and urban spaces are undoubtedly among the most important challenges for human wellbeing in the 21st century, and beyond. As a TEDx event in December 2013 concluded, "Cities matter: cities provide incredible opportunities for living, working and playing but as they grow they face problems."²

TEDx highlighted a pivotal dilemma about cities. They are tremendously vibrant spaces, but endlessly beset with problems: overcrowding, congestion, boom and bust, social, economic, political and spatial inequalities, pollution, sustainability and pressures on public space are but a few. Scholars and students of urban studies worry away at the idea that there is a more-or-less constant 'urban crisis', the theme of a major international conference at De Montfort University last year.³

Maladies like the bankruptcy of Detroit, pollution in Beijing, house-prices in London and slums across the developing world catapult cities to the forefront of international political and media attention, lending impetus to 'urban crisis' stories. The challenge of developing good policy for cities remains paramount. In developing our 20 policies, we draw inspiration from the so-called municipal doctrine of the 19th century, which envisioned the Victorian city rising phoenix-like from the squalor of Blake's "dark satanic mills". The Reverend George Dawson issued this call to arms in Birmingham:

"The speakers, instead of discussing small questions of administration and of economy, dwelt with growing enthusiasm on what a great and prosperous town like Birmingham might do for its people. They spoke of sweeping away streets in which it was not possible to live a healthy and decent life; of making the town cleaner, sweeter and brighter; of providing gardens and parks and music; or erecting baths and free libraries, an art gallery and a museum ... Sometimes an adventurous orator would excite his audience by dwelling on the glories of Florence and of the other cities of Italy in the middle ages, and suggest that Birmingham, too, might become the home of a noble literature and art."⁴

¹ <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS>

² See <http://tedxlondon.com/city2-0/>

³ See <http://www.dmu.ac.uk/urbancrisis>

⁴ Davies, J. S. (2010) 'Localism', in A. Gamble, C. Hay, M. Flinders and M. Kenny (Eds), *The Oxford Handbook of British Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 404-422, p. 410.

Projecting Dawson's vision forward into the 21st century, there are many more-or-less credible ideas circulating the policy environment, such as “new garden cities” as liveable spaces⁵ and “Smart Cities” as laboratories of innovation.⁶ Think tanks urge political leaders to develop policies for more and better housing, new jobs and businesses, better public services, higher skills and wages for all, and balancing growth with sustainability⁷. Our vision and policies are an innovative response to this call. We put forward an “urban doctrine” for the smart, cosmopolitan spaces of the 21st century, and aspire to cultivate dynamic “front-running cities”.

OUR VISION OF THE FRONT-RUNNING CITY

Many cities in the UK are viewed negatively. How we begin to rebrand them and reframe our urban narratives is essential to overcoming such negative perceptions of our urban spaces. What do we mean by the front-running city? And, what type of vision does it offer for the future of our cities?

The first dimension of our vision of the front-running city is the aspiration that cities lead from the front, or are at the forefront of, the making of our social, political, economic and environmental futures. Cities should aim to drive developments in technology, harness innovation and build sustainability into urban space. We understand that cities in the UK are not only competing with each other for business investment, they are also competing with cities across the world.

Being at the forefront of technology and innovation can only help attract scarce investment, and enable cities to compete globally. But technology and innovation must not be pursued at the expense of sustainability. On the contrary, cities need to be able to deliver the urban spaces and living needed by today's generations, whilst also safeguarding and extending the opportunities for future ones.

Turning to the second dimension of our vision for the future of urban spaces, cities also need to have the capacity to be able to run. But, what do we mean by ‘running’? On the one hand, in order to deliver the types of urban spaces we envisage, we understand that cities will need the autonomy to innovate. Innovation and creativity thrive in conditions of freedom, where collaborative leadership capacities are nurtured. Cities must be empowered to ‘run’ in the sense that they possess the confidence, the capabilities and the powers to take risks.

5 See for example <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-27701245>.
6 See for example <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-initiative-to-support-40-billion-smart-cities-in-the-uk>
7 See <http://thinkcities.org.uk>

Equally, we can no longer depend on top-down leadership. As attempts to build community engagement and participation demonstrate, cities work best when there are arenas for decentralised decision-making and community dialogue. We recognise enduring concerns over the effectiveness of community participation. At the same time, with the pressures of austerity, new forms of participatory governance might be taking second place to dealing with reduced public spending. But, we argue that cities need to run in that they need also to become ‘laboratories’ for democracy innovation, where citizens can ‘co-author’⁸ urban futures together with public authorities.

TACKLING WICKED ISSUES AND ENSURING OUTCOMES

Cities face a bewildering array of challenges. But, these are not standalone issues – they are increasingly inter-connected and perhaps best seen as ‘wicked’ or even ‘super wicked’ issues.⁹ For example, tackling public health cannot be divorced from questions of housing, transport, air pollution, noise pollution, food production and so on. It is in short a set of interdependent, cross-cutting and ambiguous policy issues, to the extent that in many instances we cannot even agree on problem definition, let alone how we might tackle it. And, to make matters worse, the issues under discussion often stretch beyond the boundaries of cities, demanding new forms of collaboration between the local, the national and the international.

We argue that such policy challenges require a new model of local authority leadership. Over the last few years, local government has been influenced by ideas and agendas that seek to reduce local government's role in the direct provision of local services, projecting it instead as ‘strategic commissioner’, in which services are outsourced to private, voluntary and community providers in accordance with public governing agendas.

We are not making a stand against the advantages of different service providers. However, the enabling model has come under attack for relegating the leadership capabilities of local authorities and understating the value of strong urban leaders.¹⁰ We seek to develop of an alternative model of local government in our cities. The front-running city requires a stronger form of local leadership, what has been termed an ‘Ensuring Council’.

8 University of Birmingham and Demos (2011) ‘When Tomorrow Comes’. The Future of Public Services, Policy Commission, Birmingham: University of Birmingham/ Demos.
9 See Rittel, H. and Webber, M. (1973) ‘Dilemmas in a general theory of planning’, Policy Sciences, 4, 155-169; Levin, K et al.(2009) Playing it forward: path dependency, progressive incrementalism, and the “Super Wicked” issue of global climate change, IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science, vol 6., session 50.
10 Stoker, G. (2011) ‘Was Local Governance Such a Good Idea? A Global Comparative Perspective’, Public Administration 89(1): 15-31.

The Ensuring Council¹¹ brings to the fore values of stewardship, marrying with an ethical approach to urban leadership¹². We thus call upon political parties and government to reframe their understanding of local and loosen their grip on the ‘big ticket issues’ in keeping with the spirit of the Localism Act.¹³

AN AGENDA FOR FRONT-RUNNING CITIES GREENING CITIES

The front-running city is a sustainable city. What this means in practice will depend on local contexts, and we recognise the many competing understandings of the sustainable city. However, in our vision of front-running cities, we seek to privilege two principles. First, we stress the importance of ensuring the convergence of policies so that economic policies cannot undermine environmental protection or go against social justice (or vice versa). We have to drive smart growth, such as the investment in solar, wind and biotechnology, which offers the UK the opportunity to cut unemployment, reduce dependency on oil and gas, and promote itself as a front-runner in the world-wide green movement, championed recently by President Obama.

Secondly, in making such claims, we endorse moves away from the logic of efficiency towards the logics of sufficiency and upstream prevention. Sufficiency looks to impose environmental limits on growth, by determining what is a ‘sufficient’ level of particular services or goods in our societies. Upstream prevention seeks to prevent harm early on before it materialises.¹⁴

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Policy Idea 1: Open up the energy market through the decentralisation and re-municipalisation of energy provision

The local provision of sustainable energy should sit at the heart of any front-running city. Local authorities were behind the development of energy companies in the early part of the twentieth century. It is time to return to locally-sourced energy.

11 APSE (2012) The Ensuring Council. An Alternative Vision for the Future of Local Government, Manchester: APSE; APSE (2013) The Road to 2020. A Manifesto for the Ensuring Council, Manchester: APSE.
12 Newman, I. (2014) Reclaiming Local Democracy, Bristol: Policy Press.
13 We take the concept of ‘big ticket issues’ from G. Stoker (2011).
14 Princen, T. (2005) The Logic of Sufficiency, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press; New Economic Foundation (2012) The Wisdom of Prevention. Long-Term Planning, Upstream Investment and Early Action to Prevent Harm. Written by Anna Coote, London: NEF.

The decentralisation and municipalisation of energy offers the opportunity for local authorities to tackle fuel poverty, address climate change, and create jobs and training opportunities. In Germany, there has been a backlash against private energy companies and a movement to bring energy production and distribution back into public and communal ownership (as witnessed by the creation of 44 new public utilities between 2007 and 2011, and the insourcing of over 100 private contracts for energy distribution networks and service delivery).¹⁵

In the UK, municipalisation is, as the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) energy generation initiative demonstrates,¹⁶ a growing concern for local authorities. For example, Preston City Council has proposed to use wind turbines on council land to generate power for the local authority and to sell to the National Grid, while Portsmouth City Council is putting solar PV panels on its housing blocks to generate clean and cheap energy for residents and to sell energy to its energy supplier, and Southampton City Council has invested in the development of district heating energy networks. It is time for government to offer support to such initiatives, aiding local authorities, as advocated by APSE, to come together and make the most of their shared influence and the potential economies of scale necessary to deliver the municipalisation of energy.¹⁷

Policy Idea 2: Support local food production and community gardens

Supermarket shelves display an increasing array of tropical fruits and vegetables all year around. At the same time, supermarkets exercise increasing influence over the food production cycle. We recognize that a front-running city should look to become a sustainable food city. We encourage local conversion of brownfield sites into community gardens and the opening up of local authority land to cultivation, as well as grants to communities for garden tools (measures supported as part of the sustainable food city movement).¹⁸

15 See <http://www.epsu.org/a/8107>
16 See <http://www.apse.org.uk/apse/index.cfm/local-authority-energy-collaboration/>
17 See <http://www.apse.org.uk/apse/index.cfm/local-authority-energy-collaboration/prospectus/apse-energy-prospectuspdf/>
18 See <http://sustainablefoodcities.org>

Policy Idea 3: Develop vehicle-free zones and return turn our streets into social and community spaces

Our streets have become little more than thoroughfares, ways of getting from A to B. They have been transformed by the needs of cars, vans and lorries, and the associated demands for parking. The front-running city will redesign our streets and patterns of mobility, transforming streets into social spaces and giving them back to the community.¹⁹ Removing cars from urban centres will reduce air and noise pollution, lower carbon emissions, and improve safety. It will require public leadership, investment in public transport, forms of active transport and the spread of congestion charges. Some of these measures will be unpopular, however, if we are to 'green' our cities, we have to tackle our dependency on cars.

Policy Idea 4: Increase public investment in the infrastructure necessary to decarbonise transport

Decarbonising transport is one of the major challenges facing British cities. Take-up of electric cars, although growing, is hampered by fears over the lack of recharging infrastructure. The Coalition government has committed £500 million to support the development of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs) from 2015 to 2020.²⁰ We welcome this commitment. However, we urge the government, before announcing detailed funding plans in autumn 2014, to increase financial support for ULEVs. As well as investing further in rapid recharging for electric cars, we require more investment in gas refuelling stations and hydrogen technology to deliver rapid decarbonisation. Most importantly, rather than supporting 2 to 4 exemplar ULEV cities, we encourage government to offer financial support to all cities through the development of a national ULEV adoption fund, which could offer matched funding grants to cities prepared to commit to the changes necessary to support ULEVs.

Policy Idea 5: Counter urban sprawl and the ‘escape to the country’ by building on brownfield sites

The front-running city marries with the concept of the compact city, a sustainable urban form that privileges high-density residential development, mixed land uses and proximity to services and facilities. It militates against urban sprawl. London Green Belt is coming under increasing pressure as local authorities address the demands for new housing and economic growth. At the same time, public

opinion has come on the whole to see rural living as more and more desirable. However, protection for the Green Belt supports the regeneration of urban centres, integrating housing within existing transport and service links and supporting the planning and development of compact cities. Importantly, research by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) indicates that there are enough derelict sites in cities suitable for building 1,494,070 new homes, while in England alone house builders have planning permission on land that could offer over 280,000 new homes, and long-term empty homes could provide for over 300,000 families.²¹ Solving the housing crisis and preventing future house price bubbles depends on bold action, now.

TACKLING HOUSING NEED

There are vast differences and inequalities in local housing markets. Any housing programme needs to recognise this diversity. Recent policy debates, at least in the media, appear to centre on the housing crisis in London, and we have to be careful not to forget the rest of the country. However, we recognise that we have to embark on a house building programme, concerns over the protection of the greenbelt and the density of housing notwithstanding. Not to do so raises the prospect of young people not having the opportunities available to previous generations.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Policy Idea 6: Introduce a ‘help to buy a plot’ scheme and support intelligent design ‘flat-pack’ passive housing

Flat-pack homes can cost 10-25% less than conventional homes. Mirroring the 'help to buy scheme', we encourage government to introduce a 'help to buy a plot of land' scheme. But first the government may invite a developing company to purchase a large amount of land by offering incentives to do so. The company could then offer the land to those who wish to build a flat-pack home – or a housing package, which may include both land and the cost of building a flat-pack house. The government currently has a scheme whereby people can buy a new-build home up to the purchase price of £500,000 with deposit of only 5% – this scheme could be extended for those choosing to build their own home (although this might require revisions to the Community Land Act).

Policy Idea 7: Implement conditional tax incentives for developers

The UK should learn lessons from France where conditional tax incentives operate to maintain rents below market levels

and to offer housing to tenants whose incomes are below pre-set thresholds. Conditional tax incentives work so that a developer puts together a package within the framework of a specific government initiative, and a property production and management package is sold to individuals. The project is built and a managing agent lets the units to the appropriate customers. Importantly, the individual investor benefits from conditional tax concessions, while the developer benefits indirectly from tax concessions (and other subsidies) by factoring these in the viability modeling of the initial proposed package.

Policy Idea 8: Support the retro-fitting of homes for renewable energy

Refurbishment offers clear advantages in time, cost, community impact, and prevention of building sprawl, reuse of existing infrastructure and protection of existing communities. It can also lead to significantly reduced energy use in buildings in both the short and long-term. For example, Brighton and Hove Energy Services offer to retro-fit customer's houses with renewable energy generators, such as solar panels, to be paid back in line with the money saved from using the system.²²

Policy Idea 9: Offer new fiscal incentives to promote intelligent homes

In times of rising energy bills, fiscal incentives should be employed encouraging households to install smart home technology. There is discussion about how the systems that group together and automate everyday simple tasks are able to improve quality of life. More importantly, digital technologies could improve home efficiencies in the long run. Programmable thermostats for example have been proven to lower energy use by 10 to 30 per cent, while providing more effective information on energy use of different appliances can lead consumers to lower energy consumption.²³

Policy Idea 10: Reinvigorate the rationale for neighbourhood social welfare programmes

Neighbourhood renewal is no longer considered the policy panacea that it was in the early 2000s. However, there is evidence to suggest that traditional neighbourhood renewal programmes might be more effective in tackling social exclusion than other initiatives such as mixed communities,

particularly under conditions of austerity.²⁴ Indeed, Ruth Lupton argues that the ameliorative logic of neighbourhood working, or the attempt to reduce differences between neighbourhoods, can deliver improvements in environmental conditions and services.²⁵ Echoing these arguments, we call upon politicians of all parties to reinvigorate the rationale for neighbourhood-renewal. While our cities continue to experience socially and spatially uneven levels of economic growth and social justice, neighbourhood-level renewal programmes cannot be ignored.²⁶ We thus call upon local and national government, and all political parties, to continue to invest in neighbourhood-renewal programmes.

REVITALISING PUBLIC SPACE

Public spaces have been pivotal to urban democracy since ancient times. It is in public spaces that we come together, overcoming the 'parallel lives' that can structure many of our daily routines. Vibrant public parks have played a key role in the history of our cities. Along with public squares, they have served as arenas for public engagement, cultural events and for community dialogue. We support the continued revitalisation of public spaces. Indeed, we share concerns that many urban spaces where we meet may well appear public, but are in reality privately-owned and privately-regulated, often with adverse impacts on access and the exercising of public and political acts or purposes.²⁷

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Policy Idea 11: A Speaker’s corner in every city

Conveniently placed in the city centre, a 'Speaker's corner' will give ordinary citizens the chance to articulate grievances, put forward ideas and trigger public debate as fellow citizens pass by.

Policy Idea 12: Community and schools should adopt public squares

Local authorities should introduce public community space partnerships. Engaging schools and communities, these partnerships will work with local authorities to adopt public spaces. Schools can then use their squares to exhibit artwork, hold plays and advance citizenship awareness among pupils. In return, schools and community groups will receive grants for outdoor equipment and public activities.

19 Crawford, J.H. (2002) *Carfree Cities*, Utrecht: International Books; Maynard, M. (2014) *Curbing Cars*, New York: Forbes Media; see also <http://www.worldcarfree.net>

20 Office for Low Emission Vehicles (2014) *Investing in Ultra Low Emission Vehicles in the UK, 2015 to 2020*, London: OLEV.

21 <http://www.cpre.org.uk/what-we-do/housing-and-planning/green-belts/update/item/1679-green-belts-under-threat>

22 See <http://www.enteconsulting.com/brighton-and-hove-energy-services.html>

23 LaMonica, M. (2014) 'Will Smart Home Technology Systems Make Consumers More Energy Efficient?', *The Guardian*, 22 January.

24 Tunstall, R. and Lupton, R. (2010) *Mixed Communities. Evidence Review*, London: CLG.

25 Lupton, R. (2013) 'What is Neighbourhood Renewal Policy For?' *People, Place and Policy*, 7(2): pp. 66-72, p. 68.

26 We take this rationale from Lupton (2013).

27 Parkinson, J.R. (2012) *Democracy and Public Space*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.162

Policy Idea 13: Declare an annual national festival of music

In 1982, France held its first national festival of music, a free open festival on the streets of every city. Since then the idea has spread far and wide. We call on government to launch a national festival of music, part of a move to revitalise the use of public space in our cities.

Policy Idea 14: Experiments in DIY participation creating ‘virtual public spaces’

We have put in place a complex system of community participation, which favours the ‘expert citizen’;²⁸ We have been less successful at engaging those ‘Do-It-Yourself’ citizens who are the ‘everyday makers’ of our cities and who shy away from formal engagement. We encourage policymakers to think differently about participation, exploiting new digital technologies to create virtual public spaces. The Key to the Street App for example allows citizens to photograph streets, record and upload proposals for others to discuss, and vote on different ideas.²⁹

Policy Idea 15: Revitalise city centres by supporting community currencies

There are growing concerns over the pressures on local independent sellers and producers and the uniformity of our high streets. ‘Love your Local Market’ initiatives have for example been put in place, and the Portas review into the future of high streets has drawn attention to the challenges facing local shops. We support the introduction of local community currencies, following the example of the Bristol Pound. The Bristol Pound is a complementary currency to sterling and can be used by individuals in Bristol to pay for goods and services at local businesses and farms participating in the community scheme. Such local city-wide currencies keep local spending power in cities, supporting independent businesses and farms. They offer one way of supporting the local diversity of our city centres.

TACKLING INEQUALITY

The disparity between the rich and the poor is of growing concern. Differentials in access to opportunities, income, consumption, location, information and technology are now the norm, not the exception. A recent Oxfam report found that 800,000 children and 1.9 million adults in the UK are at risk of living in poverty by 2020 if ministers continue with austerity, potentially making Britain among the most

unequal countries ‘anywhere in the world’;³⁰ In fact, Britain now ranks 28th out of 34 countries in the equality ‘league table’. Inequality poses a major threat to the future of British cities, contributing to rising health and social problems.³¹ Furthermore, inequality is a financial burden in Britain as it costs the economy more than £39 billion a year.³² Yet, there is a paradox at the heart of our cities: affluence is the key driver of inequality. Cities with knowledge-based and higher than average wage economies are marked by higher levels of wage inequality and employment polarisation, than smaller cities still recovering from industrial decline. Tackling inequality locally requires measures designed to improve working conditions for low-skilled workers, and to deliver inclusive labour markets and opportunities for progression in low-paid jobs.³³

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Policy Idea 16: Reinvigorate regional policy and planning in the UK

The Coalition government has demonstrated its commitment to localism through the abolition of regional government and ‘top-down’ regional planning strategies. Whilst supporting bottom-up local engagement in planning decision, we call for government to reinvigorate regional planning. This is not to fall back on tired metaphors of the ‘North-South’ divide and the dominance of London and the South-East. It is to confront the dire regional impacts of austerity governance, particularly welfare reform. Regions have the necessary economies of scale to drive forward change through strategic planning and contribute to national wellbeing.

Policy Idea 17: Bring in standard practices for fair banding and random allocation for school places

Educational opportunity is a key element of any strategy to tackle inequality in our cites. The use of catchment areas in schools has triggered rising property prices in neighbourhoods surrounding high-performing schools and reinforced new patterns of social exclusion. We argue for the experiments in fair banding and /or random allocation in school allocation by government as a means of ensuring more cosmopolitan intakes.³⁴

Policy Idea 18: Government should pump-prime the development of credit unions

Lack of access to affordable credit, and inability to save are helping to fuel the rise of ruthlessly exploitative payday lenders.³⁵ We support the development of credit unions as a means of addressing these growing inequalities. Credit unions take many forms. They are not-for-profit community banks or financial cooperatives, in which members save, with their savings used to provide affordable loans to the local community. Investors receive annual dividends on their savings, which are converted into shares in the credit union.³⁶ As credit unions have doubled in number over the last ten years, we support the initiative of the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) to establish more through a one-off levy on the consumer credit industry of an Affordable Credit Trust (ACT), which could capitalise local credit unions, facilitate saving by low-income members, and ensure common standards and regulations.³⁷

Policy Idea 19: Use empty public buildings as ‘meanwhile spaces’ for local community businesses and activities

Local community businesses often face daunting start-up costs, particularly office rental costs. We advocate local authority programmes to create ‘meanwhile spaces’ in vacant public buildings. The concept of ‘meanwhile’ projects offers short-term free lets to community businesses, converting empty public buildings into resources to be used by local businesses and groups.³⁸

Policy Idea 20: Tackle public health inequalities by using design to promote active transport and active living

Poorer people in cities suffer the disproportionate costs of ill health, be it air and noise pollution, graffiti and vandalism or limited access to green spaces.³⁹ Importantly, recent evidence also suggests that while the overall health of the population may be improving, the poorest in our society, and those with the lowest educational attainment, have benefitted least from recent health improvement and

lifestyle programmes.⁴⁰ We welcome the further integration of public health and planning, the mainstreaming of public health into all decisions by local government, and the use of local government purchasing power to build public health requirements into local contracts with alternative providers. However, such initiatives go hand in hand with innovative design and the transformation of our urban spaces to promote active living and active transport. Creative urban design can deliver ‘fitter cities’, with the planting of trees along routes, the provision of places for play, effective use of lighting, the replacing of high curbs and so on all impacting on levels of walking, cycling and the use of recreational spaces.⁴¹ We urge government to set new standards for the promotion of active transport and living in our cities.

28 Bang, H.P. and Sorensen, E. (1999) ‘The Everyday Maker: A New Challenge to Democratic Governance’, *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, 21 (3), pp. 325-341.
29 See <https://www.prote.in/en/feed/2013/10/key-to-the-street>

30 Oxfam (2013) *A Cautionary Tale: The True Cost of Austerity and Inequality in Europe*, Oxford: Oxfam International, p.25.
31 Hutton, W. (2104) ‘Britain is Scared to Face the Real Issue – It’s All About Inequality’, *The Observer*, 19 January 2014; Rowlingson, K. (2011) *Does Income Inequality Cause Health and Social Problems?* Report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York: JRF.
32 Equality Trust (2014) *The Cost of Inequality*, London: Equality Trust.
33 Lee, N., Sissons, P. and Jones, K. (2013) *Wage Inequality and Employment Polarisation in British Cities*, London and York: Work Foundation and Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
34 See The Sutton Trust and London School of Economics (2014) *Banding and Ballots*. Research by P. Norden, A. West and A. Hind, London: Sutton Trust; see also *Comprehensive Futures* (2014) *Parents’ Choice or Schools’ Choice Survey*, available at <http://comprehensivefuture.org.uk/parents-choice-or-schools-choice-time-for-a-review-of-school-admissions/>

35 IPPR (2014) *Jumping the Shark*. Written by M.Lawrence and G. Cooke, London: IPPR.
36 New Economics Foundation (2012) *Credit Unions: International Evidence*. Written by L. Prieg and T. Greenham, London: NEF.
37 IPPR (2014) *Jumping the Shark*. Written by M.Lawrence and G. Cooke, London: IPPR, pp.23-33.
38 See <http://www.meanwhilespace.com>
39 Grant, M., Bird, C. and Marno, P. (2012) *Health Inequalities and Determinants in the Physical Urban Environment: Evidence Briefing*, Working Paper, WHO Collaborating Centre for Healthy Urban Environments University of the West of England, Bristol.

40 The King’s Fund (2012) *Clustering of Unhealthy Behaviours Over Time*. Written by D. Buck and F. Frosini, London: The King’s Fund.
41 Royal Institute of British Architects (2013) *City Health Check. How Design Can Save Lives and Money*. Written by A. Scott-Marshall. London: RIBA.

Students taking part in a debate at DMU's Trinity Chapel

Citizenship and political participation

STUDENT POLICY COMMISSIONERS

Heather Worman

Matthew Widdowson

Suraiya Jagot

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Professor Colin Copus

Dr Mark Roberts

Professor David Wilson (Executive Board Member)

In a representative democracy it is the public vote that provides those elected to any political office with the legitimacy to take action and legitimacy for the policies they introduce.¹ It is right then to be concerned about the level of citizen engagement in the political process and particularly to seek ways of ensuring the highest possible level of citizen engagement in the process of voting, at all levels of election.² Indeed, we have moved a long way from the view that the public have only a modest input into political affairs to a position where the country's democratic system rests on positively seeking ever increasing ways of engaging citizens in the electoral processes and in participation in political decision-making more broadly.³ Moreover, there is now widespread and growing concern that citizens are turning away from the electoral process, in particular, as a way of expressing political preferences and consequently, by so doing, have begun to undermine the very foundations on which a representative democracy rests and is built.⁴

It is ironic that at a time where we see concern for turnout levels in elections for political office we see a growing use of voting as a decision-making vehicle in popular television programmes such as 'Big Brother' and the 'X-Factor'. It is not that people are voting-weary, but maybe weary of what they have to vote for and how, politically.

A public distaste for party politics can be seen in the fact that only around 1 per cent of the population are members of the three main political parties nationally.⁵ On the one hand that stark figure speaks volumes of the distancing of the public from the organisations – parties – through which they are represented and governed nationally and locally.⁶ On the other hand however, that low level of party membership is not reflected in the current composition of Parliament where there are only three Independent MPs, all of whom, at one time, have been MPs for a political party.

In English local government after the May 2014 elections, approximately 90% of all council seats in England are held by one of the main three political parties. But, such staggering electoral success for political parties must be viewed with caution and must not be allowed to mask concerns about low turnout, low levels of party membership and voter disengagement from the electoral process – such electoral results for parties come despite, not because of the regard with which they are held by the public.

- 1 Sartori, G., *Democratic Theory* (1962) Detroit, Wayne State University Press; Schumpeter, J.A., (1974), *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, London, Unwin;
- 2 Loughlin, J., F.Hendricks and A.Lindstrom (2011), *The Oxford Handbook of Regional Democracy in Europe*, Oxford, Oxford University Press
- 3 Morris-Jones, W.H., (1954) 'In Defence of Apathy: Some Doubts on the Duty to Vote', *Political Studies*, 2:1, 25-37
- 4 Franklin, M., (2004) *Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies Since 1945*, Cambridge University Press
- 5 House of Commons Library (2012) *Membership of UK Political Parties*. Standard Note. Written by F. McGuinness, London: House of Commons Library.
- 6 Quagliarello, G., (1996) *Politics without Parties*, Aldershot, Avebury; Copus, C., *Party Politics and Local Government*, Manchester University Press

The public, as a result of electoral disengagement, are seeking alternative methods of involvement in policy and decision-making. Indeed, representative democracy, at the same time as it experiences concerns about low levels of engagement, is also subject to increasing participatory pressure as citizens become less and less willing to accept every decision made by governments at all levels⁷. While protest is not the subject of this set of recommendations, a second theme that emerges for citizen participation is what can be done to encourage wider engagement in political, and by extension, civil society and what can be done to strengthen and deepen both these areas.⁸ Central and local government and the latter in particular, have experimented with various mechanisms and institutional arrangements to encourage citizens to engage in policy and decision-making.⁹

When encouraging such participatory engagement however, there must be a willingness among the elected representatives to not just respond but to do so positively and to change policy – without such a willingness, public engagement will be frustrated and citizens likely to become ever more cynical about politics and politicians. Yet, despite reaching out to citizens and the use of citizen participation in decision-making, there is a long way to go before we can say that the country has a fully engaged citizenry, which is imbued with a civic spirit on which our existing political process can be strengthened and developed. There is even further to go in developing a wide-spread civic spirit on which new types of political and civic engagement can be constructed that meets the needs of the 21st century.

The proposals below are the result of discussions around three emergent policy themes reflecting the issues and problems briefly set out and discussed above. Those themes are: enhancing electoral participation; the engaged citizen; and, strengthening local government. The themes are linked policy concerns, which together relate to the idea that to strengthen the bond between representative and represented, governed and governors and between governing institutions, locally and nationally and citizens, a new civic spirit needs to develop. The proposals below contribute not just to a debate about strengthening the civic spirit but also provide practical suggestions as to how that spirit could be enhanced.

A strong, united and proud people must be able to trust and have faith in its institutions of government, at all levels and in those elected to them. It must also know and trust that engagement in politics and in the broader dimensions of civil society is supported and valued by governing institutions. Our proposals are designed towards achieving that trust and confidence among citizens.

POLICY THEMES

Each theme is now briefly discussed, after which our policy proposals are presented.

ENHANCING ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION

Low electoral turnout in elections at all levels of government raise concerns about the legitimacy of governing institutions and the distance between citizens and those that govern and represent them. In a representative system a high level of electoral participation is crucial to underpinning the democratic processes. Our proposals are designed to produce functional and educational stimuli to voters to take part in all elections and to become regular, frequent and engaged participants in the choice of representatives and governors, locally, nationally and supra-nationally. Changes to the system of voting are, however, insufficient alone to result in higher turnout and system change must be linked to action to stimulate a more engaged citizenship and a culture of participation.

Policy Idea 21:

Abolition of the deposit required for parliamentary candidacy and its replacement with the requirement for all potential candidates to secure the signatures on a nomination form of 5% of the registered voters of a constituency. Signatures could be collected at any point during the preceding year of an election. The idea is to ensure that all candidates must engage with voters.

Policy Idea 22:

Voting for elections at all levels to be held over a three-day period of Saturday, Sunday and the following Monday (which would become a voting bank holiday) to provide the voter with the maximum opportunity to attend the polling station and vote in person.

Policy Idea 23:

Mardi Gras elections: linked to the idea of a voting bank holiday weekend and the more ‘festive’ atmosphere of

elections held decades ago, a PR company should be engaged for all elections to create not just awareness and knowledge of impending elections but an enthusiastic and carnival-like atmosphere. The creation of a carnival election atmosphere would stimulate greater engagement and turnout and also interest younger people and children in the process developing an interest in voting in the future.

Policy Idea 24:

A none-of-the-above option to be available on all ballot papers to enable voters to register an ‘official’ abstention if NotA receives over 50% of the vote in any seat, then the result is declared null and avoid and a by-election held.

Policy Idea 25:

Making voting easier through introducing online voting via secure websites or mobile phone apps; polling stations to be based in places where citizens gather naturally rather than placed where a separate and specific journey to vote is required.

Policy Idea 26:

Candidates to be allowed to place their photograph on the ballot paper for local and national elections to ease recognition of individual candidates and increase the visibility of the elected individual.

THE ENGAGED CITIZEN

Citizenship is not limited to electoral participation alone, but also relates to political engagement in a range of organisations, locally and nationally and extends to non-political engagement in voluntary and third sector groups. While such engagement and involvement is voluntary, our proposals seek to provide a more fertile ground within which people and communities can engage across all aspects of citizenship activity.

There is a need to create a vibrant and engaged political culture across the country and therefore citizenship education, linked to cultural change, is necessary. Action is required which develops and promotes a spirit of citizenship and engagement, which will further result in a broadly held citizenship feelings of a duty to participate in civil society and in policy and political decision-making. Moreover, such participation would be based on a deliberative process and culture, where the importance of discussion, interaction and respect for competing and conflicting views is held and respected as the cornerstone of the civic spirit.

Policy Idea 27:

Developing an engaged and positive political culture must start in schools and continue into further education. In addition to compulsory citizenship education in schools, democratic processes and experiences should be part of the normal school organisation. Therefore all schools should have an elected student council and elected prefects and use elections held among pupils to fill a range of school positions and bodies wherever possible, especially to school decision making bodies. Schools will be responsible for creating a deliberative culture among pupils and for providing ample opportunities for pupils to participate in the electoral process within school. The intention is not to shift power from teaching staff but to ingrain experiences of and develop a culture of political participation.

Policy Idea 28:

A compulsory three-week period of volunteering in the community for every school student to be spread across the secondary school (and FE) career. The period need not run consecutively as a three-week block but can be undertaken cumulatively.

Policy Idea 29:

Income tax reductions for all working age volunteers in employment in graduated bands depending on the number of hours ‘volunteered’ per year; and, volunteering not to affect the receipt of state benefits in any way.

Policy Idea 30:

Covered public spaces to be provided in every village, town and city for free use for ‘speakers’ and public meetings.

Policy Idea 31:

Citizenship classes to be made freely available for all adult learners, to be provided through local Further Education colleges.

Policy Idea 32:

Encourage citizen propositions by giving citizens the right to raise petitions (of an agreed percentage of the local or national electorate) to have any issue become the subject of a binding local or national referendum.

7 Marsh, A., (1977) Protest and Political Consciousness, London, Sage Gyford, J., (1986) ‘Diversity, Sectionalism and Local Democracy’, in Committee of Inquiry into the Conduct of Local Authority Business, Research Vol. IV, Aspects of Local Democracy, London, HMSO, pp. 106-131. Young, K., and N. Rao, (1995) ‘Faith in Local Democracy’, in J. Curtice, R. Jowell, L. Brook, and A. Park (editors), British Social Attitudes: The Twelfth Report, Aldershot, Dartmouth, pp. 91-117. Opp, K-D (2009) Theories of Political Protest and Social Movements: A Multidisciplinary Introduction, Critique and Synthesis, Abingdon, Routledge.

8 Almond, G.A., and S. Verba., (1963) The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in five Nations, New Jersey, Princeton University Press; Sabbetti, F, (1996) Path Dependency and Civic Culture: Some Lessons from Italy about Interpreting Social Experiments Politics & Society, 24:1 19-44; Dahlgren, P., (The Internet and the Democratisation of Civic Culture, Political Communication, 17:4, 2000.

9 Lowndes.V., G.Stoker and L.Ptatchett (2001) Trends In Public Participation: Part 1 – Local Government Perspectives, Public Administration 79:1, 205-222.

From left: Vice-Chancellor Professor Dominic Shellard, The Rt Hon John Bercow MP and The Lord Alli at a DMU debate earlier this year

STRENGTHENING LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local government forms the bedrock of any democratic state and is not only an institution that provides public services and designs policy responses to local problems, it is also a governing institution that provides opportunities for thousands of people to take part in the government of the country. Local government also provides a bulwark to an overly powerful central state. Yet, England has one of the most centralised systems of government and weakest forms of local government in Europe.

Our proposals are designed to strengthen the power, position and role of local government in the governing arrangements of the country and of the councillors that are elected to it. Local government in England provides around 18,000 opportunities for citizens to participate directly in decisions taken about local policy concerns and local problems. The country's 18,000 councillors are rooted in their communities, accessible and in an immediate proximity to those they govern and represent locally; by strengthening councils and councillors we strengthen the very nature of local self-government

Policy Idea 33:

Local government to be given constitutional protection, through an Act of Parliament with a constitutional lock, so that central government cannot, without first securing the agreement of local government, make any changes that affect the roles, responsibilities, powers, functions or finances of local government.

Policy Idea 34:

Local government to have a free tax regime enabling it to introduce, in single localities, any taxes that the council think appropriate and spending of those resources to be at the discretion of the council and not subject to any capping from the centre.

Policy Idea 35:

The localisation of the proceeds of taxes such as car tax, inheritance tax and all local business rates, to be collected, maintained and spent within each council area.

Policy Idea 36:

Central government to have no control over the boundaries of councils, which are to be set by councils themselves after a binding local referendum agreeing those boundaries. Councils to be able to disaggregate and become smaller as well as to amalgamate with other councils.

Policy Idea 37:

Councils, individually and collectively, to have the right to appeal to an independent adjudication tribunal if a bill introduced by central government, is felt, by an individual council, group of councils or local government generally to change the law in such a way as to affect the roles, functions, responsibilities, activities and finances of councils and councillors, which has first not been discussed and negotiated with local government and to which local government has agreed.

Policy Idea 38:

Councils to be free to choose their own electoral system subject to local referendum.

Policy Idea 39:

All councillors individually, entire councils and elected mayors, to be subject to recall petitions and elections by citizens.

Policy Idea 40:

All identifiable towns, villages and urban settlements to have democratically elected parish or town councils so that all of the country is parished, allowing for greater participation in elected office and for local decisions to be taken through a democratic mandate.

MOVING FORWARD

Our proposals provide a way in which public trust and faith in politics, politicians and political decision-making can be strengthened and developed further and a set of means by which a spirit and culture of participation and deliberation can be grown, especially among the young. It is vital that young people are imbued with such a spirit of deliberation and a culture of engagement so as to strengthen the ties within and across communities and to strengthen participation beyond the political. Their proposals also provide a set of ideas, which taken together will refresh and revitalise our civic and political culture and life and enable a new generation of active citizens and the existing and emerging generation of politicians, to effect and shape a positive and co-operative relationship which will enhance good governance nationally and locally.



Welfare reform and communities

STUDENT POLICY COMMISSIONERS

- Emma Lindley
- Ann Harris
- Alpa Patel
- Inti Popat

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

- Professor Anne-Marie Greene
- Dr Jo Richardson
- Dr Tim Brown
- Professor Mandy Ashton (Executive Board Member)

INTRODUCTION

The welfare reform and communities stream of the DMU policy commission is concerned by the increasing evidence of the negative impact of welfare reform on individuals, communities and the economy. The financial crises from 2007/8 affected public services, local government and communities with a huge impact on vulnerable groups¹ and a disproportionate effect on the poorest areas.²

The Real Life Reform³ project found a number of stark impacts on communities they studied, including:

- Households are reporting increases in levels of stress and depression.
- 88% of households are worried welfare changes will impact on their health and wellbeing.
- Parents report they are going without to protect their children's health.
- Households report worries about loan sharks and increase in crime.
- 60% of active jobseekers applied for between 20 and 40 jobs in the last three months but 71% were not offered an interview.
- Use of local shops has halved with less than 5% using them.
- 46% have nothing left to live on each week once rent and essentials such as food and bills have been paid.

These negative impacts can be addressed through smart investment in bricks and mortar, further empowering local communities and enabling the social housing sector to do even more.

There are 20 recommendations in total in this chapter, the most urgent of these are:

- Introducing policies that enable development at a small-scale and local level by a variety of providers with private funding (such as institutional investors, pension funds and philanthropists).

- The Government meeting its own 'something for something'⁴ agenda by putting more support (non-financial) into the welfare system to ensure a true safety net that is supportive not punitive.

Ultimately, the welfare state should be one that enables a prosperous, fair and equal Britain.

DEFINING POLICY PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

When issues around welfare reform and communities were discussed by students, a clear question emerged: what does poverty cost the country? The cost of poverty is both economic and social and there is compelling and recent evidence demonstrating the impact of each:

- 50% of households in debt doubt they will ever be able to clear these debts.⁵
- Use of local shops has halved with less than 5% using them.⁶
- Over 2 million children are living in poverty where at least one adult in the household is working.⁷
- Poor living conditions create costs for non-housing services. For example, there can be a detriment to educational performance and attainment in overcrowded homes, increased crime in poorly designed and marginalised environments; and increased costs to support those living in regions with low-paid economies, and where the disparity between earnings and living costs is on the increase.⁸
- 38% of households in the private rented sector are in poverty.
- The cost of housing benefit is expected to rise to £25bn a year by 2017 with an increase of claimants predominantly in the private rented sector.⁹

Students strongly believe that the solutions to these issues lie in increasing the supply of truly affordable housing, with the social housing sector taking a key role in achieving this; as advocated in the Barker Review of 2004.¹⁰ This is further demonstrated by the facts that: Decent Homes save the NHS £71m each year,¹¹ every pound spent in construction returns £2.84 to the economy¹² and there is a great deal of community investment from the social housing sector, with the National Housing Federation suggesting housing associations delivered and maintained more than 9,000 neighbourhood services and 1,500 community spaces, as well as investing £747m in 2010/11.¹³ Further work by Fujiwara (2013) attempts to measure the social value of housing.¹⁴

HOW WE WORKED?

A number of students have been involved in the discussion on welfare reform and communities. Up to 20 different DMU students from the Faculty of Business and Law, particularly in the Department of Politics and Public Policy, have had their say at various different seminars and consultation exercises.

A core group of four people studying with the Centre for Comparative Housing Research (CCHR)¹⁵ has worked on this stream of the policy commission all the way through the process and they have undertaken background research, and prioritised and selected the 20 policy ideas presented here. The students drew on data from a number of research reports, including primary evidence from one of the student's draft dissertation. There were two seminars led by DMU lecturers, including one by Executive Board member Professor Mandy Ashton on child poverty action.

Students also participated actively in an 'Appreciative Inquiry' on welfare reform and communities which saw them visioning the future for welfare. The welfare state vision was discussed in the metaphor of a circus; everyone has a different role to play and something valuable to contribute; whilst the performers are diverse, with a variety of experience and expertise, they are all united through team work and a sense of community.

1 Richardson, J (Ed) (2014) From Recession to Renewal: The impact of the financial crisis on public services and local government, Bristol: Policy Press

2 Beatty and Fothergill (2013) www.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/sites/shu.ac.uk/files/hitting-poorest-places-hardest_0.pdf

3 http://www.northern-consortium.org.uk/assets/Policy%20Documents/RLR%20report%201_September%202013.pdf; <http://www.northern-consortium.org.uk/assets/Policy%20Documents/RLR%20Second%20Report.pdf> , http://www.northern-consortium.org.uk/assets/Policy%20Documents/RLR%20report%20march%202014_Layout%201.pdf

4 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-18575453>

5 http://www.northern-consortium.org.uk/assets/Policy%20Documents/RLR%20report%201_September%202013.pdf

6 http://www.northern-consortium.org.uk/assets/Policy%20Documents/RLR%20report%20march%202014_Layout%201.pdf

7 <http://www.cchpr.landecon.cam.ac.uk/Downloads/HFN%20final%20report%2021%20july%20inc%20%20annexes.pdf>

8 Lindley, E (2014) The role of Government in subsidising affordable housing, forthcoming unpublished dissertation, DMU Leicester

9 <http://www.theguardian.com/housing-network/2014/apr/24/housing-benefit-bill-soar-25-billion-2017>

10 <http://planningjungle.com/wp-content/uploads/Barker-Review-of-Land-Use-Planning-Final-Report-Recommendations-December-2006.pdf>

11 <http://www.building4change.com/page.jsp?id=2307>

12 http://www.construction4growth.co.uk/what-is-c4g.aspx#U5C_IRsU_IU

13 <http://www.housing.org.uk/policy/investing-in-communities/what-is-community-investment/in-our-sector/>

14 <http://www.hact.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/Archives/2013/02/The%20Social%20Impact%20of%20Housing%20Providers%20report2013.pdf>

15 Centre for Comparative Housing Research (CCHR) lecturers leading some of the sessions were Jo Richardson and Tim Brown. The four CCHR students were Ann Harris, Alpa Patel, Inti Popat and Emma Lindley, who took a lead role in compiling the report.

THE VISION FOR WELFARE REFORM AND COMMUNITIES

A welfare state fit for 21st century Britain must improve equality by being supportive not punitive; being for all and not just a few; creating success not just survival; giving choices not taking them away; acting with empathy and without prejudice; delivering a personalised service and not one-size-fits-all; being positive not negative; striving to be respected not hated.

Communities must be supported and empowered to meet their local needs with local solutions, they must be given a voice and this must be listened to, they should be enabled to become self-sustaining but not because the state cannot or will not provide for them, but because this is the right solution.

OUR 20 POLICY IDEAS

THEME ONE: SUPPLY

Policy Idea 41:

The government must facilitate a significant increase in housing supply, i.e. 250,000 homes each year. By tackling the supply problem, so many other issues will be addressed and policies such as the bedroom tax will no longer be an issue.

Policy Idea 42:

There must be an increased supply of homes of all tenures, not just for owner occupation.¹⁶

Policy Idea 43:

The government should promote alternative development models such as self-building, custom building and community land trusts.

Policy Idea 44:

The focus on bringing empty properties back into use must be maintained but in combination with Policy Idea 42 above and with a focus on creating live/work spaces (as the idea of the traditional home and office are changing).

16 CCHR at DMU has undertaken a major research project for the Economic and Social Research Council on boosting affordable housing supply. See further <http://housingsupply.our.dmu.ac.uk/>

Policy Idea 45:

Homes need to be smarter and adaptable in order to continue to meet the changing needs and demographics of the population, e.g. people are healthier for longer, households expand and contract and people want to remain in their own home as they get older.

THEME TWO – FUNDING

Policy Idea 46:

Introduce policies that enable development at a small-scale and local-level development by a variety of providers with private funding (such as institutional investors, pension funds and philanthropists).

Policy Idea 47:

Create a housing innovation fund and a housing investment fund that both the social housing sector and community groups can access. This could be funded through surpluses from the social housing sector, a credit union/housing ISA type initiative, crowd-funding, social impact bond, a 'buy-to-leave' tax, or by fining developers for land-banking.

Policy Idea 48:

Facilitate a housing pension fund that invests in housing development rather than unethical payday lending.¹⁷

Policy Idea 49:

Enable local authorities to become developers, for example by lifting HRA borrowing caps, reform borrowing rules, develop a sale and leaseback model for local authorities based on holding the assets in trust.

Policy Idea 50:

Reform housing tax policies so that 'buy-to-leave' owners are taxed more highly and high value property owners are charged a more appropriate rate of Council Tax.

17 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-23459932>

THEME THREE - TACKLING INEQUALITY

Policy Idea 51:

The government should meet its own 'something for something'¹⁸ agenda by putting more support (non-financial) into the welfare system to ensure a true safety net that is supportive not punitive.

Policy Idea 52:

Focus on job creation, for example by using the welfare budget more wisely to create employment opportunities, particularly in emerging markets and modern manufacturing to ensure our workforce is fit for the future.¹⁹

Policy Idea 53:

Legislate for the living wage and the living rent (where rents are linked to average earnings).²⁰

Policy Idea 54:

Give tenants their voice back after the National Tenant Voice was taken away after such a short existence, by expanding the scrutiny panel model to give tenants a place at national as well as local tables.

Policy Idea 55:

Modernise the support in the welfare system, for example help people discover the breadth of opportunities that are out there in emerging industries and be less prescriptive about educational routes, instead facilitate self-learning (such as the Hole in the Wall project in India).²¹

THEME FOUR - HOUSING IS THE FOUNDATION THAT EVERYTHING ELSE IS BUILT ON

Policy Idea 56:

The government should create housing champions in Parliament who can promote the role and great work of housing.

18 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-18575453>
19 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/lifestyle/9123207/Mary-Portass-knicker-factory.html>
20 <http://www.theguardian.com/housing-network/2014/may/13/living-wage-living-rent-citizens-uk-housing>
21 <http://www.hole-in-the-wall.com/abouthiwel.html>

Policy Idea 57:

The government must make housing a ministerial and cabinet post again to demonstrate the centrality and importance of housing.

Policy Idea 58:

Ensure housing has a statutory seat at the table with health (e.g. clinical commissioning groups), education, employment, business groups (e.g. Local Enterprise Partnerships); this must be at executive, senior and front-line levels.²²

Policy Idea 59:

Set the social housing sector a challenge to work in wider partnerships to encourage new and innovative ways of working; this could be linked to the housing innovation fund as suggested in Policy Idea 47.

Policy Idea 60:

Enable time banking to become a mainstream idea, so that communities can use it to be self-supporting, for example to source library volunteers, maintain public spaces, repair village halls in exchange for free hire. This would also recognise the hours of support currently given to friends, family and neighbours that is unrecorded. Engaging in time banking could be offered as a part of the Jobseeker Claimant Commitment. Support to implement this idea could be sought from the social housing sector and the voluntary sector.

MOVING FORWARD

This report, by students working with the Centre for Comparative Housing Research (CCHR) at De Montfort University, sets out compelling evidence and 20 clear policy ideas for change. We urge policy-makers at Westminster to work with us to deliver on welfare for communities.

22 Richardson, J. et al (2014) Frontline Futures New Era, Changing Role for Housing Officers, Coventry: CIH/Wheatley Group.

Shireen Hussain, who secured a job through DMU's pioneering Graduate Champions scheme

Young people and employment

STUDENT POLICY COMMISSIONERS

Amira Baglawala

Michael Fajobi

Hazra Debar

Josh Malone

Emma Holmes

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Professor Richard Hall

Mr Jonathan Payne

Mr James Gardner (Executive Board member)

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Along with many other countries, Britain confronts a serious problem with youth transitions into the labour market, which have become longer, harder and more fragmented. The financial crisis made this problem worse, but youth unemployment in the UK had been rising steadily prior to this and has remained stubbornly high, despite adult unemployment falling in recent years.¹ We know that long periods of unemployment can have 'scarring effects' on someone's life in terms of their future labour market prospects.² Economic recovery alone will not tackle the underlying problems that Britain confronts when it comes to youth transitions. The problem is complex and multi-faceted, and includes the following:³

- A UK labour market that has a large proportion of poor-quality, low-wage jobs (often geographically concentrated), many of which do not require qualifications and which generate weak incentives for young people to learn.
- Most (NB: not all) UK employers do not accept any role or responsibility in providing initial education and training to young people.
- Apprenticeships are of highly variable quality and are not focused on young people.
- Many low-level vocational qualifications are of poor quality and have little or no value in the labour market.
- In large parts of our economy, qualifications play little role in recruitment and selection.
- Employers increasingly favour experience when recruiting, which preferences older workers.
- There are major problems with 'over-qualification', symptomatic of an economy struggling to keep pace with the education system.
- Educational and career choices are complex and risky, making effective information, advice and guidance (IAG) increasingly important.

¹ The unemployment rate for 16-24 year olds was 19.1% in February 2014, down 0.9% on the previous quarter and 1.9% over the previous 12 months (Youth Unemployment Statistics, House of Commons Library)

² Gregg, P. And Tominey, L. (2005) The 'wage scar' of youth unemployment, Labour Economics, 12, 4, 487-509.

³ For a discussion, see Keep, E. (2012) Youth transitions, the labour market and entry into employment: some reflections and questions, SKOPE Research Paper Number 108, Cardiff: SKOPE. Also Keep, E. (2013) Youth Transitions from Learning to Earning – problems with information, incentives and labour market structures, unpublished briefing note to Scottish Welfare Policy Event.

CURRENT POLICY RESPONSES

Current policy responses include the Youth Contract, a £1billion scheme which offers subsidies (up to £2,275) to employers who hire 18-24 year olds through Jobcentre Plus, the promotion and reform of apprenticeships (including financial incentives for SMEs of £1,000 per apprentice), and the abolition of National Insurance contributions for under-25s (from April 2015). The sums of public money involved are relatively small (reflecting the UK’s relative neglect of active labour market policies), and there are problems with employer engagement.

Current policy focuses attention on improving the ‘employability’ of young people, ensuring they have the ‘right’ skills and attitudes that employers want so that they can access work. The implicit assumption is that any job is a ‘good job’, and that the answer lies mainly in education and training. While education and training can play a role, the difficulty is that many of the problems the UK confronts in relation to youth transitions lie outside the education and training system. They have to do with the structure of our economy and labour market, the level of skills employers need to deliver their competitive and organisational strategies, and their internal recruitment and selection preferences.

One thing is clear. Britain cannot afford a ‘lost generation’ of young people scarred by long-term unemployment. There is no simple, quick-fix to the problems identified above. However, we believe progress can be made if there is meaningful dialogue with all stakeholders, including young people. What follows attempts to offer ways forward based upon our research and discussions within the DMU Policy Commission.

EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITIES

A consistent research finding is that the provision of high-quality work experience helps young people to make the transition from education to employment.⁴ In many other European countries (e.g. Germany and Denmark), employers accept they have a role to play through the provision of work experience and high-quality apprenticeships which help support youth transitions. In the UK, despite ‘employer engagement’ being a key theme underpinning much government policy around, for example, the ‘Youth Contract’, ‘Work Programme’, careers advice and apprenticeships, the evidence suggests that employer engagement is challenging. Schools were previously required to provide compulsory work experience at Key Stage 4 (age 14-16), but are no longer required to do so.

This needs to change, but progress will only be made if employers engage with this agenda.

Policy Idea 61:

Define clearly the role and expectations of employers in relation to the initial education and training of young people.

Policy Idea 62:

Given that young people are an investment in our future, we suggest doubling current levels of public investment in schemes to encourage employers to take on and train the young unemployed, with wages guaranteed at the national minimum wage, funded through a tax on executive pay and bank bonuses.

Policy Idea 63:

A two-week period of work experience per year should be compulsory for every young person in education ages 10-18.

APPRENTICESHIPS

We welcome the Coalition government’s efforts to raise the number and quality of apprenticeships in England. In 2011, the government stated there should be a minimum of 280 guided learning hours in a year, with a minimum of 100 hours taking place ‘off-the-job’, or 30% whichever is greater.⁵ Following the Richard Review, all apprenticeships are required to last a minimum of one year, with 20% of training to be provided ‘off the job’, and apprentices at ‘advanced’ and ‘higher level’ required to obtain level 2 maths and English.⁶ It remains to be seen to what extent employers will deliver these requirements, with enforcement a key issue. However, we do not believe the current reforms go far enough. Only around half of apprenticeships are taken up by the under-25s and less than a quarter by those under 19. The majority of apprenticeships are at level 2 (‘intermediary level’) which would not be recognised as an apprenticeship in Europe.⁷ We believe it is time to re-think ‘apprenticeship’ as a high-quality educational programme for young people and to aspire to offer apprenticeships that are comparable with the best in Europe

Policy Idea 64:

Move towards a governance model for apprenticeships based on partnership between employers, trade unions and the education profession as typifies the best systems in continental Europe.

Policy Idea 65:

Employers should not be permitted to secure apprenticeship funding to subsidise the training of their adult workforce, with apprenticeship restricted to young people aged 16-24.

Policy Idea 66:

The requirement for 30% of training to take place ‘off-the-job’ should be re-instated and enforced.

Policy Idea 67:

Apprenticeships should last a minimum of two years as is the case, for example, in Germany and many other European countries (where the norm is usually three years).

Policy Idea 68:

Schools should run an alumni programme, where former students who are undertaking apprenticeships visit current students to share their views and offer advice.

Policy Idea 69:

Government should increase levels of subsidy to help SMEs take on apprentices.

VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

UK vocational qualifications (e.g. National Vocational Qualifications) have often focused on providing narrow forms of competence-based training to do a particular job. This creates problems for progression to further learning as well as for occupational and labour market progression. The absence of a strong component of general academic learning distinguishes UK vocational qualifications from those in many other European countries where this is seen as vital in supporting active citizenship, progression and lifelong learning.⁸

This weakness in the UK makes progression from vocational programmes, including apprenticeships, to academic learning (e.g. higher education) difficult.⁹

Policy Idea 70:

Embed a strong core of general education in all vocational programmes, including apprenticeships. This should include not only Maths and English but also history, civics, and physical education as happens in many other European countries.

The Coalition Government is committed to reforming vocational qualifications (including removing those with no labour market value) by giving employers a stronger role in designing occupational standards and qualifications, which meet their needs. There is a danger that employers will still design very narrow vocational qualifications. In many other European countries, this role is undertaken by employers, trade unions and educational professionals to ensure that the interests and needs of learners are balanced with those of employers.

Policy Idea 71:

Develop vocational qualifications through partnership among employers, trade unions and the education profession.

OVER-QUALIFICATION, THE ECONOMY AND LABOUR MARKET

The UK confronts a major problem with ‘over-qualification’, which affects graduates as well as the wider workforce.¹⁰ This situation creates problems for our economy as skills only contribute to economic performance if they are used productively as well as for those who cannot find work commensurate with their skills and capabilities. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) estimates that the UK is second bottom of 22 OECD countries for the proportion of jobs, which do not require any education beyond compulsory schooling.¹¹ 22% of the UK workforce is in low-wage work, with such jobs often geographically concentrated in certain areas.¹²

4 UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2011) The Youth Inquiry: Employers’ perspectives on tackling youth unemployment, Wath-upon-Deane: UKCES.

5 Department for Business Innovation & skills. [2011] Specification of apprenticeship standards for England. Available from: http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/About-Us/News/~/_media/Documents/SASE/11-521-Specification-of-apprenticeship-standards-for-england.ashx. Accessed: 04/04/2014.

6 DfE/BIS (2013) The Future of Apprenticeships in England: Next Steps from the Richard Review.

7 Apprenticeships Statistics, House of Commons Library, last updated 10 February 2014.

9 Fuller, A., and Unwin, L. 2012 ‘Banging on the Door of the University: The Complexities of Progression from Apprenticeships and Other Vocational Programmes in England’, SKOPE Monograph No. 14, Cardiff: Cardiff University, SKOPE.

10 The 2012 UK Skills and Employment Survey estimates around 37% of workers and 22 % of graduates have qualifications higher than needed to get their current job (see Felstead, A., Gallie, D., Green, F. and Inanc, H. (2012) Skills at Work In Britain, London: LLAKES.). The OECD PIACC survey finds that the UK is second worse of 22 countries for levels of ‘over-qualification’ (see OECD Skills Outlook 2013 – First Results from the Survey of Adult Skills, Paris: OECD).

11 See OECD (2013) above.

12 See Keep (2013)

Many of these jobs do not require any qualifications to get them, which further corrodes incentives to learn.¹³ In short, there is a lack of skills demand in the economy that can help to support higher levels of participation in learning and achievement, and which can support better youth transitions into the labour market.¹⁴

Given an over-supply of skills, employers are using unpaid internships to sift graduates, many of whom are also 'bumping down' in the labour market and crowding out opportunities for those with lower level qualifications. Young people in general find themselves struggling as employers favour 'experience' when recruiting, while particular types of employment (zero-hour and short-hour contracts, agency working) pose major problems for youth transitions. Reforming education and training (skills supply) so that it 'fits' better with the economy and what employers want is not enough and will not solve transition problems.¹⁵ We need to turn the telescope around and look at the problem from the other end i.e. 'the demand side'.

Policy Idea 72:

Policymakers need to acknowledge that youth transitions cannot be solved through an employability or education and training agenda alone. More attention needs to be given to measures aimed at growing the number of higher quality jobs and improving wages and job quality at the lower end of the labour market.

Policy Idea 73:

Regulate the labour market to abolish zero-hour contracts, make the minimum wage a living wage, and prevent employers exploiting young people through unpaid internships.

INDUSTRIAL POLICY

Efforts to rebuild our apprenticeship system and increase participation rates in education and training would have a better chance of success if tied to long-term strategies to rebuild and rebalance our economy. Although the Coalition government has adopted an Industrial Strategy in line with such ambitions¹⁶, it is focused primarily upon high-tech

sectors and advanced technologies.¹⁷ These sectors only employ a very small proportion of the workforce. A broader industrial strategy is needed which aims to develop and upgrade more 'ordinary' sectors where most people earn their living.

Policy Idea 74:

Broaden the UK's industrial strategy to include the upgrading of more ordinary sectors, not just the high-tech few, and link this to apprenticeships.

PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME

With historically low interest rates, the Government should consider a major public works programme, prioritising investment in the UK's ailing infrastructure, which should be linked to high-quality apprenticeships and schemes to get the young unemployed into good-quality training and work. The danger of any substantial programme of deficit-funded public investment is inflation. But with inflation falling and with the UK retaining control of its own currency, this risk is significantly attenuated. If ever there was a right time to invest in our future and our young people, that time is now.

Policy Idea 75:

Launch a major public works programme prioritising investment in the UK's ailing infrastructure, and link this to high-quality apprenticeships.

INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

Young people face a myriad of problems when it comes to making decisions around education, learning and career paths. There is often a lack of information around what qualifications lead where, to what kind of jobs, with what level of wages, particularly for those in the vocational route. Research suggests that many vocational qualifications are of low quality and do not deliver any significant wage returns in the labour market.¹⁸ Learners in the vocational route tend to be the most vulnerable given the complexity of our vocational qualifications system. Furthermore, they often lack the financial resources, knowledge and social

networks, which make transitions less problematic for those social groups which do not confront such disadvantages.

We welcome the government's commitment to addressing this problem of low-value vocational qualifications.¹⁹ Whether government efforts to reform vocational qualifications by offering employers a bigger role in qualification design can address this problem, however, remains to be seen. We would favour a social partnership approach (see above). What seems clear is that all young people desperately need high-quality impartial information, advice and guidance that can inform their choices. Qualified careers advisors who know young people and their local labour markets are critical. Currently, schools are expected to provide careers advice. However, they receive no dedicated funding for this role, while careers advisors may not have the necessary information to hand.

Policy Idea 76:

In addition to improving the quality of labour market information, high-quality impartial careers advice should be a priority area in all schools, with government providing schools with a dedicated budget for this purpose.

LEARNING AND CAREER PATHWAYS

Apprenticeships in Germany aid young people's transitions into the labour market because they offer broad-based vocational education and training. The skills developed support apprentices' future development within a broad occupational field, and are linked to employers' demand for higher level skills. Some English-speaking countries, such as New Zealand, Australia and the US, are exploring the idea of building learning and career pathways.²⁰ The aim is to offer young people broad pathways (rather than overly narrow and fragmented forms of learning), which can support progression in both learning and the labour market. A pathway might be say 'agriculture', 'health sciences', or 'communications and ICT' for example. Each pathway would start broad so as to not close down options prematurely, with students choosing particular specialisms as they progressed within the pathway. These pathways should include a common core of general education in line with European best-practice (see above).

They would cover school, colleges and higher education, and would be best developed through a social partnership approach. Crucially, they would identify clear paths into employment and would be linked to a broad-based industrial strategy to upgrade skills demand (see above).

Policy Idea 77:

Explore the development of broad learning and career pathways, linked to a broader industrial policy strategy.

REACHING THOSE OTHER SCHEMES CANNOT REACH

It is well-known that the UK has a long-standing problem with young people who are 'not in education, employment or training' (NEETs).²¹ This group is not easy to categorise (not all of those in this group are socially marginalised as is often assumed), and the problems they face are complex and wide-ranging, thereby defying 'blanket' policy prescriptions. Finding out more about who NEETs are, having in place effective data and tracking mechanisms, and delivering good-quality careers advice (see above) are all essential.²² Community youth work can also play a role in reaching out to and helping some young people to re-engage with learning as well as develop skills that can be useful for employment and their wider lives. A local football club, sports team or youth club can be crucial in helping young people to build their confidence and self-esteem, and can provide access to adult role models who can inspire and encourage. This can often be a vital starting point for helping them to think about their future, whether it is applying for a particular course or job, or simply getting help with a CV or application form.

Policy Idea 78:

The government should provide more public funding for community work with young people, especially where this can demonstrate an ability to re-engage young people with learning and work.

13 See Keep (2012, 2013)
14 See Keep (2013)
15 See Keep (2012)
16 H M Treasury and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2011), Plan for Growth, London: HMT.

17 For a discussion, see Bentham, J., Bowman, A., Froud, J., Johal, S., Leaver, A., and Williams, K. 2013. 'Against New Industrial Strategy – framing, motifs and absences', CRESC Working Paper No. 126, Manchester: Manchester University, CRESC. Also K. Mayhew and E. Keep (2014) Industrial Strategy and the Future of Skills Policy – The Road to Sustainable Growth, London: CIPD, <http://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/research/industrial-strategy-skills-policy.aspx>
18 Wolf, A. 2011. Review of Vocational Education – The Wolf Report, London: Department for Education.

19 Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2014) Getting the Job Done: The Government's Reform Plan for Vocational Qualifications, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vocational-qualification-reform-plan>
20 For more information, see Keep (2013) and Hamilton, V. (2012) Career Pathways and Cluster Skills Development: Promising Models from the US, OECD LEED Working Papers, 2012/14, Paris: OECD. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5k94g1s6f7td-en>

21 See S. Maguire (2014), Hard Evidence: Who are NEETs? <http://theconversation.com/hard-evidence-who-are-the-neets-25829>. NEET was originally used to refer to 16-18 year olds not in education, employment and training who were not classified as unemployed. It has now been broadened to include 15-24 year olds, but is more narrowly defined than the youth unemployment rate.
22 See Maguire, 2014.

MENTORING

Mentors can help vulnerable young people to cope better with challenges presented by school and everyday life, and can play a role in helping with youth transitions. Mentors can help with homework, improve mentees' academic and life skills, support everyday living, and help young people to avoid problems of alcohol and drug abuse. Mentors can include those working in schools on a day-to-day basis as well as members of the business community who give up their time to work with young people who are in particular need of help and support. Mentoring is not a new idea, and there are many such schemes already in place in the UK. We believe that more public resource needs to be given to this activity.

Policy Idea 79:

The government should increase investment in school mentoring schemes and should establish schemes to encourage business leaders to engage in mentoring young people, particularly the socially disadvantaged.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Young offenders with a criminal record face a particular problem when it comes to accessing job opportunities and need extra support. The National Grid's initiative,²³ which has helped over 2,000 young offenders, shows what can be done but more is needed.

Policy Idea 80:

The government should consider launching a scheme to help youth offenders by providing opportunities to access work placements and apprenticeships with the help of local employers. Employers should be actively encouraged and incentivised to take an interest in granting opportunities to this group.





Migration and communities

STUDENT POLICY COMMISSIONERS

- Khalid Abdullah
- Saman Ahmed
- Walid Amin
- Aiste Benkeviciute
- Benjamin Churchill
- Alex Cunningham
- Hamed Fazeli
- Hamza Guled
- Deimante Kazlauskaite
- Yusuf Komorcu
- Andrea Kovarova
- Scott Leatham
- Naomi Mbelu
- Ladislav Novak
- Minoya Patkunam
- Giuseppe Parella
- Annie Rees
- Sam Tray
- Ioanna-Eleni Tsigiridi
- Jeremy Wani
- Dean Walsh

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

- Professor Alasdair Blair
- Dr Brahim Herbane
- Mr Ben Browne (Executive Board Member)

CONTEXTUALISING MIGRATION AND COMMUNITIES

Migration is one of the most significant issues in the current political debate in Britain. This is, however, not a new issue. Indeed, if anything, Britain is a country that has been made and remade by the migration of peoples. Throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth century there has been significant migration from Britain to the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. This saw more than 20 million people leave the British Isles and, in conjunction with the spread of British influence through the Empire and subsequent Commonwealth, resulted in families, communities and businesses having networks throughout the world and it is evident that the legacy of British influence continues to this day.¹ From language to literature, economics to politics, and the military to the sports field, Britain's influence can be seen throughout the world.

The post-war era saw significant migration into Britain, being marked by the arrival of the 'SS Windrush' at Tilbury docks on 22 June 1948 carrying nearly 500 Caribbean immigrants.² The years that followed have seen the issue of migration divide opinion in Britain and in the 1960s this would be marked by legislation, of which the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act drastically reduced the number of immigrants who could enter Britain. In what can only be described as a shameful and controversial piece of legislation, the government slammed shut the door on immigrants. Yet the public at large supported a policy that was being stirred up by the anti-immigrant speeches of MPs.

The chief protagonist of these was the right-wing Conservative, Enoch Powell, who in an inflammatory speech at the Midland Hotel in Birmingham on 20 April 1968, stated that 'We must be mad, literally mad, as a nation to be permitting the annual inflow of some 50,000 dependants' and 'As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding; like the Roman, I seem to see "the River Tiber foaming with much blood"'.³ Known thereafter as the 'rivers of blood' speech, it stirred up a huge debate on migration.⁴

This debate particularly resonated with white lower-class workers who considered that their livelihoods and ways of life were being threatened by the new migrants. Yet, Britain was itself changing as the established working patterns of the postwar period that were reflected in the continued significance of heavy industry gave way to the rise of the service sector.

¹ Ferguson, N. (2004) Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power, New York: Basic Books, pp.45-6.
² Blair, A. (2014) Britain and the World Since 1945, London: Routledge, p.2.
³ Text available from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/3643823/Enoch-Powells-Rivers-of-Blood-speech.html> (accessed 9 June 2014)
⁴ Marr, A. (2008) A History of Modern Britain, London: Pan, pp.300-5.

At a time of change, migration seemed to challenge the order of British society and in June 1970 the Conservative government of Edward Heath took a decision to introduce further restrictions on migration as part of an attempt to placate right-wing views in the Conservative Party.

Such policies highlighted the tension of post-war Britain, where the country was struggling to establish an identity for itself and the challenges of declining economic growth saw traditional working communities being threatened both through economic restructuring and migration. But the problem with such policies was that the legacy of Empire meant that the government could not turn its back on its former colonies, many of whose citizens had the right to live in Britain. This came to the fore in the early 1970s when the Heath government faced the challenge of having to respond to the decision taken by the UK-educated, and unpredictable Ugandan leader, Idi Amin, to expel Ugandan Asians on the basis that they had accumulated considerable wealth at the expense of black Ugandans. This resulted in the Heath government quickly arranging airlifts for more than 28,000 Ugandan Asians to take refuge in Britain between 1972-73.⁵ These issues brought to the fore debates within Britain about its colonial legacy where migration had a considerable impact on changing the ethnic and racial make-up of the country.

But whereas the debates surrounding migration through the twentieth century were for the most part linked to Empire, in the twenty-first century it is an issue that has been linked to European integration. Moreover, whereas throughout the twentieth century migrants came to live in Britain, it was also the case that many British citizens also chose to leave the country. The upshot of this was that Britain was often a net exporter of people. The situation in the twenty-first century is markedly different because there has been higher levels of net migration into Britain than ever before, most notably from Eastern Europe and in particular Poland. This is a result of the enlargement of the European Union in 2004⁶, 2007⁷ and most recently 2013.⁸ In the last ten years thirteen countries have joined the EU, the citizens of which have free labour and movement rights.

The mass migration of the last decade has significantly changed Britain. The British population increased from 58 million in 2001⁹ to 63 million in 2014.¹⁰ A report from the House of Commons Public Administration Committee in July 2013 recorded that 'net inward migration to the UK increased from an annual average of around 37,000 in the period 1991 to 1995 to an annual average

of around 209,000 in the period 2006 to 2010'.¹¹ One impact of this is that Britain now has the fastest-growing population in Europe and the Centre for Economic and Business Research (CEBR) has predicted that the impact of population growth will result in Britain overtaking Germany to become Europe's largest economy by 2030.¹² While this may confer greater power and influence on the nation's policy-makers, the rapid rise in population has placed significant strains on public services. It is also noticeable that there are increased anxieties among the public, with opinion polls regularly recording migration as one of the public's most pressing concerns.

This has been represented in a viewpoint that migration erodes national identity, limits job opportunities for 'British' citizens, and erodes the country's homogeneity. Such concerns have been particularly raised in geographic areas where there are particularly high levels of migration and/or where there are high levels of unemployment. It is a concern that has been exacerbated since the onset of the economic crisis and which has been represented by a rise in political support for right-wing political parties. This has also gone in tandem with a rise in Euroscepticism because European policies and the erosion of national control are viewed as the cause of the steep increase in migration figures. At the same time, however, some policy-makers and employers have argued that migration is a key driving force in Britain being a competitive country and that in a globalised world Britain should embrace multi-cultural diversity. These issues reflect a central concern about what Britishness actually means and which requires politicians to grasp the debate about national identity.¹³

The proposals below are the result of discussions with undergraduate and postgraduate students, and in particular a second year undergraduate class studying European Integration and a postgraduate class studying Britain and Europe. A culmination of the undergraduate students' experience was a simulation exercise where students were grouped into six different groupings (the United Kingdom, Poland, France, Germany, European Commission and Migration Watch) and were tasked with setting out an agenda of policies in response to British concerns over migration.

These discussions resulted in four policy themes: first, the clarification of the migration debate; second, national identity; third, communities and cohesion; and fourth, employment. The proposals that are set out below are designed to establish coherence on the issue of migration and to establish policies that create a sense of purpose and national identity that enhance the country's economic, social and cultural wellbeing. Each theme is now discussed and our proposals set out.

CLARIFICATION OF THE MIGRATION DEBATE

Migration has become a byword for a number of concerns from the electorate. There is a need for politicians to disentangle the policy issues and to have an honest and open discussion with the electorate. Migration occurs for a number of reasons that include economic pull, family reunion, education and asylum. Government policy does, however, not appear to fully address these different contexts and the upshot of this is that policies are being implemented which in many contexts are having an adverse affect on Britain. For example, the Higher Education Funding Council for England has reported that the number of international and EU students coming to study in the UK fell from 311,800 in 2011-12 to 307,205 in 2012-13. This was the first fall in 29 years.¹⁴

Policy Idea 81:

Establish a National Migration Council, comprising representation from the main political parties, religion and faith groups, and employers and trade unions. The Council should establish plans to inform migration policy and enhance community cohesion.

Policy Idea 82:

Enhance the role of the Migration Advisory Committee¹⁵ so that it is akin to the Office of Budget Responsibility¹⁶ in importance and visibility.

Policy Idea 83:

Remove student migration figures from net migration figures into the UK.¹⁷

Policy Idea 84:

Stress the importance of student migration to the health of the UK economy. Measure the influence of UK universities as an index of UK soft power.¹⁸

Policy Idea 85:

Set clear policies in relation to economic migration and asylum, identifying need and cause effects.

NATIONAL IDENTITY

Migration is an area of policy that politicians tend to react to rather than take leadership on. This is a dangerous state of affairs because it means that policy has the potential to be led and shaped by the media, with this resulting in incoherent and ineffective policies that are shaped by short-term concerns. Politicians need to show leadership on an issue that is central to Britain's national identity and which should not be rooted in an island mentality. This requires an open discussion that Britain's future, as well as its past, is as a global trading country and that through membership of the European Union Britain's interests are enhanced. For this to be achieved, it is incumbent on politicians not to play 'party politics' with an issue that is central to the future of the country.

Policy Idea 86:

The three main political parties should establish a set of policy proposals that they can agree on relating to Britain's position in the EU and this joint declaration should form the basis for the core of Britain's foreign policy towards Europe. This would increase British influence in the EU.

Policy Idea 87:

Increase the power of national parliaments in the European Union to balance concerns about European integration. Introduce a new Committee of national Parliaments (COPARL) network to link national parliaments and European Parliament together to assist in information exchange and dialogue on key policies.

Policy Idea 88:

Develop a clear identity of Britishness in a globalised world through the teaching in schools of Britain's contribution to the development of global trade.

Policy Idea 89:

Create a National Commission on Britishness to establish a discussion about what being British means in the twenty-first century.

5 Heath, E. (1998) *The Course of My Life*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, pp.256-7.
6 The ten countries that joined the EU in 2004 were Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia.
7 Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU in 2007.
8 Croatia joined the EU in 2013, bringing the total number of EU member states to 28.
9 The 2001 census population for the UK was 58,789, 194. Source: Office for National Statistics. Available from <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/index.html> (accessed 3 June 2014).
10 The UK population is estimated to be 63,921,121 in 2014. See <http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2009/oct/21/uk-population-data-ons> (accessed 3 June 2014)

11 See <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmpubadm/523/523.pdf> (paragraph 10) (accessed 9 June 2014).
12 See <http://www.cebr.com/reports/cebr-world-economic-league-table/> (accessed 3 June 2014)
13 See <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/dec/12/immigration-not-problem-hostility-migrants> (accessed 3 June 2014).

14 See <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/news/newsarchive/2014/news86922.html> (accessed 9 June 2014)
15 See <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/migration-advisory-committee> (accessed 3 June 2014).
16 See <http://budgetresponsibility.org.uk/> (accessed 3 June 2014).
17 See <http://www.ippr.org/publications/international-students-and-net-migration-in-the-uk> (accessed 3 June 2014).
18 See <http://www.britac.ac.uk/intl/softpower.cfm?frmAlias=/softpower/> (accessed 3 June 2014).

Policy Idea 90:

Embrace cultural diversity by establishing a national immigrants day to mark the contribution that migrants have made to Britain.

COMMUNITIES

While migration is a subject of national political debate and impacts on the policies and views of political parties in Westminster, the reality is that migration is for the most part an issue that is most felt at the local level. We therefore propose that it is unreasonable to expect local authorities to be bound by national policies in the manner by which they address the needs and requirements at the local level. This is particularly important in the context of such local issues as employment, education and housing.

Policy Idea 91:

Provide local authorities with the powers to set policies on key issues such as migration.

Policy Idea 92:

Fund economic studies of communities to investigate variations in experiences of migration and for this to lead to inform future approaches to migration.

Policy Idea 93:

Provide tax brakes for employers to support up to one week of local volunteering by their employees in their local community.¹⁹

Policy Idea 94:

Create community partnership boards to develop local strategies and approaches to enhance cohesion.

Policy Idea 95:

Increase public funding for community engagement with young people and establish mentoring schemes for socially disadvantaged citizens.

EMPLOYMENT

The debate on migration is often located in the context of the impact that it has on reducing and eroding employment opportunities for existing communities. Critics of migration argue that a reduction in migration numbers will ensure that employment opportunities are left open for domestic workers. We regard this as a foolish position and an ill-informed policy that on the one hand is inclined to leave certain communities with low skill-levels that are not adequate to respond to a globalised work environment; and on the other hand does not reflect the need that many employers have with regard to migrant labour. Politicians need to acknowledge that a simple reduction in migration numbers will not have a positive impact on employment conditions.

Policy Idea 96:

Establish a ‘freedom to work visa’ to ensure that movement of peoples across EU countries is linked to employment opportunities.

Policy Idea 97:

Launch a major ‘Education All Areas’ initiative in communities with low levels of education attainment.

Policy Idea 98:

Establish a common database for skilled workers across the EU.

Policy Idea 99:

Undertake an economic study on the costs of ‘non-migration’ comprising academics, policy-makers, and to be chaired by a former government cabinet minister.

Policy Idea 100:

Abolish zero-hour contracts which often exploit migrant labour and increase the fine for employing illegal workers from £20,000 per person to £50,000 per person to deter exploitation.²⁰



19 See http://www.civilsociety.co.uk/fundraising/news/content/11209/tax_relief_scheme_for_company_volunteering_would_boost_giving_by_1bn_a_year_says_new_report (accessed 3 June 2014).

Appendix 1

DMU Policy Commission

EVENTS HELD

23 January 2014

De Montfort University welcomed The Rt Hon John Bercow MP. A debate was held at DMU's Trinity Chapel where the assembly was asked to discuss the proposition "This House believes that there is no point voting in the 2015 General Election".

17 March 2014

Festival of Ideas. Students across the university were asked to give us their ideas on policy thoughts on how things could be improved.

18 March 2014

US Ambassador to the UK Matthew Barzun, visited DMU for an afternoon of Q&A with Politics students.

19 March 2014

"If you were Prime Minister for a Day?" Students were asked to set out, in no more than 500 words, a policy idea to change Britain. The winning idea can be found at Appendix 2.

30 April 2014

Turning your ideas into policies and practice. A workshop was led by Ines Newman, who was previously Head of Policy at the Local Government Information Unit and Director of the University of Warwick Local Authority Research Consortium.

28 May 2014

A writing day was held at DMU to assist the students with writing up their ideas.

FESTIVAL OF IDEAS

First place prize winners

Future of our Urban Spaces and Cities
Hamza Habib

Citizenship and Political Participation
Sam Elliott-Wood

Welfare Reform and Communities
Seema Khuti

Young People and Employment
David Basopo

Migration and Communities
Catherine Austin

Appendix 2

DMU Policy Commission

"If you were Prime Minister for a Day?" winning idea

Name: **Jamie Osowski**
Stream: **Citizenship and Political Participation**

I believe that there should be a more conscious effort to educate young people about the importance of politics to the daily lives of everyone in the UK. How can young people be expected to participate politically and make informed decisions when voting if their only source of political correspondence is a misinformed, often editorially biased news media? From a much earlier age young people should be taught about the importance of citizenship and participation, not just in the political process, but in their local communities.

In a Kennedy-esque fashion we should not only teach students of their rights but also their responsibilities to engage with the local communities and 'ask not what your country can do for you' but 'what you can do for your country'. Politics should be offered as a subject from secondary school and maybe even be made compulsory. I can honestly say if I had not studied politics at A-level I would not have made nearly as much of an informed decision as I am able to do now after nearly four to five years of studying the subject.

There also needs to be a wider change in the public perception of politics. I think education is a key factor in this change. There should be advertisements that show real examples of community good that have been brought about by simple political action/mobilisation and community coordination. In this context we need to show young people that a difference can be made; and the more people that are aware of this the better.

We also need to move away from the typical image of politicians and politics as being an overcomplicated, self-serving and sometimes deliberately deceiving business. Only education can effectively overcome this. Schemes like the national citizen service are a good idea and a start, but these should be expanded and can be improved drastically to educate the younger generations. This will turn the young people of tomorrow into a voter group that are more actively targeted and listened to by politicians, like the older generations are. Then and only then will we see a real change and make the political process truly a process for the benefit of everybody.



De Montfort University
The Gateway
Leicester LE1 9BH, UK

T: +44 (0)116 250 60 70
E: enquiry@dmu.ac.uk
W: dmu.ac.uk

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Where possible DMU publications or specific sections can be supplied in alternative media. For further information on how we can help, please contact us on +44 (0)116 250 60 70 or via email at enquiry@dmu.ac.uk