

Gordon Brown
Prime Minister and Leader of the Labour Party

new Labour for Britain

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Dear friend

Help us shape our policies to meet the challenges ahead

Since coming to power in 1997, we have made steady and sustained progress in rebuilding Britain. We have reduced poverty, created millions of jobs, reformed and renewed our public services, and cut crime – all of which has been made possible by year-on-year stability and growth in the economy. We can be proud of our achievements.

But although we have come a long way, we cannot be satisfied. To achieve our goals and ensure lasting change for our country, we must continue the work of reform, enabling Britain to weather the storm of global economic turbulence at the same time as we take the steps necessary to equip our country for the challenges of the future.

That is why the process of policy development in our party is so important. For it is only Labour's progressive values – the values upon which our party was founded and which guide us today – that can enable us to meet and master the challenges Britain faces. Only Labour stands for a fair deal for all Britain's families. Only Labour can secure a just and decent society. And it is only our progressive ideas that can provide solutions to the challenges we still face in Britain today.

The challenge ahead

Our mission is to expand opportunity for all – to respond to the rising aspirations of the British people by putting real power and control into their hands. Power to shape public services so that they are personalised to the needs of each individual; power to shape communities so that people can enjoy life in safety and security; and power to hold those elected to serve the people to account. It is only when people have power over their lives that they can fulfil their potential.

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To achieve these goals of expanding opportunity and liberating potential, we have to make the right strategic choices for our country. In recent months, we have taken the long term decisions to secure Britain's future prosperity: to invest in our infrastructure, science base and skills; to support our world beating industries in finance, biotechnology, advanced manufacturing, creativity and the media; to reduce carbon emissions as we make the transition to a low carbon economy; and to ensure the security of our energy supplies. Today, as we shape new ambitions for Britain, we must move further and faster on this agenda – setting out the changes we must make to succeed and prosper in a world that is itself rapidly and radically changing.

Succeeding in the global economy

That means, first, we must stand firmly for all, not some, benefiting from globalisation. Success in the global economy demands an open, not a closed economy. No country will succeed in the long run unless it is open to the global economy. So we must reject the narrowness of the old debate of laissez faire versus protectionism, in favour of a globalisation that is open and flexible but also inclusive. And that means we must clear away all unnecessary barriers to a flexible economy - not backing down on the need for change - while minimising insecurity by ensuring we equip people properly to cope with change. It also means ensuring fair minimum standards are in place. Our strategic choice must be for openness combined with investment in skills, enterprise and an active welfare state that supports people through the transition from old to new.

A new definition of social justice

Second, preparing Britain for the future must mean a new definition of social justice, a radical extension of opportunity in all areas, ensuring that individuals have the capabilities, aspirations and opportunities to flourish and to fulfil their own personal potential. Social justice is about opening up the doors of opportunity.

The key to combining social justice and economic dynamism in the modern world is to invest in people and their abilities. Britain cannot get by in this new world through relying on some of the talents of some of the people; it is an economic as well as moral necessity to liberate all of the talents of all of the people. And that

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means helping every child in every family from the minute the child is born – and even before – right through its pre-school years and onto primary, secondary school and then on to college, university or work based training.

So in the next phase of our opportunity agenda, we have to build on the foundations we have already laid: tackling child poverty; extending high quality early learning and day care for children; raising

school standards, so that we match the best education systems in the world; opening up new routes to apprenticeships, skilled work and higher education; and giving adults not just second chances to learn and achieve, but lifelong, recurrent opportunities. And just as we promote wider and deeper opportunities for all, so we need to do more as a government and as a society to support family life: to enable parents to work flexibly, set boundaries and rules for children, and to enjoy a high quality of life in family-friendly communities.

A new standard in public services

Third, we must reform government itself, handing more power to people to control public services and to shape communities. Why? Because no challenge can now be met - whether environmental or economic - without involving and engaging people themselves. Top down bureaucratic approaches will not work in the future: we have to empower people. So the relationship between state and citizen must change. Our constitutional settlement must be recast, power devolved and services reshaped around citizens.

And that requires a new standard in public services: universal to all and personal to each. We need to give more power to citizens, ensuring their user experience counts more in developing the service; no toleration of second best but always the pursuit of excellence.

Safe and strong communities

Fourth, we must respond to the yearning for a Britain of stronger, safer and more cohesive communities. Our way of life is founded on clear values: of decency, duty, liberty and service to the common good. These are the bedrock of a safe and strong community, one with clear boundaries and consequences for those who step over them, as well as support for those who play by the rules. Ensuring that we strengthen community life in Britain in the years ahead is a critical challenge: continuing to cut crime, prevent offending by young people, and ensure that newcomers accept the full responsibilities of living in our country, including to learn English. And we must respond to the new terrorist threat and isolate violent extremism. This requires not just a security response but also that we work with all communities through debate and education to tackle at root the evils that risk driving people into the hands of violent extremists.

Our changing society

Communities in Britain today also reflect dramatic changes in the make up of our society. The changing age profile of our society - with more people over 65 than under 16 - raises profound issues for our public services and how we support different groups within our community. These demographic changes present new pressures - not least on our health service - but I see them as a significant opportunity if the potential of this older, more experienced, population can be utilised in the interest of our whole society. And I see it as our obligation to ensure that everyone in Britain is cared for in times of need as they grow old, without the fear that they will be unable to afford care or risk losing the family home to pay for it.

The challenge of sustainability

Perhaps the greatest challenge of all is environmental. Tackling climate change will affect every policy area, government department, community and citizen. We need urgently to make the transition to a low carbon economy, steadily reducing our use of fossil fuels and our CO2 emissions. Our energy, transport, housing and planning policies must fully embrace the challenges of sustainability. Our science and industrial policy must help us thrive in producing cleaner technologies. None of this is easy; it requires determination as well as imagination. But working together with citizens and their communities this is a challenge we cannot shirk.

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Your voice is crucial

These challenges and more are set out in the enclosed policy documents. I hope members from across our party will take the opportunity over the coming weeks to meet, debate and contribute to our policy development. We stay relevant as a political party through our commitment to, and involvement in, our local communities – so the voice of our members and supporters is crucial as we shape policy for the next manifesto.

Yours sincerely

Gordon Brown

Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP
Prime Minister and Leader of the Labour Party

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