



**ASSURING
EVERYONE'S
BASIC RIGHTS
THROUGH THE
PROVISION OF
UNIVERSAL
SERVICES**



The Green New Deal is more than just a plan for decarbonising our existing economy; rather, it is a strategy for building a new socialist economy, run by and for the many. A bold, transformative vision for the economy must tackle the climate crisis while also addressing inequality and improving the lives of the people of the UK. The Green New Deal is rooted in the recognition that the **crises of inequality and climate change are symptoms of the same failing economic system**, and must therefore be addressed as one.

An essential part of doing so will be the provision of Universal Basic Services (UBS) – a proposal founded on the understanding that **everyone should have their basic needs met** in order for them to thrive in and contribute to society, **regardless of immigration status**.

Expanding the provision of public services means considerably expanding the scope of public sector procurement. Democratic ownership of these services affords the opportunity to use public sector procurement as a key lever for state intervention in the economy to ensure a rapid and fair energy transition, including in shifting aggregate demand away from certain industries (i.e. industrial agriculture) and towards others (i.e. those with strong human rights protections and supply chain standards). UBS will thus be vital for confronting both economic and environmental challenges by ensuring a base quality of life for all; minimising climate and environmental impact through stewardship and economies of scale; creating secure, high quality jobs; and tackling inequality through its redistributive mechanisms.

There have been many attempts made to determine precisely which ‘services’ UBS should cover. The following represents a proposed but not exhaustive set of services:

- Education
- Health & Social Care
- Energy
- Water
- Housing
- Transport
- Information Technology
- Food

Rather than lay out a decisive plan for UBS with a Green New Deal, the following will instead provide the justification for why some form of UBS will constitute an essential pillar in the transformation of our economy, using a few proposed services to demonstrate its transformative potential. Fundamentally, **the strength of UBS derives from its**

inclusivity – providing services for all who need them, irrespective of ability to pay. A well-designed system of UBS will reduce inequalities by providing the greatest benefit to those in the lowest income groups while [facilitating lower carbon emissions and creating value](#) for society as a whole.

HOW WILL UBS SUPPORT THE AIMS OF THE GREEN NEW DEAL?

UBS is rooted in the understanding that we have both shared basic needs, and shared responsibilities with respect to providing for those needs. Beyond this moral argument, however, there is broad evidence that UBS provides tangible benefits in terms of [redistributive equity, economic security and environmental sustainability](#). Public services are **fundamentally redistributive**, as they provide more relative value to those of lower income than high. They are **economically resilient**, operating with economies of scale and providing secure government employment that is less impacted by recessions or economic crises than market-based services; and they can be delivered and managed so as to **minimise climate and environmental impact** through public stewardship and efficiency gains. The following breaks down these claims with a selection of substantive examples of UBS' transformative potential.

Education

Education is the driving force behind the long-term health of any economy; however, our current system is not fit for purpose in the context of the challenges we face and the economic transformation required. As an alternative to the existing restrictive system, which demands major career choices be made at just 16 and 18 years of age, the Green New Deal will take the approach of the Labour Party's proposed [National Education Service](#), enacting a 'from cradle to grave' system that will make **education available to all at any stage of life**, and free at the point of cost.

By guaranteeing workers the ability to pursue their interests – and re-train where needed or desired – we will support a workforce who are more skilled and gain more fulfilment from their roles. This will be fundamental to ensuring a just transition by enabling workers to re-train for the transition to a zero carbon economy, particularly those currently employed in carbon intensive industries.

Guaranteed access to lifelong education with a Green New Deal will greatly improve employment opportunity, quality and security – not just in the context of decarbonisation, but also as technology and automation continue to disrupt employment, with up to [30% of jobs estimated to be automated](#) within the next 15 years. The Green New Deal must therefore build **a dynamic education system capable of preparing people for a future that may look radically different to the present**, ensuring workers benefit from – and not suffer – from processes of decarbonisation and automation.

Health and Social Care

Nowhere is there a more compelling demonstration of the principle of UBS than in **universal healthcare systems like the NHS**. The Post War consensus involved a general recognition that citizens' essential needs should be met through collective welfare systems such as the NHS – principles that remain incredibly popular today. Indeed, a 2017 survey found that a remarkable [90% of UK citizens](#) support the NHS' founding principles: free at the point of delivery and based on need, not ability to pay. Despite this, the NHS remains under siege from privatisation, and its institutions are continually having to find ways to [cut costs](#).

Although the NHS is a beacon for universal service provision, it has been severely impacted by [chronic underfunding](#) as well as the [destructive internal market system](#), which has turned public hospitals into businesses, leading to poorer outcomes as patient services are **compromised for financial interests**. This system has also led to significant inequalities in health outcomes, with life expectancy at its [lowest in the North East and highest in the South East and London](#). Similarly, in the most deprived areas infant mortality rates are [5.9 deaths per 1,000](#), compared to 2.6 in the most privileged areas. That a child is more than twice as likely to die before the age of one if born into a lower income group demonstrates the urgency of guaranteeing equal health opportunities for all under UBS. The Green New Deal will mandate a fully universal system which is adequately funded, enabling the potential expansion of services to include, for example, dental care and prescriptions, and which eliminates destructive systems like the internal market.

In addition to the moral imperative of providing free, universal health care, the economic argument for investing in such a system is compelling, both in terms of immediate impacts such as a [reduction in sick days](#) and of long term benefits such as NHS investment in the life sciences industry, which [adds over £30bn to the economy and employs over 140,000 people](#). Furthermore, there is evidence that universal health care systems **emit less carbon than privately funded systems**, owing to economies of scale, as well as superior resource use and

procurement (Gough, 2017). The health and social care industries are also the flagship for the high-skilled, high-quality and green jobs that will form a core component of our workforce in a zero carbon economy.

Energy

Access to energy is indispensable to living and thriving in modern society, as well as a pivotal issue in combating climate change. [1 in 10 UK households](#) currently live in fuel poverty, and research from Fuel Poverty Action finds that a staggering [10,000 people per year die](#) in the UK due to being unable to heat their homes – a figure almost certain to rise among increasingly extreme weather patterns. In line with recent, transformative Labour Party policy [recognising energy as a human right](#), the **Green New Deal will ensure all homes have their base energy needs met**, either for free or at extremely low cost, initially through immediate subsidisation of basic sustenance energy requirements. In the medium term these subsidies could be supplemented by the widespread roll-out of domestic renewable energy systems, providing a huge economic stimulus to the manufacturing sector, reducing costs in subsidising fuel, and, critically, increasing household fuel and energy independence.

Housing

Safe, secure, guaranteed housing is another vital element of living and participating in society. However, the UK is currently gripped by a major housing crisis, owing largely to the decades-long erosion of social housing from Right to Buy and spiraling real estate speculation, leading to [significant homelessness and poverty](#). Housing also comprises a [growing proportion of carbon emissions in the UK](#) and a growing source of energy consumption. The guaranteed provision of secure, green homes to all who need them is therefore essential to tackling both inequality and the climate crisis.

To achieve a fully decarbonised economy by 2030, significant efficiency gains within the domestic housing sector are imperative, both with respect to construction and household energy usage. As it stands, [the UK's housing stock is amongst the least energy efficient in Europe](#). Total decarbonisation will thus require the construction and social provision of **green, high quality housing** in addition to widespread retrofitting of the existing housing stock. This significant undertaking will be a source of well paid, high quality green jobs as well as a critical step in the transition to a zero carbon economy.

The erosion of social housing in the UK has both driven a crisis of affordable housing and left private renters extremely vulnerable. To

ensure access to secure, green housing for all, the Green New Deal will both empower renters unions, enabling private renters to defend and expand their rights, and create a system of democratic participation in the management of social housing.

UBS, ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION AND THE GREEN NEW DEAL

UBS should be extended to provide for all **base requirements for living and thriving in society**, including food, transport, and access to the internet. Rather than an incidental policy, UBS should be understood as central to the Green New Deal, which is fundamentally a plan for tackling the climate and inequality crises as on by radically transforming our current economic system. Central to this transformation will be universal public services which, as with the establishment of the NHS and welfare state, will provide the bedrock for a new economic consensus.

Further References

Gough, I. (2017). Heat, Greed and Human Need, p.163. Edward Elgar Press.