Funding the Future

After fifteen years of my saying PFI does not work the ...

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As the Guardian reports this morning:

Taxpayers will be forced to hand over nearly £200bn to contractors under private finance deals for at least 25 years, according to a report by Whitehall's spending watchdog.

In the wake of the collapse of public service provider Carillion, the National Audit Office found little evidence that government investment in more than 700 existing public-private projects has delivered financial benefits.

The cost of privately financing public projects can be 40% higher than relying solely upon government money, auditors found.

I have a number of ways I could respond to this, but I am (for once) simply going for the 'told you so' route.

From 'People's Pensions' in 2003, where Colin Hines and I advocated local authority bonds as an alternative to PFI, the the Green New Deal, where we developed the theme, to green quantitative easing, and then People's Quantitative Easing, I can claim some credit in being an anti-PFI campaigner, and always because it was glaringly obvious that it failed to deliver value for money.

That is 15 years of saying so.

And now, finally, the NAO catches on.

Three questions:

* Why has the NAO taken so long to state the obvious?

* When will local authority bonds be part of the UK savings architecture?

* When will People's (or Green, for they are the same) QE be used to underpin those bonds via a National Infrastructure Bank, which is an idea Labour borrowed from my

work?

We cannot afford to wait for answers.