

# Renewing life after the pandemic

The pandemic has been characterised by several contradictory experiences of dialectical change (where do we sit on the spectrum):

“We are all in this together”,  
locked down, unable to use  
our freedom of movement,  
or to meet each other

## Financial Inequality



Economic divisions have  
widened, with the number  
of children going hungry  
having doubled since the  
lockdown, with an 81%  
increase in the use of  
foodbanks, with 100,000  
carers being forced to use  
one

## Risk Inequality

“We are all equally  
vulnerable”



“Shielding the most  
vulnerable”, while those  
from BAME, bus drivers,  
nurses and delivery drivers  
all suffer disproportionately

“We have all moved online  
to Zoom, Skype and  
BlueJeans” + “I will never  
go into work five days a  
week again”

## Digital Inequality



Except for those who  
haven't: largely the elderly  
and the poor once again.  
10% of UK households  
have no internet access;  
less than half the UK  
population is in  
employment; of those who  
are, 1 in 4 are working part-  
time and 225,000 people  
are on zero-hours  
contracts

“We have loved being in  
catching up with old friends  
online”

## Mental health Inequality



70% of under 24s and 46%  
of over 75s are suffering  
from greater anxiety during  
the pandemic. Between 2/3  
and 3/4 of those suffering  
from mental health  
conditions have seen a  
worsening of their  
condition, with 0.5 million  
more people suffering from  
poor mental health for the  
first time

## What next?

We have all learnt one thing – how easy it is to change things when we have to:

1. Money is suddenly no object; entire forest of money trees always sprout whenever the government wishes, as during the 2008 financial crisis, the wars in the Middle East and Afghanistan, and now with Covid.
2. There are new ways of doing things that we can find and explore through cooperation (rather than competition). The Ventilator Challenge was met by extensive cooperation between the public health sector, universities, business incubators, and private sector businesses.
3. Blue skies and bird song; NO<sub>2</sub>, SO<sub>2</sub> and PS 2.5/10 levels dropped to record lows; nature immediately started to regenerate.
4. We can do with less: less consumption, less travel, less dining out, less self-indulgence.
5. We can do with more: more investment in green outcomes, greater equality and better planning for the future challenges.
6. Climate Crisis: the government has not really been trying, industry has not been trying at all, collectively we have not been shouting loud enough.

## Build back better: the objectives

Governments seem determined to go “back to normal”, which with the most damaged economy in 300 years is, of course, impossible. Certain sectors will never be the same again, hospitality and dining, travel and leisure, transport, particularly airlines, retail . . . etc.

Some are pressing for real change.

<https://www.buildbackbetteruk.org>

- 1) Secure the health needs of everyone, now and in the future
- 2) Protect and invest in our public services
- 3) Rebuild society with a transformative Green New Deal
- 4) Invest in people
- 5) Build solidarity and community across borders

My own view is that the people of this country and its businesses will need long-term support. A Green New Deal is the obvious way forward, and this should include Universal Basis Income.