

Centre  
Write

 bright blue

# A green and prosperous land?



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## Bright Blue

Bright Blue is an independent think tank and pressure group for liberal conservatism.



**Director:** Ryan Shorthouse  
**Chair:** Matthew d'Ancona  
**Board of Directors:** Rachel Johnson, Alexandra Jezeph, Diane Banks & Phil Clarke

**Editor:** Richard Mabey  
**Assistant Editors:** Corinna Peachey, Meera Sonecha & Alexander King (Arts)  
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## Contributors

DIANE BANKS is a non-executive director of Bright Blue

NICHOLAS BOYS SMITH is the Director of Create Streets

JAMES BRENTON is an Associate of Bright Blue

BEN CALDECOTT is an Associate Fellow of Bright Blue

LORD DEBEN was the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food between 1989 and 1993

SUELLA FERNANDES is the MP for Fareham

ADRIAN GAHAN is the managing director of Sancroft

BEN GOLDSMITH is Chairman of the Conservative Environment Network

MARK HOBAN is a former Treasury Minister

STANLEY JOHNSON is a former MEP

DAVID KIRKBY is Bright Blue's Senior Research Fellow

MICHAEL LIEBREICH is Chairman of the Advisory Board of Bloomberg New Energy Finance

ERIC LUTH is member of the board of the Centre Party Youth in Sweden

RICHARD MABEY is the Editor of Centre Write

SARAH NEWTON is MP for Truro and Falmouth

MEURIG RAYMOND is the President of the National Farmers' Union

JOSH ROBSON is Head of Public Affairs for Knauf Insulation

RYAN SHORTHOUSE is the Director of Bright Blue

MAF SMITH is Deputy Chief Executive at RenewableUK

TIM YEO was Chairman of the Energy and Climate Change Select Committee in the last Parliament

KRISTINA YNGWE is the Vice President of the Environment and Rural Affairs Committee in the Swedish Parliament

## Editor's letter

With the Paris climate change talks coming up in December, now is the time to push environmental policy back up the agenda



RICHARD MABEY is the  
Editor of *Centre Write*

In 2010, David Cameron proclaimed that the Coalition Government would be “the greenest government ever”. Five years on, and the new Conservative Government has promised perhaps an even more radical agenda than its predecessor. The Conservatives’ 2015 manifesto (pp 54–57) talks about “protecting and enhancing our natural environment” and “guaranteeing...clean, affordable and secure energy supplies” through bold, eye-catching initiatives. Boosting marine conservation, improving our offshore wind capabilities and reducing anthropomorphic climate change are all firmly on the table.

But, against the backdrop of a busy policy agenda, you would be forgiven for not noticing. In fact, green issues do not seem to be commanding anything like the kind of media attention they once used to. Did you know, for example, that the Chancellor has announced the creation of a marine reserve around the Pitcairn Islands that is four times the size of Great Britain? Or that Britain is building the world’s first tidal lagoon? Probably not. Major announcements like this just don’t seem to get the coverage these days.

With 196 countries coming together in Paris this December to sign a new climate change deal, there has never been a better time for the Government to get these policies right back to the top of the agenda. This will no doubt be challenging. With a slender majority and with the Party not always united on the topic, David Cameron must devote all his resources to push forward the major legislation required to deliver on his manifesto promises. In short, the party of economic responsibility must also prove it is the party of environmental responsibility.

In this edition of *Centre Write*, we tackle the sometimes thorny issue of climate change head-on. **Lord Deben** (Pg. 6) writes that the market has failed to price carbon effectively, while the former Chair of the Energy and Climate Change Select Committee **Tim Yeo** (Pg. 5) makes the Conservative case for low-carbon subsidies. And Bright Blue’s Associate Fellow **Ben Caldecott** (Pg. 8), in an extract from his latest report for us, brings an international perspective to the debate, highlighting the challenges to be faced in Paris in December.

But environmental issues do not end with climate change. On the wider environment, the Chairman of the Conservative Environment Network **Ben Goldsmith** makes the case for

resource efficiency (Pg. 11), while NFU President **Meurig Raymond** (Pg. 12) highlights sustainability and economic efficiency in British farming. Former Tory MEP **Stanley Johnson** (Pg. 13) highlights the promises made by the Conservatives in their recent manifesto, and we get an insight from **Eric Luth** and **Kristina Yngwe** (Pg. 10) into Swedish environmental policy.

On energy, **Michael Liebreich** (Pg. 23) tells us that Britain’s renegotiation with Europe is the perfect opportunity to make our energy more sustainable. **Sarah Newton MP** (Pg. 24) writes that local enterprise partnerships are the key for boosting marine renewables, while RenewableUK Deputy CEO **Maf Smith** (Pg. 26) writes that onshore wind power could still have a future. And while we analyse renewable energy efforts in the developed world, former Treasury Minister **Mark Hoban** (Pg. 22) provides a useful reminder of the impact of renewables on the developing world, as it goes through its own industrial revolution.

Bright Blue also welcomes 20 new Parliamentary supporters to its burgeoning list since the General Election, and we hear from a selection of those of our supporters who are entering Parliament for the first time. One of them, **Suella Fernandes MP** (Pg. 18), tells us about why she is a Bright Blue MP.

Bright Blue is doing what it can to bring environmental issues back to the top of the policy agenda. This edition of *Centre Write* goes to print as a major new paper from Bright Blue is released: *Green and Responsible Conservatism*. Authored by Ben Caldecott, and with a foreword from former Conservative leader Lord Howard, the report sets out how the centre-right of British politics could better embed sustainability and long-termism within the UK economy.

For Conservatives, the Green agenda has always been of great importance. As Lord Howard wrote for us in our recent report: “Ever since Margaret Thatcher’s speech to the UN General Assembly in 1989, British Conservatives have been in the vanguard of developing environmental policy. It is vital for that tradition to be maintained.”

This edition of *Centre Write* should be essential reading for Conservatives, and indeed all policy enthusiasts and influencers, as we strive together to build a green and prosperous land. ●

# Director's note

Ryan Shorthouse



RYAN SHORTHOUSE is the  
Director of Bright Blue

After the unexpected General Election result, the first majority Tory government since 1992, what should Britain expect from a Conservative Party unchained? His final term in office, the next five years gives the Prime Minister the opportunity to define his legacy, to reveal what Cameronism really is.

There will be no surprises. David Cameron will continue to deliver a broad and balanced programme of policies, just like in the last parliament where we saw the Conservatives get tough on immigration and Europe at the same time as legalising same-sex marriage and increasing the minimum wage. This breadth is politically important – to keep together an alliance of voters who can give the Conservatives a majority, from those who left the Liberal Democrats to those flirting with UKIP.

The hunt is still on for the essence of Cameronism. The key is that the Tory leader is not an ideologue. Sure, there are parameters to his thinking that makes him of the centre-right, but he does not lean consistently on a definable and narrow set of principles for tackling every policy dilemma. Rather, Cameron is an arch-pragmatist, responding to events and crises in a way he deems responsible. If anything, Cameronism is mainly about keeping the show on road, keeping Britain prosperous and decent. He does not envisage an end-point for British society that he wishes to take us to.

Critics cry that this pragmatism demonstrates Cameron doesn't really believe in much. This is

a grave misunderstanding. As his friend and former adviser Steve Hilton writes in his new book, Cameron has “an uncommon sense of duty”. Being Prime Minister is about public service, doing the right thing, supporting others, not trying to impose a certain vision on the complex and largely successful country we live in.

He is guided by common sense and traditional values: we should live within our means, look after the vulnerable, do our bit for society, put the kids first, reward hard work, protect our environment. Hardly groundbreaking. But the right values. Throughout this Parliament, Bright Blue will be suggesting and critiquing policies to ensure these values are realised.

Really, the underlying theme of Cameronism is responsibility – economically, socially and environmentally. Cameron's modernisation project is often interpreted as simply about improving the image of the Conservative Party – making it more fashionable and modern. But there was much more to the 'Big Society' and hugging huskies.

By the end of the twentieth century, in public consciousness, conservatism had become associated with individualism and materialism. Little wonder the biggest obstacle to more people voting Tory is still being seen as 'the party of the rich'. Cameron going to Eton is not really the problem here. It is the idea that Conservatives stand for people who are ferociously socially mobile, make big bucks in the city, own big houses.

But there is more to life than this. And there is much more to conservatism. Modernisation is about moving conservatism beyond, but not rejecting, what is perceived as 'Thatcherism'. Forging a culture of

'we' rather than just 'me'. Showing that the Party is about nurturing strong communities, as well as protecting personal liberty; about urging social action, not just individual advancement. In fact, The Spectator named our co-President, the former Cabinet Minister David Willetts, as “the real father of Cameronism” thanks to his 1995 pamphlet *Civic conservatism*.

In this magazine, we focus on environmental responsibility. This is a contentious policy issue on the centre-right of British politics. But taking steps to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and to protecting our natural environment, should not be dismissed as “green crap”. It is an essential part of a richer conservatism that Cameron has been advocating and which can widen the electoral support of the Conservative Party.

Moving to a greener, cleaner economy is not only about new commercial opportunities for Britain, but protecting our environment for future generations. This is about what thinkers and politicians since Edmund Burke have described as a key element of conservatism: responsible stewardship of our society. That doesn't just mean avoiding indebting future generations with a reckless government deficit, but avoiding the severe depletion of our natural resources too. As the former Tory leader Lord (Michael) Howard wrote in the foreword for our most recent report: “The Conservative victory at the 2015 General Election must be seen as a springboard for the continuing need for the centre-right to win the battle of ideas and set the pace for intellectual advance in policy formulation. There is no area in which this is more important than environmental policy.” ●

# The Conservative case for low-carbon subsidies

**Tim Yeo** on how Conservatives must accept that the market does not yet price in the economic and social cost of carbon emissions



TIM YEO *was* Chairman of the Energy and Climate Change Select Committee in the last Parliament

Privatisation of the United Kingdom's energy industry has helped to deliver more competition and wider choice for consumers. However the Government must continue to play a role in shaping the market given the importance of energy to the UK's economy, people's health and the environment.

Any energy policy must be judged against three key aims: ensuring the UK's energy security, keeping energy bills affordable and cutting greenhouse gas emissions. The IPCC's Fifth Assessment report strengthened the scientific basis underpinning the need to act urgently on climate change. The historic joint announcement by President Obama and President Xi Jinping in November last year committing both their countries to emission cuts, followed by the outcome of the recent G7 meeting, reflects how quickly attitudes are now changing.

The UK is committed to big emission reductions under the Climate Change Act 2008. The Committee on Climate Change, which is tasked with ensuring the UK meets its targets as cost-effectively as possible, has suggested that our power sector must be virtually decarbonised by 2030. As the market does not yet recognise the social and environmental cost of carbon emissions and hence they are not reflected in the price of fossil fuels, the Government must intervene to address this.

The benefits of a mixed energy generation portfolio go beyond tackling climate change. Energy security is promoted if Britain cuts its

reliance on imported liquefied natural gas from countries who will sell to wherever the price is highest. There will be a continuing role for gas in the UK's energy mix but this will be alongside an increase in low-carbon sources such as solar, wind, nuclear, hydro, tidal power and energy from waste.

Most forms of low-carbon energy are currently more expensive than fossil fuel based generation but costs are falling. Solar power in particular has enjoyed a dramatic reduction in cost in recent years. The Energy Act 2013 introduced Contracts for Difference to support many types of low-carbon energy, alongside the continuation of Feed-in Tariffs for smaller projects.

The overall cost of subsidies for low-carbon energy is capped under the Levy Control Framework (LCF). This means that up to 2020/21 we know exactly how much will be added to consumer bills each year. Clarity is now needed on the extension of the LCF beyond this point. The energy industry has long investment cycles and the UK has to compete for capital investment in a global marketplace. To secure the investment our energy industry needs we have to maintain confidence in the stability of our policy framework.

It is also important to focus on getting the best value for money from this pot. The role of auctions in this process is crucial. Technologies now compete for Contracts for Difference and the most recent auction saw many projects bid at a lower price than expected. As technologies mature, competition drives down prices, and encouraging the role of the market to grow and that of the state to diminish helps this.

Nuclear power has a key role as it provides secure, low-carbon base load power which, in the absence of better electricity storage, intermittent renewables are unable to do. However at present nuclear looks expensive. This is an area where the Government could help. Since borrowing costs are a large part of the total cost of a new nuclear power station and since the UK has one of the best credit ratings in the world, the Government should consider funding the cost of construction itself and then selling the power station on to a private operator.

We must also ensure that in addition to subsidising low-carbon electricity generation other measures such as Demand Side Response and energy efficiency measures are also supported. In the longer term a reformed EU Emissions Trading System will hopefully drive a meaningful carbon price that will incentivise low-carbon technologies without the need for any other price support.

Conservatives have long recognised that the world cannot deplete its finite resources without jeopardising the health and prosperity of future generations. I am convinced that those economies which cut their dependence on fossil fuels sooner rather than later will enjoy a competitive advantage in the 2020s as the world steps up its response to the threat of climate change.

It is time to accept that the market alone cannot deliver an energy system that is secure, low-carbon and affordable. Low-carbon subsidies are needed during the transitional phase which will lead to the eventual emergence of a global carbon price. ●

# Pricing carbon

Lord Deben writes that pricing carbon on a locally sensitive basis would address market failure in a conservative way



LORD DEBEN *was the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food between 1989 and 1993*

Believers in the Free Market are tempted to assume that the market in which they work becomes less free if there is any government intervention. So any talk of carbon pricing strikes a discord on the ear of many on the Right. Yet, prices are supposed to reflect real costs in order that choices are real and the democracy of the marketplace works. We know now just how unreal were many of the prices of our Victorian forefathers. They left us the cost of cleaning up while they themselves were pocketing the unreal profits that ensued from their failure to charge properly. Their smokestacks destroyed lives and health, dirtied and damaged buildings, left piles of waste products, and made great gashes in the countryside.

This was therefore not a free market because external costs had not been internalised. In effect the Industrial Revolution was being subsidised by the communities left with the bills. What makes it worse is that the more the community takes on responsibility, the more that subsidy increases. So the health effects become more expensive if there is a National Health Service mandated to pick up the costs of the thousands of people affected by air pollution – all at the taxpayers' expense.

Introducing a carbon price, whether by tax or by some market mechanism, is therefore a thoroughly conservative measure. It's not just that the polluter pays, it's that the customer pays the proper price and therefore the 'hidden hand' of the market can work properly. In principle, this is a

much more sensible way of correcting anomalies than countering one subsidy with another which is what current policies attempt.

The principle is therefore simple but its implementation can take various forms. In the UK we have the EU-ETS, road fuel taxes, and 'shadow pricing' under Electricity Market Reform. This last method is a particularly clever way of using carbon pricing to incentivise low-carbon investment as it avoids a number of difficult technical problems.

The precise method of levying the carbon price already varies considerably but its necessity in one form or another is gaining widespread support, not least now that the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund have endorsed the process. Particularly interesting is the success of the scheme introduced in British Columbia where increases in the carbon tax are exactly mimicked by decreases in the income tax.

An independent commission ensures that the switch is complete and the Treasury doesn't siphon off any of the proceeds. This may well be a model for other provinces and countries because the independent control element has ensured that the system has gained very widespread trust and support. People know they can avoid the carbon tax by taking 'green' decisions. It's much more difficult to avoid income tax! The tax therefore drives behavioural change throughout the process.

Carbon pricing at an appropriate level and on a flexible and locally sensitive basis would therefore address the main issue of market failure and enable a properly competitive market. It would, however, not be the only necessary answer to meeting

the challenge of Climate Change. We would also need to follow the Stern Review recommendation and have a technology policy that takes seriously the difficulties of development of major new mechanisms such as Carbon Capture and Storage. Stern also highlighted the need for measures to encourage behaviour change if we are to meet our statutory requirement of cutting emissions by 80% by 2050. The change in attitudes to drink-driving is a powerful reminder of what can be achieved by well founded policies of this kind.

*People know they can avoid the carbon tax by taking 'green' decisions. It's much more difficult to avoid income tax!*

Together, these are policies which fit a free society. They enable the market to work effectively, they overcome artificial barriers to necessary technological change, and they reward choices that contribute to our goal of combatting climate change, increasingly seen as the major physical threat that the world faces. Above all, these are policies that commend themselves to nations across the globe. It isn't surprising that China has five carbon pricing pilot programmes nor that carbon pricing is the mechanism that most commends itself to those in the US who have come to accept climate science and the urgency it implies. If Britain takes the lead in reforming the EU-ETS we could also lead the way for real global change. ●

**Dear Prime Minister,**

Welcome back to Downing Street.

**We are some of the businesses that will help to create the UK's future economy.**

We want this economy to be energy efficient and low carbon.

Failure to tackle climate change could put economic prosperity at risk. But the right action now would create jobs and boost competitiveness.

**We encourage your government to:**

- *Seek a strong global climate deal in Paris in December which limits temperature rises to below 2°C*
- *Set an ambitious 5th carbon budget to drive further reductions in UK emissions*
- *Establish a long-term framework for investment in the low-carbon economy*

We look forward to continuing to work with your government to deliver a cleaner, greener and more prosperous Britain.

Yours sincerely,



Co-ordinated by WWF-UK in collaboration with the above businesses.

# A centre-right approach to international climate diplomacy

Ben Caldecott writes on the challenges for the next round of climate change talks



BEN CALDECOTT is an Associate Fellow of Bright Blue and a Programme Director at Oxford University's Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment

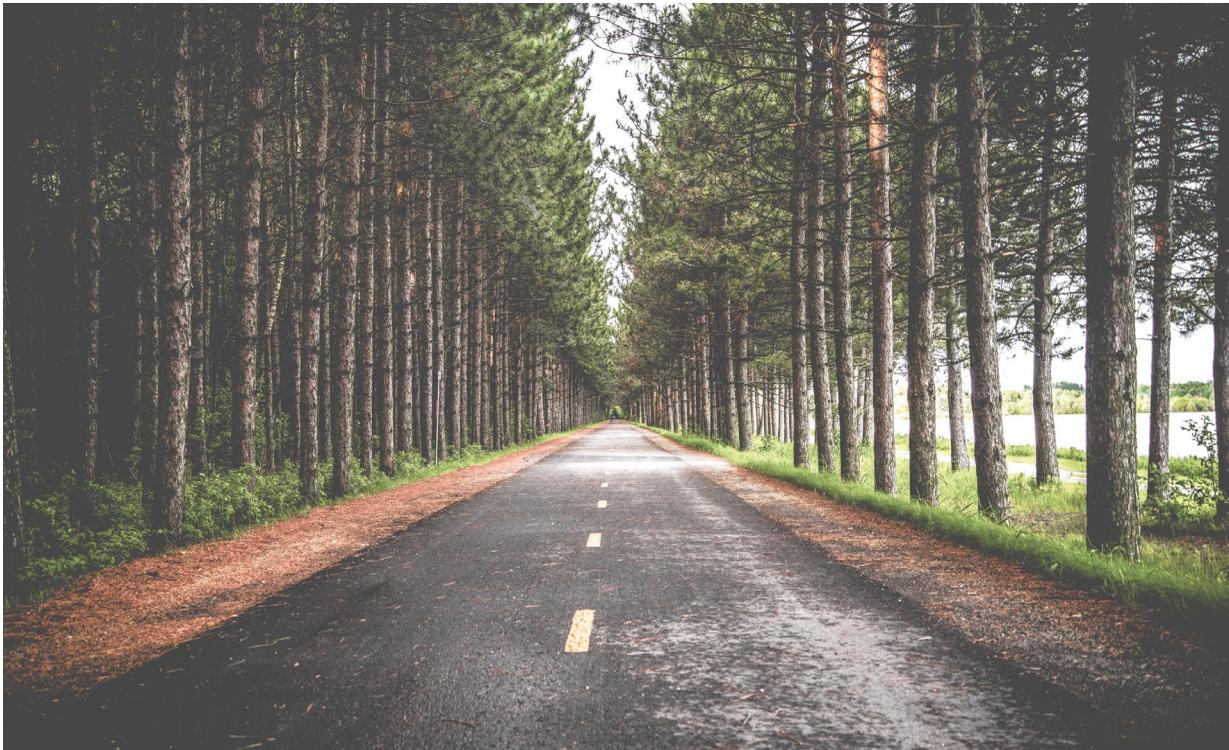
Environmental challenges are often collective action problems that require co-ordination to solve. Such co-ordinated responses frequently need to happen internationally. Anthropogenic climate change is a perfect example of this challenge – carbon pollution has the same impact wherever it is emitted and emissions are currently associated with most forms of economic activity. It is, therefore, impossible to solve without concerted collective action internationally.

Without global progress, physical climate change impacts will make it incredibly challenging to secure long-term economic sustainability. From a UK perspective, key trade partners are likely to be seriously impacted (the US, China, India, and Australia all rank highly in terms of exposure to climate risk) and we will suffer from countless other direct and indirect impacts. The literature on this is well-established, large, and growing.

As we approach another set-piece international negotiation in Paris in December 2015, it is worth putting that process in context, setting out what the centre-right can do as part of these efforts, and also identifying what

other initiatives can be led by the UK to achieve real progress on important aspects of climate change mitigation and adaptation internationally.

The UN climate negotiations culminate annually in early December – the next such meeting is in Paris in 2015. The build up to Paris began immediately after the Durban negotiations held in December 2011. At Durban negotiators agreed to deliver a “new and universal greenhouse gas reduction protocol, legal instrument, or other outcome with legal force by 2015 for the period beyond 2020”. This makes Paris the last opportunity to secure such an agreement by the end of 2015 for implementation five years later.



This is slow and inadequate progress. But the good news is that action on climate change is only partly influenced by the negotiations – most of the on-the-ground action has very little to do with the UN process. It is largely determined by national policies and market innovation.

*While recognising the importance of the UN process, we should also recognise the importance of bilateral and plurilateral action and be much more active in this respect*

Copenhagen in 2009, the previous big UN climate change ‘save the world’ moment famously ended in acrimony. Since then clean energy investment has exploded (US\$1,462 billion since the start of 2010), the price of renewables has fallen dramatically (59% for solar photovoltaics), and the world is now adding more capacity in renewable power each year than coal, natural gas, and oil combined – it is now a large and mainstream sector.

So regardless of whether a UN agreement is reached, clean technologies will continue to transform markets and disrupt traditional business models remarkably quickly. Nevertheless, an international deal still matters and the UK centre-right should be helping to ensure the best possible outcome for some of the following reasons.

First, the nature of climate change means that there is significant potential for ‘free riding’. To ensure that all countries contribute their fair share we need an international system able to measure, monitor, and hold countries to account. The international process helps to keep countries ‘honest’ with respect to their emissions and progress towards targets. We also need a process that involves the countries responsible

for the vast majority of emissions and the UN process does this.

Second, we need a way of setting levels of ambition and urgency. We also need a way of keeping countries in regular contact on specific climate change issues – regular formal and informal dialogue builds trust and helps ratchet up ambition over time.

Third, there are technical issues, methodologies, and scientific assessments that need to be conducted, developed, and evaluated. The international process enables ongoing technical collaboration and co-operation. The importance of this should not be underestimated.

Fourth, some countries require international climate finance to reduce emissions and adapt to current and future climate change. There are also sources of emission reductions, such as preventing deforestation in tropical forest countries, which require financial flows into those countries that can be partly mediated via the international process.

These practical reasons, rather than grander ideas about the importance of UN processes, are why we must be active, ambitious, and vocal supporters of an agreement in Paris and beyond. While failure at Paris will not halt progress, it would slow it down, and this would harm UK interests and disproportionately impact least developed countries.

While recognising the importance of the UN process, we should also recognise the importance of bilateral and plurilateral action and be much more active in this respect. The UN process has significant weaknesses – not least the requirement to get universal support from all countries involved.

The NGOs and activists, and a large part of our own civil service, have placed too much faith, time, and money in the UN negotiations. Doing things outside of the UN ‘track’ is seen as undermining the sanctity of that process. That is nonsense.

What key countries should have done long ago is to identify key sectors and then mobilise the right coalitions to reduce emissions from those sectors. Cement production, deforestation, and coal-fired power generation are three such sectors – each incredibly important accounting for 5%, 15%, and 20% of global emissions respectively. The top five countries account for 72% of total global cement production, 47% of deforestation, and 77% of coal capacity.

Sector specific agreements would be complementary to the UN process, but could be separate from it. They would each involve the main countries responsible for emissions in a sector being brought into a negotiation process with each other and key countries to try to agree on timelines for reducing emissions. The UK should take the lead on negotiating one such sectoral agreement by 2020 – phasing out subcritical coal-fired power stations by 2030 or a comprehensive and funded international deal to stop tropical forest deforestation would be potential options.

Just one such agreement would almost certainly yield many more net emission reductions than the entire UN process has so far. That’s not to say that such agreements are easy – they are not – but such efforts should be made and undertaken in parallel (and in a supportive, reinforcing way) to the UN track. The fact that such efforts have not taken place is largely down to a lack of imagination and an outdated worldview, where the UN track is seen as the only way to secure progress. We must be much more pragmatic and the centre-right should be at the forefront of reimagining British and European international climate diplomacy. ●

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*This article is an edited extract from ‘Green and Responsible Conservatism’, a new report from Bright Blue*

# The Swedish model

Eric Luth and Kristina Yngwe explore the benefits of prioritising a low carbon strategy



ERIC LUTH is member of the board of the Centre Party Youth in Sweden, and former president of the organisation's environment network



KRISTINA YNGWE is the Vice President of the Environment and Rural Affairs Committee in the Swedish Parliament

Sweden is, by international observers such as the OECD, considered a forerunner when it comes to environment-related questions and combatting climate change. Between 2006 and 2014, the party we represent – the social liberal Centre Party – held the ministerial posts for environmental, energy and rural affairs. Thus, we had great influence in the area.

Our main ideas were quite simple: if it is cheap and easy to be environment-friendly, people will be environmentally-friendly. Prohibitions are sometimes inevitable, but in most cases, incentives will work better. While carbon taxes have been increased, subsidies have also been increased on cars run on renewable



fuels. Consequently, road traffic has increased, whilst emissions from road traffic has decreased. In a somewhat similar manner, the state has stopped subsidising nuclear power, but increased subsidies towards renewable energies. Consequently, wind power is increasing rapidly. In 2006, when the centre-right party took over, the annual production amounted to 1.0 tWh. In 2014, the annual production amounted to 11.5 tWh.

Tax shifts have been a popular measure in Sweden. In 1991, Sweden was one of the first countries to introduce a tax on carbon. This has been increased ever since. Again, our motive has been promoting environmental-friendliness as, at the same time and in a so-called green tax shift, taxes on labour have been decreased. We wanted to make environment-friendly goods and services cheaper, at the expense of dirtier goods and services.

The last couple of years, decoupling has become a popular term in research as well as public debate. Simply, decoupling could be defined – as it has been by OECD and UNEP – as the breaking of the link between “environmental bads and economic goods”. Many of the measures we took whilst in government directly increased our rate of decoupling, to the extent that Sweden doesn't decouple relatively (increasing GDP faster than CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, for example), but absolutely – GDP is increasing, and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions decreasing. There are more countries decoupling absolutely, but few to the extent that Sweden does.

The Centre Party has been, and is still, an important factor when it comes to rural affairs. While the environmental questions are crucial, it is vital as well that there is a working

agriculture and vivid countryside.

It has thus been important to keep this in mind in the discussions: the measures to combat climate change cannot kill the countryside.

Similarly, and what our decoupling success shows, is that entrepreneurship and growth is not opposed to cutting carbon emissions. Contrarily, we would say that it is only by focussing on how to grow sustainably that we can, in the end, experience reduced emissions.

If the companies, industries and people in this country feel no incentive to be environmentally-friendly, it is much more likely they will not be.

*If all our emissions stopped today, the world would not be saved*

The importance of this, to conclude, is that it shows that decreasing emissions does **not** inevitably lead to decreased growth – but rather, that it is indeed possible to decrease emissions and meanwhile experience a growing economy. It has to be acknowledged that Sweden is a small economy, and our emissions have very little impact on the rest of the world. If all our emissions stopped today, the world would not be saved – we stand for a very limited amount of the emissions made in the world. Still, what Sweden's environmental policies has shown, and what could be crucial both for developing countries and developed countries, none willing to risk their well-being (or increasing well-being, if it is low, economically), is that growth and emission cuts could go hand in hand. This, we are convinced, is a crucial insight if the world is to develop sustainably. ●

# Making the political case for resource efficiency

Ben Goldsmith writes that environmental responsibility must start at home



BEN GOLDSMITH is a Green industry financier and Chairman of the Conservative Environment Network

I share the elation felt by all true Conservatives at David Cameron's great victory in the General Election. Admittedly part of my elation comes from a successful flutter at the bookies. But there is also a deeper reason: having seen off threats from both right and left, the Conservative Party finally has the confidence and political capital to become the real party of environmental stewardship. At the heart of Conservatism is the desire to preserve what is best for future generations. And what is better and more important than our natural heritage and the natural capital it bequeaths to us?

Conservative thinkers from Burke to Mrs Thatcher to Roger Scruton have all stressed this point. Yet instead of standing proud on this tradition, the Conservatives allowed the environment to become a divisive weak spot during the last Parliament. Environmental measures were seen as a sop to the Lib Dems – or, worse, the EU – while also increasing the threat from UKIP. Yet in spite of policy being left under a pall of uncertainty – with subsidies slashed and the country yet to respond to austerity measures – the green economy still grew by 22% between 2010 and 2013. It now turns over £122bn with roughly half made up of waste-reclamation processes – a thrifty and profitable proposition that should appeal to all Conservatives.

The economic case for resource efficiency is now making itself known, as evidenced by the huge savings – and thereby shareholder returns – now being generated by companies like M&S and Kingfisher

from their environmental-management programmes. Equipped with a new mandate from the British people – and backed by a new intake of forward-looking young MPs – it is now up to the Conservatives to make the political case, which should come naturally to the party.

What is the political case? It certainly has a strong economic component, which plays to the Conservative interest in both long-term economic health and living within our means. But it goes beyond that to deeper questions. One of the themes of this publication is beauty: a simple human need on which the Left, for all its visions of the nobility of man, has never delivered. One reason is that it has typically seen beauty as a luxury, which it subordinates to the 'common good'.

But a deeper reason is that real beauty is rooted in nature and the Left still despises rural life due to its perceived inequality and resistance to change. Conservatives prize that life, seeing human society – and the mechanisms needed to maintain a healthy society – as rooted in nature. A belief in the wisdom of nature is at the heart of Conservatism. If we add to this belief a desire to preserve the national landscape and a non-wasteful approach to natural resources, we arrive at the three pillars of Conservative environmentalism.

The new parliament provides the Conservative Party with a once-in-a-generation opportunity to take ownership of these issues. Central is the need to free environmental responsibility from the association with top-down dictats by unaccountable international bodies, in particular the EU. It is essential that the Conservative Party does not accept the old narrative set by its opponents – that to reject



the EU is to reject environmental concerns – or allow the electorate to accept it. A much stronger case can be made that the EU's superstate approach to the environment is in itself unnatural – in turn making it inefficient and expensive to implement, as quota-based systems like the Common Agricultural Policy and Common Fisheries Policy have shown.

Environmental responsibility should start at home, where the benefits will also be felt. After all, what joy can an EU bureaucrat take if British populations of bees, cuckoos, river fish, eels and owls start to rebound in the next five years? Just as David Cameron intends to repatriate control of human rights with a British Bill of Rights, so his team should now advance a strong and independent set of environmental and energy policies. Doing so would not only be true to Conservative philosophy – it is also essential to consolidating support among young voters and defending attacks from rival parties, thereby delivering stronger majorities in 2020 and beyond. ●

# Can British farming be sustainable?

Meurig Raymond explains the challenges facing British farmers and their solutions



MEURIG RAYMOND is  
the President of the  
National Farmers' Union

Farmers and growers in Britain are more than ready to meet the challenge of feeding a growing population and continuing their hard work in protecting and looking after our beautiful countryside. It's not a debate about 'either or' and farmers and growers are already doing a great deal of hard work for our countryside. For example, under the voluntary Campaign for the Farmed Environment in England, farmers and growers currently have 450,000 hectares of land voluntarily put aside for wildlife. Meanwhile, smarter use of agricultural inputs have resulted in, for example, a reduction in the overall application rate for nitrogen by 40 per cent for grassland and by 10 per cent on crops compared to 2000.

The National Farmers' Union (NFU) is intensely aware of the major challenges ahead for British farmers – to increase food production with fewer inputs and better care for the environment. But they also need to be doing this at a time when our industry needs to grow and invest, all the while meeting the demands of consumers who have told the NFU they want more British produce on their plates.

And this all needs to be achieved amidst a backdrop of volatile global markets and sometimes impractical, burdensome legislation that duplicates what is already in place. This is why we expect the Government to challenge European environmental regulation that adds unacceptable burdens to farmers. Where regulation is necessary it must focus on outcomes and not process.

Increasing volatility in our climate is also throwing in a few curveballs for the United Kingdom's farmers to grapple with. The devastating floods experienced over the past few years have demonstrated that these events are becoming more frequent – wiping out huge swathes of our countryside and devastating many farmers' businesses and rural communities at the same time. We will need to find more resilient ways of managing flood risk and rethink how we value farming when allocating funding to flood defences in the future.

At the other end of the spectrum we've seen access to water become more challenging for some parts of the country. All farmers need water to grow our food and rely on rainfall, public supply and abstraction from rivers and groundwater. Farmers need secure access to water to make long-term business investment in future food production.

We also need to consider the wider global context of the UK farming industry. By value, Europe's agricultural trade accounts for 9.8 per cent of exports and 9.7 per cent of imports respectively. Trade on this scale carries a significant external environmental footprint. In effect, Europe relies on crucial natural resources from outside its borders, such as water, which are likely to become increasingly limiting to food production in the decades ahead. Investing in resource-efficient, sustainable and resilient food production systems will have an increasingly important role to play in limiting this external footprint in the future. Crucial to this will be the continued need to invest in both management and technological advances which support the achievement of these high production standards.

These are all crucial issues that need addressing, sooner rather than later, and that's why, ahead of this year's General Election, we set out our own manifesto for both the industry and the Government, focussed on investing for growth; protecting animal and plant health; securing knowledge and technology; building fair, safe and secure food chains; and caring for our countryside. We had 47 asks in all, covering a whole host of issues affecting the farming industry.

And now we have a Conservative government in place, we are working hard to ensure we have the right environment so we can maximise the potential of our industry and create a policy environment in which our farmers and growers can thrive. The NFU wants this next government to work with us to set an agenda for growth and for profitable and sustainable production that fosters the breadth of farm businesses from food to renewable energy and environmental services. The opportunities are clear – global and domestic demand for food and renewable energy is on the rise; 88 per cent of the UK public think farming is important to the economy. We need to do this by building on the professionalism and confidence of British farmers, and by backing British farming and working together we have a unique opportunity to achieve that ambition.

Crucially, we need to make sure that our new government understands farming, that it supports growth and has the policies that send the right business signals to farmers across the UK. On our part we will be working hard to ensure these practical and easily implementable actions are adopted because we are convinced they will deliver growth and benefits for both the country and for the countryside. ●

# Conservatism, diversity, fragility

Stanley Johnson on how Conservatives must stick to their manifesto commitments



STANLEY JOHNSON is a former MEP and Vice-Chairman of the European Parliament's Environment Committee

In the run-up to the June 1970 General Election, as the Conservative Research Department's first environment 'officer,' I contributed some stirring paragraphs to the Conservative Manifesto about the need for environmental protection, including: cleaner air, the fight against water pollution, dealing with toxic chemicals and waste. I would like to think that Conservative pledges to do more and better in this particular field of political endeavour helped Mr Heath win his largely unanticipated victory.

Nor were they empty pledges. Heath appointed Peter Walker as the first Super-Minister in charge of a newly-created Department for the Environment which encompassed housing, planning and transport as well as the Central Unit for Environmental Pollution. When the UK joined the European Economic Community at the beginning of 1973, Britain took the lead in pushing for a vigorous and effective EEC-wide programme on the environment. People who speak glibly of the UK 'simply joining a free-trade area' back in the '70s ignore the facts. We were among the most active proponents of European environmental policy. I speak here from certain knowledge, having been closely associated with the development of EEC/EU environmental policies – both in the European Commission and in the European Parliament – over two or more decades.

In the wider international sphere, Britain – with Peter Walker leading the UK delegation – played a leading role at the first UN Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm in

June 1972. We actively supported the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme in 1974. Britain supported, and often initiated, the elaboration and adoption of important international agreements on key issues, such as ozone depletion, the transport of toxic waste, the loss of biodiversity and climate change.

Today, forty-five years later, the Conservatives have won another 'surprising' election victory. The Prime Minister has made it clear that the Government, freed from the restraints of coalition, will seek to implement the Conservative Party Manifesto 2015 line by line.

Given that clear Prime Ministerial commitment, the preamble to the 'Environment' section of the Manifesto deserves to be reproduced in full. Here it is:

"For Conservatives, Britain's 'green and pleasant land' is not some relic from a bygone era, to be mourned and missed: it's the living, breathing backdrop to our national life. Our moors and meadows, wildlife and nature, air and water are a crucial part of our national identity and make our country what it is. So we care about them deeply, want to protect them for everyone and pass them onto future generations."

On the international front, the most immediately relevant commitment in the Manifesto, given the imminence of the Paris Climate Change meeting later this year, is the clear statement that the Government will seek an agreement which makes it possible, even at this late hour, to keep the increase in global temperatures to no more than two degrees Celsius.

At a time when elephant and rhino populations are being decimated throughout Africa, the Manifesto also

commits the UK to taking urgent action to end the illegal trade in threatened wildlife.

On climate change and wildlife trade and similar issues, we must and will work with our European partners. But the Manifesto also signals a raft of other measures that the UK can implement now, on our own account, regardless of the outcome of the current 'European debate.' The Manifesto commits us, for example, to creating a network of marine protection areas not only around Britain's coasts, but also around overseas territories such as the Pitcairn Islands and Ascension.

My only quibble is that there is no clear assessment of the implications of continued rapid population growth in this country and of the ways this problem can be addressed.

Back in 1971, when I was still working in the Conservative Research Department, the House of Commons Select Committee on Science and Technology, in their first Report of 5th May 1971, concluded that "the Government must act to prevent the consequences of population growth becoming intolerable for the everyday conditions of life."

At the beginning of the 1970s, the UK's population was around 54 million. The current estimate is 63.7 million, with 78 million projected twenty years hence. Given the basic demographic facts and their implications for economic, social and environmental policy, I would argue that an All-Party Group on Population, promoting population policy at home as well as abroad, is needed today more than ever.

At the very least, Number 10's Policy Unit, under newly-appointed Camilla Cavendish, might be encouraged to put the 'population issue' high on its list of priorities. ●

# On direct planning

**Nick Boys Smith** says we need to stop asking how to build more homes and start asking how to make new homes more popular



NICHOLAS BOYS SMITH is the Director of Create Streets

The South East has a housing crisis and France has overtaken Britain as a home-owning democracy. So far, so anodyne. But why? “NIMBYs”, incant frustrated developers. “Greenbelts”, invoke irate LSE professors. “Timid politicians”, shout furious lobby groups. But they are all wrong. Or at any rate they are insufficiently right. They are dealing with symptoms not maladies.

We have a housing crisis because new housing, new neighbourhoods and new multi-storey blocks are consistently, unambiguously and predictably unpopular with strong majorities of the public a strong majority of the time. Older homes are larger and normally worth more per square foot (despite staggeringly lower insulation standards). Even RIBA admits something is wrong. They found, in one report, that “only around a third of homebuyers would consider buying a new home at all. Two thirds or more are only prepared to purchase from the existing stock.”

If you could make people not just accept but love new buildings and neighbourhoods, argue for them and lobby for them then most other problems would fade away like ghosts at cockcrow.

Research by Savills found that the two most important issues people search for in their home are the “neighbourhood” and the “external appearance”. Meanwhile Create Streets’ own research shows that the vast majority of people just want to live in a normal house on a normal street.

I can almost hear professionals sharpening their pencils (or worse) in fury but the data is unambiguous. In poll after poll almost all would rather live in houses in streets than flats and would almost always avoid multi-storey blocks. In one MORI survey not one single respondent of the 1,056 wanted to live in a tower block. People in multi-storey blocks are the least happy with their homes. In seven controlled surveys high-rise block residents were the least satisfied – even if their social and economic status was identical.

Data over many years reports people living in large blocks are less happy, less sociable, know fewer of their neighbours, are more likely to suffer from crime, less likely to do well at school and so on (again – even when their social and economic status was identical).

Just as bad, too often the very design attributes that are often correlated with the most provably popular neighbourhoods are just not present in too many new developments. In a globalised age, people seek compensation in a strong sense of place – including a style and use of materials that normally references memory and locational heritage. In a survey we did last year that was the key finding. People want here to be here. They don’t want here to be anywhere. Place trumps time.

In our recent pop-up poll on what types of housing people would actually want built, 87 per cent preferred homes that were clearly ‘small c’ conservative in design: one a street re-built 15 years ago as a Victorian simulacrum, the other a brilliant take on a Georgian terrace by the architects Gluckman Smith. Revealingly of the 13 per cent

who preferred less historically-referenced buildings, 43 per cent worked as planners, architects or in creative arts.

The poll was indicative not scientific but is consistent with older studies. There is a measurable disconnect between what architects and the rest of the population appreciate in the built environment.

*People want here to be here. They don’t want here to be anywhere. Place trumps time*

But too often the miasma of development control processes, housing regulations and building regulations actually make it hard to build such conventional places. When we presented some street-based, very ‘London’ high-density masterplans to a developer last month his response was: “that’s beautiful; you’ll never get it through planning”.

This is Kafkaesque. With developers able to out-spend planners five to one and with communities hating the results, the planning system is both too weak and too strong. It is beyond democratic control. There is a new majority Government. This is their key planning challenge: not ‘build more homes’ but ‘how do we make homes more popular’. The planning system needs to change and give a staggeringly greater focus to what people want. Neighbourhood plans should be but the first step in a direct planning revolution, which removes planning power from property funds and city officials and returns it, where it belongs, to the rest of us. ●

# 21st century marine conservation

Adrian Gahan on how Britain can lead the world in marine conservation



ADRIAN GAHAN is the managing director of Sancroft ([www.sancroft.com](http://www.sancroft.com)), a sustainability consultancy

If a government was to announce one of the single largest acts of nature conservation ever taken by any country, one would think they might make a bit of a song and dance about it. Not so for our Government. On Budget Day 2015, the Chancellor practically hid within the fine print of his budget a remarkable announcement: that the UK was committing to establish the world's largest marine reserve. You will be forgiven if you didn't notice.

*There are many complex policy solutions to the challenge of restoring healthy seas. There are also some very simple ones*

This reserve will be located in the UK territorial waters surrounding the British Overseas Territory of the Pitcairn Islands in the central Pacific, which is inhabited by fewer than 50 people, most of whom are descendants of the Bounty mutineers. At a whopping 322,000 sq miles, the reserve will be nearly 3.5 times the size of the UK.

The prospects for the global ocean are currently not good: in 2012 the UN determined that 70% of world fish populations are unsustainably exploited. This represents not just a global environmental crisis, but also an economic and security crisis for the world.

There are many complex policy solutions to the challenge of restoring healthy seas. There are also some very simple ones, and creating marine reserves is one of them.

This is why the Pitcairn announcement is so important. The design of the reserve is also highly significant, as it will act as a world-leading model for 21st Century conservation practice and, as a bonus for Bright Blue readers, it has been designed on soundly conservative principles:

**1. This reserve will reduce and share the traditional role of the state in conservation enforcement.** Until very recently such a vast conservation area could only have been enforced by the mother state, using boats in the water. Not any more.

**2. Thanks to innovative technology, developed by private business working in partnership with government and civil society,** the global ocean can now be monitored using satellites that can draw a remarkably clear picture of which boats are where, and what they are doing. Pew Charitable Trusts, an American foundation, has partnered with a British satellite business to develop the technology. Pew will also be covering the costs of trialling, so UK public costs are minimised.

**3. Regional political cooperation.** If a boat is caught illegally fishing, the UK will not act unilaterally. Instead, the boat's details are passed from the UK to local regional ports, under what is called a Regional Fisheries Management Organisation Agreement. These port states will then enforce the reserve by impounding the boat and confiscating its illegal catch.

**4. Local community support.** The Pitcairn islanders are overwhelmingly supportive of the reserve, not just for conservation reasons, but they also recognise that it could help bring additional scientific research and conservation tourism to one of the most remote places on Earth.

**5. A government open to innovation in policy and technology.** A coalition of environmental NGOs made up of Blue Marine Foundation, Greenpeace UK, Marine Conservation Society, Pew, RSPB and the Zoological Society of London have together built the momentum necessary to bring the Pitcairn proposal to the Government's attention. The Prime Minister's Office, and Oliver Letwin in particular, supported by Conservative colleagues including Zac Goldsmith, Richard Benyon, Nick Hurd and Lord Deben, showed a commendable willingness to support these 21st Century solutions to the age old challenge of conservation.

All Conservatives, of any and every shade of blue, can therefore be extremely proud of our Government leading the way with this initiative.

Britain is in a privileged position to make a difference, with our 14 Overseas Territories – the confetti of Empire – dotted around the world, all extending British territorial waters 200 nautical miles offshore into an otherwise lawless and increasingly plundered High Seas.

We must now encourage the Prime Minister to press on with the establishment of the Pitcairn reserve, no later than 2016. We should also keep the pressure up on our Government to pursue its ambition to extend this conservation model to other supportive Overseas Territories, as declared in the Conservative Party election manifesto.

Conservatives should always be the party of conservation. There are few more important, or more solvable, conservation challenges than the crisis currently befalling our seas. Our Prime Minister has found a way for Britain to lead the world in helping to solve the problem – and in a distinctly conservative way. We must both support him and hold him to the task. ●

# BRIGHT BLUE'S NEW PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORTERS

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We are delighted to announce 21 new Bright Blue Parliamentary Supporters who have joined us since the General Election

**Stuart Andrew MP**

*Pudsey, Horsforth & Aireborough*

**Lucy Allan MP**

*Telford*

**Henry Bellingham MP**

*North West Norfolk*

**Jo Churchill MP**

*Bury St Edmunds*

**Richard Graham MP**

*Gloucester*

**Stephen Hammond MP**

*Wimbledon*

**Kevin Hollinrake MP**

*Thirsk and Malton*

**John Howell MP**

*Henley*

**Ben Howlett MP**

*Bath*

**Nigel Huddleston MP**

*Mid-Worcestershire*

**Stewart Jackson MP**

*Peterborough*

**Syed Kamall MEP**

**David Lidington MP**

*Aylesbury*

**Paul Maynard MP**

*Blackpool North and Clevelleys*

**Stephen McPartland MP**

*Stevenage*

**Stephen Metcalfe MP**

*South Basildon and East Thurrock*

**Sarah Newton MP**

*Truro and Falmouth*

**John Stevenson MP**

*Carlisle*

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP**

*Berwick-upon-Tweed*

**Lord (Christopher) Tugendhat**

*House of Lords*

**Robin Walker MP**

*Worcester*

If you sit in the House of Commons, the House of Lords or the European Parliament and would like to become a supporter, please email [connect@brightblue.org.uk](mailto:connect@brightblue.org.uk)

Our Parliamentary Supporters endorse Bright Blue and its aim of strengthening and advancing liberal conservatism. They do not necessarily agree with all the policies and opinions we advocate.



# Parliamentary supporters from the new intake

We spoke to a few of our new Parliamentary Supporters who have just entered Parliament for the first time



**ANNE-MARIE TREVELYAN MP**  
Berwick Upon Tweed

### 1. What is your focus for the year?

My focus for 2015 is to get to grips with the many tools available to me to make progress on issues of concern to my constituents, such as work on the dualling of the A1; building solutions to the poor broadband in rural Northumberland; and getting better support for military veterans in my area with complex needs requiring medical and psychological interventions.

### 2. In your opinion, what was the best Coalition policy?

Raising the income tax threshold to take out millions of low paid workers from tax entirely.

### 3. What book has influenced you the most?

Anthony Trollope's *Barchester Chronicles* have given me a strong insight into the cynicism required to survive and make a career in the political world.



**LUCY ALLEN MP**  
Telford

### 1. What is your focus for the year?

The needs and concerns of the people of Telford. To start delivering on election pledges; particularly the need for young people to gain workplace skills and raising awareness of the increasing number of children in the care system.

### 2. In your opinion, what was the best Coalition policy?

Raising the lowest tax threshold to £10,600

### 3. What book has influenced you the most?

*The Selfish Gene* by Richard Dawkins.



**JO CHURCHILL MP**  
Bury St Edmunds

### 1. What is your focus for the year?

My focus for the year is delivering on what I promised my constituents during the campaign and learning about how to be effective in my new role. My main focus areas are: skills, particularly work-readiness and apprenticeships; improving broadband connectivity; rural funding; and health.

### 2. In your opinion, what was the best Coalition policy?

Reform of the welfare system; but we need to ensure the system works effectively and fairly for those in real need.

### 3. What book has influenced you the most?

No one book has influenced me exclusively, but a favourite that I have re-read many times is *Little Dorrit*. From a work and management perspective I particularly enjoy *The Fifth Discipline* by Peter Senge.



**BEN HOWLETT MP**  
Bath

### 1. What is your focus for the year?

My focus for the year is to champion the issues on which Bath residents elected me. I will fight for additional funding in the West of England and focus my attention on espousing the Conservative case for social justice.

### 2. In your opinion, what was the best Coalition policy?

Personal Tax Allowance – enabling more people who have worked hard to keep hold of more of their money. This not only has an economic benefit, it enables more people to get themselves out of the dependency culture.

### 3. What book has influenced you the most?

*The Big Society* by Jesse Norman or *Red Tory* by Phillip Blond.

# Why I'm a Bright Blue MP

Suella Fernandes on what drives her politics and why Bright Blue is important to her



SUELLA FERNANDES is the Conservative Member of Parliament for Fareham

On a cold February morning in 1968, a young man, not yet 21, stepped off a plane at Heathrow airport. Nervously folding away his one-way ticket from Kenya he clutched only his most valuable possession, his British passport. He had no family and no friends.

My father never returned to Kenya. He made his life here in Britain, starting on the shop floor of a paint factory. And my mother, recruited as a girl of 18 by the NHS, recently passed her 45th year of service as a nurse. My family had nothing but hopes and dedication. They were so proud to be British, so proud to serve and so proud to make our country better.

*That optimism and faith in people will continue to be the driving force behind a Conservative Party that I am proud to represent*

I started in an inner city state school where the teachers would go on strike. Somehow my parents saved enough money to send me to a local independent school which was my spring board to reading law at Cambridge University, the Sorbonne and New York City.

Bright Blue conservatives say that it does not matter where you start in life. You can get ahead through self-empowerment, taking responsibility and compassion. People, not the state, make us a proud nation. Individuals, working together, in a spirit of innovation and service enrich society. That is the ideal.

That optimism and faith in people will continue to be the driving force behind a Conservative Party that I am proud to represent, epitomised by many discussions and policies initiated by Bright Blue. The Conservative Party that our country needs is one which empowers people: whether it is through setting up a Free School in their community, or through incentivising jobseekers and making work pay, or supporting people as they acquire a stake in society through home ownership or running a business. A party that cherishes the small, the localised, the bespoke and personal is one that will thrive; instead of a party that favours vested interests, established monopolies and top-down dictate.

I have been inspired by the power of community and social enterprise, having helped to set up a Free School which is pioneering knowledge-based teaching in an area of historic educational underachievement and many social challenges. It is transforming the lives of its pupils and was made possible only because individuals, not Whitehall, saw a particular need and took action. As a result, it is tackling the root causes of social inequality whilst injecting choice and competition into local schools so that standards will be forced to rise.

As a Conservative, I believe in the power of the markets and enterprise to create growth and raise living standards. The general consensus between left and right confirms that the arguments between capitalists and socialists, monetarists and keynesians no longer divide the main political parties. Indeed, debate around deficit reduction during the last General Election campaign was centred around the degree of cuts rather than the principle of cutting government spending.

The role, therefore, of the politicians of the future will not be to win those arguments, but rather find solutions to the social challenges that our country still faces, against a backdrop of an increasing and more diverse population, more pressure on natural resources and a shift in economic might from West to East. To a large extent, those challenges include how we increase social mobility and eliminate intergenerational inequality. How do we provide high quality childcare, simplify tax, resolve unfairness in the benefits system, deliver affordable healthcare, improve the mental health of our children, and provide the housing and schools that people need? How do we redefine Britain's place in the world as her internal and external bonds loosen and how do we regain a sense of control over those coming here, whilst remaining open and a team player in the global economy? How does our trade capitalise on the growing eastern balance of power?

*Bright Blue conservatives say that it does not matter where you start in life. You can get ahead through self-empowerment, taking responsibility and compassion*

These are not easy questions, but fidelity to our core values will enable us to unearth the right way forward through pragmatism, principle and fairness, so that freedom, aspiration and compassion become the defining characteristics of a Conservative and Bright Blue legacy. ●

# How should conservatives approach environmental issues?

Oliver Shore shares his essay, which won Bright Blue's Tamworth Prize earlier this year



OLIVER SHORE *will shortly be doing work experience with Bright Blue after winning the Tamworth Prize*

Unfortunately, in recent times, those on the right have been associated with inaction on environmental issues. I can see how this view might properly be directed at the section of the right that advocates entirely free markets and as little government regulation as possible, hence the Conservative Party's association with big business, polluters, and oil companies. However, this should not be the case for a conservative. A conservative should be concerned with environmental issues and finding solutions to problems as they arise.

This does not entail climate change alarmism, and the enacting of any and every policy handed to a politician by the green lobby. The issue in the front of my mind here is wind farms. These have been relentlessly trumpeted in England as a good thing but to me they appear more as a classic example of the politician's syllogism "something must be done; this is something; this must be done". They are a classic example of the absurdities which the state can go to when it does not rely on evidence-based policy making. They seem to be nothing more than a face-saving exercise in alleviating the national conscience. And, given the wide-spread opposition to them wherever they are built, they have failed on all fronts. One does not save the environment for future generations by destroying it with rank upon rank of wind turbines.

I use wind farms as an example of an environmental policy that, while being well-intentioned, does very little, if

any, good. In an ideal world, we would be able to lower carbon emissions produced by energy generation while at the same time keeping the lights on for the current citizens, workers, and businesses. I do not consider those goals to be irreconcilable. In the sector of power generation, there is one source of which I am aware which can produce electricity on a scale large enough to maintain our society, while being carbon-neutral in terms of emissions: nuclear power.

While such a power source may be unpopular with the green lobby, it is the obvious and natural solution to all their concerns and is far safer than many of them would ever care to admit. Gone are the days of Chernobyl; modern reactors are far safer, and Britain is simply not at risk of the kinds of earthquakes and tsunamis that jeopardised the Fukushima reactor. Furthermore, recent advocacy for nuclear power has pointed to a greater number of small, local reactors, rather than the traditional behemoths. These reactors would take a shorter amount of time to build and can cater to local demand, thus rooting out inefficiencies in production.

This is the kind of infrastructure spending a green conservative government should be backing. Projects which would create jobs in construction and design, and which would foster skills that we can then export to countries who would seek to copy our model.

That, I would suggest, is the conservative answer to the supply side of the environmental issue. Keeping the lights on, while keeping the carbon down. On the demand side, I would argue that a conservative should be

concerned with giving people the power to make the right decisions and rewarding them when they do. The most obvious instrument for this is the tax system, and perhaps co-ordinated subsidies. A current Government scheme makes it easier and cheaper for households to install solar panels on their roofs. This reduces the energy bills of households and lessens the demand for electricity from conventional power stations. Not only that, but the incentive is also there for citizens to engage in this scheme, since they can sell back surplus power to the national grid. This is how I believe a conservative should approach the demand side of the environmental issue: by helping the individual to do the right thing, and incentivising them to do so.

With regards to conserving the physical environment as it stands, I think it would be wrong for a conservative to license large-scale construction of housing up and down the country. I do not deny that there is currently a great deal of pressure on the housing market. But I would rather the solution came from brownfield development, as far as is possible, and an acknowledgement of the fact that there is going to be substantial pressure on such a system for as long as we have net migration in to the country approaching 300,000 per year. I mention this as something a conservative would want to control, since widespread urban sprawl is not something we should desire if we are to conserve the environment we see today and hand it over to the future generations to enjoy. ●

*The Tamworth Prize is Bright Blue's essay prize for those aged 21 or under*

# Letter from America

James Brenton on the lessons we can learn from a bygone era of environmentalism



JAMES BRENTON is an Associate of Bright Blue

While the events in question may seem remote, the historically low levels of public trust in government in the United States are occasionally attributed to former Republican president Richard Nixon. The long shadow of the Watergate scandal, so the argument goes, still hangs over American politics. This is an oversimplification, but it is undoubtedly true that overblown fears of political skulduggery are Nixon's most enduring legacy. Less remembered is his role as the most environmentally ambitious president the United States ever had.

It is a 'truth is stranger than fiction' kind of realization. Nixon's time as president saw the enactment of most of the significant pieces of environmental legislation that today trip off the tongues of conservationists. The Clean Air Act (1970); Clean Water Act (1972); the Endangered Species Act (1973). Nixon, still reviled by many Americans, also created the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) which continues to oversee the United States' environmental regulatory framework.

Nixon's position as an implausible environmental champion makes more sense when considered in the context of his administration. Nixon won the presidency in 1968, the same year that Paul Ehrlich published *The Population Bomb*. In the United States in the late 1960s, polluted rivers were catching fire and leaded gasoline poisoned the air. A wave of popular concern brought 20 million people (nearly 10% of the population at the time) out to the first Earth Day protests in 1970.

But while Nixon's environmental enthusiasm may have just been smart politics, to dismiss it on this basis is to miss what makes his legacy so fascinating. In the United States of the 1970s, there was bipartisan consensus about the need to protect the environment. The Republican Nixon had to act, even if the legislation might come with an economic cost. The fact that he privately felt environmentalists wanted to "go back and live like a bunch of damned animals" is less interesting than the fact that he felt compelled to do something anyhow.

Much has changed since this time, and it would be an understatement to say that conservatives are generally not leaders in the environmental movement. There are many reasons why bipartisan support has frayed. For example, the rise of laissez faire attitudes towards business made close environmental regulation by government seem increasingly intrusive. And perhaps monumental issues like climate change, which cannot be predicted with perfect accuracy, will necessarily create a political divide about the urgency of action. Nothing shows this divide more clearly than the vitriol that Republicans now direct at the EPA, which should be counted among their party's great achievements.

But even if modern conservatives have become more wary of the economic tradeoffs involved in protecting the environment, the counterintuitive history of Nixon's legacy offers two lessons for the present.

The first is that environmentalism is not naturally a captive issue of the left or the right. Conservatives have played an important role in the environmental movement. Conservative concerns about intergenerational

fairness and individual responsibility also make environmentalism a natural fit. Margaret Thatcher said that "no generation has a freehold on this earth. All we have is a life tenancy – with a full repairing lease." This can be easy to forget in an occasionally polarised debate.

The second is that voters, including conservative voters, will respond to changing conditions. Conservatives are not born with a preference for growth over green levies. Events that show the costs of environmental degradation will shift attitudes, and conservative politicians can tap into this by demonstrating that they have a wellreasoned plan to address the consequences.

In Britain, a time when the environment was a key part of conservative efforts to attract a wider range of voters is no further away than David Cameron's own exhortation to "Vote Blue, Go Green". But much of this momentum has since been lost. All the while, a change in conditions that will lead voters to think more about the environment is all but inevitable. Some predictions show that by the year 2080 summer precipitation in parts of the UK may decrease by up to 50%, while winter precipitation could increase by more than 30%. This will surely get the public's attention.

It may well be possible for conservatives to wait for the political landscape to change and to support environmental issues as and when it's expedient. But given the near certainty of further environmental calamity as a result of our rapidly changing climate, it would be better to adopt a forward thinking policy of demonstrating environmental credibility now, rather than waiting for the flood waters to reach kneeheight. ●

## Research update



DAVID KIRKBY is *Bright Blue's* Senior Research Fellow

In the early 1950s, Winston Churchill believed that the British public was suffering from a lack of red meat consumption. Convinced of its nutritional properties, he held a policy aim of having it removed from the ration. This was achieved in 1954.

Developing good public policy has to move with the times. While Bright Blue has no position on the benefits or otherwise of red meat, over the past six months we have been working on a number of policy areas which matter for the economy and for society generally.

A major focus has been our project to develop a balanced centre-right agenda on immigration. We have published four reports exploring public attitudes to immigration and recommending policies and narratives for the centre-right:

1. **Understanding how Conservative voters think about immigration** demonstrated the distinctiveness of the views of Conservative voters on immigration, as well as how views vary within the conservative family.

2. **A centre-right plan on immigration from decision-makers and opinion-formers**, drew upon a series of roundtables we held to propose distinctive centre-right narratives on immigration which go beyond caps and clampdowns, such as contribution, integration and competence.

3. **A manifesto for immigration** outlined nearly 30 policy recommendations for the major parts of the immigration system: workers, students, families, asylum applicants and refugees.

4. **Understanding how ethnic minorities think about immigration**

demonstrated that ethnic minorities are more welcoming of immigrants and positive about their impact than the wider population, but value many of the same policy priorities. These attitudes indicate that there is an opportunity for the centre-right to develop a balanced agenda on immigration which enjoys greater support.

Beyond immigration, we published in July a report on environmental policy – **Green and responsible conservatism: embedding long-termism and sustainability in the UK economy**. Authored by our Associate Fellow, Ben Caldecott, this report tackles many of the themes discussed in this issue of Centre Write. Specifically, it addresses the issue of how to carve out a compelling green conservatism in this Parliament.

Bright Blue has three research projects currently underway.

First, our project, **Self-employment for those on low incomes**, will explore the characteristics of this low-income, self-employed group and identify how they can be better supported. Since 2000, around a million people have

moved into self-employment, with a rising proportion on low incomes. We will identify the challenges faced by this group and what policy response is required.

Second, **Strengthening the social networks of different ethnic minorities**, will unearth the quality and diversity of social networks for different ethnic minority groups. A growing body of evidence suggests that such networks are critical for improving living standards and life chances for those facing disadvantage. In this project, we will explore the barriers to greater social networks for different ethnic minority groups with reference to three key local public services: nurseries, Sure Start Centres, and schools.

Finally, our project, **Going part time: supporting part-time students**, will identify the reasons for the recent decline in part-time student numbers and how this should be addressed. Participation in part-time study yields impressive private and public benefits and this project will explore how more people can be encouraged to consider and commit to part-time studying. ●



# Sustainable energy and sustainable development

Mark Hoban on the impact of renewables policy on the developing world



MARK HOBAN *was the Member of Parliament for Fareham between 2001 and 2014*

There is a gathering sense of momentum in the run-up to the Paris climate change conference later this year. The Bonn Summit, the G7 commitment to decarbonise our energy supply and even a papal encyclical are all precursors to a push to set an ambitious, inclusive and binding commitment to emissions.

For us in the developed world, the outcome of these talks will have a minimal impact on our lifestyle. Some sources of non-carbon energy may be more expensive than the fossil fuels they replace. We may decry the aesthetic impact of wind turbines or a nuclear power station, but again I would emphasise there will be no discernible impact on our lifestyle.

But the wrong decisions in Paris could have a huge impact on the lives and livelihoods of those in developing countries without access to reliable sources of energy. Whereas we have a sense of entitlement to electricity and gas, three billion people lack access to electricity, according to the World Bank. For three billion people the outcome of the talks in Paris is not about how much to pay for turning on lights, but more crucially getting the energy in the first place.

But this presents us with a circle to square, for economic development we need energy, but to protect our planet we need to curb the emissions that are a traditional by-product of electricity and gas generation. On a recent fact finding trip to Kenya with the international development charity, CAFOD, that tension between protecting the environment and economic development was palpable.

I saw for myself the life-changing impact of having, for the first time, access to reliable sources of energy. The effect is huge. In a health centre, staff had historically relied on gas bottles to power fridges and keep vaccines cool. It frequently ran out and vaccines were ruined, meaning people who had walked for hours to get their medicine had to be turned away, never to attempt the trip again. But having installed solar panels and a water purification system with CAFOD's support, the clinic's doctors told us that every patient can now be seen and offered clean drinking water while they wait.

Affordable energy access also brings education benefits. In a girl's boarding school, solar energy was enabling evening remedial lessons to support pupils, and had meant the advent of hot running water for washing, all essential in attracting new pupils to the school. With the right of girls to receive an education so high on the international agenda, it has never been more vital to ensure schools are properly equipped to teach them.

Of course, where there has previously been no energy access, the choice between using fossil fuels or renewable energy sources is starker. The projects I visited all use solar panels, and in harnessing one of the few commodities that ordinary Kenyans have in abundance, sunlight, they are allowing people an affordable and reliable way to build their futures.

But there are challenges. Development projects are often targeted at delivering a specific, essential aim – like mitigating the effects of drought – meaning that other concerns – like environmental sustainability – can take a back seat. A poor community may end up with a pump that provides

essential access to water, but is powered by expensive diesel. To marry economic development with a concern for emissions and climate change, I believe that all bodies planning new development projects – including our own Department for International Development – should focus on long-term affordability and sustainability as part of first-stage planning, rather than revisiting this when a project is already built and functioning.

Many East African countries, Kenya included, have reserves of fossil fuels that governments could tap into at the expense of renewable energy investment. Clearly, the UK must not inhibit the economic development of other countries by preaching about fossil fuels, given the huge carbon emissions generated during our own industrialisation, but by supporting the roll-out of renewable energy sources we can help countries to avoid relying on fossil fuels in a way that both delivers unarguable economic benefits and avoids causing harm to the environment.

In our enthusiasm to strike a deal in Paris, we cannot overlook the importance of access to energy in the developing world, but at the same time we should not force countries like Kenya to repeat the mistakes we made when we industrialised. Just as Kenya was able to leapfrog traditional models of banking when it launched the mobile phone based banking system M-Pesa, we should look at how we can help Kenya and other developing countries adopt a new model of economic growth based on sustainable, renewable energy sources – one that squares the circle of promoting economic development and tackling climate change. ●

# On energy, Europe and Brexit

Michael Liebreich says our renegotiation with Europe can be used to make our energy more sustainable



MICHAEL LIEBREICH is Founder and Chairman of the Advisory Board of Bloomberg New Energy Finance

Over the past few years, there has been a divide within the Conservative family over energy. I have described it before as Roundheads vs Cavaliers. The Roundheads are painstakingly modern, emote about climate change and are convinced renewable energy can unlock economic growth within environmental limits. The Cavaliers are dismissive of climate change, convinced that any cheap energy is good energy, and all it would take is deregulation and generous tax reliefs for the UK to reclaim its past as an energy exporter.

Neither Roundheads nor Cavaliers are fully right. The world has entered a multi-decadal transition towards a cleaner energy system, primarily driven by the fact that such a system will deliver higher performance. The transition also holds the promise of lower overall energy costs, but only if it is done right. The liberal conservative – Bright Blue – task should be to make sure the transition is effected as efficiently as possible, and that the benefits should wherever possible be captured by consumers, rather than producers.

The outline of a high-performing, affordable, cleaner energy system is becoming clear. On the supply side will be renewable energy, generated centrally as well as locally, alongside nuclear power and natural gas. Coal can only survive if carbon-capture technology drops dramatically in cost. Vehicles will be electric or have super-efficient internal combustion; buildings will be far better insulated;

lighting and appliances will draw minimal power loads. Heavy manufacturing will have been largely supplanted by additive technologies and advanced materials. The whole system will require energy storage and be managed via a smart grid.

*What started as an exercise to bolster Europe's energy security in the face of Russian adventurism has developed into a broader, more liberal attempt to unblock the process of energy market integration*

So where does Europe come in? Much of the future power supply will come from intermittent renewables – perhaps as much as two thirds. Intermittency is not a show-stopper, but managing it comes with a cost. To keep this within manageable bounds we need what Europe has always promised and never delivered: a single market in energy and related services, so that energy demand can be time-shifted to match supply across as broad an area as possible, and so that we can blend cheap surplus power from overseas with, for instance, more expensive domestic offshore wind power.

When it comes to the current renegotiation of our relationship with Europe, our first demand therefore should be that the EU completes the single energy market. There are encouraging signs on this front, in particular an initiative dubbed the European Energy Union. What started as an exercise to bolster Europe's energy security in the face

of Russian adventurism has developed into a broader, more liberal attempt to unblock the process of energy market integration. The UK has been one of the leaders, but we have many allies, even among countries which have benefited until recently from the status quo.

Our second demand of the EU should be that it stops meddling in UK energy policy. As a member of the EU, we have conceded the right to negotiate carbon emission targets under the UNFCCC climate negotiations. But when it comes to decisions about how the UK should meet those targets – whether via energy efficiency, renewable energy, nuclear power, carbon capture and storage, electric vehicles or more efficient vacuum cleaners – those decisions are best taken here. That is what subsidiarity means.

Third, and finally, we should demand that the EU fix the European Carbon Trading Scheme (EU-ETS). The scheme was designed to deliver the carbon price required to drive out coal from the continent's energy mix. Instead it has become a joke, collapsing twice to near-zero, and allowing European coal use to increase, despite a withering recession. The UK's Carbon Price Floor is an ugly and distortive sticking plaster. We should be telling our EU colleagues that if they can't fix the EU-ETS, we will abandon it and set up our own mechanism, designed to drive the cost of capital of UK clean energy producers down rather than up.

Should the EU fail to deliver these three things – a single energy market, an end to meddling, and a fix to the EU-ETS – then from an energy perspective, Roundheads nor Cavaliers should join forces to recommend Brexit. ●

# Thinking global; acting local

Sarah Newton MP on how local enterprise partnerships are boosting marine renewables



SARAH NEWTON is MP for Truro and Falmouth

While there is an ongoing public discussion on climate change that needs more scientific input and greater participation, a clear development in recent years has been the rise in the numbers of people prepared to do something about climate change.

The annual British public attitudes survey has recorded a rise in the proportion of people recycling, from 42% in 1991 to 86% in 2010. When asked why they recycled, 89% of people in 2010 identified the danger of climate change as a motivator. As household budgets are squeezed, it is not surprising that more people are also cutting down on energy use. More surprising perhaps is that more than half of those doing so say that the risk of climate change is a motivating factor.

These statistics should be considered alongside more serious figures: the results of last year's State of Nature report on the UK's wildlife. This pioneering environmental audit, carried out by 25 conservation groups, revealed a picture of broad decline in British wildlife, driven in part by climate change. As someone lucky enough to hail from and represent a Cornish constituency, these numbers confirmed visible trends in the landscape in which my constituents and I live.

These two sets of figures, showing a rise in actions to combat climate change running in parallel with noticeable changes to our natural environment, are closely linked. The philosopher Roger Scruton has written about a powerful, but often overlooked, driving force

within society that he has christened "oikophilia", a family of motives at whose centre is love of one's home. As recent developments in the UK demonstrate, concern at seeing the changes to our home environment can readily translate into action.

Witnesses of decreases in wildlife or flooding as a result of extreme weather have not stood idly by. In addition to recent surges in energy saving, community flood prevention schemes, the creation of bee friendly communities and popular campaigns to save threatened species we have seen people, experts and policymakers come together to protect the environment. As the State of Nature report testifies, these campaigns have achieved some spectacular conservation successes in recent years.

While important public discussions continue about the rate of climate change and subsequent energy policy, we should not overlook this fightback against the impact of climate change, now gathering pace in homes, gardens, parks as well as village, town and city halls across Britain. As a Conservative, I believe this natural urge for people to want to work together to protect their environment should be nurtured. Over the past three years we have seen Conservatives in government do just that, helping people tackle climate change in order to protect the places they call home.

Communities looking to move away from carbon-based energy can put this priority at the heart of their future through neighbourhood planning, which allows local people to set out the future of their area. A new community energy fund, and the community energy strategy, gives people power

to come together to produce clean energy and implement energy efficiency programmes.

*When asked why they recycled, 89% of people in 2010 identified the danger of climate change as a motivator*

At a regional level, local enterprise partnerships (LEPs), drawn from local businesses and local authorities, have been charged with growing their local economies. Recognising the economic benefit of producing more energy in our own country and developing new renewable energy technologies to export, many LEPs have used their new freedoms and funding to support the renewable energy sector; the Cornwall & Isles of Scilly LEP is focusing support on marine renewables.

The UK currently leads the world in marine renewable energy. This year sees the start of the five year Clean Energy from Ocean Waves project coordinated by Nordic company Fortum, involving a new design of wave energy converter called the 'Penguin' deigned by Finnish firm Wello. The project will be delivered by a partnership of Cornwall based Majo Maritime, Wave Hub Ltd. and Uppsala, Exeter (Cornwall campus) and Plymouth universities.

For me such localism is the cornerstone of what environmentalism should be about in the 21st century – the nurturing of people working as a community, as people concerned by local environmental impoverishment, coming together to protect and enhance that environment for future generations. Thinking global; acting local. ●

# Warming up the UK economy

Josh Robson on how energy efficiency should be at the forefront of Government thinking



JOSH ROBSON is Head of Public Affairs for Knauf Insulation and writes on behalf of MIMA, the representative body for the mineral wool insulation sector

An Englishman's home is his castle. The problem is that castles are hard to heat. And UK homes, whether English, Welsh, Northern Irish or Scottish, are some of the hardest to heat in Europe. No matter how many times you switch energy supplier, you will be paying too much if your home is not insulated.

This doesn't just affect families, this heating gap has significant implications for wider areas of Government spending. In March, cost implications to the NHS from chronic illness caused by living in an under-heated environment led to the publication of a report by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, which sought to ensure doctors and health practitioners checked 'at risk' people are living in suitably warm homes. This only scratches the surface of how the infrastructure that we live in affects budgets across government.

So how do we turn around energy efficiency policy, and do so in a way that makes economic sense?

The first thing to say is that the Government has got it right – at least some of the time. Statistics from the World Bank show that UK energy consumption has fallen steadily since 2004, despite economic growth during this period. Government backed energy efficiency schemes have played a significant role in getting this far. By ensuring that economic growth is de-coupled from a parallel growth in dependence on international energy markets, the UK is stronger and more stable in a world where resource constraints are clear.

That Government has led the way so far is good news, because even though we are behind most of Europe, small changes to the way existing programmes work can reap large rewards.

What needs to take shape, during this Parliament, is a long-term framework supporting lasting investment in the energy efficiency industry. The lack of such clarity to date has stifled investment, held back the creation of jobs and hampered progress of delivery.

Success has been limited on a domestic level as consumers are offered intermittent incentives, complex information and unappealing rates for finance, all of which have affected the numbers of people willing fund their own refurbishment. Consumers going forward need clarity, consistency and easy-to-understand processes to boost confidence and drive demand.

On a corporate level, be it nuclear, energy efficiency, or the new generation of gas power plants, investors need a clear and consistent view of how Government will act over the lifetime of their investment. Short term interventions have limited the scale of investment and – perhaps more importantly – the appetite for innovation. If the newly developed framework is strong and long-term enough, to take political risk out of the equation at the next election new and existing players will have a much greater level of confidence.

Speaking for business, the CBI's John Cridland made the specific point that "energy efficiency needs to move up the rankings and be seen as a critical part of our infrastructure", as part of his UCL lecture at the beginning of June.

Making energy efficiency in buildings an infrastructure priority sends a strong message that as a country we

are finally stepping up to the level of our European neighbours. This will make us more competitive and this Government will see the economic returns.

The time to build long-term frameworks to support investment is now. Private housing repair, maintenance and improvement output is forecast to rise 5.0% in 2015. Further output growth of 3.0% per year is then expected in each year between 2016 and 2018.

This growth will be reliant upon a stable, long term policy environment and continued improvement in the confidence of UK consumers. People are already looking at improving their properties, and lowering the cost of finance attached to the Green Deal can help to provide a significant boost for the policy.

As the housing market picks up, a 'nudge' for consumers linked to stamp duty would be both revenue neutral, and help to build a wider market for energy efficiency. Such a move would also complement existing legislation which will come into effect in 2018, limiting the rental of uninsulated properties.

Energy efficiency is the most cost effective way to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide that we produce as we heat our homes. Getting the next iteration of Government schemes right will also help us save money in meeting these targets. Best of all, it will do so whilst boosting the wider UK economy through the regeneration of communities right across the country. The efficiency of our homes and buildings is already fundamental to our economic success, but as a country we are yet to act decisively to improve them. Well constituted Government schemes have been shown to work. It is time to finish the job. ●

# The future of onshore wind

**Maf Smith** writes that taking onshore wind off the table has political motivations



MAF SMITH is *Deputy Chief Executive at RenewableUK*

Energy projects make up nearly half of the £466bn infrastructure pipeline identified by the Treasury and the sector is, therefore, more interested than most in understanding what new Government policies might mean for their planned investments. The industry I represent – wind energy – is paying very close attention indeed.

While the Conservative manifesto rightly recognised the strategic importance of offshore wind in the UK – a major new manufacturing industry that can boost exports by up to £18bn a year – there was also a pledge to “end any new public subsidy” for onshore wind. It might surprise some Conservatives, but the UK’s onshore wind companies want that at least as much as politicians and are working hard to bring costs down and end the need for support. The question is how best to do this.

Swift action to stop onshore wind has certainly looked popular in the Party, with many backbenchers lining up to thank David Cameron and Amber Rudd for their decisiveness. There are Conservative MPs who have campaigned against onshore wind, and MPs who are agnostic but who have been on the receiving end of local campaigns against individual proposals, and would like the difficult issue to go away. All of these politicians will be happy.

But those Conservative MPs who have realised that onshore wind fits the Government’s requirement for “decarbonisation at lowest cost” will be nervous about how the announcement has been spun. Onshore wind is cheaper than new nuclear, for example, and on



course to be cheaper than new gas-fired power plants. If it gets there industry and government will achieve the shared objective of being subsidy free.

The Government has acted swiftly to close the Renewables Obligation (RO) to onshore wind projects a year earlier than planned. The RO is clearly a subsidy regime by the way, but one already scheduled for closure. Now Government is looking to exclude onshore wind from the new Contracts for Difference (CfD) regime – a competitive auction process in which renewable projects are allocated contracts based on price – which has been ‘live’ for little more than a year. In Bright Blue’s recent publication, *Green & responsible conservatism*, its author Ben Caldecott makes clear that the CfD regime is not a subsidy mechanism, but that what counts as subsidy will depend on cost relative to other technologies. The Committee on Climate Change recently reported to Parliament on UK progress on tackling climate change, and has said that “onshore wind at a cost of £80/MWh should be considered subsidy free”. Recent auction results show that onshore wind is already at that price, and set to go lower.

If the Conservatives want wind to be subsidy free they will use these market mechanisms to drive out cost.

But excluding onshore wind only shows that something else is at work. Closing the CfD to onshore wind would do nothing to tackle subsidies in the energy market. Thoughtful Conservatives know this and worry about a government tinkering in an energy market which was meant to be technology neutral. Policy which veers toward the anti-competitive is not a very Conservative approach.

Worse, the Government is excluding onshore wind from the market at a time when the Government is preparing to implement a new round of support payments through capacity market auctions for gas and old coal power plants. That will not be a good look for a Prime Minister who earlier this year pledged to end the use of coal for electricity generation and signed up to a global commitment to scrap fossil fuel subsidies.

The danger is that in its haste to deliver a manifesto commitment for onshore wind, Government is about to set some dangerous precedents, introducing anti-competitive practices, standing in the way of the energy market trying to drive out cost to the consumer, while at the same time funding high carbon alternatives. If that is right, then these decisions will look foolish in time. ●

# More human: designing a world where people come first

By Steve Hilton

Will Humphries deciphers Steve Hilton and tries to get beyond the thick of it...



WILL HUMPHRIES is currently researching for his DPhil in Renaissance Literature at Oxford

*More human: designing a world where people come first* is the first major offering from Steve Hilton, former Conservative policy-strategist, since his appointment in 2012 as a visiting professor at Stanford University. To the general public, Hilton is perhaps best remembered as the subject of satirical parody in the BBC 2 series *The Thick of It*, where he was reimagined as the director of communications and blue-sky thinker Stewart Pearson. While in office, Hilton was described by Nick Clegg as a “wacky thinker”, and *More human* will probably do more to cement rather than debunk his public image. Nevertheless, Hilton’s remarkable ability not only to pinpoint structural inadequacies in our society but also to suggest ways of improving them makes *More human* a compelling and refreshing read.

The book is divided into ten chapters, dealing with topics as varied as ‘Government’ and ‘Business’, ‘Food’ and ‘Health’, ‘Poverty’ and ‘Spaces’. In each, Hilton identifies structural conditions that have driven us increasingly towards dehumanising ways of dealing with problems before suggesting ‘more human’ alternatives. Some of these truly are ‘wacky’, such as introducing webcams to live-stream the activities of all farms so consumers know what they are buying; some are compelling, such as enabling life-long training for citizens so that skill-learning doesn’t end after school or university; and some are plain common-sense, such

as redirecting spending on childproofing playgrounds to enhance children’s road-safety. While critics (including myself) will have a tendency to sift through the details, lauding some and rejecting others, Hilton must be commended for starting a timely debate on how society is structured.

The recent election has confirmed that the Conservative party is trusted by the public to continue its work in Government, especially with regard to dealing with the economy. However, the Conservative party cannot allow itself to become a party that ignores social issues or believes that economic prosperity (or GDP growth) is the only way to deal with or improve institutions such as healthcare or education. Yes, more money in the coffers and cutting inefficiencies are important, but fundamentally rethinking how 20th century institutions operate in a 21st century world is going to have much more long-term significance. *More human* goes some way to asking the right questions even if the answers are not always perfect.

At times, Hilton lacks a degree of nuance that would better serve his argument. In his chapter on ‘Childhood’, for example, he decides that creating stable families based around marriage would better serve the children born into them. While this may be true, it is difficult to see how any government intervention in such matters would resist accusations of ‘nanny state’ meddling – something that Hilton himself decries. If growing up in a single-parent households makes for children to enjoy a stable environment for education (a key measure, according

to Hilton, for reducing poverty and inequality) then solutions should be based around offering maximum support to that parent rather than lamenting their inability to remain with their former partner. Nevertheless, *More human* is not a manifesto for government, nor a blueprint for reform, but the first word in a discussion that needs to take place at all levels of policy-making and implementation.

*More human* is Hilton’s call-to-arms for a ‘post-bureaucratic age’ of smaller government and more intimate business. His desire to strip away obstructive civil servants and implement empathetic policies will no doubt bring back memories to those in Whitehall of his two years in Conservative HQ. Hilton proposes that revolution not evolution is the only way to ensure lasting and meaningful changes to how bureaucratic systems deal with the ‘humans’ that they govern; however, in practice, the entrenched inertia of the systems that he wishes to reform are unlikely ever to permit anything more than a gradual pace of change. This is a deeper problem for which Hilton offers no solution.

On the surface *More human* is a book of bluster, of outrage, and (at times) of self-aggrandisement. However, don’t be fooled by Hilton’s style. At the heart of each chapter is a fascinating re-evaluation of how we might enact structural changes to business and society, and, in so doing, produce a world that is not just more human but more humane for all. ●

WH Allen, 384pp; £18.99

# The myth of the strong leader: political leadership in the modern age

By Archie Brown

Diane Banks discovers the secrets of political leadership



DIANE BANKS is a literary agent and a non-executive director of *Bright Blue*

In light of recent events, the premise of *The myth of the strong leader* is a compelling one. In an age of increasingly sophisticated media, unprecedented access to information and ability to comment instantly on events as they unfold, it would seem that a figurehead who embodies a party's key message, as well as, attracting a personal following, is of over-arching importance to any political party. Here, Emeritus Professor of Politics at the University of Oxford, Archie Brown, sets out to explore the



significance of a 'strong' leader and asks whether charisma and conviction are always desirable traits.

If nothing else, *The myth of the strong leader* offers a comprehensive overview of 20th and early 21st century politics in Europe, the US and China, touching also on the Middle East and South America. It is certainly heavy on case studies, but a clear argument unfolds. Brown takes us through the significance of leaders in historical context then gives examples of leadership styles in democratic states, beginning with Blair's inability to use the term 'we' – "I won three general elections". Taking in de Gaulle, Teddy Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Reagan, Churchill, Macmillan, Thatcher, he then returns to Blair and his dismissive view of his own party. Brown then goes on to distinguish between 'redefining' leadership and 'transformational' leadership. Redefining leaders seek to move the centre in the direction of their party rather than move their party to the centre ground as defined by others. So Willy Brandt, FD Roosevelt, Thatcher and the SNP are defined as redefining, but Blair isn't. On the other hand, transformational leaders introduce systemic change, either political or economic. Brown's key examples of the latter are Adolfo Suarez, de Gaulle, Gorbachev, Mandela and Deng Xiaoping, but he is at pains to point out that this type of leader is not the same as an inspirational leader. We're then taken through examples of revolutionary, totalitarian and authoritarian leadership. A key point is that technically Communist regimes are about developing

a following for an ideology, so in theory should avoid the cult of personality – although this usually fails to happen, most notably in the cases of Stalin, Mao and the Kims of North Korea. However authoritarian regimes are by definition led by the cult of personality with little else underpinning this, obvious examples being Hitler and Mussolini.

It is clear from the outset that Brown will come down in favour of power resting with a party as a whole rather than with an individual, which of course is the foundation of democracy – "leaders should view their parties not just as a vehicle for their ambitions but as a shared undertaking to advance the most widely shared objectives and values of that party" (Pg. 355). His argument is focused heavily on outcome rather than input. I would have liked to have seen more analysis of the psychology of the types of leaders profiled as well as an exploration of the concept of the 'hero' and 'role model', fundamental to the development of the human race and as relevant now than ever before. However, Brown is not a psychologist, and this book offers an important and comprehensive analysis of leadership styles over the last hundred years, coupled with lessons for the future in this time of party political flux. And whilst David Cameron cannot (yet) be described as a transformational leader, the recent general election result bears out Brown's theory that steady and collegiate is a winning combination. ●

Bodley Head / Vintage Digital, 482pp;  
hardback £25.00, ebook £11.99

## The flat white economy: how the digital economy is transforming London and other cities of the future

By Douglas McWilliams

Keith Tomlinson compares two works that highlight the importance of fostering opportunity to help growth

A visitor to Charleston, the country home of the Bloomsbury group of artists and writers, might be intrigued by a colourful chart which describes the members' web of relationships. The lines seem to connect all over the place and the colours denote whether relationships were homosexual or heterosexual. Bloomsbury member John Maynard Keynes' diary and letters record his love life in great detail: he had many male lovers in his early life, then fell in love with and married Russian ballerina Lydia Lopokova. She was the perfect partner, especially as his health failed in later life. Homosexuality was illegal in Britain in Keynes lifetime, so there must have been a certain thrill at not being caught, and almost certainly at the rejection of Victorian rigidity.

Richard Davenport-Hines' excellent biography of John Maynard Keynes, *Universal man*, divides his life into seven portraits which depict Keynes' character and help us understand who he was. Keynesian economics are not the focus but rather he presents us the man and the main influences on his life. This turns out to be essential to understanding the economics. Indeed, as Davenport-Hines notes to great effect, Keynes never sat an economics exam in his life. What emerges is completely unique: an intellectual and a pragmatist who was not always diplomatic, but whose ideas are still imprinted on the global financial system today.

Keynes rejected the cold logic of Jeremy Bentham and Karl Marx, which was so fashionable in the 1930s, and instead devised ways to improve people's lives, especially the freedoms which they enjoyed. Rather than the 'dismal science', Davenport-Hines shows Keynes work as *la science du bonheur public* (Davenport-Hines Pg. 139), linking his personal altruism with public policymaking. This makes sense. Keynes benefited greatly from earlier education reforms with a scholarship at Eton, then on to King's College Cambridge.

## Universal man: the seven lives of John Maynard Keynes

By Richard Davenport-Hines



KEITH TOMLINSON  
is an economic and  
investment researcher

He was an early proponent of women's suffrage (his mother Florence Keynes was highly accomplished in her own right), sexual liberty and disseminated culture throughout his life.

Davenport-Hines describes Keynes early role in officialdom as fraught, though he was likely very good at his job in the India Office's statistics department. Keynes described one meeting thus: "half of those present showed manifest signs of senile decay, and the rest didn't speak" (Davenport-Hines Pg. 69). Hardly a place for a reformer to excel. Keynes resigned and returned to Cambridge to lecture in economics only to be recalled to Treasury in 1914. Davenport-Hines shows Bloomsbury ideals of civilisation were a constant influence in Keynes' public life. Former lover and fellow Bloomsbury Duncan Grant convinced Keynes to propose a Treasury mission to a Paris art auction in March 1918. Wartime Chancellor Andrew Bonar Law allotted £20,000, which Keynes and National Gallery Director Sir Charles Holmes (travelling in disguise, no less) used to purchase Impressionist art, where the thump of German shells falling kept prices low. Keynes' collusion with wartime government upset the pacifist literary set, but it is their distaste that likely shaped his view of the Versailles Treaty negotiations in 1919. His most famous book, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, is 'a most delectable debunking' of world famous politicians cobbling together the reparations imposed on Germany (Davenport-Hines Pg. 117). We see a 'European' Keynes who offered a more constructive trade oriented approach and warned of imposing servitude on Germany. And we are reminded of pre-1914 passport-free travel and common European currency that had existed only a few years before. All of which puts today's European debate in context.

Davenport-Hines shows Keynes' final role as envoy for his country, securing essential supplies during the Second World

War, as rather heroic. We see Keynesian economics for the first time, balancing total income with total demand, rather than government simply balancing its own books in isolation. In so doing, the Treasury first used national income accounting to estimate the taxation necessary to fund very high wartime spending. Despite a weak heart, Keynes endured a punishing schedule in America to fund war-weary Britain, culminating at Bretton Woods with the creation of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. His final speech in the House of Lords, perhaps his best ever, was a rousing defence of the Bretton Woods agreement. Davenport-Hines is right that selflessness killed Keynes, who died not long afterwards of a heart attack at Tilton, his country home, with his wife Lydia and mother Florence at his side.

Former CEBR Chairman Douglas McWilliams' new book *The flat white economy* analyses the current tech boom in London and other global technology clusters, which has interesting parallels with the pre-1914 bout of globalisation. McWilliams' analysis effectively shows us both the need for a new economic framework, to better account for tech investment and the right infrastructure, as well as the importance of people's freedom of movement, to creating this investment led economic growth.

London's current digital-economy boom is a potent mix of a large consumer market, which readily accepts online business, as well as world leading creative industries. Top ranked universities supply a highly educated workforce, though most important may be openness to global trade and especially people: 46% of migrants to the UK have a degree, which is far higher than the equivalent figure for the local population. The City, London's financial district, offers access to essential capital.

McWilliams cites Keynes' observation in *Economic Consequences* that the re-investment of profits drove pre-1914 economic growth and thereby prosperity: "In fact, it was precisely the inequality of the distribution of wealth which made possible those vast accumulations of fixed wealth and of capital improvements which distinguished that age from all others..." (McWilliams Pg. 143).

This link between rising profits and investment spending is crucial, yet for some reason, McWilliams notes, we do not count business spending on software as investment at all. Interestingly, Richard Davenport-Hines cites the same passage from *Economic Consequences*, though in Keynes' day this illustrated the importance of businesses putting the nation's savings to work. This is precisely what McWilliams describes today: Southern Europe's discontent is driving skilled and creative people to London, with the effect that a record 32,000 new businesses were created in one London postcode, EC1V, now dubbed "Silicon Roundabout", in just 24 months. London is growing faster than Hong Kong or Singapore, such that businesses are reporting shortages



of skilled labour. All of which demonstrates a clear need for sensible immigration policy.

Davenport-Hines shows us that Keynes enjoyed defying the status quo, whether in his personal life or economics. He was optimistic and generous, which drove his liberalism. Britain's problems today are those of success. Indeed, we are lucky that so many Europeans think the UK is a place they wish to come to and, very often it seems, create a business. In *The Flat White Economy*, Douglas McWilliams clearly demonstrates how the 21st century digital economy fits together, and the need to push back against reactionaries. Indeed, both of these books capture what Keynes described as the political problem of humanity, "...above everything, to give unhindered opportunity to the exceptional and the aspiring." ●

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*The Flat White Economy*, Gerald Duckworth & Co Ltd, 256pp; £16.99  
*Universal Man*: William Collins, 760pp; £18.99

# All I know now

By **Carrie Hope Fletcher**

**Meera Sonecha** relearns the importance of being young again



MEERA SONECHA is  
an Assistant Editor  
of *Centre Write*

When I was asked to write a review for Carrie Hope Fletcher's *All I know now*, I thought I was being punished for some horrendously cruel act I had committed. Having just spent a good couple of months of my life reading General Election coverage, her videos 'How to Pee in a Onesie' and 'Boys in Books are Better' sent a shiver of cynicism down my spine. Nonetheless, I read the book, grudgingly.

How I wish I had this book when I was thirteen! She covers all things from

friendship, bullying, how to behave appropriately on the internet and first crushes. If any readers of *Centre Write* have teenage girls in their lives, I thoroughly recommend buying this book for them. It is an invaluable lesson in learning how to be yourself, and how to be happy with yourself.

Although her chapters on 'Making Friends' and 'How to Handle a Bully' are no longer relevant in my life, I found Carrie Fletcher's writing refreshing and innocent. She is trying to lead a generation to be true to themselves, not to lie, to be ready to admit to mistakes and to be the best they can be. This is an admirable task and something

the Westminster bubble forget about all too often. Young people need good role models and Carrie Fletcher is stepping up to the task. Maybe we should be too.

As an adult, I immensely enjoyed reading Act 5 onwards (the book is divided into eight acts). We forget to tell ourselves that we are only human, to be realistic with our dreams and that positivity begets positivity. Carrie Fletcher is wise beyond her years and when we are done reading our political commentaries, I hope we will all seize this book and take the time to learn how to be young again. ●

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