Funding the Future

Principles for post-Covid Britain: an agenda we can all...

Published: January 14, 2026, 1:26 am

I am a signatory to this statement, published yesterday in <u>The Ecologist.</u> I also had involvement in its drafting, although I am not an author. After careful consideration I did, however, decide I could endorse it:

Principles for post-Covid Britain

The coronavirus crisis is a massive shot across the bows of the world as we know it. In response we can no longer afford to take timid steps. Bold, concerted action is the only responsible way forward.

We, along with the signatories listed below, therefore propose the following principles for a post-pandemic United Kingdom, with examples of how they might be implemented.

These are, we believe, principles that all can agree to, principles emerging from the emergency itself. This is not a shopping list of policies, about which there will be contention; this is a sketch of the deep necessary change that our time calls for, an agenda we can all share:

Causes

There will be many more crises like this one if we don't change course. This pandemic is linked to habitat destruction, creating opportunities for the spread of the virus.

Economic globalisation has made economies very vulnerable to disruption in supply chains, and air travel has enabled Covid-19 to spread at unprecedented lightning speed. Extreme inequality has meant that large sections of the population lack the resilience to properly cope with crisis conditions, whilst austerity policies of cuts to public services have undermined the capacity of health services and local government to respond.

Despite pandemics and epidemics appearing many times on official risk registers, the short-termism of most politics has prevented adequate precautions from being put in

place by governments. The climate emergency has already caused droughts, floods, and forest fires, and these can be expected to worsen as more and more carbon is put into the atmosphere.

Decarbonisation

All plans to rebuild the economy after the coronavirus crisis must be designed to simultaneously decarbonize the economy and restore ecosystems and biodiversity.

We must use this as an opportunity to build a different kind of economy - an economy that prioritises human wellbeing and ecological stability. If we 'solve' the coronavirus crisis and its economic impacts by worsening the longer emergency of the ecological crisis (including the climate emergency), we will have achieved less than nothing.

There is no point leaving the frying pan of the covid crisis only to jump into the flames of ecological breakdown.

The postponement of this year's big international climate and biodiversity COP conferences is a worrying sign of the possible postponement of ecological concern — at a time when we simply cannot afford any delays.

Work

We must change how we travel and work, without resorting to bailouts for high-carbon industries. As we emerge from this terrible corona crisis, let's bake-in and expand the incidental benefit felt by some of reduced air pollution, reduced levels of motor and air traffic, more quiet, more leisure time, more space for nature.

Transport in future must not rely on the private car, let alone on air travel. High-carbon companies wanting to return to business should not be helped by government assistance. Employees who wish to continue working from home should be actively facilitated to do so.

Care

The virus crisis has helped us realise what's important, what really matters in our lives. It has shown us (in neighbours supporting each other, in mutual-aid groups, in hundreds of thousands volunteering for the NHS) how we care about each other.

Similarly, the crisis has revealed which jobs really matter, and which matter much less. It can nolonger be acceptable for City traders to earn hundreds of times more than nurses or shelf-stackers. Our collective priorities have changed.

Action

We support calls for a full independent public inquiry on the handling of the Covid-19

pandemic in the UK. Plans for how we emerge from the corona crisis should have a precautionary dimension: let's plan on suppressing or eliminating future corona outbreaks, let's be prepared to nip future pandemics in the bud – and to prevent further climate breakdown and mass extinction so far as possible.

We need radical targets for the reduction of climate-deadly greenhouse gas-pollution and of biodiversity-destruction.

We have seen in the Covid-crisis how incredibly fast and radically governments and the public can act, and we have seen the damage wrought by not asking quickly enough. We have implemented measures that would have been deemed 'politically impossible' a few months ago. That kind and scale of action is precisely what is needed in order to safeguard us against future emergencies.

Assemblies

Citizens assemblies must be convened to chart the bold way forward, on the basis of these principles. The UK Government, like virtually every other government across the world, was elected in a different world — the pre-coronavirus world. Governments should turn to citizens to decide how, together, we'll make the post-coronavirus world.

Citizens' Assemblies are more representative of the population than elected bodies, whilst not being subject to the pressure to win elections or please funders. Citizens' assemblies locally, nationally and globally should be convened as soon as possible to figure out *how* to convert these principles into a raft of rapid, deep action-points.

Citizens, chosen at random (like a jury) informed by experts, and deliberating together, should be empowered to come up with a plan for the path forward, post-corona. For example: should pro-globalisation infrastructure plans (e.g. new runways) be shelved, permanently? Should there be a frequent flyer levy so that those still travelling by air the most pay by far the most? Should there be a high basic income, or a low one (or none at all)?

Should there be universal basic services? Should there be preparations for food-rationing (as a precautionary measure)? Should agroecology be massively publicly subsidised? Should industrial animal agriculture be systematically reduced?

Citizens assemblies can investigate these questions and more, questions that society hitherto has tended to duck, in a way that will enable the buy-in of all to a radically repurposed future.

Collective

People tend to assume that they themselves hold values that are good for the community, values that are caring, but that others' values are more selfish. But the amazing human response to the corona crisis — especially in our communities and in

the caring professions -- has exploded that myth of selfishness.

So the time is now to create a better society in the face of this emergency, a society reflecting those values that we all share. This 'unmanifesto' is a set of principles that all can agree to, going beyond party politics.

These principles are based on the experience of the emergency we are currently going through and the more fundamental, longer, unavoidable emergencies that underlie it. This terrible, precious moment of the world economy being paused is a unique opportunity, possibly the last opportunity, to get things right. Let's not blow it.

Let's seize this moment to bring the nations and the generations together. We must protect the old through the coronavirus crisis; and protect the young through a future which, if the vision sketched here is realised, can even yet be better than ever.

So let's not blow this chance. This should be a collective effort, with the private sector, philanthropists, charities, unions, governments and all of us playing a role. We aspire for this 'unmanifesto' to be implemented by governments; for governments to have the wisdom to create Citizens Assemblies that will chart a way forward, on the basis of the principles we've laid out.

But the rest of us should not wait passively for governments to act. We must do what we can to realise these principles starting now: in our communities and workplaces, in our counties and on our streets, in our nations and in our homes.

<u>Signatories</u>

Prof. Rupert Read, University of East Anglia and author, This Civilization is Finished

Prof. Jason Hickel, Goldsmith's, University of London and author, *[The Divide: A Brief Guide to Global Inequality and its Solutions](#)*

Prof. Victor Anderson, Anglia Ruskin University

Dr. Caroline Lucas MP

Sir Jonathon Porritt, former Director, The Sustainable Development Commission

Prof. Richard Murphy, author, *The Courageous State: Rethinking Economics, Society and the Role of Government*

Prof. David Graeber, author, *Bullshit Jobs*

Baroness Natalie Bennett

Baroness Jenny Jones

Prof. Julia Steinberger, IPCC author

Helena Norberg-Hodge, author, *Ancient Futures*.