

Ten points for an immediate counter-cyclical policy.

1. *Greening localities.* To promote any of a wide range of low carbon measures, the Government should offer grants of £10,000 to all parish councils, schools, health services, and transition towns who can spend it within 3 months. The grants would be awarded on the basis of 2 page proposals presented at a speed grant evening to a joint panel of council/environment representatives. Half the grant would be paid up front, the remainder on presentation of results, on the web and in person with invoices at a return speed grant evening. Successful groups could then apply for a £20,000 three month grant to extend their work. An established national environmental group would operate an interactive website for the project, for participants to access project advice, share ideas, and report on projects. Appeals of this kind to local public institutions (school, hospitals, municipal offices) are well established in the US, and together constitute a distributed network for rapid implementation of community initiatives
2. *Community land and property banks.* A recession is the moment for investment in a physical infrastructure to support social economy activity in the next phase. The advantage of such investment in a recession is that transactions can be completed quickly, assets are cheap, and the cash injection will set a floor to the collapse of the property market more productively than the public underwriting of distressed assets. Above all it ensures a social stake in future land rents.

Socialising land rent has long been a goal of economic policy – from David Ricardo, through to Henry George and proponents of site value rating. In recent years developments rents have been partially captured by negotiating social benefits in planning permissions, the so called section 102 agreements. What none of these approaches have recognised is that land rents can be captured by extending community ownership of land at the low point of the property cycle when land rent is minimised. This is the opportunity that now presents itself.

The purchases may have different purposes:

- *Regeneration.* A locality could establish a community land co-op, open to share investment by all in the community (with contributions in cash or in kind) with matching funds from central government. Regeneration investment and the recovery of economic activity would raise the value of the land that could either be realised through sale on the market, or used to generate a flow of income to the local shareholders. This would be a way of capturing development rents, and give those in the community a stake in the success of any regeneration investment.
- *Green space expansion.* Funds of £500 would be offered to a community to contribute to a Doomsday Book from below, by mapping a locality, using techniques of rapid urban appraisal and social mapping (following a procedure set out on a central website). Each mapping would list the unused/surplus spaces and property in the area, its ownership (where traceable) the potential cost of purchase, and use to which it could be put to increase green space in the area (sports fields, community gardens, park

extensions, community owned woodland and allotments). Subsequent grants would part fund the public purchase of identified sites.

- *Social housing.* The government should use Northern Rock, Bradford and Bingley, RBS and HBOS to provide social housing mortgages to councils, housing associations and housing co-ops to purchase, renovate and digitally wire low cost property for use as social housing. This will have greater impact in terms of social need than mortgage debt write offs, while providing some support to a distressed property market.
3. *Informal care provision.* The issue is how to organise low cost care using the household economy supplemented where appropriate by volunteers and a digital network. For urban households with wage earnings parents, existing tax credits for childcare could be doubled for parents forming care clubs. The credits could either fund a club member in providing childcare for the group as a whole, or go towards more adequate care purchased on the market. A similar model could be applied to elder care, or after school clubs.
4. *Good health and support for chronic conditions.* The government has set out a radical programme for ill health prevention – increasing exercise, improving diet, and cutting smoking – but it remains drastically underfunded. Many of the measures can be turned on rapidly such as:
- Providing 25% grants for freshly prepared school meals (including a take home service for a family's evening meal)
 - Matched funding for personal health coaches/support workers for people with a chronic disease, either individually or in groups
 - Supplying 100% grants to councils for the construction of a network of separated bicycle paths within six months.
 - The provision of capital funds to Community Health Trusts to purchase private gyms and their equipment and convert them to public use. The trusts would normally include GPs who could provide exercise prescriptions to their patients. This is an example of an infrastructure developed during the period of frenzy being made available to a wider population after a crash.
 - Grameen style funding for high rise and guerrilla gardening clubs, starting with grants of £250, potentially doubling and redoubling on the basis of achievement.
 - Initial grants of £5,000 for Community Food Trusts, half to be immediately passed on to local food projects, and half to prepare a plan for strengthening the local good economy as a basis for later funding.
 - Providing 50% funding for workplace based health coaches for those with chronic conditions and to promote good health among employees (not

only through access to good food and exercise, but monitoring the workplace environment, advising on ergonomics and reducing stress

- Similar initial grants of £5,000 to Community Sports Trusts designed to expand sports activity and infrastructure in an area – for example the provision of China-style adult exercise equipment in public places, parks and community gardens.

5. ***Increasing access to broadband and the effective application of modern computer technology.*** 100% tax write offs for new computer equipment purchased within a limited time period would extend household computer ownership (together with 50% grants for pensioners). While the broadband infrastructure expands, an immediate expansion of access could be provided by a £50 grants for connectors that allow those registered in the scheme to use wireless to access surplus broadband capacity for those in the network. For organisations – particularly those in the social economy, the key issue is one of systems rather than equipment. Here the Government could fund twinning programme between large private companies and social economy organisations to upgrade the systems of the latter and provide coaching in their use.
6. ***Make mine a million.*** Providing grants of £1,000 to Committees of 100, groups who undertake to plant 100 trees in 3 months, with access to council and privately run trees nurseries. In urban areas this could be linked to the social mapping initiative, to the grounds of public institutions such as schools and hospitals, to people's gardens, or to public parks and streets where Councils participated in the Committees. An example of such a project was that undertaken in Totnes Devon by the local transition town group, who planted a series of nut trees in the town.
7. ***Extending volunteering.*** The recession is a time of discarded skills through redundancy and early retirement. These skills are greatly needed in many parts of the social economy. What is lacking are sufficient intermediary bodies to match one with the other. It is not merely a question of a quasi employment agency for volunteers. It is also one of promoting volunteering, being able to visit social economy organisations and discuss the particular needs and the means of managing volunteers and then arranging a meeting. One possibility is arranging for volunteer fairs – organised along the same lines as speed dating. Incentive grants should be provided to social and private volunteer promoting agencies, and to the volunteers through the £60 allowance. A form of national service is often advocated for younger people, but it may be as applicable to experienced adults for whom a year in the social economy would extend understanding while contributing skills.

A similar approach could be followed for younger volunteers faced with the difficulty of entering the job market. They too could be paired with local employers, or paired with social projects in Africa and Asia.

8. ***Waste reduction.*** Over the past ten years there has been a decisive improvement in the way waste is managed, but the three Rs (reduce, re-use, recycle) are still subordinate to large scale mass waste disposal. There are three immediate areas for speed investment:

- The community recycling sector is one which has played a key role in expanding re-use and recycling, but it is a sector which would benefit from the application of modern reverse logistic systems, management information systems, and a production oriented metrics. Professional volunteers are one source of potential support. Pairing with a corporation with relevant systems would be another (Tesco for example or DHL). A third possibility would be to establish a development bank that like any venture capital house would provide in kind advice and guidance as well as investment capital
 - Food waste is one of the critical areas for expanding household recycling, with separate good waste collections provided by only 15% of collection authorities. Immediate grants could be made available to councils for start up schemes within six months, as well as expanded grants to those councils already providing the service as an encouragement to further widen their services.
 - Re-use centres. Internationally there are re-use centres that capture as much as 80% of discarded consumer goods and recycle them for re-use or materials recycling. The key to success is sufficient numbers of employees at recycling sites, both to capture and repair goods and sort materials, and to organise their re-use. There is scope for radical extension of this intermediate function – through extending a door to door collection service for bulky goods for both households and firms, and the introduction of an e-Bay style site for the recirculation of the goods. Again this is a service that could be rapidly expanded within the counter recession measures timescale.
9. ***Green collar training.*** A post-bubble recession is a time for training those without paid work in the skills necessary for the deployment period. Particularly necessary will be those skills required by a low carbon economy. The include green design (for which there are already a number of high quality university courses available in the UK) low carbon living and working, new materials technology (such as biodegradable plastics) zero waste specialists, local food production and distribution systems, and so on. Some of these are medium term projects in that courses and intern programmes have yet to be developed, but others are available and their expansion should be funded and promoted
10. ***Launchpad projects for the new economy.*** There has been a rapidly developing structure for promoting new projects in the social economy, generating project ideas through innovation camps, funding prototypes and start ups and arranging for longer term finance. Projects like the School for Everything or Patient Opinion both started in this way, driven by social entrepreneurs who were pioneers of new forms of education and health-related service respectively. There is scope for a major, immediate expansion of these initiatives and their diffusion, both outside the public sector as it is currently constituted and within.