

A Vision For Housing

The Problem: Property and land are sources of wealth and speculation.

There is no national plan for housing despite 1.8 million on housing lists. Large housing developments are built with little regard to local needs or appropriate infrastructure.

There is a massive shortage of social housing, a backlog of repairs and many empty houses – 262 in Northampton in Feb 2015.

The Right to Buy' has decreased the housing stock in Northampton by 3,778. Governments have prevented councils from building more houses and are about to force the sell off of Housing Association stock.

Young people are trapped in low paid jobs and forced into private rental. Housing benefit is often a subsidy given to private landlords through high rents.



Our Alternative

- The bedroom tax would be scrapped.
- Vastly increased investment in properly planned house building with every £100 spent on housing generating another £350 in the economy and jobs created in the construction and supply industries.
- New social housing would be paid for by low cost bonds raised by local councils with additional central government grants.
- Rent controls and secure tenancies would be introduced for both sectors and all council tenants would have rights and responsibilities with proper representation on council bodies.

A Vision for Manufacturing and Industry

The Problem: Since Thatcher, British manufacturing and industry has been in perpetual decline.

In Northampton we have witnessed the decline and export of all our key manufacturing: our traditional manufacturing boot and shoe industries, Express Lifts, Airflow, Avon, and British Timken. We have seen skilled higher paid jobs being replaced by low paid distribution, retail warehousing and smaller manufacturing units.

Our Alternative

- Key industries will be re-nationalised; eg rail, water, power, the Royal Mail, failed banks
- Nationalised banks will act as investment banks for manufacture and industry
- There will be protection for British industries and manufacturing, so jobs will not be able to be exported abroad or bought up by speculators and private equity firms for sale or asset stripping.
- Northamptonshire will have a plan for industry and manufacture which will be the key element in informing planning for housing and infrastructure needs.
- Workers will be entitled to freely meet in work-places, form and belong to unions and negotiate better terms and conditions.



A Vision for Northampton

In 2008, there was a banking crisis which was not the fault of workers, but was used to mount to a deliberate political attack on wages, working conditions and pensions.

We are told that the solution to this crisis is to work harder for less and that public assets paid for by our taxes must be privatised and given to those who created the crisis in the first place!

At the same time workers have been encouraged to attack each other rather than attack the true source of these problems.

It is now time for **all workers** to fight back, to think clearly and to reject all this nonsense. Put the blame where it belongs and organise with others to defend those public assets that belong to us all.

The Alternative

An alternative vision is needed of how society can work for everyone, not just a few, and how it can be paid for. Since all wealth is created by workers our focus must be on how we can control what is done with our money, with our assets, and with the infrastructure that was paid for by previous generations.

Northampton Trades Council is assembling a pamphlet laying out some ideas for how this could work nationally and locally, and would like you to contribute your ideas.

This leaflet from Northampton Trades Council sets out some initial ideas about what we might say and also how we could challenge our politicians.



A Vision for Health

The problem: recent years have seen many attempts, most recently the Health and Social Care Act, to undermine the universal nature of the NHS.

We are all aware of the reduced funding and increased privatisation that has led to the fragmentation of services, poor staffing levels, low morale, stressed health workers, increased waiting lists and payment for some services.

We can expect increased profit making from multinationals and American corporations.



Our Alternative

- Free universal healthcare paid for by direct taxation. No other hidden charges.
- Nationally agreed wages and pensions for all staff so people want to work for the NHS.
- Increased emphasis on training and recruitment, with less reliance on expensive agency workers and poaching of staff from poorer countries.
- Adequate staffing levels to ensure NHS is able to provide quality care.
- Repeal of the Health and Social Care Act. We do not want any providers who are in it for profit.
- Properly funded care in the community.

A Vision for Transport

The problem: The privatised rail and bus industry has failed us

Increasingly, we have lost control of our rail companies as they become owned by foreign firms. The local operator for the town is London Midland, itself partly owned by Keolis - part of SNCF, the French state railways. If taxpayers' money was not paid to private rail companies, but had been given to British Rail we would now have a truly world class, integrated railway system with lower fares, better connections, re-opened railways and the latest rolling stock.

Since deregulation back in 1985 bus routes have been axed where the companies don't make profit and the council have cut subsidies, leaving people isolated. Deregulation has failed in Northampton, with Stagecoach now holding the monopoly on routes.

Our Alternative

- Transport, **nationally and locally**, to be brought back into public ownership.
- We need passengers and staff to have a direct say in how services are provided and have full access to all decisions about services.
- All profits will fed directly back into the industry instead of to shareholders.

A Vision for Education

The problem: Governments are dismantling our state education system.

They have forced through academies and free schools, the destruction of Local Education Authorities, attacked national wages and conditions and the professional status of teachers.

We see competition between schools imposed through a punitive system of league tables, Ofsted inspections and constant changes to the curriculum, all of which is damaging the education of our children.

Our Alternative

- In Northamptonshire the Local Authority would plan future school provision and admission policies that apply to all schools. It will have its own advisory and inspection team. It would provide properly funded and staffed central services and hold schools accountable for both their provision and financial management.
- Academies and free schools will be reintegrated into a common state system which will return the running of schools to the local authorities away from private providers and sponsors.
- League tables will be abolished and children will no longer be subjected to constant testing.

A Vision for Local Government

The problem: local government, which should be at the heart of local democracy, has been cut to ribbons for purely political reasons.

Funding for councils has been cut by 40% and they are now at breaking point. Our County Council intends to outsource all community services thus removing accountability and putting jobs and services in danger.

Our Alternative

- An end to privatisation and outsourcing
- Reinstatement of functions such as education provision, admissions, standards and training
- More democratic and control by residents
- Adequate funding by central government, and progressive and fair local taxation
- Local government to play a key role in planning local infrastructure and jobs and the ability to raise bonds for funding of local projects.

