

Forge

A Manifesto for National Renewal

Modern. Fair. Accountable. Britain deserves a government that is honest about what is broken, ambitious about modernising the systems that no longer work, and serious about investing in the future. Forge exists because neither Labour nor the Conservatives will do what is obvious: modernise the institutions that the comfortable exploit, tighten the safety net so it catches those who genuinely fall, and redirect the savings into the growth and security this country desperately needs.

I. Tax Simplification

"One Rate, No Games"

17,000+

PAGES IN UK TAX CODE

£46.8bn

ANNUAL TAX GAP (2023-24)

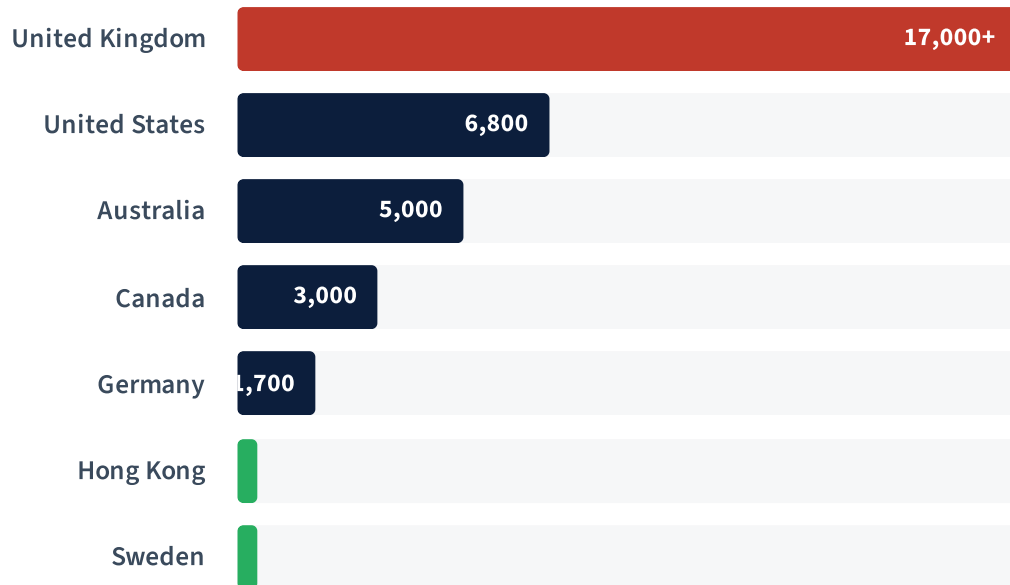
1,180+

TAX RELIEFS CURRENTLY IN FORCE

350

PAGES IN HONG KONG'S TAX CODE

Tax Code Length: International Comparison (pages)



Sources: Tolley's Tax Handbooks, OTS, World Bank Doing Business, Next Generation Worth

The UK tax code is the longest in the world. Over 10 million words, twelve times the length of the complete works of Shakespeare. Every exemption, relief, and allowance is a loophole waiting to be optimised by those who can afford advice. The result is that ordinary PAYE workers pay their full share while the self-employed, directors, and the wealthy play a parallel game with lower effective rates.

Where the £46.8 Billion Tax Gap Comes From



Source: HMRC Measuring Tax Gaps 2025 Edition (2023–24 data)

The key insight: The overwhelming majority of lost tax revenue comes not from headline-grabbing avoidance schemes but from a system so complex that errors, confusion, and low-level non-compliance are baked in. Simplify the system and you shrink the gap automatically – without hiring thousands more investigators.

A. UNIVERSAL 15% VAT – WITH INCOME TAX CUTS TO COMPENSATE

VAT will apply to all goods and services at a single rate of 15%. No zero-rating, no exemptions. The current system has three rates, hundreds of classification disputes, and an entire industry of VAT categorisation. We replace it with one number.

Businesses continue to reclaim input VAT as they do now – the reclaim mechanism stays because removing it would cripple business costs. The simplification comes from one rate instead of three, and the end of arguments about whether a Jaffa Cake is a biscuit or a cake.

Stopping personal spending through companies. The VAT registration threshold is held at **£90,000 turnover**, not raised. Raising it would help slightly larger firms compete against the smallest sole traders, the opposite of protecting the self-

employed tradesperson. The cliff-edge problem is addressed with a two-year tapered transition relief for businesses crossing the threshold rather than by raising it. For registered businesses, we tighten the "wholly and exclusively for business purposes" test: items used personally more than 20% of the time cannot be reclaimed. Solo-director companies cannot claim VAT on vehicles or electronics unless the company has other employees. Random HMRC audits on small company claims with automatic penalties for abuse.

Yes, this means VAT on food. We are honest about this. A weekly food shop of £80 would cost roughly £12 more per week in VAT. But this is more than offset by income tax cuts funded from the broader base and closed loopholes:

The Trade-Off: What You Lose on VAT, You Gain on Income Tax

Household Income	Extra VAT on Food (est. annual)	Income Tax Cut (est. annual)	Net Effect
£20,000	~£500	~£750	+£250 better off
£35,000	~£600	~£900	+£300 better off
£55,000	~£700	~£900	+£200 better off
£80,000	~£750	~£900	+£150 better off
£150,000+	~£900	~£900	Broadly neutral, but loophole closures increase effective tax paid

Illustrative estimates. Exact rates subject to OBR modelling. The principle: nobody on an average income is worse off.

The hardest case: large low-income families. A household with five or six people on £22,000 spends a higher proportion of income on food. The income tax saving on £22,000 may not fully offset the food VAT. Forge addresses this through three existing payment routes requiring no new bureaucracy: (1) UC standard allowance uprated by £400 per year from the date of reform, automatically reaching 5.5 million households at a cost of approximately £2.2bn; (2) free school meals extended to all primary pupils and all secondary pupils from UC households or below £30,000 household income, at approximately £800m annually; (3) Child Benefit uprated by £200 per child per year. A family with three children on UC receives approximately £2,000 in additional annual support. Combined these cost approximately £4bn annually, funded from VAT revenue. The compensation mechanism reaches the households most exposed without creating a new targeted benefit system.

How the income tax cut works: The broader VAT base and closed loopholes generate £15–25bn in additional revenue. A portion funds a reduction in the basic and higher rates of income tax, visible on every payslip. The remainder funds the investment commitments in this manifesto: defence, retraining, digital infrastructure, and the national champions programme. For company directors currently paying themselves via the salary+dividend route, the dividend alignment increases their tax, but the income tax rate reduction partially offsets it. The net effect: they pay more than before, but not punitively so. The honest message is that everyone pays the same rate on the same income, and that rate is lower than today's headline rate.

B. DIVIDENDS TAXED AS INCOME – END THE TWO-RATE GAME

Currently, a company director paying herself a minimum salary of £12,570 and taking £80,000 in dividends pays thousands less in tax than an employee earning £92,570 in salary. This is the single most used tax avoidance route in the UK, used by over 2 million Ltd company directors. We end it.

- ▶ **All dividend income taxed at the same rate as employment income.** No separate dividend tax rates. No dividend allowance. If you take money out of a company you control, it's income, and it's taxed as income.

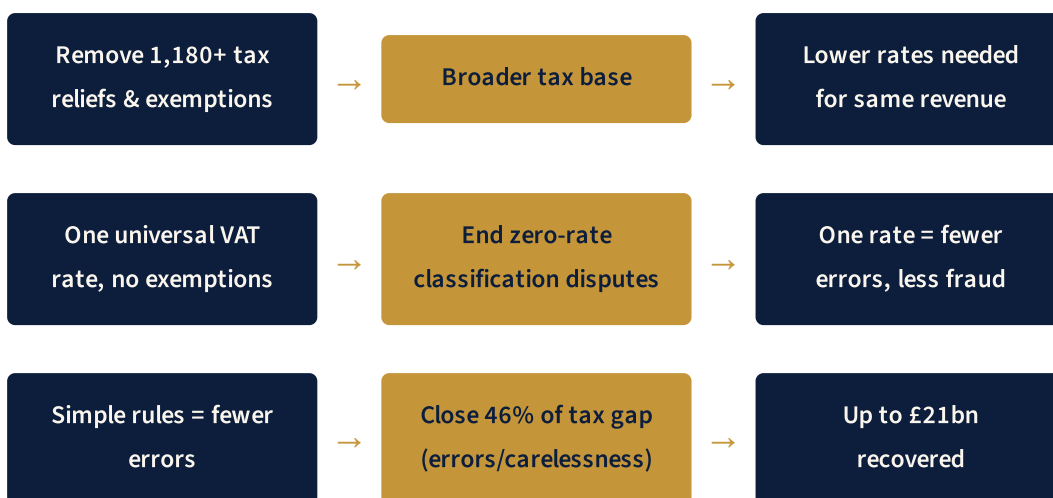
- ▶ **Capital gains equalised with income tax rates.** Capital gains are taxed at the same rate as earned income. Business Asset Disposal Relief abolished. Your main home remains fully exempt.

- ▶ **CGT charged on death: the rebasing loophole closed.** Under current law accumulated capital gains are wiped clean at death and beneficiaries inherit at current market value. Once CGT equals income tax rates this becomes the dominant avoidance strategy: never sell, hold to death, rebase, pass on tax-free. Forge charges CGT on death on accumulated gains as if the assets were sold at market value on the date of death. Main residence exempt. £500,000 lifetime CGT exemption protects modest estates. Illiquid assets can defer payment over up to 10 years with interest at base rate. CGT paid on death is deductible from the IHT base so the taxes do not fully stack. Canada and Australia have operated this for decades. Estimated revenue: £3 to 4bn annually.

- ▶ **Genuine working farms: protected and explicitly distinguished from land investors.** Productive agricultural land is different from an investment portfolio. A farm worth £3 million may generate £40,000 in annual profit. A tax bill payable only by selling land breaks the farm and fragments food production. Forge therefore: (1) applies a £2 million lifetime agricultural CGT exemption on top of the general £500,000 exemption for land actively farmed by the owner or family; (2) extends the payment deferral to 20 years for farm land, resetting if the farm is passed on and continues in agricultural use; (3) restores full Agricultural Property Relief for IHT for genuinely active farmers, reversing Labour's blunt 2026 cap, but (4) closes the abuse route where wealthy investors hold land in agricultural form purely to shelter assets from IHT by requiring active farming by the owner or family member in occupation, not just ownership. The family farmer pays no more. The land banker loses the shelter.

- ▶ **This raises an estimated £5–8bn per year** and eliminates the entire industry of salary+dividend structuring overnight.

How Simplification Pays For Itself



C. CLOSE EVERY LOOPHOLE – A COMPLETE LIST

The current tax system rewards those who can afford accountants to restructure their income. Here is what we close, and why:

The Loopholes We Close

Loophole	How It Works Now	What We Do
Spouse share splitting	Director pays wife £30k in dividends via shares; she does no work but uses her tax-free allowance and basic rate band	Dividends from a controlling-interest company taxed as earned income of the controller

Loophole	How It Works Now	What We Do
Salary + dividend mix	Company directors pay themselves minimum salary (£12,570) then take rest as dividends at lower tax rate, avoiding NIC entirely	All income from a company you control taxed at same rate as employment income. One rate. No gaming.
Bonus-to-pension sheltering	Banker routes £100k bonus via salary sacrifice into pension, paying zero income tax and zero NIC on it	Pension contributions tax-relieved up to £20k/yr. Above that, treated as taxable income.
IR35 / personal service companies	Contractor sets up Ltd company, works full-time for one client like an employee, but pays corporation tax + dividends instead of PAYE + NIC	IR35 abolished. If you work for one client >80% of your time, you're an employee. Simple test. No loophole.
Business Asset Disposal Relief	Sell your company and pay 14% CGT on £1m of gains instead of up to 24%. Designed for genuine entrepreneurs but used by anyone incorporating.	Abolished. Business disposals pay the standard CGT rate (18%/24%) like any other asset sale. Your main home stays exempt.
Offshore structures	Wealthy individuals hold property/assets through offshore companies in Jersey, Guernsey, or the Caymans to avoid CGT and inheritance tax	Beneficial ownership register mandatory. UK assets taxed on the UK beneficial owner regardless of holding structure.

Loophole	How It Works Now	What We Do
Non-dom status	Wealthy foreign residents pay no UK tax on overseas income for years under remittance basis	Non-dom status fully abolished (Labour started this – we complete it). If you live here, you pay here.
EIS/VCT tax shelters	Invest £200k in qualifying company, get 30% income tax relief + tax-free gains. Designed to fund startups but often used as tax shelters.	Abolished as tax reliefs. The BSIF (Section VI) funds innovation directly – not via tax breaks for the wealthy.
Inheritance tax trusts	Wealthy families place assets in discretionary trusts, passing wealth between generations while avoiding IHT	Trust assets included in the estate of the person who funded the trust. No exceptions.
The jobs tax (employer NI)	Employers pay 15% National Insurance on earnings above £5,000 per employee. A direct tax on employment.	Threshold raised to £14,000, Employment Allowance expanded to £15,000. Cheaper to employ people. A small firm with four staff pays no employer NI.

The principle: If you earn £80,000, you pay the same income tax whether you earn it as a salary or dividends or through a company you control. Capital gains remain taxed at 18%/24%, but the gap between income tax

and CGT has narrowed significantly, and every special relief that let insiders pay less has been abolished. The entire industry of tax structuring loses most of its purpose.

- ▶ **Doctors and public-sector professionals** who currently reduce hours or retire early to manage pension tax charges will simply receive increased gross pay. The pension taper distortions will be removed because the underlying abuse route will no longer exist.

D. PROFIT SHIFTING: TAX WHERE YOU SELL

Companies like Google, Amazon, and Starbucks generate billions in UK revenue but declare minimal UK profit by routing sales through Ireland, Luxembourg, or the Netherlands. The UK introduced a Digital Services Tax and Diverted Profits Tax, but both are easily circumvented through transfer pricing.

- ▶ **Tax based on UK revenue, not declared UK profit.** Any company generating over £10 million in UK sales will pay a minimum effective tax rate based on a deemed profit margin (10% of UK revenue). If a company declares less than this, the difference is taxed automatically. No more declaring £50 million profit on £1 billion of UK sales.
- ▶ **Full implementation of the OECD Pillar Two global minimum tax (15%).** The UK enacted this in 2024 but enforcement is weak. Forge will resource HMRC to actively pursue non-compliance, with a dedicated Multinational Tax Compliance Unit.

E. IMPORT SAFETY AND ONLINE MARKETPLACE LIABILITY

Platforms like Shein and Temu ship thousands of parcels to the UK daily. Products frequently lack UKCA safety markings, fail flammability standards, and contain

chemicals banned in the UK. Children's toys arrive without CE stamps. Fast fashion is produced with no environmental or labour standards. The current enforcement system cannot inspect millions of individual small packages.

- ▶ **Online marketplace liability.** Platforms selling to UK consumers become legally responsible for the safety compliance of every product they list, exactly as if they were a UK retailer on a UK high street. If a child's toy from Shein fails safety standards, Shein pays the fine – not the anonymous overseas manufacturer. Fines linked to global revenue under the Corporate Accountability Act framework.
- ▶ **Mandatory UKCA marking for all imports.** Every product sold to a UK consumer, regardless of origin or value, must carry valid UKCA marking with a traceable UK-based responsible person. Platforms that list non-compliant products face escalating fines and, for repeat offenders, blocking orders preventing the platform from processing UK transactions.
- ▶ **VAT collected at platform level on every sale.** No threshold, no exemption. The platform collects and remits 15% VAT on every sale to a UK address. This levels the playing field between UK high street retailers (who already collect VAT) and overseas platforms that undercut them.

Current System vs. Forge System

Feature	Current System	Forge
Tax code length	17,000+ pages	Target: under 1,000 pages
Tax reliefs	1,180+	Fewer than 50
VAT rates	3 (20%, 5%, 0%) + exempt	1 universal rate (~15%)

Feature	Current System	Forge
VAT reclaim	✗ Complex with 3 rates + exempt categories	✓ Retained for businesses, but one rate eliminates classification disputes
Spouse share splitting	✗ Legal loophole	✓ Closed
Bonus-to-pension sheltering	✗ Unlimited via sacrifice	✓ Capped at £20k/yr
Self-assessment required	12m+ people	Only complex cases (~20%)
Estimated tax gap closure	—	£15–25bn annually

D. A SIMPLER TAX RETURN

For the majority of earners, HMRC will issue an automatic annual tax statement. Self-assessment will only be required for those with genuinely complex affairs. The goal: 80% of taxpayers never fill in a form.

II. Property Tax Reform

"Pay What Your Home Is Worth"

1991

YEAR OF LAST VALUATION

8×

LONDON PRICE RISE SINCE '91

3.5×

NORTH EAST PRICE RISE SINCE '91

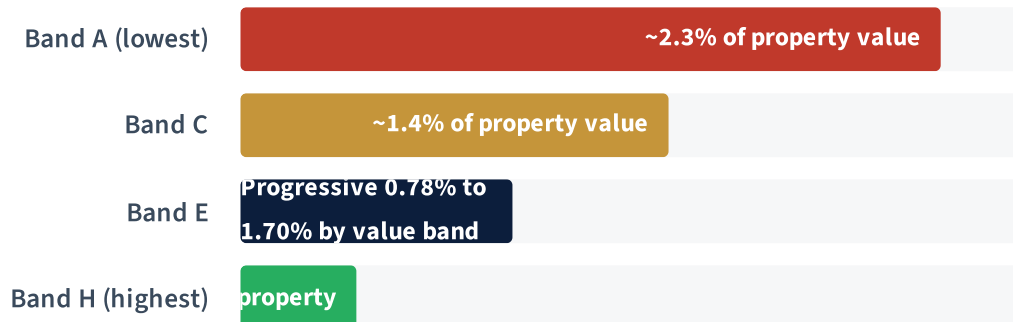
Progressive

BANDED PROPERTY TAX: LOWER
HOMES PAY LESS, WEALTHIER HOMES
PAY MORE

Council Tax is one of the most regressive taxes in Britain. It is based on property valuations from 1991, over three decades ago. A modest home in Middlesbrough can attract a higher effective tax rate than a multi-million-pound property in Belgravia. The banded structure means the most expensive homes (Band H) pay just three times what the cheapest homes (Band A) pay, despite being worth at least eight times as much. This is indefensible.

Council Tax: The Regressive Reality

Effective council tax rate as a proportion of property value



Source: IFS analysis; Parliamentary petition data. The poorest pay proportionally the most.

The core problem: Councils in deprived Northern areas have low property values and high need. 1% of council tax raised in Stoke-on-Trent produces £700,000. The same 1% in Surrey produces £7.5 million. Yet Stoke has far higher demand for social care. The current system systematically underfunds the areas that need the most help.

A. ABOLISH COUNCIL TAX. INTRODUCE A PROGRESSIVE PROPERTY TAX

Council Tax and its eight arbitrary bands will be abolished. In its place, every residential property pays a **progressive property tax on its current market value**, structured in bands like income tax. Lower-value homes pay a lower rate; higher-value homes pay more on the portion above each threshold. The bands are: 0.78% on the first £300,000, 0.90% on £300,000 to £500,000, 1.10% on £500,000 to £1,000,000, 1.40% on £1,000,000 to £2,000,000, and 1.70% above £2,000,000. Because the rates are keyed to value not location, a £2.5m house in Surrey and a £2.5m house in Kensington pay exactly the same: the reform addresses high London values without a regional rate. The majority of homes, those under £300,000, pay slightly less than under council tax, while genuinely expensive properties contribute more for the first time since 1991.

Current System vs. Progressive Property Tax

Property Value (2026)	Per year	Per month	vs ~£2,000 now
£130,000	£1,014	£84	~£986 less
£175,000	£1,365	£114	~£635 less
£250,000	£1,950	£162	~£50 less
£320,000	£2,520	£210	~£520 more
£500,000	£4,140	£345	~£2,140 more
£750,000	£6,890	£574	~£4,890 more
£1,200,000	£12,440	£1,037	~£10,440 more
£2,500,000	£32,140	£2,678	~£30,140 more

Illustrative figures. Band D average from DLUHC. Actual rates will vary by local authority.

The pattern is clear: lower-value homes (concentrated in the North, Midlands, and coastal towns) see their bills fall. Higher-value homes, concentrated in London and the South East, pay their fair share for the first time.

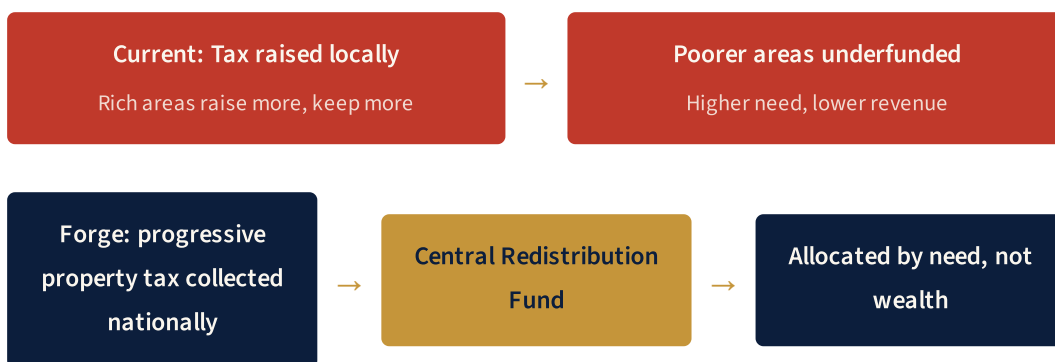
And it stops rising every year. Council tax has increased by roughly 5% per year, every year, because councils have no other way to fund growing costs. Under the property tax, the band rates are fixed. Your bill only changes when your property value is reassessed every three years, and if values are stable, your bill is stable. No more annual 5% hikes. For a £320,000 home the property tax is approximately £2,520 per year; a £250,000 home pays £1,950, slightly less than council tax now. The majority of homes pay less while the band rates protect against the automatic annual increases council tax imposes.

B. CENTRAL REDISTRIBUTION FUND

Revenue from the progressive Property Tax will be collected nationally and redistributed to local authorities **according to need**, not according to local property wealth. The funding formula will be based on:

- ▶ **Population size and demographics** – areas with older populations and more children in care receive proportionally more.
- ▶ **Deprivation indices** – the Index of Multiple Deprivation will determine a needs weighting, ensuring that Stoke, Middlesbrough, and Blackpool receive funding commensurate with their service demands.
- ▶ **Infrastructure deficit** – areas with documented backlogs in road maintenance, housing, and public facilities receive additional capital allocation.
- ▶ **A floor guarantee** – no local authority will receive less than 90% of its current funding in the first three years, providing a transition buffer.

How Money Flows: Current vs. Forge



C. REGULAR REVALUATION

Property values will be reassessed automatically every three years using Land Registry transaction data and statistical modelling – the same approach already

used successfully in Northern Ireland and many US states. No more "drive-by" valuations from 1991. No more properties frozen in the wrong band for decades.

D. PHASED OVER 5 YEARS – NO SHOCK BILLS

The property tax will not hit anyone with a sudden increase on day one. It will be phased in over the parliament:

- ▶ **Year 1:** You pay your current council tax plus 20% of the difference between that and the new property tax. For a £550,000 London flat where the difference is ~£2,690, that's an increase of about £538 in year 1.
- ▶ **Year 2:** 40% of the difference. Year 3: 60%. Year 4: 80%. Year 5: full rate.
- ▶ **Properties below the regional median** will see bills fall immediately in year 1 – the phase-in only applies where the new tax is higher than the old council tax.
- ▶ **Everyone can see where it's going.** Your annual statement shows your current bill, the full property tax amount, and the phase-in percentage for this year. No surprises. No shock bills. By year 5, the system is fully in place, but you've had four years to adjust.

E. PENSIONER, LOW-INCOME, AND LONDON PROTECTIONS

Pensioners and low-income households whose property value exceeds their ability to pay (asset-rich, income-poor) can defer their Property Tax liability. The deferred amount accrues interest at Bank of England base rate and is recovered from the estate on sale or transfer. No pensioner is forced from their home.

Three additional protections for high-value areas:

- ▶ **Income cap at 3% of gross household income.** If the property tax at full rate exceeds 3% of your gross household income, the excess defers automatically on

base rate terms, recovered on sale. A household earning £50,000 pays a maximum of £1,500 per year regardless of property value, with the remainder deferred. This applies nationwide but is most relevant in London and the South East where the income-to-value ratio is most compressed. It is not a London subsidy – it is a basic fairness principle that tax should not exceed a reasonable proportion of income.

- ▶ **Long-term resident discount of 25%.** Any owner-occupier who has lived in the same property as their primary residence for 15 or more continuous years receives a 25% reduction in their property tax rate. Protects the person who bought modestly in 1985 and watched values rise around them. Does not apply to investment properties or second homes.
- ▶ **Three-yearly revaluation** means ongoing changes are gradual and predictable. No cliff-edges from short-term market movements. The phase-in handles the initial transition; the revaluation cycle handles subsequent changes.

F. ABOLISH STAMP DUTY ON YOUR HOME

Stamp Duty Land Tax is a tax on moving. It punishes families who need a bigger home, penalises pensioners who want to downsize, and freezes the housing market by making every transaction cost thousands in tax before you've even unpacked. On a £350,000 home, stamp duty is £6,250. On a £500,000 home, it's £15,000. This is money that could go toward the deposit, the mortgage, or the move itself.

- ▶ **Stamp duty abolished on all primary residence purchases.** Buy your home, move to a bigger one, downsize in retirement, all without a transaction tax punishing you for moving. This is funded from the surplus generated by the progressive property tax over current council tax receipts, combined with retained stamp duty on non-primary purchases.
- ▶ **Stamp duty retained on buy-to-let and second homes** at current rates plus the existing surcharge. Investment properties are not homes. They are assets.

The tax stays.

- ▶ **The effect on the housing market:** removing stamp duty on primary residences unlocks mobility. Pensioners in 4-bed houses who would downsize but can't afford the stamp duty on a new 2-bed will move, freeing up family homes. First-time buyers keep thousands more toward their deposit. The property market becomes more fluid, which benefits everyone.

G. RENTERS' RIGHTS – GOING BEYOND THE 2026 ACT

The Renters' Rights Act 2025 came into force on 1 May 2026 and ended Section 21 no-fault evictions, banned bidding wars, capped advance rent at one month, capped deposits at four weeks, abolished blanket pet bans, and made all assured tenancies periodic. These are real wins after years of campaigning – but they do not go far enough. The Act regulates how landlords can evict; it does little to control how much they charge, how fast rents rise, or how rotten properties are when you move in. Forge will build on what the Act delivered, not replace it, and close the gaps that 11 million renters still live with.

- ▶ **Cap rent rises during a tenancy at CPI + 1%.** The 2026 Act allows landlords to raise rent once a year by serving a Section 13 notice. Tenants can challenge an increase at the First-Tier Tribunal – but the tribunal can only assess "market rent," and in expensive markets that means almost any increase is permitted. We will replace the market-rent test with a hard CPI + 1% cap on increases during a tenancy. Landlords can charge what the market bears for a new tenant; they cannot ratchet up rents on existing tenants to force them out.
- ▶ **One national deposit protection scheme.** The 2026 Act keeps the deposit cap at four weeks but leaves three competing private protection schemes (DPS, MyDeposits, TDS), each with their own dispute process. Tenants get bounced between them. Forge will replace all three with a single national deposit protection service run by HMRC. One scheme. One dispute process. Disputes

resolved within 14 days by an independent adjudicator – not weeks of arguing through portals.

- ▶ **28-day fix-or-no-rent for serious hazards.** The Act promises a Decent Homes Standard, but the timetable is "future" and the enforcement is council-led – which means in most areas, broken. Forge will introduce a statutory 28-day window for landlords to remediate any Category 1 housing hazard (severe damp, mould, broken heating, electrical danger, infestation). Failure to fix within 28 days suspends the tenant's rent obligation until the hazard is resolved, and triggers an automatic rent repayment claim for the months affected.
- ▶ **Public quality scores for every rental.** The Act creates a private landlord database visible only to councils. Forge will go further: every rental property will have a public digital quality score covering EPC, hazards reported and resolved, average response time for repairs, and tenant reviews. Tenants check the score before they sign, the way they check a hotel before they book.
- ▶ **Criminal liability for persistent illegal evictions.** Illegal evictions and harassment are already criminal under the Protection from Eviction Act 1977 – but prosecutions are vanishingly rare. Under the Corporate Accountability Act (Section IX), landlords with three or more substantiated illegal-eviction findings face automatic criminal prosecution and a banning order from letting property. The threshold is not "fines as a cost of business" – it is prison and prohibition.
- ▶ **The principle:** the 2026 Act fixed the eviction problem. Forge will fix the affordability and quality problems too. Together, that is what proper renters' rights look like.

III. Welfare Reform

"Three Benefits. One System. No Excuses."

30+

SEPARATE UK BENEFITS TODAY

£9.5bn

LOST TO FRAUD & ERROR

£7.3bn

ADMIN COST (DWP ALONE)

37 yrs

DWP ACCOUNTS QUALIFIED

Britain's welfare system has approximately 40 distinct working-age and household benefits, and is administered across DWP, HMRC, 300+ local authorities, and now a separate Scottish agency. Universal Credit was supposed to simplify this. After 13 years and £2.9 billion, it merged six benefits into one but left PIP, Carer's Allowance, Child Benefit, Attendance Allowance, Council Tax Reduction, and the State Pension outside the system. The National Audit Office has refused to certify DWP's accounts as accurate for 37 consecutive years – because benefit fraud and error is so large the auditors cannot verify the figures.

New Zealand proved in 2013 that this kind of consolidation is achievable. They compressed 11 working-age benefits into 3 core payments, administered through a single agency, and reduced future welfare liability by \$1.4 billion in year one. We will do the same.

A. FORTY BENEFITS REDUCED TO FIVE

The approximately 40 distinct benefits currently claimable across DWP, HMRC, and local councils become five named entitlements: Jobseeker Support, Carer and Parent Support, Health and Disability Support, Child Benefit (universal, automatically income-tapered), and a single Crisis and Transition Fund replacing all discretionary emergency cash. Winter fuel and seasonal payments are replaced entirely by the

structural energy bill reform in Section XI. Housing Benefit is absorbed into the three-benefit system and paid direct to landlords. Council Tax Reduction disappears when council tax is replaced by the property tax (Section II). SEND vouchers become direct payments to schools and providers, not cash to parents.

B. THREE CORE WORKING-AGE BENEFITS

Every working-age benefit will be consolidated into three payments, administered through a single digital system:

The Forge Welfare Model

Benefit	Who It's For	Conditions	Time Limit
Jobseeker Support	Anyone unemployed and able to work	Must register immediately, apply for jobs weekly, accept retraining. Mandatory activity from day one.	2 years. After 2 years, benefits taper unless in approved retraining.
Carer & Parent Support	Sole parents with children under 6, full-time carers of disabled family members	Part-time work expected once youngest child turns 6. Carers assessed annually.	Duration of caring responsibility. Transitions to Jobseeker Support when caring ends.
Health & Disability Support	People with permanent physical or mental conditions	Assessed by independent clinical panel (not Atos/Capita). Mandatory care plan for conditions	No time limit for permanent conditions. Reassessed every 3 years for

Benefit	Who It's For	Conditions	Time Limit
	preventing work	where recovery is possible. No work requirement for severe permanent conditions.	recoverable conditions.

That's it. Three benefits. One application. One assessment. One agency. Child Benefit and the State Pension continue as universal entitlements outside this system, but everything else folds in.

C. WHAT HAPPENS TO AN UNEMPLOYED PERSON: THE DANISH MODEL

Denmark pays 90% income replacement but limits benefits to 2 years and mandates active retraining from day one. Result: 2.6% unemployment and half of all spells resolved within 3 months. The UK pays far less but allows indefinite passive claiming with no meaningful retraining requirement. 1.4 million people have been on out-of-work benefits for more than a year. Forge adopts the Danish principle: generous short-term support, active help back to work, hard limit on passive claiming.

- ▶ **Months 1 to 3:** higher initial payment rate plus active work coach support. Skills assessment in the first two weeks identifies realistic job targets and training needs. Two weekly contact points.
- ▶ **Month 3:** mandatory funded retraining offer. Digital skills, trade apprenticeships, healthcare and social care, logistics, construction, green energy installation. Paid, structured, leading to a recognised qualification within 6 months. Refusal without good reason tapers benefit by 25%.

- ▶ **Month 12:** community contribution scheme. 3 days per week on community projects (road maintenance, social care support, environmental work), 2 days intensive job search. Full benefit paid plus contribution top-up. The claimant contributes, builds work history, maintains structure.

- ▶ **Year 2 limit:** benefit reduces to subsistence unless in approved full-time accredited training. Denmark spends 1.2 to 2% of GDP on active labour market programmes. UK spends 0.3%. Forge increases to at least 1% – spending shifts from passive cash to active support that actually gets people back to work.

- ▶ **Note: the Dutch model is separate.** The Dutch model in Section G applies to people currently employed who go off sick – making employers financially responsible for occupational health and early return-to-work. The Danish model gets unemployed people back to work. Together they address both routes into long-term welfare dependency.

D. THE RECIPROCITY REQUIREMENT: ATTENDANCE, NOT PAPERWORK

A welfare system keeps public support when people believe it is reciprocal. Forge builds reciprocity into long-term claiming, in a way that actually works by learning from why previous attempts failed.

Why job-search requirements do not work: every UK government has required claimants to "actively seek work," measured by counting applications. This is trivially gameable and everyone knows it: apply for jobs you cannot get, underperform at interview, tick the box. Intent cannot be proven, so a person sabotaging an interview looks identical to one who is nervous or unlucky. The DWP's own evaluations of Mandatory Work Activity and the Community Action Programme found little or no employment benefit, precisely because effort-based conditions can be faked. **Forge does not count job applications as the qualifying activity.**

What cannot be faked is showing up. The qualifying activity for continued benefit after the initial period is verified attendance, measured by a register, at one of: approved training with a real attendance register and a qualification; a supported work placement with real hours; or a community contribution placement for those who cannot yet do the others (environmental projects, social care support, council services, libraries). You can fake intent. You cannot fake presence. Real job search continues alongside with work coach support, but the benefit is paid against the attendance register, not an application count. A person working cash-in-hand cannot attend a placement three days a week during working hours: they must give up the undeclared work or the claim. This is the mechanism that actually deters fraud.

The honest fiscal position: the saving does not come from the unpaid labour or from large employment gains. Supervised placements cost £3,000 to £5,000 per participant per year to run. The genuine saving comes from the attachment effect (people doing undeclared work disengaging from the claim rather than attend, an effect the DWP found is often larger than the employment effect), the routine and recent-work-history effect, and strengthened public consent. Conservative net saving after running costs: approximately **£1 to 2 billion per year**. A real but modest number, presented as such. The requirement is justified first by fairness and work-readiness, second by the saving.

Exemptions: people with severe disabilities (Stream 3), people with significant caring responsibilities, parents of young children (requirements adjusted around childcare and school hours), and people in genuine ill-health episodes including mental health crises (paused with clinical sign-off). Placements must be genuinely useful, must not displace paid jobs, and must have a clear route to real employment. This is the Danish model with a sharper reciprocity element and genuine support, not unpaid labour with nothing wrapped around it.

E. CITIZEN DIGITAL ID: REAL-TIME VERIFICATION

The single most significant anti-fraud reform in this manifesto is not a new inspector or a new form. It is a Citizen Digital ID linked to real-time data from HMRC, the Home Office, and the NHS. Benefits are calculated from verified facts, not self-reported

claims. The current system asks claimants to declare their income, household composition, and residency – then checks slowly and incompletely. Forge inverts this: the system knows, from verified sources, and pays accordingly.

Why it launches as voluntary but becomes mandatory over time. The Digital ID cannot be made compulsory on day one because the X-Road government database connections take 12 to 18 months to build. Mandating an ID before the system can use it creates public hostility without any of the benefit. So it launches as voluntary, incentivised by genuinely useful services – faster benefit processing, pre-filled tax statements, unified NHS login. Estonia launched their ID card as voluntary in 2002 and achieved effective universality by 2007 through utility rather than compulsion. The same approach applies here. Compulsion matters for one specific reason: if voluntary take-up leaves a 20 to 30% holdout, those holdouts are disproportionately the fraud cases. The honest person signs up because it helps them. The fraudster avoids it because it exposes them. Compulsion for benefit access by Year 2 to 3, once the system is proven and the majority already hold an ID, closes that structural gap. By then the argument is won by demonstrated utility rather than assertion.

▶ **Employment and earnings verified automatically** via HMRC PAYE records in real time. A claimant who starts a job and does not declare it is detected within the first pay cycle, not at annual review. The benefit adjusts automatically.

▶ **Child Benefit household income tracking.** Child Benefit now tapers automatically based on real-time verified household income. No more annual self-assessment clawback. The £118k two-earner household no longer receives Child Benefit and repays it through their tax return. Payment is adjusted automatically based on what HMRC already knows. Approximately 670,000 households freed from filing self-assessment returns solely for the Child Benefit clawback.

▶ **Bank account verification** with explicit consent at application. Savings threshold compliance confirmed directly rather than self-reported. Fraud through concealed savings is eliminated.

- ▶ **Overseas residency detected automatically** via passport control and border data. Absences exceeding 4 weeks trigger benefit suspension with notification and right of appeal. UK benefits cannot be claimed while living abroad.
- ▶ **Undeclared household composition** cross-referenced via Council Tax records, address data, and electoral roll through X-Road. Single-person claims verified against household data rather than self-declaration alone.
- ▶ **Immigration status rechecked automatically.** Right-to-reside verified at application and when visa conditions change. No-recourse-to-public-funds enforced systemically.
- ▶ **No algorithmic punishment.** Australia's Robodebt generated 169,000 false debt notices and cost more than it saved. Every query is audited. Claimants can see which agencies accessed their data and when. Disputes resolved by humans within 14 days.

F. BENEFIT FRAUD REPORTING: THE CIVIC REWARD SCHEME

The UK loses approximately £9.5 billion per year to benefit fraud and error. Most of it is visible locally before it reaches a DWP investigator. The current reporting mechanism is a phone line offering nothing in return. Forge introduces the **Civic Reward Scheme**: a structured financial incentive for verified fraud reports.

- ▶ **Secure online portal** for submitting reports, audited and anonymous at submission. Triage by a specialist DWP Fraud Intelligence Unit within 14 days.
- ▶ **Confirmed fraud generates a civic reward** equivalent to 3 months of the fraudulently claimed benefit – typically £1,500 to £2,500 for a Jobseeker Support fraud.
- ▶ **The reporter chooses where the reward goes:** direct payment to themselves, donation to an approved charity from a published list (foodbanks, veterans

organisations, NHS trusts, hospices, mental health charities), or contribution to a local community cause.

- ▶ **Scaled reward for organised fraud rings:** up to £25,000 per report where a network is exposed and prosecuted.
- ▶ **False or malicious reports** face no penalty for a first good-faith submission. Repeat malicious reporters face a fine equivalent to the investigation cost.
- ▶ **Estimated impact:** 5,000 to 15,000 substantiated reports annually, recovering £500 million to £2 billion per year in fraud that currently goes undetected. The reward cost is a fraction of the fraud amount recovered, which in most cases runs to years of false claiming.

G. PIP REFORM: SERVICES NOT CASH, TARGETED TO ACTUAL NEED

Personal Independence Payment costs £23 billion per year for 3.7 million claimants, rising to £31 billion by 2030. The current design pays cash with no verification it reaches what it was meant for. Forge restructures PIP around a clear principle: PIP is for long-term physical disability, delivered as services and targeted support rather than cash. Mental health is removed from PIP entirely and treated by the NHS. The political principle: this is targeting, not cutting. Disabled people get what they actually need rather than a flat-rate cheque, and people with mental health conditions get NHS treatment that works rather than a payment that treats nothing.

Stream 1 (~25% of claimants) — Employer-funded support, no cash. PIP cash replaced entirely by Employer Accommodation Fund (workplace adaptations and equipment paid directly by the Fund), NIC rebate for employers at 12 months, generous employer support payments (up to £4,000 in Year 1, £2,000 in Year 2 for hiring disabled employees), and a no-risk sick pay guarantee for two years modelled on the Dutch Wet Banenafpraak which moved the Netherlands from 45% to 63% disabled employment. The disabled person gets a job and earnings rather than a benefit. The

employer gets every incentive to make the hire genuinely attractive. Estimated saving: £2.5 to 3.5bn annually.

Stream 2 (~15%) – Personal Employment Budget, tightly controlled. Capped at £3,800/yr, pre-approved against a written employment plan, released in tranches against receipts, 2-year maximum then reassessment to Stream 1 or Stream 3. Not a permanent category.

Stream 3 (~23%) – Direct provision for severe disability. For those who genuinely cannot work due to severe and permanent conditions. No cash element. Care hours, equipment, and adaptations provided directly. Social worker assessment every 18 months. Universal Credit covers income. Stream 3 receives *more* resource than under the current system because the system is no longer paying flat-rate cash to people whose disabilities are far less severe.

Mental health is removed from PIP entirely and treated by the NHS. This is one of the most important reforms in the welfare programme, and the principle must be stated plainly: PIP is for long-term physical disability; mental health is a health condition and belongs with the NHS. 1.37 million PIP claimants (37%) currently claim primarily for a mental health condition, receiving cash on average £6,200/yr that treats nothing and is lost if they recover, while waiting up to 18 months for NHS therapy. Forge removes mental health from PIP and funds a major expansion of NHS mental health services accessible directly through the NHS App: self-referral with no GP gatekeeping, talking therapies within weeks not 18 months, digital CBT available immediately, and continuous clinical care aimed at genuine recovery. Income during treatment is covered by Universal Credit like any other person who cannot currently work. Severe enduring psychiatric conditions (psychosis, schizophrenia, severe bipolar, treatment-resistant conditions) certified by a consultant psychiatrist are treated as long-term disability and assessed for Stream 3. **Removing mental health from PIP saves approximately £8.5bn in cash payments; the NHS App expansion costs £1.5bn; net saving approximately £5.3bn, directed to defence.** This is a better deal for people with mental health conditions, who get fast treatment that works instead of a cheque that treats nothing and traps them in ill-health.

Total welfare saving from PIP restructuring: Stream 1 employer-funded support saves approximately £2.5bn; removing mental health from PIP nets approximately £5.3bn after the NHS expansion. Combined with benefit consolidation, digital ID fraud reduction, and the Danish model conditionality, the welfare programme delivers a substantial saving, with the mental health reform money specifically directed to defence.

H. THE DUTCH MODEL: EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITY FIRST

Working-age disability and incapacity benefits rose £24bn between 2019 and 2025. 1.4 million more people are claiming disability benefits. Around 1,000 new claims are approved every working day, overwhelmingly for mental health conditions. This is not sustainable – and it is not helping the people involved. Being out of work for years damages mental health further; evidence from 237 studies shows worklessness increases the probability of mental ill-health by 64%.

The Netherlands faced this same problem in the early 2000s and introduced the strongest reforms in Europe. Employers became responsible for paying wages and facilitating return-to-work for **2 years** before any disability claim can be assessed. Result: disability inflow dramatically reduced. We adopt a modified version:

- ▶ **Employer-led first 6 months.** For any health-related absence, the employer is responsible for statutory sick pay and an active return-to-work plan for the first 6 months. This includes occupational health assessment, phased return, and reasonable adjustments. Employers who fail to make genuine return-to-work efforts face fines; those who succeed receive National Insurance rebates.
- ▶ **No health-related benefit claim before 6 months of structured intervention.** Claimants must first exhaust employer-led return-to-work, NHS treatment, and the Talking Therapies service. Only then can they apply for Health & Disability Support. This prevents the direct route from "I'm unwell" to "I'm on benefits for life" that currently exists.

- ▶ **Graduated benefit based on residual capacity.** Netherlands uses percentage bands (35%+, 80%+ unfit for work). Partial benefit plus part-time work is always better than full benefit with no work. The UK's cliff-edge system where any work risks losing benefits is replaced with tapered support: work what you can, benefits top up the difference.

I. MENTAL HEALTH: TREATED BY THE NHS, NOT PAID BY PIP

Mental health is removed from PIP and treated where health conditions belong: the NHS. A major expansion of NHS mental health services is accessible directly through the NHS App with no GP gatekeeping: self-referral to talking therapies within weeks, digital CBT available immediately for mild to moderate conditions, and continuous clinical care for genuine recovery. The current system pays 1.37 million people an average £6,200/yr in cash that treats nothing while they wait up to 18 months for therapy, and takes the payment away if they recover. Forge replaces a cash trap with actual treatment. Income during treatment is covered by Universal Credit. The net saving of approximately £5.3bn (£8.5bn cash removed minus £1.5bn NHS expansion) is directed to defence. This is better for people with mental health conditions, not worse: fast treatment that works instead of a payment that keeps them unwell.

J. ANTI-ABUSE AND VERIFICATION

- ▶ **Fit note reform – short-term GP, long-term specialist.** GPs can issue fit notes for short-term absence of up to 4 weeks. Beyond 4 weeks, fit notes must be renewed by an **occupational health physician** – a specialist trained in work capacity assessment, not a 7-minute GP appointment. For absences beyond 3 months, the fit note must be supported by objective medical evidence: scan, specialist letter, or diagnostic test result where clinically relevant.
- ▶ **Structured fit notes: what you CAN do, not just what you can't.** Following the Dutch and German model, fit notes specify residual capacity: "can work seated for 4 hours", "can work from home", "cannot lift over 5kg". Employers use

this to provide adjustments. Binary "fit/unfit" fit notes are abolished – partial capacity is the norm, and the system must recognise it.

- ▶ **Second opinion for extended claims.** Any claim for Health & Disability Support beyond 6 months requires a second independent clinical opinion. Not punitive to the GP – the second opinion is a specialist review to catch conditions that need different treatment, and to reduce the false-negative rate (where genuine conditions are missed).
- ▶ **Occupational health at 4 weeks, not 4 months.** Employers required to refer any employee on extended sick leave to occupational health within 4 weeks. Employer-funded for staff of 50+, state-funded for smaller employers. This catches problems early, when they can be treated and the person returned to work, before they become chronic.
- ▶ **Pattern analysis, not individual punishment.** Where a specific GP practice issues fit notes at significantly higher rates than the regional median, the practice is offered training and support – not punishment. Persistent outliers after intervention face CQC review. But the focus is improving the system, not penalising individual doctors who would then refuse everyone to protect themselves.
- ▶ **30% face-to-face PIP assessment minimum.** The current system does only 6% of PIP assessments in person. Paper-based assessments have much higher rates of both false positives and false negatives. 30% in-person minimum, with additional random auditing.
- ▶ **Functional capacity evaluation.** Where physical capacity is the claim basis, objective functional testing (can you lift X, walk X metres, sit for X minutes) replaces self-reporting where clinically appropriate. This is standard practice in the Netherlands and Germany.
- ▶ **3-year reassessment for recoverable conditions.** No indefinite awards except for permanent, non-recoverable conditions (certified by a specialist).

Standard award period: 3 years with reassessment.

- ▶ **Independent clinical panels, not Atos/Capita.** Assessments done by registered clinicians in the specialty relevant to the condition – not by generalist contractors on performance bonuses. Assessors accountable professionally for their decisions.
- ▶ **Cross-verification with Citizen Digital ID.** Income, employment, travel, and residency cross-referenced automatically via UK X-Road. Claimants doing substantial paid work undeclared are detected within the first pay cycle. Overseas claimants on UK benefits are identified in real time via border data.
- ▶ **Civic Reward Scheme.** Any member of the public who reports benefit fraud that is subsequently confirmed receives a civic reward equivalent to 3 months of the fraudulently claimed benefit, paid to themselves or a charity from an approved list. See Section III.D for full details.
- ▶ **Organised fraud prosecuted criminally.** The small minority engaged in organised benefit fraud (including coaching networks selling "how to claim PIP" guides) face criminal prosecution. The large majority of genuine claimants are not the target.

K. CONSOLIDATE SMALL PAYMENTS INTO REAL PROVISION

The current system pays out dozens of small discretionary cash sums – holiday activity money, club grants, discretionary council payments, cost-of-living top-ups, mobility component cash. Each one is small enough to escape proper verification, large enough in aggregate to dilute the budget for genuine care, and easy to spend on things the payment was never intended for. Cash payments under £500 are particularly vulnerable to abuse and impossible to audit at scale.

Instead of dozens of small cash transfers we cannot verify, we provide fewer, larger, properly-targeted services we can:

- ▶ **Holiday and after-school activity money redirected into universal school provision.** No more £200 vouchers handed to families for "clubs" with no audit trail. Instead, every state primary and secondary school is funded to run free breakfast clubs, after-school activities, and summer holiday programmes open to every child on free school meals. The money goes direct to the school. The provision is real. The food is supervised and nutritious. The activities are supervised by qualified staff.

- ▶ **Discretionary council crisis cash replaced by direct payment to providers.** Need help with an energy bill? The payment goes directly to the energy company, not your bank account. Need a replacement boiler or fridge? The provision comes through approved suppliers, not as cash. Need food? Supermarket vouchers loaded onto a prepaid card, restricted to food retailers. This eliminates the cash-out exploitation route while still helping people in genuine crisis.

- ▶ **Mobility component already replaced** (Section III.D) – funded transport, free accessible taxis, dial-a-ride, adapted vehicles where genuinely needed. No more £77/week cash payments labelled "mobility" but spent on whatever.

- ▶ **One Crisis & Transition Fund** replaces the patchwork of discretionary local schemes. Single application through Universal Credit, single eligibility test, single record. Approved support is delivered as provision, not cash. Councils retain a small case-by-case discretion for genuinely unique circumstances – but the default is verified provision.

- ▶ **What this protects:** Healthy Start vouchers for pregnant women and under-4s remain (the prepaid card is already restricted to fruit, vegetables, milk – this is verified provision, not unrestricted cash). Discretionary Housing Payments remain because preventing eviction saves vastly more than it costs. The principle is not "remove all support" – it is "replace untraceable cash with verified provision."

The savings from eliminated cash transfers, reduced fraud and reduced administrative duplication go directly into the school clubs programme and the Crisis & Transition Fund. The same money produces better outcomes because it actually reaches children, and energy companies, and approved suppliers – not cash that disappears.

L. DOMESTIC SOCIAL CARE WORKFORCE: REDUCING IMMIGRATION DEPENDENCY

The UK employs approximately 430,000 overseas workers in adult social care – roughly a third of the entire workforce. This reflects a systemic failure to train, pay, and retain domestic workers, not a genuine shortage of British people willing to do the work. Care work is demanding, skilled, and essential. It is also paid, on average, £11 to £12 per hour, on zero-hours contracts, with minimal career progression and no professional status.

- ▶ **Care work as a retraining destination.** Anyone on Jobseeker Support for more than 3 months is offered funded retraining in adult social care as a primary track. Paid, structured, leading to a recognised Level 2 or Level 3 Certificate in Health and Social Care within 6 months. Funded because the cost is recovered through reduced benefit spend and reduced overseas recruitment.
- ▶ **Career structure and pay.** A formal career ladder for social care workers with pay bands equivalent to NHS Bands 2 to 5, implemented across all publicly-funded care providers. Care workers at Band 3 or above receive the same terms, pension rights, and sick pay as NHS staff.
- ▶ **Social Care Professionals Register.** A mandatory register equivalent to the NMC register for nurses. Registration requires a recognised qualification and continuing professional development. This raises the professional status of care work and creates a sustainable domestic pipeline.

- ▶ **Immigration consequence.** These measures reduce the need for social care visas progressively over 5 years. The visa route remains open during transition – the current shortage is real and cannot be solved overnight. But it becomes subject to an annual workforce plan, with the objective of reducing overseas dependency to under 15% within 10 years.

M. PROJECTED SAVINGS

An honest assessment: welfare reform is hard and takes years to show savings. The Netherlands model saves roughly 0.5-1% of GDP over a decade. For the UK that would be £15-30bn over 10 years. Combined with Dutch-model employer responsibility, tightened mental health eligibility (CSJ estimates £7bn saving), and fraud reduction via digital ID (£4-6bn), the potential savings are £15-20bn/year by year 5. This is substantial but not transformative – the bigger fiscal levers remain pensions and healthcare.

N. STATE PENSION: DOUBLE LOCK REPLACES TRIPLE LOCK — SAVING £5BN

The triple lock guarantees the state pension rises by the highest of inflation, earnings growth, or 2.5%. It was right for 2010 when pensioner poverty was acute. It is not right for 2026. Pensioner incomes have risen substantially relative to working-age incomes over 16 years. The 2.5% floor has no economic justification. It costs approximately £5bn more annually than a double lock (the higher of inflation or earnings) and transfers money from working-age taxpayers to pensioners as a group regardless of individual need.

Forge replaces the triple lock with a double lock. The state pension still rises by the higher of inflation or earnings. Pensioners are fully protected against prices rising and fully protected against falling behind workers. The 2.5% minimum floor is removed because it bears no relationship to economic conditions and is regressive relative to the working-age people funding it. A portion of the £5bn annual saving funds a targeted pensioner poverty top-up for the 1.6 million pensioners in genuine poverty —

the poorest pensioners do better, the universal floor that benefits all 12 million regardless of wealth ends.

Every party knows the triple lock is unsustainable as the pensioner population grows. Every government since 2019 has found ways to temporarily avoid it when it became too expensive. Forge says it plainly rather than managing it quietly. The double lock is the honest and fair position.

O. UNIVERSAL PENSIONER BENEFITS: MEANS-TESTED VIA HMRC

Five universal pensioner benefits cost approximately £10.5bn annually: Winter Fuel Payment, free TV licence (over-75s), free bus pass, free NHS prescriptions (from 60), and Attendance Allowance. Previous means-testing proposals failed because they required new forms, new assessments, and new bureaucracy. That objection disappears once HMRC real-time household income data flows through X-Road.

From Year 2, all four cash benefits are means-tested automatically via HMRC household income. No new form. No interview. The benefit adjusts at the tax year end based on the previous year's verified household income — exactly as the High Income Child Benefit Charge already works. Free in full below £35,000 household income. Tapered withdrawal between £35,000 and £50,000. Withdrawn above £50,000. The 7 million pensioners on the lowest incomes are unaffected. Attendance Allowance is absorbed into Health and Disability Support direct provision. Estimated annual saving: £3.5bn from Year 2.

What this is not: we are not proposing to strip benefits from genuinely disabled people, to cut state pensions, or to introduce the cruelty that made PIP assessments notorious. We are proposing to spend less on cash transfers and more on treatment, retraining, and getting people back to productive lives. The measure of success is not the benefit bill falling – it is employment rising, ill-health reducing, and genuine claimants receiving better support than they currently get.

P. BENEFIT CAP AND CHILDCARE

- ▶ **Benefit cap enforced.** No household receives more in benefits than the median post-tax income in their region. The cap already exists but is riddled with exemptions. We enforce it simply.
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Q. CHILDCARE – A NATIONAL CONSULTATION

The current 30 hours free childcare system is established and families rely on it. We will not disrupt it without evidence that an alternative is better. But the system has serious problems that a consultation must address:

- ▶ **The funding gap is destroying providers.** The government pays nurseries roughly £5–6/hour for a "funded" place that costs £8–10/hour to deliver. Providers cross-subsidise from private-paying parents or close. In 2024, over 5,000 childcare providers closed in England. The funded rate must reflect the real cost of delivery.
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- ▶ **The hours don't match working hours.** 30 "free" hours across 38 weeks, starting at age 3, does not cover 8am–6pm, 48 weeks/year for a parent working full-time. Parents still pay thousands for the gap. The system was designed for headlines, not for working families.
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- ▶ **Costs are still among the highest in the OECD.** For under-3s, a full-time place costs over £14,000/year. Denmark caps childcare at 10% of household income. We will consult on whether an income-based cap would deliver better outcomes and more places than the current flat entitlement model.
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- ▶ **Place shortages are the real crisis.** Even families entitled to funded hours cannot use them if there are no places available. Any reform must address supply, not just demand. Funding providers at the real cost of delivery would stop closures and incentivise new provision, particularly in deprived areas where the shortage is worst.
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Within the first year, Forge will commission a national childcare consultation with parents, providers, and employers to design a system that is genuinely affordable, available, and funded at the real cost. The Danish income-based model is our starting point, but the final design will be evidence-led and consulted on, not imposed.

R. WHAT THIS SAVES

Consolidating 30+ benefits into 3, eliminating duplicate assessments, closing the £9.5bn fraud and error gap through real-time verification, and reducing a 89,000-person department through automation does not save a small amount. Conservative estimate: **£4–8 billion per year** in reduced administration, reduced fraud, and faster return to work. Every pound saved goes to funding the retraining guarantee and the disability provision that replaces PIP cash.

IV. Immigration Control

"Legal, Limited, and Enforced"

100,000

HARD ANNUAL CAP

Embassy

ONLY ROUTE OF ENTRY

Digital ID

MANDATORY FOR ALL RESIDENTS

A. A HARD CAP OF 100,000 PER YEAR

Net immigration will be capped at 100,000 people per year. All legal immigration applications must be processed through British embassies and consulates abroad. There will be no route to remain for those who arrive outside the legal system.

B. CHANNEL CROSSINGS: DETECTION, DETERRENCE, RETURNS

41,472 people crossed the Channel in small boats in 2025. The UK already spends over £3 billion on border surveillance including AI-powered sentry towers, drone patrols, and surveillance aircraft. Not a single boat arrives undetected. The problem is not detection – it is that detection without consequence is just expensive observation. We change that.

- ▶ **Channel Patrol Fleet.** A dedicated fleet of fast patrol boats operating in rotating shifts across the Dover Strait, forming a visible deterrent barrier. Not Royal Navy warships – smaller, faster, purpose-built vessels crewed by Border Force. Their role: intercept boats in UK waters, provide safety assistance, and escort them back toward French territorial waters under the bilateral return agreement.

- ▶ **AI-powered Channel surveillance consolidated** into a single Coastal Maritime ISR Service. The current patchwork of Anduril sentry towers, Tekever drones, Dash-8 aircraft, and radar systems will be integrated into one real-time operating picture, accessible to Border Force, the Royal Navy, and French counterparts simultaneously. Every boat tracked from launch to interception.

- ▶ **Bilateral return agreement with France** backed by significant funding (£500m+ per year). The current arrangement pays France to patrol beaches but does not require France to accept returned boats. We will negotiate a formal returns agreement: boats intercepted in UK waters are returned to French jurisdiction, and the UK funds processing centres on the French side. If France refuses, the funding stops.

- ▶ **Embassy-only asylum processing.** No asylum claim will be accepted from anyone arriving by irregular means. Applications must be made through British embassies and consulates abroad. This removes the incentive to cross the Channel – if arriving by boat cannot lead to a successful claim, the business model of people smuggling collapses.
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C. STUDENT VISAS: STUDY, THEN LEAVE UNLESS QUALIFIED

- ▶ **Student visas time-limited to the duration of the course plus 3 months.** No automatic post-study work visa. The graduate route will be replaced with a points-based system: students may remain only if they have a confirmed job offer in a shortage occupation at a salary above the median, or if they are continuing to postgraduate research in a strategic sector (STEM, healthcare, defence).
 - ▶ **University accountability.** Institutions that sponsor student visas will be held responsible for compliance. If more than 10% of their sponsored students overstay or switch to non-study immigration routes, the university's visa sponsorship licence is suspended. This makes universities partners in enforcement, not passive visa mills.
 - ▶ **Digital ID tracks visa status in real time.** Every visa holder's status is linked to their digital ID. Expiry triggers automatic alerts to the individual, their employer (if any), and their landlord. No more "lost" overstayers.
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D. MANDATORY DIGITAL IDENTITY CARDS

- ▶ **Universal digital ID** – every UK resident, citizen and non-citizen alike, will hold a digital identity card linked to their immigration status, right to work, right to rent, and access to public services.
-

- ▶ **Random verification checks** – employers, landlords, and public services will be required to verify digital ID. Spot-checks will be conducted randomly by enforcement officers in workplaces and public settings.
- ▶ **Employer penalties** – any employer found to be hiring individuals without valid digital ID will face escalating fines starting at £10,000 per worker, rising to unlimited fines and criminal prosecution for repeat offences.
- ▶ **Integrated with welfare and tax systems** – the same digital ID will serve as the backbone for the simplified tax system (Section I) and the managed welfare system (Section III), creating a single, unified record per resident.

E. DOMESTIC TRAINING REQUIREMENT BEFORE OVERSEAS SPONSORSHIP

In sectors with high visa dependency and high potential for domestic employment (construction, social care, hospitality, agriculture, logistics, and green energy), employers with more than 50 staff must demonstrate at least one new apprenticeship start per 20 employees per year before they can sponsor an overseas worker in that role. If you have not trained anyone domestically, you cannot recruit overseas in that sector.

This removes the perverse incentive that currently makes it rational to recruit a trained worker from overseas in 6 weeks rather than train a domestic worker over 2 years. It does not ban overseas recruitment. It makes domestic training the economically rational choice by removing the cheaper overseas alternative for employers who have not invested in their own workforce pipeline. This directly addresses youth unemployment in sectors where young British people could and should be working. The mechanism is similar to Switzerland's domestic preference obligation and Australia's skills shortage assessment requirements.

The principle: A generous country must also be a controlled country. Britain will welcome those it chooses to welcome, through a legal process, at a pace that allows integration and does not suppress wages or overload public services. The digital ID system makes this enforceable, not aspirational.

V. Defence: Drones, AI, and Networked Force

"Build at scale. Network everything. Don't fight yesterday's war."

British defence policy is being overtaken by events. Ukraine produces 2 to 4 million drones per year. The UK produces a tiny fraction. Ukraine's DELTA battle management system integrates satellite, drone, radar, and frontline data into a single AI-assisted picture on laptops, tablets, and smartphones across all branches, and was rated more effective than any equivalent Western system in NATO interoperability testing. The UK has no equivalent in service. The £6.2 billion HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales were ordered in 1998 and entered service after costs doubled. They are vulnerable to threats that did not exist when they were specified.

Forge proposes a fundamental reorientation. Defence spending rises to 3% of GDP funded partly through Defence Bonds. How the money is spent matters as much as how much. The priorities: mass drone production capacity, an integrated AI battle management system, a Royal Navy of dispersed networked platforms rather than concentrated high-value targets, and accelerated AUKUS Pillar 2 integration.

A. THE STRATEGIC ARGUMENT

Three years of large-scale combat between roughly equal powers has produced more battlefield data than the previous thirty years combined. The findings are not contested: cost-exchange ratios have inverted (a £400 drone disables a £4 million tank); mass matters more than perfection; integration beats individual capability (DELTA identifies 12,000 Russian targets per week from 50,000 video streams via AI); survivability has shifted from armour to dispersion. The fleet that survives is the one that is dispersed and networked, not concentrated and heavily protected.

B. THE BRITISH DRONE INDUSTRIAL BASE: 1 MILLION DRONES PER YEAR BY 2030

The current target of 100,000 tactical drones annually is genuinely insufficient. Forge commits to 1 million tactical drones per year by 2030: loitering munitions, ISR drones, sea drones (surface and underwater), counter-drone interceptors, and one-way attack drones. 10 to 15 approved British drone manufacturers with framework contracts, not the current handful of preferred suppliers. UK firms positioned to scale include BAE Systems, Malloy Aeronautics, MSubs, Marshall ADG, Cranfield Aerospace, MBDA UK, and Thales UK. Drone Production Zones in the North and Midlands with planning fast-track. Defence Bonds (£10 to 15bn) ring-fenced for capital expenditure on factories, machine tools, and testing facilities. DragonFire (the UK laser, £10 per shot vs £1m per missile) fitted to all Type 26 and Type 31 frigates from initial delivery.

C. UK INTEGRATED BATTLE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: BEYOND DELTA

The single largest capability gap in British defence is integration. Information from an Army drone in Estonia does not flow automatically to a Royal Navy frigate, an RAF Typhoon, or PJHQ Northwood. Forge commits to a sovereign British battle management system, the National Defence Cloud, drawing on Ukraine's DELTA architecture but engineered for British and allied use:

- ▶ Cloud-based architecture with UK sovereign hosting and allied-interoperable layers. Operable on laptops, tablets, and ruggedised smartphones at every level

of command.

- ▶ AI-enabled target detection trained on real combat data. Ukraine opened battlefield AI training data to allies in March 2026. Forge accepts and signs the data-sharing agreement in Month 3.
- ▶ NATO interoperability by design using Link 16 standards from launch. RAF F-35s, Type 26 frigates, and Army assets share the same operational picture.
- ▶ Allied integration through AUKUS Pillar 2. The May 2026 UUV announcement is the first concrete output. Forge scales Pillar 2 cooperation across AI, autonomy, quantum, and electronic warfare.
- ▶ Mandatory adoption by all three services within 36 months. The current situation where each service operates its own separate platforms ends.

This is the most consequential structural change in British defence. Drones, ships, and aircraft are tools. The system that integrates them is the capability multiplier.

D. ROYAL NAVY: DISPERSED, NETWORKED, DRONE-CENTRIC

The 2025 Strategic Defence Review identified the Royal Navy needs a "high-low" mix and "hybrid carrier air wings." Forge goes further:

- ▶ HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales retained but reconfigured as hybrid drone motherships carrying F-35Bs, autonomous collaborative platforms, expendable one-way attack drones, and long-range precision missiles fired from the deck.
- ▶ 8 Type 26 City-class frigates as planned. 8 Type 31 Inspiration-class (3 above current). 6 additional smaller patrol vessels (£150m per hull range) carrying USVs and UUVs for North Sea, Channel, and undersea cable protection.

- ▶ Every surface combatant a drone mothership from initial delivery. Type 26 and Type 31 carry standardised launch and recovery systems for sea and air drones.
- ▶ Project Cabot (Atlantic Bastion autonomous sub-hunting fleet) accelerated from Year 5-7 to initial operational capability by Year 3. Russian submarine activity in the North Atlantic has increased substantially; delay in delivery is delay in deterrence.
- ▶ The Royal Navy's first autonomous helicopter drone (first flight January 2026, 1-tonne payload, sub-hunting capable) rapidly scaled to operational deployment.

E. BRITISH ARMY: 10X MORE LETHAL TRANSLATED INTO SPECIFICS

The 2025 SDR pledged a "10x more lethal" Army. The phrase was rhetorical. Forge translates: every infantry battalion equipped with organic drone capability (ISR at platoon level, loitering munitions at company level, larger reconnaissance and strike drones at battalion level), all networked into the National Defence Cloud. Royal Artillery transitions from shells alone to a drone-shell-missile mix. Land drone swarms operationally deployed by Year 4. Army troop strength raised to 76,000 with recruitment supported by the Skilled Career Pathway (Section XIV) and Jobseeker Support retraining (Section III).

F. DEFENCE BONDS VIA NS&I

NS&I-issued retail Defence Bonds at 4 to 4.5% interest, available from £100. Ring-fenced for capital expenditure only: ships, drones, ammunition factories, cyber infrastructure, the National Defence Cloud. Never for salaries or running costs. Israel raises \$1 to 2.7bn annually through similar bonds. Target: £10 to 15bn raised over the parliament. Off-balance-sheet retail debt, does not count against deficit targets in the same way as general government borrowing. Repaid from the increased defence budget as it reaches 3% GDP.

G. SHIPYARDS, APPRENTICESHIPS, AMMUNITION, BASES, AND CYBER

- ▶ **Double-shift British shipyards.** BAE Govan/Scotstoun, Babcock Rosyth, and Harland & Wolff Belfast move to two-shift production. 5,000 fully funded defence apprenticeship places annually drawn from Jobseeker Support retraining and the Skilled Career Pathway. The Norwegian £10bn UK frigate deal demonstrates export potential; the constraint is yard capacity.
- ▶ **Ammunition and readiness.** 155mm shell production at BAE Glascoed and Washington targeting 100,000 rounds annually by Year 2, 250,000 by Year 4. National stockpile raised to a 90-day warfighting reserve. 10-year minimum contracts to justify capital investment.
- ▶ **Three new military bases in the North.** Naval logistics hub on the Tees, drone testing and production facility in Lancashire or Yorkshire, RAF rapid-reaction capability in Cumbria. Real jobs and genuine strategic rationale.
- ▶ **UK Cyber Academy in the North.** 4,000 graduates per year. Located via competitive bidding (Edinburgh, Glasgow, Manchester, Sheffield, Doncaster credible candidates). Modelled on Israel's Unit 8200 pipeline.

H. WHAT THIS PROGRAMME DOES NOT REPLACE

Honest defence policy requires saying what stays. The drone-and-AI pivot does not replace: the continuous at-sea nuclear deterrent (Dreadnought-class submarines proceed on schedule); nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSN-AUKUS at Barrow-in-Furness); conventional expeditionary capability (Royal Marines, Parachute Regiment); or NATO commitments. The 3% of GDP target meets the strategic commitment. Drones and AI augment existing capability; they do not replace boots on the ground when boots on the ground are needed.

The strategic point: the next war Britain might fight will not look like the wars its current force was built for. The 2025 SDR acknowledged this direction. Forge commits to the structural changes that direction requires. Drones at industrial scale. AI battle management as the connective tissue. A Royal Navy of distributed networked platforms rather than a small number of high-value targets. AUKUS Pillar 2 integration as a strategic priority. This is what credible deterrence looks like in 2026.

VI. Economic Growth, National Champions, and Regional Development

"Invest, Accelerate, Protect"

South Korea has Samsung. Taiwan has TSMC. The United States spent \$280 billion on the CHIPS Act and runs DARPA to seed breakthrough technologies decades before the private sector would invest. Britain has world-class companies in genomics, nuclear, wave energy, AI, and advanced materials. But we don't back them. We let them struggle for funding, then sell them to foreign buyers. This section is not about nationalising industries. It is about doing what every serious country does: targeted investment that helps British companies scale faster.

A. THE BRITISH STRATEGIC ACCELERATOR

A £10 billion fund, managed at arm's length by the British Business Bank, providing three types of targeted support:

- ▶ **Advance Market Commitments.** Government commits to being an early buyer of British technology. The US did this with DARPA and created the internet, GPS, and the mRNA vaccine platform. The UK government already spends £300bn+ on procurement annually. Directing even 2% toward British innovators in strategic sectors would be transformational. Specific commitments: NHS contracts for UK long-read sequencing leaders, MoD contracts for British-built drones and cyber tools, and energy grid contracts for British tidal and wave technology.

- ▶ **Scale-up capital.** British companies routinely raise Series A in London, then move to the US for Series B because UK capital markets won't fund growth-stage companies. The Accelerator provides matched funding for British companies in strategic sectors that have proven their technology but need capital to scale manufacturing. Not grants. Co-investment alongside private capital, with the state taking a minority equity position that generates returns for the taxpayer.

- ▶ **R&D partnerships.** Fund university-industry partnerships modelled on the Catapult network but with harder commercial targets. Every £1 of public R&D funding must be matched by £2 of private investment within 3 years, or the programme is wound down. No more perpetual grant-funded research with no route to market.

B. STRATEGIC SECTORS

- ▶ **Genomics and diagnostics.** The UK has world-leading capability in long-read DNA sequencing and other emerging diagnostic technologies. A National Genomics Procurement Programme will commit NHS and public health agencies to long-term contracts with UK genomics companies, providing the revenue certainty that enables manufacturing scale-up in the UK rather than abroad.

- ▶ **Small modular nuclear.** Rolls-Royce SMR has a proven design and a Wylfa site selected. We will accelerate regulatory approval, guarantee first-unit procurement for the grid, and fast-track planning for SMR sites. The goal: first power by 2032, a fleet of 10+ reactors by 2040, and a UK-built export product for global markets.
- ▶ **Wave and tidal energy.** Britain has 40% of Europe's tidal resource. Private developers need procurement certainty to invest. Ringfenced Contracts for Difference for marine energy, with strike prices that reflect the early-stage technology premium, plus Accelerator co-investment in scale-up companies like Orbital Marine Power and Nova Innovation.
- ▶ **AI and quantum.** The UK has world-leading AI research at DeepMind, academic centres in Oxford, Cambridge, and Edinburgh, and a growing quantum computing cluster. The Accelerator will fund compute infrastructure (sovereign AI data centres, not reliant on US hyperscalers) and provide procurement commitments for AI deployment across government (Section VII).
- ▶ **Compound semiconductors.** The CSconnected cluster in South Wales is a genuine world leader in compound semiconductors used in 5G, electric vehicles, and defence. Targeted expansion funding, co-located training, and defence procurement priority.

C. PROTECT WHAT WE BUILD

There is no point investing public money in British companies if we then allow them to be acquired by foreign competitors. Strengthen the National Security and Investment Act to give government a **right of first refusal** on acquisition of any company that has received significant public funding through the Accelerator. ARM, DeepMind, and dozens of other British companies were built here and sold abroad. That pattern ends.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT: PROPERTY TAX REDISTRIBUTION AS ECONOMIC POLICY

The property tax reform (Section II) is the largest single act of regional economic rebalancing in this manifesto. Higher-value southern properties pay proportionally more. The revenue distributes nationally on a needs-weighted basis. Left-behind regions, those with the worst infrastructure, lowest median incomes, and greatest deferred investment, receive proportionally more. The BSA explicitly targets manufacturing and R&D capacity outside London: compound semiconductors in South Wales, tidal manufacturing in Caithness and Orkney, SMR supply chain in Derby and Rotherham, Cyber Academy in Scotland. The roads programme allocates by Road Condition Indicator score, which means northern, coastal, and rural councils receive more. This is not charity. It is the precondition for the rest of Britain generating the economic activity the whole country needs.

F. BUSINESS SUBSIDY ZERO-BASING

The UK government spends approximately £9.5bn per year on business grants, subsidies, and support schemes. The academic literature on business subsidies consistently finds that deadweight loss (paying for activity that would happen anyway) consumes 40 to 60% of grant programme value. A business finance guarantee for a company that would have borrowed commercially anyway is not a subsidy to growth. It is a transfer from taxpayers to banks.

Every business subsidy programme is reviewed within Year 1 against a single test: can it demonstrate additionality above deadweight from its own evaluation data? If not, it is discontinued at the next spending review unless a credible new evaluation framework is produced within 12 months. Regional growth grants are discontinued as a separate programme, their redistributive function absorbed into the property tax redistribution and BSA geographic weighting already in this manifesto. Hospitality

and tourism grants are reserved for genuine crisis only. UKRI commercialisation grants (not core research grants, which are protected) are individually zero-based.

Conservative saving: £3.8bn annually by Year 3. Strategic research, aerospace, advanced manufacturing with genuine spillovers, and the BSA sectors are fully retained. Only programmes that cannot demonstrate they caused anything are discontinued.

VII. Digital Government & Automation

"Fewer Desks, Better Service"

5.9m

PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES

25%

NHS ADMIN REDUCTION TARGET

15%

CIVIL SERVICE HEADCOUNT
REDUCTION

NHS: AI TRIAGE AND HARD TARGETS

The NHS App becomes the default front door for all non-emergency healthcare. An NHS-funded trial at Groves Medical Centre showed AI triage reduced GP waiting times by 73% – from 11 days to 3. One in six GP appointments are unnecessary, and up to 40% of A&E patients could be seen in primary care. The problem is navigation: people don't know where to go, so they default to A&E.

- ▶ **AI Smart Triage deployed to every GP surgery within 2 years.** When you contact your GP – online, phone, or in person – AI assesses your symptoms, determines the right level of care, and books you directly into the appropriate slot. No 8am phone scramble. No receptionist gatekeeping. The right care, first time, every time.

- ▶ **Self-referral expanded to 30+ conditions.** 30% of GP appointments are musculoskeletal complaints most needing physio not a GP. A Torbay trial cut waiting times from 10 weeks to under 3 days for 90% of patients. Forge extends self-referral through the NHS App to all MSK physiotherapy, mental health talking therapies, audiology, optometry, dermatology via photograph reviewed by a consultant within 48 hours, podiatry, sexual health, and chronic disease monitoring within agreed protocols. A clinical screening tool routes red flag symptoms to urgent GP appointments. The GP is bypassed only where there is no clinical reason for them to be in the chain.

- ▶ **Pharmacy First expanded from 7 to 30 conditions.** Launched January 2024, the scheme dispensed over 1.2 million prescriptions in 11 months with no attributable safety incidents. Forge expands to 30 conditions including hay fever, eczema flare-ups, thrush, cold sores, travel health, blood pressure and inhaler titration within agreed protocols, and routine diabetes monitoring. France prescribes for a broader range. The barrier is regulatory inertia. 15,000 additional pharmacist prescriber qualifications funded over the parliament.

- ▶ **NHS Nursing Compact: ending the agency dependency.** The NHS spent £3bn on agency nursing in 2023/24. The same money could have employed 31,000 permanent nurses. Forge introduces: a Nursing Compact (transition payment plus guaranteed flexible working plus protected CPD for nurses returning from agency to permanent NHS posts); legally mandated nurse-to-patient ratios following the Australian model; 10,000 additional nursing degree apprenticeships per year; permanent residency fast-track for overseas nurses with 3 or more years NHS service. Agency cap tightens progressively to 115% by Year 5. Target:

agency spend below £500m, down from £3bn. Saving of £2.5bn reinvested in staffing.

- ▶ **Digital imaging: no more couriers.** NHS couriers transport hundreds of thousands of imaging CDs between hospitals because PACS systems are not interoperable. Forge mandates: National Imaging Archive (NHS-owned, UK-hosted) operational by Month 18; no new imaging CD from Month 6; AI-assisted radiology reporting at national scale; pathology results in the NHS App within 24 hours of sign-off. The GP appointment to be told your blood results are normal is eliminated.
- ▶ **Hard waiting time targets:** GP appointment within 1 week (or same-day for urgent). A&E 4-hour standard restored. 18-week elective standard enforced. Published performance data by practice and hospital – patients can see and compare.
- ▶ **AI diagnostic support.** AI already reads chest X-rays and skin lesion images in parts of the NHS. Scale this nationally: AI flags anomalies, clinicians review and confirm. Faster diagnosis, fewer missed cancers, less pressure on radiology departments.

AI CLINICAL NOTE-TAKING

GPs spend approximately 11 minutes per consultation – and a significant portion of that is typing notes, coding diagnoses, and writing referral letters. AI ambient listening technology (already piloted in NHS trusts) can listen to the consultation, draft the clinical note in real time, code the diagnosis, and pre-fill the referral. The doctor reviews and approves in seconds instead of typing for minutes.

- ▶ **Deploy AI scribes to every GP surgery within 2 years.** Each consultation gains 3–4 minutes of clinical time. Across 370 million GP consultations per year, that is the equivalent of adding thousands of extra GPs without recruiting a single one.

- ▶ **AI discharge summaries.** Hospital discharge letters – currently written by junior doctors, often hours after the patient leaves – will be auto-generated from the clinical record and reviewed by the discharging clinician. Faster, more accurate, fewer errors in handover.
- ▶ **Paperwork-free referrals.** GPs currently write referral letters by hand or dictate them. AI-generated referrals, pre-populated from the patient record, reduce the task to a single click to confirm and send.

SOCIAL CARE: PUBLIC STEP-DOWN CENTRES & HOSPITAL WITHOUT WALLS

Approximately 13,000 hospital beds are blocked on any given day by patients who are medically fit for discharge but have nowhere to go. Each blocked bed costs the NHS roughly £2,000 per night. The same group – predominantly older, frail patients – also drives a large share of avoidable A&E attendances. The fix is not just more hospital beds. It is a different model of care that delivers hospital-level support without the hospital. Three components, working together.

1. Public Step-Down Centres (Discharge to Assess)

- ▶ **State-run step-down care centres adjacent to every major hospital.** Patients medically fit for discharge but not ready for home move to a publicly-run facility next door. NHS-funded for the first six weeks (matching the existing Care Act 2014 requirement for free intermediate care). Frees hospital beds immediately, provides genuine rehabilitation and reablement, and builds public care infrastructure from the ground up. Target: **50 centres in the first parliament**, starting where bed-blocking is worst.
- ▶ **Co-located on hospital sites where possible.** Most large hospital complexes have unused space – outdated wards, surplus admin buildings, vacant land. We

will repurpose these into step-down units. Faster to deliver than greenfield builds; integrates clinically with the acute hospital.

- ▶ **Capacity where demand is.** New centres located based on NHS discharge data – near hospitals with the longest delayed transfers of care, and in communities with the largest care home shortages. Data-driven investment, not political allocation.
- ▶ **The NHS saving funds the expansion.** Freeing 13,000 blocked beds at £2,000/night saves up to £9.5 billion per year. Even freeing a quarter of them funds the entire step-down programme and generates a surplus for further expansion.

2. Hospital at Home (Virtual Wards) – Massively Expanded

NHS England runs around 12,000 virtual ward beds today – roughly 20 per 100,000 population. Evidence is now strong: a Liverpool heart failure virtual ward delivered a 36% reduction in A&E attendance and lower mortality than inpatient care. West Hertfordshire's frailty virtual ward costs £118 per bed-day versus £569 for inpatient care – a saving of around £450 per patient day. East Kent data shows one acute admission avoided for every 1.03 patients on the home pathway. Yet ICBs have been told to cut running costs by 50% by the end of 2025, which is choking expansion at exactly the moment the evidence is strongest.

- ▶ **Triple virtual ward capacity in the first parliament:** from 20 to 60 beds per 100,000 population. Deliver hospital-level acute care – IV antibiotics, oxygen, vital signs monitoring, daily clinical review – in patients' homes for conditions where evidence supports it: frailty, heart failure, respiratory infection, post-operative recovery. Target: 36,000 virtual ward beds nationally.
- ▶ **Pre-emptive admission avoidance.** Around two-thirds of current virtual ward use is "step-down" (early discharge). The bigger prize is "step-up" – preventing the admission in the first place. Frailty teams attached to ambulance services and A&E front doors can divert older patients with falls, infections, or

exacerbations of chronic conditions directly into hospital-at-home rather than admitting them at all. Target: 50% step-up by 2030.

- ▶ **The cost case is overwhelming.** At £450 per day saved across 36,000 virtual ward beds running 80% occupancy, the saving is roughly £4.7 billion per year. Initial capital investment in remote monitoring kit and clinical command centres pays back in months, not years.

3. Single Point of Assessment (SPoA)

Today, an older patient with a fall or chest infection might be assessed by an ambulance crew, then by A&E, then by a community nurse, then by a discharge team, then by social services – each generating its own paperwork and decision. The British Geriatrics Society has flagged this fragmentation as the single biggest barrier to better care. Forge will consolidate.

- ▶ **One number, one team, one record.** Combine the Urgent Community Response Service, Hospital at Home teams, and frailty crisis services into a Single Point of Assessment in every Integrated Care Board area. One phone number for GPs, paramedics, care homes, and families. Multi-disciplinary triage decides within hours: virtual ward, step-down centre, community response, or acute admission.
- ▶ **Frailty assessment teams in every A&E.** Older patients arriving at A&E are often admitted because there is no quick way to organise an alternative. A consultant geriatrician and multi-disciplinary team based at the front door can divert appropriate patients to virtual wards or step-down beds within four hours.
- ▶ **One care record across health and social care.** Linked through the UK X-Road digital backbone (Section XVII). The hospital, GP, community nurse, social worker, and care home all see the same record in real time. No more handover by fax.

The Combined Effect

Fewer older patients trapped in expensive hospital beds. Fewer avoidable admissions in the first place. Faster, better recovery in places people actually want to be. The freed acute capacity flows straight into shorter A&E waits, faster elective surgery, and lower waiting lists – the things every voter cares about. Public step-down centres, hospital at home, and a Single Point of Assessment together unlock around **£14 billion in NHS efficiency savings per year** within the parliament, with better outcomes for patients.

- ▶ **Ban offshore ownership of care providers.** Any company receiving public money for social care must be UK-domiciled, with UK-transparent accounts. No more extracting profits through Cayman Islands holding companies while staff earn minimum wage.
- ▶ **Care workers paid properly.** Minimum pay for care workers set at NHS Band 3 equivalent (~£24,000/year) regardless of whether the provider is public or private.

GOVERNMENT-WIDE AI PROGRAMME

- ▶ **HMRC:** automated tax calculation and compliance (enabled by the simplified code).
- ▶ **DWP:** automated eligibility, fraud detection, and payment processing.
- ▶ **DVLA, Land Registry, Companies House:** fully digital, fully automated for standard transactions.
- ▶ **Courts:** digital case management, AI-assisted document review.

DIGITAL IDENTITY: "TELL US ONCE"

The mandatory digital ID (Section IV) will link tax, health, welfare, immigration, and local government records. When a citizen updates their address, reports a death, or

changes their name, they do it once and every agency is updated automatically. This eliminates millions of hours of duplicated administration.

VIII. Planning Reform

"Build Faster, Build Accountably"

318

AVERAGE DAYS FOR MAJOR DECISION
(2025)

20%

MAJOR APPS DECIDED WITHIN 13
WEEKS

5 yrs

AVG DELAY FOR 500+ UNIT SCHEMES

2,000+

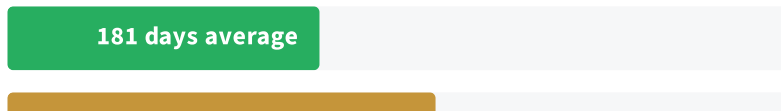
PLANNER SHORTFALL IN LOCAL
AUTHORITIES

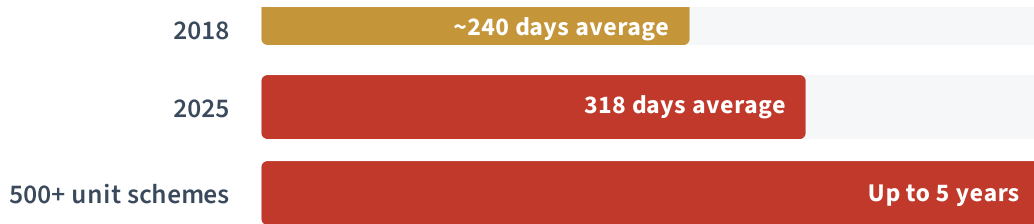
Planning permission exists for good reasons: ensuring sewage capacity, protecting flood plains, maintaining building safety, and preserving genuinely important habitats. But the system has grown so slow, so unpredictable, and so open to gaming that it has become the single greatest barrier to building the homes and infrastructure Britain needs.

Planning Delays Have Nearly Doubled in a Decade

2011

181 days average





Source: Searchland, March 2026; HBF Housing Pipeline Reports

Consider this: Approval rates have stayed at ~80% for over a decade. The problem is not that applications are being refused – it's that they take years to be approved. Delay, not rejection, is the enemy of housing supply.

A. HARD STATUTORY TIME LIMITS WITH AUTOMATIC APPROVAL

- ▶ **8 weeks for minor applications, 13 weeks for major applications** – these are already the statutory targets. We will make them enforceable: if a local authority fails to determine an application within the statutory period (with one permitted 4-week extension by mutual agreement), the application is **deemed approved**.
- ▶ **Section 106 agreements capped at 6 months.** Currently, negotiating Section 106 obligations regularly exceeds one year. We will introduce standard-form Section 106 templates and a hard 6-month backstop.
- ▶ **Presumption in favour of brownfield development.** Any application on previously developed land that meets building safety and utilities standards will be granted unless the authority can demonstrate specific, material harm – not speculative objection.

B. REFORM ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEYS

Environmental protections exist for good reason. Great crested newts, bats, and other protected species deserve legal safeguards. But under the current system, developers pay private ecological consultants to survey their own sites. This creates an obvious conflict of interest and a cottage industry of delay.

The Environmental Survey Problem

Issue	Current System	Forge
Who commissions surveys?	Developer pays, developer chooses consultant	Local authority commissions from approved panel
Conflict of interest	✗ Consultant paid by party who wants "no newts found"	✓ Consultant paid by authority, independent of outcome
Regulation of ecologists	✗ No mandatory accreditation for all survey work	✓ All survey ecologists must be CIEEM-registered and licensed
Survey timeline	Seasonal restrictions can delay projects 6–24 months	eDNA and District Level Licensing used as default fast-track
Accountability for false results	✗ Effectively none	✓ Criminal liability – see Section IX

- ▶ **Local authority-commissioned surveys.** Environmental surveys will be commissioned and paid for by the local planning authority (funded from

application fees), not by the developer. The developer will have no role in selecting the ecologist. This eliminates the incentive to find "no species present."

- ▶ **Mandatory CIEEM accreditation.** All ecological consultants conducting planning surveys must be registered members of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, with a current species licence where required. Unaccredited individuals will be barred.
- ▶ **District Level Licensing as default.** For great crested newts and other common protected species, the District Level Licensing scheme will become the default route – developers pay into a habitat compensation fund and receive a licence without site-specific surveys that can take up to two years. Site-specific surveys will only be required for genuinely exceptional ecological sites.
- ▶ **eDNA fast-track.** Where site-specific survey is needed, eDNA testing (water samples analysed in a lab) will be accepted as the primary evidence for presence/absence, replacing multi-visit trapping surveys except in designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

C. SEWAGE AND UTILITIES: CAPACITY BEFORE PERMISSION

- ▶ **Statutory sewage and water capacity check.** Before any major housing development is approved, Water England (Section X) will provide a binding assessment of whether existing sewage and water infrastructure can serve the development – and if not, what upgrades are required and who will fund them.
- ▶ **Developer contributions ring-fenced.** Where infrastructure upgrades are needed, developer contributions will be held in escrow and released only upon delivery of the capacity – not absorbed into general council budgets.

D. DIGITAL PLANNING

All planning applications, consultations, and decisions will be managed through a single national digital platform – replacing the fragmented systems used by 300+ local authorities. Applications tracked in real time. Consultation responses submitted digitally. Decision timelines visible to the public. This is overdue.

E. FLOOD DEFENCE – THE DUTCH APPROACH

The Netherlands – a country largely below sea level – stopped building ever-higher concrete flood walls decades ago. Their "Room for the River" programme deliberately created natural flood absorption zones: wetlands, floodplains, and overflow areas that hold water safely during storms and support wildlife the rest of the year. It works better than concrete, costs less to maintain, and creates habitats rather than destroying them.

- ▶ **Designate natural flood absorption zones** in every major river catchment. Farmland in high-risk floodplains is purchased (at market value) and converted to managed wetland that absorbs peak flows.

- ▶ **Ban new housing in Flood Zone 3.** No more building homes that will flood and then blaming the weather. If the land floods, it's a flood plain, not a building site.

- ▶ **Mandatory sustainable drainage (SuDS)** for all new developments: permeable surfaces, rain gardens, and water retention systems. No more runoff from new estates overwhelming Victorian drains.

- ▶ **Funded from insurance savings.** The UK currently spends billions on flood damage and insurance payouts. Preventing floods is cheaper than cleaning up after them.

F. CIRCULAR ECONOMY – GLASS RECYCLING AND MANDATORY RECYCLED CONTENT

The UK recycles around 76% of glass packaging – but most of that goes into low-value uses like aggregate for road building, not back into new bottles. Genuine bottle-to-bottle recycling sits at around 30%, far below the EU average of 76% and Germany's 90%+. The glass industry has lobbied successfully for decades to keep recycled content low because virgin glass is marginally cheaper to manufacture. The result: more energy used, more emissions, more raw material extracted, and consumers paying for the externality through higher carbon costs and landfill charges.

- ▶ **Mandatory recycled content for new glass packaging** phased in over 5 years: 40% by year 2, 60% by year 3, 75% by year 5. Manufacturers can buy recycled glass certificates if local supply isn't available, but the content must be real.
- ▶ **Deposit Return Scheme operational by year 2.** A 20p deposit on every glass bottle and aluminium can sold, refunded when returned to any retailer. Germany, Norway, and most US states already do this with return rates above 95%. England's scheme has been delayed for years – we will deliver it.
- ▶ **Plastic, aluminium, and steel recycled content targets** phased in to similar levels. The EU has set 25% recycled content for PET bottles by 2025; we will go further – 50% by 2028, 75% by 2030.
- ▶ **Right to repair extended.** Manufacturers selling electronics, white goods, and small appliances in the UK must provide spare parts at reasonable cost for 10 years after sale, repair instructions publicly available, and standard tools used wherever possible. Forced obsolescence treated as consumer fraud under the Corporate Accountability Act (Section IX).
- ▶ **Modular product standards** for batteries, chargers, and electronic components. The EU mandated USB-C as the universal charger – we will go further and mandate replaceable batteries in phones, laptops, and tablets within 5 years. Repairable beats disposable.

IX. Corporate Accountability

"Directors Go to Prison"

For too long, corporate wrongdoing in Britain has been punished with fines that are treated as a cost of business. Companies dump sewage, file false environmental reports, breach safety regulations, and defraud consumers – and the worst that happens is a financial penalty paid from corporate funds, with no individual ever held to account. This ends.

A. PERSONAL CRIMINAL LIABILITY FOR DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS

- ▶ **A new Corporate Accountability Act** will establish that where a company commits a serious regulatory offence – environmental pollution, filing fraudulent survey or compliance reports, health and safety breaches causing death or serious injury, systematic consumer fraud – the **directors and senior officers** who authorised, permitted, or negligently failed to prevent the offence will face **personal criminal prosecution**.
- ▶ **Prison sentences:** up to 7 years for environmental crimes causing serious ecological damage; up to 14 years for offences causing death; up to 5 years for systematic fraud or filing false compliance reports.
- ▶ **"I didn't know" is not a defence.** Directors have a positive duty to ensure their company complies with the law. Wilful blindness or failure to establish adequate compliance systems will constitute negligence sufficient for prosecution.

Who Is Accountable: Current vs. Forge

Scenario	Current Outcome	Under Forge
Water company dumps sewage illegally	Company fined; fine paid from revenue; no individual charged	CEO and responsible directors prosecuted; up to 7 years prison
Ecological consultant files false "no species" report	No meaningful sanction; consultant keeps working	Criminal fraud charge; up to 5 years prison; permanent CIEEM ban
Builder ignores fire safety regulations	Company fined after the fact; often after tragedy	Director personally liable; up to 14 years if death results
Company systematically underpays tax via fraudulent returns	Settlement with HMRC; rarely prosecuted	Individual who authorised the fraud prosecuted; up to 7 years
Employer knowingly hires workers without valid digital ID	Fine on company	Escalating fines + criminal prosecution for repeat offenders

B. FINANCIAL PENALTIES THAT HURT

- ▶ **Revenue-linked fines.** Corporate fines will be calculated as a percentage of *global annual turnover*, not as a flat sum. For serious offences: minimum 5% of turnover. For repeat offences: minimum 10%. This ensures that fines scale to the size of the company – a £10,000 fine means nothing to a company turning over £1 billion.
- ▶ **Director disqualification.** Any director convicted of a corporate accountability offence will be automatically disqualified from holding a directorship for a

minimum of 10 years.

- ▶ **Proceeds of crime.** Where corporate wrongdoing has generated profit (e.g. a developer saving money by filing a false environmental report), the full profit from the wrongdoing will be confiscated under Proceeds of Crime Act powers, in addition to any fine.

C. A CORPORATE CRIMES UNIT

A dedicated **Corporate Crimes Prosecution Unit** will be established within the Crown Prosecution Service, staffed with specialist prosecutors and forensic accountants. Its sole focus: holding individuals within companies criminally accountable when the company breaks the law. Funded from the fines it generates, it will be self-financing within three years.

The principle: companies don't make decisions – people do. When a company pollutes a river, someone signed off on it. When a false report is filed, someone wrote it. When safety is cut to save money, someone authorised the cut. Those individuals will face the same justice system as everyone else. The era of corporate impunity is over.

H. COMPANIES HOUSE: REAL IDENTITY VERIFICATION

UK shell company fraud costs £6 to 8bn annually. Forge mandates real-time identity verification via Citizen Digital ID for all directors at incorporation. Registered offices must be genuine operational addresses. Annual confirmation requires active director

sign-off. Dormant companies auto-struck-off at 2 years. Estimated fraud reduction: £2 to 3bn annually.

X. Water Nationalisation

"Public Asset, Public Ownership, Clean Rivers"

450,398

SEWAGE DISCHARGES (2024)

£60bn+

WATER COMPANY DEBT

3bn litres

LEAKED PER DAY

15%

RIVERS IN GOOD HEALTH

Since privatisation in 1989, water companies have extracted an estimated £85 billion in shareholder dividends while accumulating over £60 billion in debt. They dumped raw sewage 450,398 times in 2024. Three billion litres of water leak from their pipes every day. Bills have risen 40% in real terms. Just 15% of England's rivers are in good ecological health. The Cunliffe Review (July 2025) concluded that a "fundamental reset" was needed and recommended abolishing Ofwat entirely.

The government's response – a new regulator and £104 billion of private investment funded by 26% bill increases – keeps the same failed ownership model. Forge takes a different path: bring water into public ownership, eliminate shareholder extraction, and invest every penny of bill revenue directly into infrastructure.

A. NATIONALISATION WITH DEBT OFFSET

All ten regional water companies will be brought into public ownership under **Water England**. Shareholder compensation will be calculated by starting with enterprise

value, deducting outstanding debt (which the state assumes), and deducting cumulative regulatory fines and environmental penalties. The residual – which in some cases may be minimal or zero – is the compensation paid.

- ▶ **The National Interest Acquisition Act.** A new law establishing that when any company is nationalised, its outstanding debt and regulatory penalties are deducted from enterprise value before compensation. This creates a standing deterrent: load a company with debt and break the rules, and you reduce your own payout.
- ▶ **Foreign ownership ended.** Wessex Water (Malaysian-owned), Northumbrian Water (Hong Kong-owned), Thames Water (UAE/China/Australia investors) – all returned to domestic public control. The entity that provides water to your home should be accountable to the public, not to offshore investment funds.

B. ABOLISH OFWAT – ONE REGULATOR

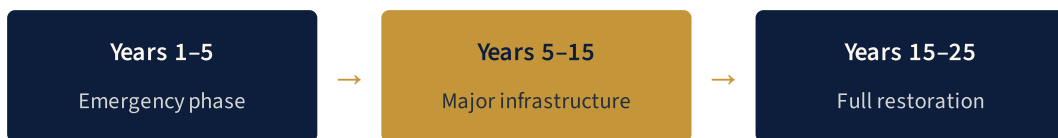
Ofwat was created to regulate private monopolies. Under public ownership, it is redundant. The current four overlapping regulators (Ofwat, Environment Agency, Natural Resources Wales, Drinking Water Inspectorate) will be replaced by a single **Water Quality & Infrastructure Authority** with powers to:

- ▶ Set binding infrastructure investment targets and enforce them
- ▶ Conduct unannounced inspections of treatment works and sewage overflow systems
- ▶ Order immediate remediation of pollution incidents, with personal liability for Water England regional directors under the Corporate Accountability Act (Section IX)
- ▶ Publish real-time water quality data for every river, beach, and bathing water in

C. THE SEWAGE CLEANUP PLAN – 25 YEARS TO CLEAN RIVERS

The infrastructure deficit is vast. 100,000 km of ageing sewers, many Victorian. 14,500 combined sewer overflows that discharge in heavy rain. Treatment works operating beyond capacity in hundreds of locations. This will not be fixed in one parliament. We are honest about the timeline: it will take 20–25 years of sustained investment to achieve clean rivers. But the plan starts on day one.

The Cleanup Timeline



- ▶ **Years 1–5: Emergency Phase (£20bn investment).** Target the worst 1,000 overflow points – those discharging most frequently and nearest bathing waters, nature reserves, and drinking water sources. Install real-time monitoring on every storm overflow (completing the work already underway). Begin separating combined sewers in the 50 worst-affected urban catchments. Reduce leakage by a third through pipe relining and replacement. Build the first 3 of 10 new reservoirs. Launch wetland and nature-based drainage schemes in 100 catchments to reduce surface water entering sewers.
- ▶ **Years 5–15: Major Infrastructure Phase (£60bn investment).** Upgrade or rebuild 1,700+ wastewater treatment works to modern biological treatment standards. Complete sewer separation in all major urban areas. Extend the pipe replacement programme to eliminate the Victorian-era combined sewer system over 15 years. Build all 10 new reservoirs and 9 major water transfer schemes to

drought-proof the system. Install phosphorus removal at every treatment works discharging to rivers (currently a major cause of algal blooms).

- ▶ **Years 15–25: Full Restoration (£40bn investment).** Achieve bathing water standard in every river used for recreation. Reduce storm overflow discharges to fewer than 5,000 per year (from 450,000+). Complete the reservoir and transfer network. Every river in England to achieve "good ecological status" – the target the UK has missed for 25 years.

D. HOW IT'S FUNDED: BILLS PAY FOR PIPES, NOT PROFITS

The current private system plans to spend £104 billion over 5 years, funded by bill increases of 26% in 2025-26 alone, with further rises every year. Under that model, a significant portion funds debt interest (£2-3bn/year), shareholder returns, executive pay, and the costs of four overlapping regulators.

Under public ownership:

- ▶ **Bills frozen in real terms for the first parliament.** No above-inflation bill increases while the transition to public ownership takes effect. The average household bill of ~£600/year stays at that level in real terms.
- ▶ **Elimination of shareholder extraction saves £2-3bn/year.** No dividends, no related-party transactions with offshore holding companies, no executive bonuses linked to share price. Every pound of revenue goes to infrastructure or operations.
- ▶ **Lower borrowing costs save £1-2bn/year.** Public ownership means Water England borrows at gilt rates (currently ~4%) instead of the 7-16% that private companies pay through complex special purpose vehicles. On £60bn of debt, this saves hundreds of millions annually.
- ▶ **After the first parliament, bills rise with investment – transparently.** From year 6, Water England publishes a 5-year investment plan and the bill increase

required to fund it, subject to parliamentary approval. The difference from the current system: every pound of bill increase goes into the ground (pipes, treatment works, reservoirs), not into dividends. If bills need to rise by 3% per year to fund the 25-year cleanup, that's honest and transparent. What's not acceptable is 26% rises that fund debt interest on leverage created by shareholders extracting value.

- ▶ **Long-term target:** total investment of ~£120 billion over 25 years, funded from bill revenue, lower borrowing costs, and the elimination of profit extraction. The annual investment rate (~£5bn/year) is comparable to what the private sector has promised but never consistently delivered.

E. HARD TARGETS

- ▶ Storm overflow discharges cut by 50% within 5 years, 90% within 15 years
- ▶ Leakage reduced by a third within 5 years, halved within 15 years
- ▶ All bathing waters to meet "excellent" or "good" standard within 10 years
- ▶ Every river in England to achieve good ecological status within 25 years
- ▶ Real-time sewage discharge data published publicly for every overflow point, every day

XI. Energy – British Power

"Drill, Tide, Sun, Sell"

36 GW

UK WAVE + TIDAL POTENTIAL

£50bn

MARINE ENERGY GVA BY 2050

90,000

POTENTIAL MARINE ENERGY JOBS

40%

GLOBAL TIDAL PROJECTS IN UK

A. NORTH SEA OIL – DRILL FOR THE TRANSITION

The world still runs on hydrocarbons. Refusing to issue North Sea drilling permits does not reduce global oil consumption – it simply means Britain imports oil from countries with worse environmental standards, while losing revenue, jobs, and energy security. We will take a pragmatic approach:

- ▶ **Issue new North Sea drilling permits** for proven reserves, with strict environmental conditions and a hard decommissioning timeline.
- ▶ **Ring-fence North Sea revenues** – every pound of tax and royalty income from new permits will be hypothecated (legally reserved) for investment in tidal, wave, and other renewable energy infrastructure. Oil funds the transition to clean energy, not general spending.
- ▶ **A British Energy Sovereign Fund** – modelled on Norway's, building a permanent national asset from finite fossil fuel revenues.

A2. SHALE GAS – COUNCIL-LED, COMMUNITY-BENEFITTING

The UK imports roughly half its gas, increasingly as expensive LNG from Qatar and the US. Meanwhile, the Bowland Shale in Northern England may contain 1,300 trillion

cubic feet of gas (British Geological Survey estimate). The 2019 fracking moratorium was imposed after a 2.9 magnitude tremor at Preston New Road – equivalent to a heavy lorry passing. The UK's seismic threshold of 0.5 magnitude is the most conservative in the world; the US operates at 4.0.

Forge will not impose fracking on any community. We will let communities choose – and reward those that do. The model: **opt-in, council-led, profit-sharing**.

- ▶ **Lift the moratorium with a realistic seismic threshold.** Raise the traffic light system to 2.0 magnitude – still far more cautious than the US or Canada, but high enough to allow commercial extraction. Operations paused automatically above 2.0, halted above 3.0.
- ▶ **Councils opt their area in by formal resolution.** Local authorities decide whether their area is open to fracking proposals. A council vote, supported by a public consultation, adds the area to a national register accessible to licensed operators. Areas not on the register are off-limits, full stop. No top-down imposition.
- ▶ **Profit share negotiated by the council.** When a council opts in, it sets the percentage of operator profit returned to the area – minimum floor of 10%, no upper cap. Higher percentages will attract less commercial interest; that is the council's call. Some councils may go for 10% to maximise activity; others may demand 20% and accept fewer projects. Local democracy decides what local extraction is worth.
- ▶ **National opt-in register.** A simple public database, maintained by the Department for Energy Security: every council that has opted in, the profit-share percentage they have set, and the available extraction zones. Operators bid for licences only in registered areas. Transparent, predictable, and entirely consent-led.
- ▶ **Binding local referendum still required at the well-site level.** Council opt-in opens the area to bids; a binding referendum in the affected ward or parish is still

required before any specific drilling proposal proceeds. Two layers of consent: the council, then the community closest to the wellhead.

- ▶ **Mandatory restoration bonds.** Operators deposit the full estimated cost of site restoration before any drilling begins. If the company walks away, the bond pays for cleanup. No more orphaned wells.
- ▶ **Revenues ring-fenced** for the British Energy Sovereign Fund alongside North Sea revenues. Shale gas, like oil, is a transitional fuel. The revenue funds permanent renewable infrastructure.
- ▶ **The principle:** some councils, particularly in Lancashire, Yorkshire, and Nottinghamshire, will see fracking as an opportunity for jobs, investment, and revenue. Others will not. Neither view should be imposed on the other. Councils choose. Communities consent. Money flows directly back to the people who host the activity.

B. WAVE AND TIDAL – INVEST, DON'T NATIONALISE

The UK has the best tidal and wave energy resources in Europe – over 25 GW of accessible wave energy and 11 GW of tidal stream potential. The UK already accounts for nearly 40% of all wave and tidal projects globally. Yet we are letting this lead slip through underfunding. Labour are nationalising rail; we propose nationalising water. But energy generation should be driven by private companies with targeted public investment, not another state-owned corporation.

- ▶ **Ringfenced Contracts for Difference for marine energy.** CfDs already support offshore wind. We will create a dedicated marine energy CfD pot with strike prices that reflect the early-stage technology premium, giving private developers the revenue certainty to invest. As the technology matures, strike prices fall – exactly as they did with offshore wind.

- ▶ **British Strategic Accelerator co-investment** (Section VI) in tidal and wave companies at the scale-up stage. Matched funding alongside private capital for companies like Orbital Marine Power, Nova Innovation, and SIMEC Atlantis. Government takes a minority equity stake – returns flow back to the taxpayer.

- ▶ **Target: 5 GW of marine energy capacity by 2040**, starting with expansion of proven sites like MeyGen in the Pentland Firth and the Morlais zone off Anglesey.

- ▶ **Manufacturing in coastal communities.** Turbine assembly, maintenance, and supply chain operations based in Scotland, Wales, and Northern England – where the resource is and where the jobs are needed.

- ▶ **Export to Europe.** Tidal energy is uniquely predictable – unlike wind and solar, the tides are known decades in advance. New interconnector capacity makes Britain a net energy exporter.

C. SOLAR BRITAIN

Solar Britain will bulk-purchase panels directly from manufacturers at scale, negotiating national-volume pricing that individual retailers cannot match. Domestic panel manufacturing is not viable in the short term when Chinese producers make panels at a fraction of the cost. Instead of subsidising uncompetitive factories, we buy cheap, install fast, and invest the savings into wave, tidal, and energy storage where Britain has genuine competitive advantage.

Target: 5 million additional UK homes with solar within the parliament. Panels sold to retailers and installers at cost or below. Combined with battery storage packages (see below).

D. ENERGY STORAGE – THE MISSING LINK

Solar and wind are intermittent. Tidal is predictable but still varies. The missing piece in every renewable strategy is storage. Without it, we waste energy when the sun shines and import when it doesn't.

- ▶ **National Grid Battery Programme.** A 10-year plan to build grid-scale battery storage at every major substation and renewable generation site. Target: 50 GWh of grid storage by 2035 – enough to power the country for hours during low-generation periods.

- ▶ **Pumped hydro expansion.** The UK has geography perfectly suited to pumped hydro storage – mountains with water. Invest in 3–5 new pumped hydro schemes in Scotland and Wales, providing long-duration storage that batteries cannot match.

- ▶ **Domestic battery subsidy.** Solar Britain will bulk-purchase home battery systems alongside panels, offering households solar + storage packages at cost. A home with solar panels and a 10 kWh battery can store daytime generation for evening use, dramatically reducing grid demand at peak hours.

- ▶ **Hydrogen pilot.** Fund pilot projects for green hydrogen production (using surplus renewable electricity to split water), particularly at coastal tidal energy sites where excess generation is predictable. Hydrogen provides seasonal storage that batteries and pumped hydro cannot.

E. NUCLEAR BASELOAD

A fleet of Small Modular Reactors manufactured in the UK, located in Northern industrial regions – combining power generation with local employment.

F. GRID INFRASTRUCTURE

Fast-track planning for pylons, substations, and interconnectors – designated as nationally significant infrastructure. The bottleneck is not generation but transmission. New European interconnector capacity to enable energy export at scale.

G. DECOUPLE ELECTRICITY PRICES FROM GAS

British households pay among the highest electricity prices in Europe even though much of our power now comes from cheaper renewables and nuclear. The reason is structural: under the current "marginal pricing" wholesale market, the price every generator receives is set by the most expensive source running at any moment – almost always gas. When gas prices spiked after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, electricity bills doubled even though the wind kept blowing for free.

The Government's July 2025 REMA review rejected zonal pricing in favour of "Reformed National Pricing" – an incremental package that retains the gas-marginal-cost model and adds voluntary Wholesale Contracts for Difference for low-carbon generators. Forge will go further: structural decoupling, faster bill reductions, and a clear link between cheap generation and cheap consumption.

- ▶ **Split the wholesale market.** Two pools instead of one: a low-carbon pool (renewables and nuclear) where prices reflect the actual cost of generation, and a thermal pool (gas, biomass) priced on marginal cost as today. Suppliers contract for both pools and pass through the blended cost. As more renewables come online, more of the market moves to the cheap pool. The gas price stops dragging the entire system upward.

- ▶ **Mandatory long-term Contracts for Difference for legacy renewables.** The current government's voluntary Wholesale CfDs (announced April 2026) ask renewable generators to give up windfall profits in exchange for price certainty. Forge will make this mandatory for all existing renewable and nuclear generators receiving any form of subsidy or grid priority. Strike prices set transparently. Above-strike profits return to consumers via bill rebates, not shareholder dividends.

- ▶ **Pass-through to bills, not just averages.** Suppliers required to publish the proportion of each customer's bill that comes from low-carbon generation versus gas. As renewable generation grows, customer bills must visibly fall – not be absorbed into supplier margins.

- ▶ **Targeted bill reduction for green-heated homes.** Households on heat pumps, solar, or fully-electric heating receive a "clean kilowatt" discount of approximately 15-20% on the unit rate. This is the missing incentive for the heat pump rollout: today, switching off gas often raises your bill because electricity is taxed and priced higher per unit of energy. Reverse that. The cheaper the source, the cheaper the bill.
- ▶ **Faster timeline.** The Government's reformed national pricing is a 2029-at-the-latest project. Forge will deliver wholesale market splitting within the first parliament. The legal and technical complexity is real but solvable; the political will has been the bottleneck.

H. OTHER WAYS TO CUT ENERGY BILLS

Decoupling is the structural fix. These are the immediate ones:

- ▶ **Move levies from electricity to gas (or general taxation).** Around £160 of the average electricity bill is policy levies and obligations – the cost of past renewable subsidies, social tariffs, and energy efficiency schemes. Almost none of this sits on gas bills. The result: electricity is artificially expensive, which slows the heat pump rollout. Forge will rebalance levies onto gas (matching the actual carbon cost) or move the largest levies to general taxation. Net effect: typical electricity bill £160 lower; gas bill modestly higher; net household impact neutral or positive depending on heat source. Households on heat pumps and electric heating see direct savings.
- ▶ **National insulation programme.** The cheapest energy is the energy you don't use. A 5-year programme to insulate every home below EPC band C, prioritising fuel-poor households. Funded jointly from energy company obligations (already collected), local authority capital, and a national mortgage-linked "pay-as-you-save" scheme – home improvements financed at low interest, repaid through bill

savings. Saves households £300-500/year on heating; cuts national gas demand by 15-20%.

- ▶ **Standing charge cap.** Standing charges have risen 80% in three years and now make up over £350 a year before any energy is used. They penalise low-users disproportionately – often pensioners and low-income households. Cap standing charges at the genuinely fixed cost of network maintenance per meter (~£100/year). Move recovery of other fixed costs onto the unit rate, so people who use less, pay less.
- ▶ **Bulk-purchase domestic batteries through Solar Britain.** Already in Section XI.D. A home battery + solar package allows households to use cheap daytime energy at night, dramatically reducing peak-rate consumption.
- ▶ **Enable household solar export at fair rates.** The Smart Export Guarantee currently pays homes 5-15p/kWh for exported solar, while suppliers charge 25-30p/kWh for the same energy moments later. Mandate fair-export pricing: minimum 70% of the day-ahead wholesale rate. Households with solar effectively become micro-generators paid properly for their contribution.

The combined effect: typical household electricity bill reduced by £200-£400 per year by year 3 of the reform programme. Households with heat pumps or full electric heating see deeper savings. Households who insulate to EPC C save a further £300-£500 per year. The savings are funded structurally – not by subsidy – which means they are durable.

XII. Constitutional Reform

"A Modern Democracy"

A. CITIZENS' SCRUTINY COUNCIL – THE BELGIAN MODEL

The House of Lords is indefensible: 800+ unelected members, including 92 hereditary peers and 26 bishops, with an average age of 71. But the answer is not another chamber of career politicians. Belgium's Ostbelgien region proved that ordinary citizens can scrutinise legislation without leaving their jobs.

We will abolish the House of Lords and replace it with two interlocking bodies:

- ▶ **A Citizens' Council** of 50 members, selected by stratified random sortition (representative by age, gender, region, ethnicity, and income), serving staggered 18-month terms. The Council meets one Saturday per month. Its job is to decide which Bills and policy areas need citizen scrutiny, and to oversee the process. Members are compensated at MP-equivalent daily rates (~£350/day) plus travel, childcare, and accommodation. They keep their jobs.

- ▶ **Citizens' Review Panels** of 80–100 randomly selected members, convened for each major Bill. Panels meet over 4–6 weekends across 3–4 months, hear expert evidence, deliberate in facilitated small groups, and produce binding recommendations. If a Panel recommends amendments, the Commons must accept them or publish a written justification for rejection, debated in public. This is the Belgian "respond or justify" obligation: not a veto, but a requirement to explain yourself to ordinary citizens on the record.

Ireland used this model to resolve its two most divisive issues: marriage equality (passed 62% in referendum after citizen assembly recommendation) and abortion reform (passed 66%). The citizens met on weekends over 18 months and kept their regular jobs. France convened 150 citizens for its climate convention over seven weekends. Belgium has now made citizen deliberation a permanent part of its national legislature. This is not experimental. It works.

Cost: approximately £15–20 million per year, replacing a Lords that costs £120+ million. The savings alone fund the entire programme several times over.

B. BINDING GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

All major public works – beginning with the Palace of Westminster restoration – will use fixed-price, milestone-linked contracts. Miss a milestone, lose that tranche of payment. No renegotiation. A National Projects Auditor will publish real-time cost dashboards for every project above £100 million. Parliament will be fully evacuated for repairs under these terms.

C. ELECTORAL REFORM

Move to Single Transferable Vote for general elections. First-past-the-post entrenches two-party dominance. STV preserves the constituency link while ensuring seats match votes.

D. MANDATORY VOTING – THE AUSTRALIAN MODEL

UK general election turnout was 60% in 2024 – the lowest in over two decades. Among 18-24 year olds, turnout dropped to 37%. A democracy that fewer than two-thirds of citizens participate in stops being representative. Australia introduced compulsory voting in 1924; turnout has been above 90% in every federal election since. Belgium, Singapore, Brazil and 22 other democracies require voting as a basic civic duty.

- ▶ **Voting becomes a duty for every UK citizen aged 18 and over.** Failure to vote in a general election or local council election results in a £20 administrative fine, payable like a parking ticket – appealable, reasonable, easy to handle.
- ▶ **Automatic voter registration.** Every UK adult is registered automatically through the digital ID system at age 18. No registration deadlines. No "I forgot to register" disenfranchisement. The state knows you exist – it should make voting as easy as possible.
- ▶ **Easier ways to vote.** Polling stations open from 6am to 10pm, including in supermarkets, train stations, and workplaces. Universal postal vote on request.

Election Day declared a flexible bank holiday. Online voting trialled for overseas citizens first, scaled if secure.

- ▶ **"None of the above" on every ballot.** If you genuinely reject all candidates, you can record that formally. Civic duty doesn't mean false endorsement. If "None of the above" wins a seat, the election is rerun with new candidates.
- ▶ **The principle:** a higher turnout means politicians cannot win by appealing only to their base. They must speak to the whole electorate. Mandatory voting moderates extremism by forcing parties to reach disengaged voters – not just the most motivated.

E. RECALL AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Right of constituent recall for MPs (10% petition threshold). Full financial disclosure for all MPs, ministers, and senior civil servants in machine-readable format.

F. CLEAN POLITICS – NO GIFTS, NO DONATIONS, NO CORRUPTION

Singapore pays its politicians the highest salaries in the world – and is consistently ranked among the least corrupt nations on earth. The logic is straightforward: pay a clean wage high enough to attract talent, and remove every other source of income that creates obligation. We will adopt this principle for Britain, calibrated to UK conditions.

The Clean Wage Model

Feature	Current UK System	Forge
MP base salary	£91,346	£150,000 (clean wage)

Feature	Current UK System	Forge
Cabinet minister	£91,346 + £67,505 supplement	£250,000 (clean wage, all-in)
Prime Minister	£91,346 + £80,807	£350,000 (clean wage, all-in)
Gifts from any source	✗ Permitted if declared above £300	✓ Banned outright – zero threshold
Corporate donations to parties	✗ Unlimited	✓ Banned entirely
Individual donations to parties	✗ Unlimited	✓ Capped at £500 per person per year
Second jobs / consultancies	✗ Permitted if declared	✓ Banned for MPs and ministers
Post-office lobbying	2-year advisory committee review	5-year hard ban on lobbying former department

- ▶ **Total ban on gifts.** No MP, minister, or senior civil servant may accept any gift, hospitality, or benefit in kind from any individual, company, or organisation. No football tickets. No country house weekends. No free holidays. No exceptions. The clean wage is the compensation – nothing else.
- ▶ **Ban on corporate, foreign, and untraceable donations.** Political parties will be funded by small individual donations (capped at £500 per person per year) and a reformed system of state funding based on votes received. Corporate donations, trade union block donations, and individual donations above £500 will

be illegal. All donations from foreign individuals, foreign governments, or foreign-controlled entities are banned outright. Cryptocurrency and any other untraceable payment method is banned as a donation vehicle. If the source cannot be verified by a named UK individual with a UK address, the money cannot enter politics. This severs the link between money and political access permanently.

- ▶ **No second jobs.** MPs will be prohibited from holding any paid employment, consultancy, directorship, or advisory role outside Parliament. The increased salary reflects this – it is enough to live well, and it is all they get.
- ▶ **5-year post-office lobbying ban.** Former ministers may not engage in any lobbying, consultancy, or advisory work relating to their former department for five years after leaving office. Breach will be a criminal offence.

The Singapore insight: Corruption doesn't start with brown envelopes. It starts with a dinner, a box at the football, a consultancy contract, a donation with strings. Remove every avenue of obligation, pay a wage that makes politics a career worth choosing on its merits, and you get cleaner government. It costs perhaps £50 million more per year in salary. One corrupt procurement decision costs ten times that.

XIII. Justice, Rehabilitation & Fresh Starts

"Break the Cycle"

20,000 additional neighbourhood police officers. Fully digital court case management with a hard six-month charge-to-trial target.

A. END SHORT SENTENCES – COMMUNITY SERVICE, NOT CAGES

End prison sentences under 12 months for non-violent offences. Britain's prisons are overcrowded, expensive, and counterproductive – they turn low-level offenders into hardened criminals. Short sentences will be replaced with **mandatory community service** that benefits the public:

- ▶ **Physical labour for local projects.** Offenders will work on visible community projects: cleaning streets and public spaces, clearing fly-tipping, painting community centres, maintaining parks and green spaces, and assisting with local authority building and renovation projects. Labour is supervised, structured, and publicly visible – it shames constructively while producing real value.

- ▶ **Construction and trades training.** Offenders with aptitude will be placed into supervised building labour programmes – assisting with social housing construction, school repairs, and infrastructure maintenance. This serves dual purpose: useful work done cheaply, and offenders gain trade skills that make them employable on release.

- ▶ **GPS-tagged curfew.** All community service offenders wear GPS tags and observe a strict evening curfew. Non-compliance triggers immediate escalation.

- ▶ **Cost saving:** community supervision costs approximately £5,000–£8,000 per year vs £47,000 for a prison place. For 30,000 short-sentence prisoners diverted annually, that is a saving of over £1 billion per year – money that funds police, courts, and rehabilitation.

Prisons will be reserved for those who are genuinely dangerous. Everyone else works for their community.

B. CANNABIS – LEGALISE, TAX, CONTROL

2.3m

UK ADULTS USED CANNABIS LAST
YEAR

30%

ADULTS WHO HAVE EVER USED IT

£1.5bn

POTENTIAL ANNUAL TAX + SAVINGS

£890m

ANNUAL COST OF PROHIBITION

Cannabis use is endemic in Britain. Approximately 2.3 million adults used it in the past year. Almost a third of the adult population has tried it at some point. Prohibition has not reduced use – it has simply ensured that all of the revenue flows to criminal gangs, none of the product is quality-controlled, and police waste hundreds of millions on enforcement that achieves nothing. This is not a radical position. It is a pragmatic one.

The Cannabis Framework

Activity	Legal Status	Penalty
Purchase from licensed retailer (age 21+)	✓ Legal	—

Activity	Legal Status	Penalty
Consumption in private home	✓ Legal	—
Consumption in public	✗ Illegal	£500 fixed penalty fine
Consumption near children / schools / playgrounds	✗ Illegal – aggravated	£2,000 fine + 200 hours community service
Supply to under-21s	✗ Criminal offence	Up to 5 years prison
Unlicensed sale / street dealing	✗ Criminal offence	Up to 7 years prison – harsher than now
Driving under influence	✗ Criminal offence	Same as drink driving: ban + fine + prison for repeat

- ▶ **Licensed retail only.** Cannabis sold through licensed premises (similar to alcohol licensing), with ID verification, quality standards, THC content labelling, and health warnings. No online sales for recreational use. No advertising.
- ▶ **Taxed at 30% duty + standard VAT.** Projected annual revenue: £500–750 million in tax plus £200+ million in criminal justice savings. Total fiscal benefit: up to £1.5 billion annually.
- ▶ **Home growing permitted** – up to 3 plants for personal use. This undercuts the black market further and reduces the incentive for illegal cultivation.

- ▶ **Public use treated like public urination** – a £500 fixed penalty, not a criminal record. Dealt with on the spot by police. No arrest, no court, no clogging the system.
- ▶ **Near children: heavy community service.** Using cannabis near children, in school zones, or in playgrounds carries a £2,000 fine and 200 hours of mandatory community service. This is deliberately designed to shame – community service is visible and public. The message: your freedom to use stops where a child's space begins.
- ▶ **Illegal supply punished harder, not softer.** Street dealing and unlicensed sale will carry harsher penalties than under current law. The point of legalisation is to move the market into licensed, taxed, quality-controlled channels – not to tolerate a parallel black market.

The principle: What you do in your own home is your business. What you do in public, near children, or behind the wheel is everyone's business. Legalisation is not permissiveness – it is control. The state gains revenue, quality oversight, and enforcement resources. The gangs lose their most profitable product line. The police focus on real crime instead of chasing possession.

B. THE FRESH START PROGRAMME

Britain's reoffending rate is around 25% within one year, and over 40% for short-sentence prisoners. The reason is obvious: we release people back into the same postcode, the same peer group, the same drug markets, and the same hopelessness. The Fresh Start Programme breaks this cycle.

How it works:

- On release, eligible offenders are offered **relocation to a Fresh Start community** in a different part of the country – away from the environment, associates, and supply chains that drove their offending.
- Fresh Start communities are **purpose-built supported accommodation** in towns with low drug prevalence, staffed by trained key workers, with on-site drug counselling, mental health support, and employment training.
- Residents agree to **mandatory drug testing, curfews, and structured daily programmes** (skills training, work placement, therapy) for a minimum of 12 months.
- After 12–24 months, residents transition to independent housing in the same area – building a new life in a new community, not returning to the old one.

C. DRUG REHABILITATION – TREATMENT NOT PUNISHMENT

- ▶ **Drug courts.** Non-violent drug offenders will be diverted from prison into structured rehabilitation programmes. A specialist drug court judge oversees their progress, with prison as the backstop for non-compliance – not the first resort.
- ▶ **Residential rehabilitation funded at scale.** The UK currently has approximately 4,000 residential rehab beds. We will treble this to 12,000, funded from prison savings (it costs ~£47,000/year to imprison someone vs ~£15,000/year for residential rehab).
- ▶ **"Dry communities."** Fresh Start communities will operate as alcohol- and drug-free zones with zero-tolerance enforcement. Not as punishment, but as

protection – creating an environment where recovery is the default, not the exception.

D. HOMELESSNESS: HOUSING FIRST + FRESH START

Rough sleeping is overwhelmingly driven by three factors: addiction, mental health crisis, and release from prison or care without support. The Fresh Start Programme addresses all three simultaneously – combining Housing First (a permanent address before anything else), mandatory care plans (mirroring the mental health benefit reform in Section III), and relocation away from the street networks that make recovery impossible.

Target: zero rough sleeping within five years. Not by moving people on – by giving them somewhere to go, something to do, and someone to answer to.

XIV. Education Reform

"Teach What Matters"

The British education system produces young adults who can analyse poetry but cannot read a payslip, who know the dates of Henry VIII's marriages but not how a pension works, and who study quadratic equations they will never use while remaining unable to calculate compound interest on a mortgage. Meanwhile, the SEN system is in crisis – consuming billions while failing the children it's meant to help and disrupting the education of everyone else.

A. FINANCIAL LITERACY AS A CORE SUBJECT

From age 11, every child will study practical financial literacy as part of the core curriculum – not as an optional add-on, but with the same status as English and Maths:

- ▶ **Years 7–9:** Budgeting, bank accounts, the cost of living, how wages and tax work, what national insurance is, how to read a payslip, understanding debt (credit cards, loans, interest rates), saving, and the basics of compound interest.
- ▶ **Years 10–11 (GCSE level):** How pensions work (state pension, workplace pensions, the value of starting early), how the stock market works, what shares and bonds are, how to evaluate an investment, how mortgages work, insurance, and the basics of starting a business. Assessed as part of a reformed Maths GCSE.
- ▶ **Years 12–13 (optional A-level or T-level module):** Personal financial planning, tax returns, ISAs and investment vehicles, property purchase, business finance, and entrepreneurship. Available as a standalone qualification or integrated into Business Studies.

B. PRACTICAL MATHS

Maths teaching will be reformed to prioritise real-world application. Abstract concepts will still be taught, but every topic must be grounded in practical use:

- ▶ **Percentages taught through finance:** interest rates, VAT calculations, discount pricing, wage increases.
- ▶ **Statistics taught through data literacy:** reading polls, understanding NHS waiting time data, evaluating media claims about crime rates.
- ▶ **Algebra taught through engineering and coding:** practical formula manipulation, not abstract symbol shuffling.
- ▶ **No student leaves school unable to:** calculate a monthly mortgage payment, understand a pension projection, read a utility bill, or file a basic tax return.

C. HISTORY – BROADER, DEEPER, MORE HONEST

The current history curriculum is dominated by the Tudors and the World Wars. Both matter, but they crowd out the broader sweep of human political development that citizens need to understand democracy, revolution, and power:

- ▶ **Athens vs Sparta** – the birth of democracy and the tension between democratic and militaristic states. The first lesson any citizen should learn about governance.

- ▶ **The English Civil War** – Parliament vs the Crown, the execution of a king, the brief republic, and the birth of constitutional monarchy. This is the origin story of British democracy and is inexplicably undertaught.

- ▶ **The French Revolution** – the Enlightenment, the overthrow of absolute monarchy, the Declaration of the Rights of Man, the Terror, and the lessons about what happens when revolution loses control. Essential context for understanding modern democracy.

- ▶ **The Industrial Revolution and its social consequences** – child labour, the Chartists, the birth of trade unions, the Factory Acts. The story of how ordinary people fought for and won the rights we now take for granted.

- ▶ **World Wars I and II** – retained but with less repetition and more global context (the Eastern Front, the Pacific, colonialism and decolonisation, the partition of India).

- ▶ **Post-war to present** – the creation of the NHS and welfare state, the Cold War, decolonisation, the EU, devolution, and the digital revolution. Students should leave school understanding how the world they live in was built.

D. SEND REFORM: FOUR TIERS, NEED-BASED, NOT LABEL-BASED

1.67 million children had an EHCP or SEN Support in 2024 – up 32% in five years with no improvement in outcomes. LA SEND budgets are collectively £4 billion overspent. The average EHCP takes 35 weeks against a legal limit of 20. The system is failing genuine Tier 4 children because it is swamped with cases that should be handled differently. Diagnostic inflation, absence of a middle tier, and gaming of exam accommodations are consuming resources that severely disabled children need.

Not every child presenting with attention difficulties, social communication problems, or emotional regulation challenges has a neurodevelopmental disorder. Evidence links ultra-processed food consumption, sleep deprivation, excess screen time, and absence of taught coping skills to ADHD-like symptoms that are environmental rather than neurodevelopmental. The system has no mechanism to distinguish these before diagnosis and an EHCP. Forge introduces four tiers:

Tier 1 – Universal SEMH skills for every child. Social, Emotional and Mental Health curriculum in every state school. Small-group coping skills sessions (emotional regulation, social communication, executive function) available without diagnosis. EEF effect size: +0.4. Children withdrawn from class for a structured 45-minute skills session return with better capacity to learn.

Tier 2 – Environmental review before neurodevelopmental assessment. 12-week structured review of sleep, diet, and screen time before formal referral. Targeted Tier 1 intervention documented. If difficulties resolve: no further referral needed. If they persist: Tier 3 or assessment proceeds. This is good clinical practice, not a barrier to diagnosis.

Tier 3 – Graduated SEN Support Plan (no EHCP). Documented, termly-reviewed plan for moderate needs met at school level. No EHCP legal apparatus, no tribunal, no LA battle. Reviewed termly; escalates to Tier 4 if needs exceed what the plan can address.

Tier 4 – Fast-tracked EHCP within 8 weeks for severe and complex needs: non-verbal autism, complex learning disabilities, cerebral palsy, severe sensory impairment. Short, specific, legally binding. Names the provision, provider, and frequency. Specialist SEND schools expanded. 500 additional EP posts funded. SEND budgets ring-fenced.

- ▶ **Exam accommodations standardised.** Extra time awarded only on state-funded EP assessment – not private assessments. Eliminates the private school gaming that gives wealthier pupils a competitive advantage over state school pupils competing for the same university places.
- ▶ **Fiscal return:** a 30% reduction in EHCP caseload over 5 years releases approximately £4.5bn annually (at £26,000 average EHCP cost). Redirected to

Tier 4 fast-tracking, specialist school expansion, and EP posts. The genuinely severely disabled child gets more resource, not less.

E. SCRAP SINGLE-WORD OFSTED RATINGS

Replacing Ofsted's "Outstanding/Good/Requires Improvement/Inadequate" with detailed, published reports that explain what is working, what isn't, and what the school needs. A single word tells parents nothing and drives teachers to performative compliance rather than genuine improvement.

F. ACCELERATED 2-YEAR DEGREES AS THE DEFAULT

The standard 3-year degree is a 19th century inheritance, not a modern necessity. Most undergraduate degrees teach roughly 90 weeks of content over three calendar years – a structure that exists because of long summer holidays, not because the material requires it. A 2-year degree covers the same content in two intensive years, with teaching weeks across what was previously the summer break. The student saves a year of tuition fees, a year of living costs, and starts earning a year sooner. The taxpayer saves on the tuition loan outlay. We are not proposing a graduate tax – we are proposing to remove unnecessary years of study and the debt they generate.

- ▶ **2-year degrees become the default option** for most undergraduate courses. Universities will be required to offer the accelerated route alongside the traditional 3-year option. Students choose. Most degrees can be condensed without loss of quality – Buckingham, Staffordshire, and the University of Law have been doing this successfully for years.
- ▶ **Year-round teaching.** Universities will use the long summer break for additional teaching weeks. Academic staff workloads adjusted accordingly with summer-block contracts. Buildings used productively rather than sitting empty.
- ▶ **Tuition fees capped at £11,100/year for accelerated courses** (the existing cap). Annual fees are higher because of more teaching weeks, but total cost is

roughly 20% lower than a 3-year degree (£22,200 vs £27,750 at current caps). Maintenance loans for two years rather than three. Total student debt drops dramatically.

- ▶ **STEM, vocational, and business degrees prioritised for acceleration.** Some subjects – medicine, architecture, languages requiring immersion – will keep traditional structures. But for most degrees, the 2-year structure becomes standard.
- ▶ **Student loan reform without graduate tax.** Repayment thresholds raised to median graduate earnings. Loans cancelled after 25 years rather than the current 40. Interest rates capped at the Bank of England base rate – no more punitive RPI+3% interest accruing on loans that were never affordable.
- ▶ **The savings: £4-7 billion per year** for the taxpayer (lower tuition loan outlay, faster repayment, more graduates entering the workforce earlier paying tax). For students, an average £7-10k less debt at graduation.

G. APPRENTICESHIPS EQUAL TO DEGREES

The cultural assumption that "university is the goal" has done immense damage to British vocational education. Skilled trades pay well, are in chronic shortage, and are increasingly resistant to AI displacement. We need plumbers, electricians, welders, and carpenters far more urgently than we need another marketing graduate.

- ▶ **Apprenticeship Levy reformed with 60% ringfenced for under-25s in genuine skill trades.** The levy raises £3bn per year but currently only 30% reaches the under-25 age group. Most goes on management development for existing staff. From Year 1, 60% restricted to 16 to 24 year olds in construction, engineering, healthcare, green energy, digital, logistics, and care. No new spending: approximately £1.8bn already collected redirected toward young people in skilled trades.

- ▶ **Higher apprenticeships** (degree-equivalent qualifications earned while working and earning) heavily expanded. Defence apprenticeships in shipbuilding, drone manufacturing, and ammunition production already covered in Section V. Equivalent expansion in construction, healthcare, and engineering.

- ▶ **Same university tuition fee discount available for vocational training routes:** if the state pays £22,200 for a 2-year degree, an equivalent £22,200 voucher is available for 4 years of structured apprenticeship training. Choice of academic or vocational paths becomes financially equal.

H. CLASSROOM BEHAVIOUR: PROTECT THE OTHER TWENTY-NINE

Persistent disruptive behaviour is the single biggest cause of school exclusion, and the leading complaint from teachers leaving the profession. A small number of pupils with significant behavioural needs can dominate a classroom, ruin the learning environment for everyone, and drive their classmates' GCSE results down by half a grade or more. The current system fails everyone: the disruptive child, who is excluded into a Pupil Referral Unit with poor outcomes; their classmates, whose education is degraded; and their teachers, who burn out. We will not pretend this is easy. We will fix it honestly.

- ▶ **Universal whole-school behaviour standards.** The Education Endowment Foundation has clear evidence on what works: consistent, predictable rules applied across every classroom; a 5:1 ratio of positive-to-negative interactions; immediate but proportionate consequences; and a calm, structured classroom environment. We will mandate that every state school adopts a published whole-school behaviour policy meeting these evidence standards, with annual external review. No exceptions for academy trusts.
- ▶ **Behaviour Specialist Units in every secondary school.** A dedicated, on-site space with specialist staff – not exclusion, not a corridor – where pupils can be

sent for short periods (a lesson, a day, occasionally a week) to de-escalate, reset, and complete work. Crucially these units focus on returning the pupil to mainstream classes, not warehousing them. Modelled on the most successful approaches in the strongest multi-academy trusts.

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- ▶ **Mental health and SEND assessment within four weeks of a referral.** A large proportion of disruptive behaviour is unidentified or untreated SEND – particularly autism, ADHD, and trauma-related conditions. The current waiting time of 18+ months for an Educational Psychology assessment in many areas is indefensible. We will guarantee a four-week initial assessment turnaround, with treatment plans funded directly by the school via a new behaviour and SEND budget line. Diagnose first; intervene early; reduce exclusion later.
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- ▶ **Mentalization-based teacher training.** Recent UCL/Anna Freud Centre research shows that teachers trained in Mentalization-Based Interventions – understanding the emotional drivers of disruptive behaviour and responding accordingly – resolve significantly more incidents without escalation. We will integrate this evidence into Initial Teacher Training and ongoing CPD requirements. This is not "soft" practice; it is more effective discipline based on better understanding of why children act as they do.
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- ▶ **Specialist Behaviour Schools, properly resourced.** Where a pupil's needs genuinely cannot be met in mainstream education, we will not return them to a Pupil Referral Unit with a 4% GCSE pass rate. We will fund proper specialist behaviour schools with small classes, qualified staff, therapeutic input, and a clear pathway back to mainstream where possible or to vocational training where not. The savings come from no longer paying private alternative-provision providers £40-60k per pupil per year for inadequate placements.
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- ▶ **Parental responsibility, properly enforced.** Where disruptive behaviour stems from neglect or chaotic home circumstances, schools currently have almost no levers to engage parents. Parenting Orders – legally requiring a parent to attend parenting classes and engage with school support – will be available to head teachers without requiring criminal proceedings. Persistent parental non-

engagement triggers a referral to children's social services. Children whose parents will not engage with their education need state intervention, not gentle letters.

- ▶ **Protect the teaching profession.** A teacher facing assault, persistent abuse, or false allegations from pupils or parents has the right to immediate professional support, paid leave during investigation, and legal representation. False allegations against teachers carry criminal consequences for the accuser, including loss of school place. The 8% of teachers who leave the profession each year cite behaviour and false allegations as primary drivers; we will not allow that haemorrhage to continue.

H. THE SKILLED CAREER PATHWAY: A GENUINE ALTERNATIVE FROM 14

Forcing every child to stay in classroom-based academic education until 18 is a 2015 policy with little evidence behind it. Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands, and Austria all stream around 14 to 15 into different pathways. Switzerland sends 65% of 15-year-olds into apprenticeship-based routes. These are not failing students — they are students whose talents are practical, and who become highly skilled, well-paid adults. Britain abolished this pathway over four decades and replaced it with a single academic route that fails roughly 30% of pupils. Each long-term NEET young person costs approximately £56,000 over a lifetime.

The Skilled Career Pathway is a structured alternative available from age 14:

- ▶ **Two days per week academic learning** at the young person's school or partner college: English, maths, citizenship, financial literacy, digital skills. Core competencies for adult life, taught in smaller groups.
- ▶ **Three days per week paid workplace apprenticeship** with an accredited employer, at apprentice minimum wage (currently £7.55 per hour). Real work, real money, adult context.

- ▶ **At 18:** Level 3 vocational qualification (equivalent to A-levels for university entry), a recognised trade, four years of work experience, and earnings. Can enter skilled employment, progress to Higher Apprenticeship, attend technical university, or move to traditional university through Level 3 equivalence.

- ▶ **Elective for most, structured offer for some.** Any young person from 14 can opt in with parental consent following careers conversation, taster experiences, and educational psychologist consultation where appropriate. For young people with documented persistent classroom disruption or disengagement, the pathway is offered through a multi-agency meeting (school, family, EP, careers adviser). Never imposed as punishment. Never decided unilaterally by a headteacher. Always with the young person's consent.

- ▶ **Return route always available.** The young person can return to academic education at 16, 18, 25, or 40 with full bridging support. The choice at 14 is the start of a career, not the end of options. Germany's Fachhochschulen feed back into mainstream higher education and we adopt the same principle.

- ▶ **Quality protections:** only employers approved by a National Apprenticeship Quality Board can host placements, with documented training plans and qualified workplace mentors. Pastoral lead at the academic provider. Annual review of employer accreditation including direct input from young people.

The disruption case. Disruptive young people are the most expensive problem in mainstream schools and the most damaged by them. Current options: exclude them (makes it worse), send them to a PRU (4% achieve 5 good GCSEs), or tolerate disruption while it harms other pupils. The Skilled Career Pathway offers a fourth option: remove them from a classroom environment that is failing them and place them in a workplace environment that often suits them far better. Evidence from the Netherlands and Switzerland: 14-year-olds who were disruptive in school frequently become entirely different people in a workplace. They have agency, they earn money, they have adult colleagues, they develop genuine skills.

Cost: £400 to 600m annually at scale (50,000 to 80,000 young people across the four-year pathway). Funded from the reformed Apprenticeship Levy (60% ringfenced for under-25s) and a portion of the SEND reform fiscal return where the pathway prevents EHCP-funded specialist behaviour placements. **Fiscal return: each long-term NEET prevented saves £56,000 over a lifetime.** Even at 30% effectiveness, return of £6 to £10 per £1 spent. The Heckman curve evidence: structured intervention at 14 to 16 produces higher returns than equivalent intervention at any later age.

I. EXTENDED SCHOOL DAY: COMPULSORY FREE ACTIVITIES TO 6PM, THREE DAYS PER WEEK

Private schools operate from 8am to 6pm. Sport, music, drama, debating, coding — structured and staffed. Their pupils achieve better outcomes not just because of smaller classes but because they spend a decade developing skills and character. The other 93% of state school children are told that is just how it is. Forge makes this compulsory provision, not an optional extra.

- ▶ **Three days per week to 6pm compulsory in every state school.** Schools must provide the programme. Children attend by parental choice. Not supervised waiting: properly programmed activities. Sport, music, art, coding, drama, gardening, languages, cooking, debating.
- ▶ **18,000 activity coaches over four years.** Year 1: legislation and 500 pilot schools. Year 2: 6,000 coaches. Year 3: 12,000. Year 4: 18,000 at full national coverage. Salaries NHS Band 3 to 4 (£24,000 to £28,000). Recruited from retired professionals, ex-armed forces, recent graduates. National Activity Coach Register and Activity Coach Certificate established. A new recognised profession.
- ▶ **Annual cost at full operation: approximately £800m per year.** Ring-fenced separately from the core schools budget – cannot be raided in a spending review. Funded from three sources without requiring new taxes: (1) welfare reform savings ring-fenced allocation of £400m per year from Year 3, plus the fiscal return from increased parental workforce participation estimated at £2 to 4bn

annually; (2) Apprenticeship Levy reform, 15% redirected to coach training in Years 1 to 4, approximately £450m over the phase-in; (3) SEND reform fiscal return of £4.1bn annually, partially funding the SEMH Tier 1 provision within the extended day infrastructure and freeing other sources for activity coach salaries.

- ▶ **Nutritious supper** for every attending child. Free for FSM recipients.
- ▶ **Inter-school competitions:** sports leagues, music festivals, debating, coding. School pride built deliberately.
- ▶ **Holiday Activities and Food** extended to all FSM children through every school holiday with the same coach provision.
- ▶ **Return on investment:** Heckman curve evidence shows £4 to £13 return per £1 invested in structured after-school activity. The attainment gap between private and state school pupils narrowing by 20% represents a larger economic gain than the entire programme cost. This is not a cost. It is the highest-return investment the state can make.

A. REPLACE ROAD TAX WITH PAY-PER-MILE

Vehicle Excise Duty (road tax) is a flat annual charge that bears no relation to how much you drive, the roads you use, or the wear you cause. With electric vehicles paying no fuel duty and the Treasury facing a £35 billion hole as petrol/diesel revenues decline, the current system is unsustainable. We replace it entirely.

Road Tax: Current vs. Pay-Per-Mile

Feature	Current System	Forge
Charging basis	Flat annual fee (£0–£590)	Per mile driven, recorded at annual MOT

Feature	Current System	Forge
Payment	Annual lump sum or monthly DD	Monthly direct debit based on estimated mileage, reconciled at MOT
Electric vehicles	Pay nothing (from 2025: flat rate)	Pay per mile like everyone else – they use roads too
Low-mileage drivers	Pay full rate regardless	Pay less – fair for rural pensioners, WFH workers
Heavy vehicles	Same system as cars	Higher per-mile rate – they cause more road damage
Foreign vehicles	Pay nothing if not UK-registered	Log entry/exit at ports; invoiced per day/mile via ANPR

- ▶ **Mileage recorded at MOT.** Each year, the odometer reading is recorded at the annual MOT test (already happens). The difference from last year = miles driven. Tax calculated automatically. Paid monthly by direct debit, reconciled at each MOT. No annual lump sum.
- ▶ **Rate per mile varies by vehicle weight and emissions.** A small electric car might pay 2p/mile. A large diesel SUV might pay 5p/mile. A heavy goods vehicle pays 8p/mile. The heavier you are and the more you pollute, the more you pay per mile of road you use.
- ▶ **Foreign vehicles.** Lorries and cars entering the UK from abroad will have their entry and exit logged via Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) at ports and the Channel Tunnel. An invoice is issued based on days present and

estimated mileage. Non-payment results in fines enforced through international agreements – or vehicles seized at the port on departure.

- ▶ **Revenue hypothecated to roads.** All pay-per-mile revenue goes directly to road maintenance and local transport infrastructure. No more potholes funded (or not) from general council budgets.
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B. TOLL-FUNDED NEW INFRASTRUCTURE

The UK has a chronic shortage of river crossings, bypasses, and strategic road links. The M6 Toll, Dartford Crossing, and the new Lower Thames Crossing (£10-11bn) prove that toll-funded infrastructure works – but only when there is no free alternative running in parallel. Norway builds most of its tunnels and bridges through project-specific tolls that are removed once the project is paid off. We adopt the Norwegian model.

- ▶ **A National Infrastructure Programme** of 5–10 toll-funded projects in the first parliament, targeting specific bottlenecks where no direct route currently exists. Candidates include: new estuarial crossings, strategic bypasses of congested towns, tunnel upgrades, and new dual carriageways connecting underserved regions.
 - ▶ **Time-limited tolls.** Tolls are set at a level to repay construction costs plus a reasonable return within 25 years. Once paid off, the toll is removed and the road becomes free. No permanent toll roads. Norway's model achieves high public acceptance because people can see the end date.
 - ▶ **Regulated Asset Base model.** Private consortia build and operate the infrastructure, recovering costs through tolls under regulated price caps. Government provides planning fast-track and land acquisition powers. No public borrowing required.
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- ▶ **Connected to the Northern Renewal agenda.** Priority projects will improve connectivity to Northern defence bases, manufacturing zones, and the Strategic Industry Zones in Section VI. Infrastructure investment follows industrial investment.
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C. END THE POTHOLE CRISIS – RESURFACE BRITAIN

The Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance survey reports a backlog of **£18.6 billion** in road repairs across England and Wales. Roads are now resurfaced on average **once every 93 years**. Almost half the local network has under 15 years of structural life remaining; one in six roads has under 5 years. Despite spending £20 billion over the past decade on patch-and-fill repairs – one pothole filled every 18 seconds, every day, for 10 years – 94% of council highway teams say their roads have got worse. This is the textbook definition of a false economy. Filling potholes is a sticking plaster. What Britain needs is proper resurfacing, properly funded, properly tracked.

- ▶ **National Resurfacing Programme – £20bn over the parliament.** A ring-fenced, multi-year funding settlement of £4 billion per year for five years, paid directly to local highway authorities to resurface and rebuild – not patch. This is roughly double current maintenance spending and addresses the backlog within a parliament rather than letting it grow indefinitely.
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- ▶ **Five-year guaranteed allocations.** Every council receives a five-year funding envelope at the start of the parliament, with annual amounts known in advance. The current system of one-year settlements means councils cannot plan multi-year resurfacing programmes; contractors cannot invest in plant; the unit cost of repair stays artificially high. Long-term funding cuts the cost per mile by an estimated 20–30%.
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- ▶ **Allocations based on need, not history.** Funding distributed by a transparent formula combining: total carriageway length, current condition (Road Condition

Indicator data), traffic volume, and weather exposure. Northern, rural, and coastal authorities – which currently lose out under the historical baseline – gain the most. Southern urban authorities continue to receive their fair share based on actual demand.

- ▶ **Resurfacing, not patching.** Funding tied to demonstrable resurfacing outcomes, not pothole counts. Councils report on lane-miles fully resurfaced and on Road Condition Indicator improvements, not on the number of holes they have temporarily filled. The "patch and run" mentality – cheaper today, more expensive tomorrow – ends.
- ▶ **Public road condition map at [ForgeBritain.org.uk/roads](https://www.forgebritain.org.uk/roads).** Every road in England under repair, every road scheduled for resurfacing, every road in good condition – all mapped, all updated weekly, all public. Drivers can see when their road will be done, why others are being prioritised, and what the council has actually spent. The Department for Transport already publishes a traffic-light rating for highway authorities; we extend that down to street level.
- ▶ **Coordinated disruption – one road, one closure.** Currently the same stretch of road can be dug up by a water company, then a gas company, then a fibre installer, then resurfaced, then dug up again. This is absurd. A National Streetworks Coordination System – linked to the UK X-Road digital backbone (Section XVII) – requires utilities to share planning at least 6 months in advance. Multiple works on the same stretch are bundled into a single closure. Disruption is reduced; resurfacing happens once, properly, after all utility works are complete.
- ▶ **Stronger penalties for utility damage.** Utility companies that dig up newly-resurfaced roads pay a punitive surcharge that scales with the age of the surface – up to 5x the resurfacing cost for damage to a road less than 2 years old. The current £100-per-day fixed-fee penalties are nothing more than a cost of doing business; we make breaking new tarmac genuinely expensive.
- ▶ **Specialist resurfacing workforce.** The construction industry warns it cannot deliver doubled budgets without doubled capacity. We commit to a Resurfacing

Apprenticeship Programme – 5,000 places over the parliament, fully funded – training the operatives, plant operators, and supervisors needed to deliver the programme. Skilled jobs in every region.

- ▶ **Innovation in materials.** Trials of longer-lasting surfaces – polymer-modified asphalt, recycled rubber crumb, carbon-fibre reinforcement – on 5% of the resurfacing programme. The aim: surfaces that last 20-30 years instead of 15. Successful materials become standard specification. The UK has world-class universities researching road materials; we will use them.
- ▶ **The cost case is clear.** Pothole damage costs UK drivers an estimated £1.5 billion per year in vehicle repairs. Insurance claims for road-condition damage are at record highs. Properly resurfacing roads pays for itself within 7-10 years through reduced damage to vehicles, lower insurance costs, fewer claims against councils, and faster, safer journeys.

The framing: Britain is a country where roads are not resurfaced for a century. That is not a normal state of affairs in any developed country. We are not a poor nation. We have allowed a basic public infrastructure to fall apart through short-term political thinking. Forge will fix it – not by promising it, but by ring-fencing the money, publishing the schedule, and being held accountable for delivery.

D. DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Elected regional mayors with genuine fiscal powers: local income tax supplements, retained business rates, borrowing for capital investment. Abolish the two-tier council system – single unitary authorities everywhere.

XVI. Crown Estate & Employer National Insurance

"The Nation's Assets, the Nation's Income"

A. TRANSFER THE CROWN ESTATE SEABED TO THE STATE

The Crown Estate owns the seabed around England, Wales, and Northern Ireland – and delivered £1.1 billion in revenue profit in 2024/25, with £5 billion contributed to the Treasury over the past decade. Currently, 12% of this income is siphoned off as the Sovereign Grant to fund the monarchy (£132 million in 2025–26). The seabed – the platform for our entire offshore wind, tidal, and wave energy future – belongs to the nation, not the Crown.

- ▶ **Transfer the seabed** from the Crown Estate to a new **National Seabed Authority**, a public body reporting directly to Parliament.

- ▶ **End the Sovereign Grant link.** The monarchy will receive a fixed civil list payment (set at £50 million per year, reviewed every 5 years by Parliament), not a percentage of an asset they have no operational role in managing. This saves approximately £80 million per year immediately, growing as offshore energy revenues grow.

- ▶ **Seabed revenues ring-fenced** for marine energy investment through the British Strategic Accelerator (Section VI) and the British Energy Sovereign Fund – the nation's energy future funded by the nation's seabed.

- ▶ **Symbolic and practical.** This is about principle as much as money. The seabed is a public asset. Its revenues should fund public energy infrastructure, not royal households.

B. CUT THE JOBS TAX – EMPLOYER NATIONAL INSURANCE REFORM

Our universal VAT policy (Section I) removes all zero-rating and exemptions. This means businesses currently selling zero-rated goods (food retailers, children's clothing) will now charge VAT on everything. Without offsetting action, this would increase costs for high-street businesses that are already struggling.

- ▶ **Cut the jobs tax, not business rates.** A business rates cut is substantially captured by commercial landlords through higher rents as leases renew (only 25 to 50% reaches the business). A National Insurance cut cannot be captured by a landlord. Forge raises the employer NI threshold from £5,000 to £14,000 per employee (£7bn) and expands the Employment Allowance from £10,500 to £15,000 for small firms (£2.5bn). Combined cost approximately £9.5bn, the same envelope a business rates cut would have used, but the money reaches employment and wages rather than landlords. A small business employing four people on modest wages pays no employer National Insurance at all.
- ▶ **Business rates structurally rebalanced, revenue neutral.** Rather than a blanket cut, the burden shifts toward large online distribution warehouses and out-of-town fulfilment centres, with relief for high street and town-centre premises. Properties under £25,000 rateable value pay nothing, eliminating business rates for approximately 400,000 of the smallest premises. Annual revaluation replaces the slow current cycle. This delivers the high-street relief a 40% cut promised without handing money to commercial landlords, at no net fiscal cost.
- ▶ **The net effect:** businesses pay less in rates, charge VAT on everything (one rate, no classifications), and the Treasury collects more from the broader VAT base than it loses from the rates cut. The high street wins. Modernisation wins.

XVII. Digital Integration & Admin Simplification

"One System, Not Three Hundred"

Beyond the NHS and DWP automation already in Section VII, there are systemic simplifications that save billions by eliminating duplication, integrating databases, and making the digital ID the backbone of every government interaction.

Government Admin: What Gets Simplified

Area	Current Waste	Forge Fix	Est. Saving
Benefit fraud & error	£9.5bn/yr in overpayments	Digital ID auto-verifies income, address, household. Real-time data sharing eliminates 80% of errors.	£4–6bn/yr
DVLA, Land Registry, Companies House	3 separate agencies, paper-heavy processes	Single digital identity links vehicles, property, and company records. Fully automated for	£300m/yr

Area	Current Waste	Forge Fix	Est. Saving
		standard transactions.	
GP appointment booking	Millions of phone calls, receptionist gatekeeping	NHS App auto-allocation when slots open. Phone retained for those who can't use digital.	£500m/yr in admin time
Court scheduling	Manual case management, adjournments due to admin	AI-optimised scheduling. Digital case files. Remote hearings for minor matters.	£200m/yr
Council services	300+ councils each running separate IT systems	Single national platform for planning, waste, licensing, council tax. Local delivery, shared infrastructure.	£1bn/yr

Area	Current Waste	Forge Fix	Est. Saving
Tax returns	12m+ self-assessment returns filed manually	Auto-calculated for 80% of taxpayers. Simplified code means fewer errors, fewer queries.	£500m/yr in HMRC admin
Death/birth/marriage registration	"Tell us once" exists but poorly implemented	Digital ID auto-cascades to all agencies. One registration updates tax, benefits, NHS, pensions, council.	£100m/yr
School admissions	Each council runs separate process with different forms	Single national portal. Apply to any school in England from one form. Algorithm allocates based on criteria.	£50m/yr

Total estimated admin savings from digital integration: £7–9 billion per year.

This is not speculative technology – it is database integration, API connections between existing systems, and a single identity layer. Estonia does this already for a

population of 1.3 million. The UK can do it for 67 million with the same architecture and vastly more resources.

- ▶ **UK X-Road – the Estonian model.** Estonia built X-Road: a secure data exchange layer connecting every government database. A citizen in Estonia interacts with government once; the data flows everywhere it's needed. The result: 99% of public services available online, 2% of GDP saved in admin costs, digital signatures saving every Estonian 5 working days per year. We will build a UK X-Road – a single interoperability layer connecting HMRC, DWP, NHS, DVLA, Land Registry, Companies House, local councils, and the courts. Every system talks to every other system, securely, in real time. No more bespoke IT projects costing billions.

- ▶ **Sovereign data – staged exit from Palantir and other foreign data platforms.** The UK has signed contracts worth over £900 million with the US firm Palantir, including £330 million for the NHS Federated Data Platform and a £240 million MoD direct award without competitive tender. Switzerland walked away from the same company on sovereignty grounds. We will too – but carefully. Cancelling overnight would crash systems that government departments and the NHS now depend on. Instead: maintain existing Palantir contracts only until the UK X-Road and replacement systems are demonstrably operational. Run parallel UK-built alternatives during the transition. Exit Palantir contracts at the next break clause (NHS FDP: 2027). Procurement preference for British-led consortia in the replacement tender, building UK sovereign capability and skills. Sensitive data – health, defence, financial regulation – must run on UK-controlled infrastructure when alternatives are ready.

- ▶ **Procurement reform.** Government IT contracts will use open standards and open-source software by default. No more vendor lock-in to single suppliers. Competitive pricing. Modular systems that can be upgraded without replacing the whole stack. The Palantir transition becomes the template for all sovereign technology procurement.

- ▶ **Civil service reduction through attrition.** As digital services replace admin roles, headcount is reduced through natural attrition (~10% per year), redeployment, and voluntary redundancy – not compulsory layoffs. Target: 100,000 fewer admin roles within the parliament.
-

GOVERNMENT IT: STOP FAILING PROJECTS BEFORE THEY FAIL

The UK government has written off approximately £37bn in failed IT projects since 2000. An independent Year 1 portfolio review of all central government IT projects above £20m, conducted by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority. Red-rated projects presumed for cancellation unless a credible 90-day recovery plan is produced. No further large contracts with Capita, Fujitsu, or IBM government division without competed procurement. 500 additional in-house government digital specialists replacing the most expensive external contractor roles. Estimated saving: £500m to £2bn.

XVIII. Scotland & Wales – A Working Partnership

"Respect the Devolution. Deliver the Difference."

The NHS, schools, social care, and housing are devolved to the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Senedd. Forge is not running candidates to take over Holyrood or the Senedd – we respect what was settled in 1998 and refined since. But the policies in this manifesto have direct and substantial benefits for Scotland and Wales through reserved Westminster powers, the Barnett formula, and UK-wide infrastructure. Voters in Scotland and Wales deserve a credible, modern UK government that works *with* their devolved governments, not against them.

A. WHAT FORGE DOES FOR SCOTLAND

The 2026 Holyrood election captured a familiar pattern: voters frustrated with both the SNP and Westminster, with no clear alternative. Forge offers one. We will not interfere with devolved areas; we will deliver on the things that are reserved – and the things that benefit Scotland whether or not Holyrood agrees with us.

- ▶ **Marine energy investment in the Pentland Firth.** The Pentland Firth holds a quarter of Europe's tidal energy potential. Section XI commits to dedicated marine energy Contracts for Difference and a 5 GW capacity target, with manufacturing in coastal Scottish communities. Tidal turbine assembly and maintenance bases in Caithness, Orkney, and Shetland. Real engineering jobs, real exports.
- ▶ **Scottish shipyards on double shifts.** Section V commits BAE Govan, Scotstoun, and Rosyth to two-shift working to deliver Type 26 frigates, Type 31s, and the next generation of attack submarines on accelerated timelines. Skilled jobs return; supply chains across central Scotland strengthen.
- ▶ **UK Cyber Academy in the North – Scottish bid welcome.** The proposed UK Cyber Academy (Section V) will be located via competitive bidding. Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Dundee all have strong cases – world-class universities, existing cyber clusters, and lower costs than the South East. The £4,000 graduates per year would feed both UK national security and Scotland's growing tech sector.
- ▶ **Defence Bonds available to every Scottish saver.** NS&I products are UK-wide. Scottish savers earn 4-4.5% on Defence Bonds, while their money funds British shipyards including their own. A Scottish family putting £5,000 in Defence Bonds is directly funding ships built on the Clyde.
- ▶ **Energy bill decoupling.** Section XI.G splits the wholesale electricity market so renewable generation isn't priced off gas. Scotland generates more wind and

hydro per capita than anywhere else in the UK – and pays the same gas-set prices as everyone else. Decoupling delivers structurally lower bills in Scotland.

- ▶ **Crown Estate Scotland already devolved.** Forge commits the same principle of public-good seabed management to the rest of the UK. Scotland keeps and strengthens what it already has.
- ▶ **Barnett formula honoured but reviewed.** No cuts to Scotland's block grant. A formal review with the Scottish Government to update the formula for actual need rather than historical baseline – something both sides have wanted for years.
- ▶ **Independence question respected.** Forge has no view on Scottish independence. That is for the Scottish people to decide, through proper democratic processes, in their own time. We will not block a Section 30 order if Holyrood, on the basis of an electoral mandate, requests one. We will also not encourage one. The Union holds because it works, or it does not. Our job is to make UK government work for Scotland.

B. WHAT FORGE DOES FOR WALES

Wales has been let down by both Westminster and the Welsh Government for two decades. NHS Wales waiting lists are the worst in the UK. Welsh Labour has been in power for 27 years and the productivity gap with England has widened. Reform UK is now polling well in former Labour heartlands. Forge offers a different alternative – competent, modern, accountable, and genuinely respectful of devolution.

- ▶ **South Wales semiconductor cluster.** Section VI's National Champions includes compound semiconductors – a sector where Newport and Cardiff already host world-class capability (CSA Catapult, Newport Wafer Fab). We will commit £500m+ from the British Strategic Accelerator to scale this cluster. Welsh manufacturing jobs, not American shareholders.

- ▶ **Marine energy: the Morlais zone off Anglesey.** Wales hosts one of Europe's largest tidal stream demonstration zones at Morlais. Section XI commits dedicated CfDs and accelerator co-investment to scale tidal projects in Anglesey, Pembrokeshire, and the Bristol Channel. Skilled coastal jobs in some of Wales's most economically deprived areas.

- ▶ **Defence manufacturing renewal in Wales.** Newport's MOD Aberporth, Pembrokeshire's military estate, and General Dynamics in Merthyr all benefit from the 3% defence target. Welsh defence apprenticeship surge as part of the 5,000 per year programme (Section V).

- ▶ **Welsh Water nationalisation.** Dŵr Cymru is already a not-for-profit, but it carries large debts and faces the same sewage challenges as English companies. Forge's water programme (Section X) extends to Wales: a Wales-specific cleanup plan funded from the same UK-scale capital programme, with the public-interest model preserved.

- ▶ **Defence Bonds and energy decoupling for Welsh savers and households.** Same UK-wide benefits as Scotland. Welsh households on heat pumps and electric heating see immediate bill reductions from levy rebalancing (Section XI.H).

- ▶ **Honest about devolution.** NHS Wales, Welsh schools, Welsh social care, and Welsh housing are devolved. We will not pretend Westminster can fix waiting lists in Wrexham. What we can do is fund the Welsh Government properly through Barnett, deliver the UK-wide reforms (defence bonds, energy decoupling, water cleanup, profit shifting reform) that benefit Welsh households, and never use Welsh policy as a political football.

- ▶ **Crown Estate devolution to Wales.** Scotland has Crown Estate Scotland. Wales does not, despite Welsh seabed generating significant income via offshore wind leases. Forge will devolve management of the Crown Estate's Welsh

portfolio to a Welsh public body, on the Scottish model. Welsh seabed income for Welsh public investment.

C. STANDING IN SCOTLAND AND WALES

Forge will stand candidates for Westminster constituencies in Scotland and Wales – not for Holyrood or the Senedd. Our purpose is to deliver competent, accountable UK government. Scottish and Welsh voters can support Forge for Westminster while supporting whichever party they prefer for their devolved parliament. We are not in a contest with the SNP, Plaid Cymru, Welsh Labour, or the Scottish Conservatives at devolved level. We are in a contest with Westminster's two-party drift – and we welcome Scottish and Welsh voters who agree the UK Parliament needs renewal.

The Forge Clubs model (Section XII / launch plan) extends to every nation. Scottish Forge Clubs in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and Inverness. Welsh Forge Clubs in Cardiff, Swansea, Wrexham, and Bangor. Members shape the manifesto with regional priorities. Scottish and Welsh members can propose Scotland-specific or Wales-specific policy amendments which, with 60% support, go to the policy committee – the same as English members.

The principle: we are a UK party that takes the Union seriously by taking devolution seriously. The path to a stronger Union is competent UK government that delivers what Holyrood and the Senedd cannot, while respecting what they can. Not a grudging tolerance of devolution – a working partnership with it.

XIX. Fiscal Responsibility

"Every Pound Accounted For"

The Forge Balance Sheet – Annual Fiscal Impact (Estimated)

Revenue / Saving	Annual Estimate	Source
Tax simplification (broader VAT base, fewer errors)	£10–15bn	Broader base at lower rate + closing £21bn error gap
Dividend alignment + loophole closures	£5–8bn	Dividends taxed as income; BADR abolished; spouse splitting closed
Income tax rate reduction (offset)	–£8–12bn	Lower basic and higher rates to compensate for food VAT
Progressive property tax replacing council tax + stamp duty abolition on primary residence	+£10bn ring- fenced for Growth Infrastructure Fund	Majority of homes pay less; wealthier homes pay more; no stamp duty on your home; £10bn for growth infrastructure
Welfare fraud & error reduction via digital ID	£4–6bn	£9.5bn currently lost; target 50–60% reduction
Welfare reform (40 benefits to 5, Dutch employer model, MH treatment-first, PIP to direct provision)	£10–15bn	Phased over 5 years; tighter eligibility, employer responsibility, treatment- first
Cannabis legalisation (tax + justice savings)	£1–1.5bn	Transform Drug Policy Foundation estimates

Revenue / Saving	Annual Estimate	Source
Digital admin / automation savings	£7–9bn	Fraud reduction, admin headcount, shared platforms
Means-tested universal pensioner benefits (HMRC automatic)	£3.5bn	Winter Fuel, TV licence, bus pass, prescriptions. Free below £35k. Withdrawn above £50k. No new form. 7m poorest pensioners unaffected.
Business subsidy zero-basing (40% of portfolio fails additionality test)	£3.8 to 4.8bn	Every grant programme justified by evidence or discontinued. Strategic research, aerospace, BSA sectors retained.
State pension triple lock to double lock	£5bn/yr by Year 3	2.5% floor removed. Inflation and earnings protection fully retained. Targeted pensioner poverty top-up from saving.
Government IT project cancellations	£0.5 to 2bn	£37bn written off since 2000. Year 1 portfolio review cancels red-rated projects. No repeat contracts with failed suppliers.
Crown Estate seabed – end Sovereign Grant link	£0.08bn (growing)	£132m grant → £50m fixed = £82m saved, growing with wind

Revenue / Saving	Annual Estimate	Source
Prison reform (community service replacing short sentences)	£1bn+	30,000 prisoners × £47k vs £8k community supervision
Ofwat abolition + water nationalisation efficiencies	£3-5bn	No dividends (£2-3bn), lower borrowing costs (£1-2bn), one regulator
North Sea oil + shale gas revenues (ring-fenced)	£3-6bn	New permits + shale extraction, hypothecated for energy transition
Profit shifting enforcement + platform VAT compliance	£2-4bn	Minimum UK tax on multinationals; Shein/Temu VAT collection
Accelerated 2-year degrees as default	£4-7bn	Lower tuition loan outlay, faster repayment, earlier tax-paying graduates
TOTAL ESTIMATED NET ANNUAL GAIN	£43-67bn	(after income tax reduction; welfare savings phased over 5 years)

Major Spending Commitments – Annual Cost (Estimated)

Commitment	Annual Cost	Notes
Defence increase to 3% GDP	£15–20bn	Phased increase; capital front-loaded via £10–15bn Defence Bonds
Employer National Insurance cut (threshold to £14k, EA to £15k)	£9.5bn	Replaces business rates cut. Money reaches employment not landlords. Funded from broader VAT base. Business rates rebalancing is revenue neutral.
British Strategic Industries Fund	£2bn/yr	£10bn over parliament for national champions
Solar Britain + marine energy CfDs + storage	£2–3bn	Capital investment, partly self-financing via energy sales
Retraining guarantee (Danish model)	£2–3bn	Active labour market spend from 0.3% to 1% GDP
Fresh Start communities + rehab trebling	£1bn	Offset by prison savings
20,000 police officers	£1.5bn	Recruitment + ongoing salary costs
NHS mental health / care plans	£1–2bn	Psychiatric sessions for mental health claimants
Step-down care centres (50 centres)	£1–2bn	Offset by freed hospital beds (~£2k/night per bed)
School activity coaches (extended day, phased)	£0.2–0.7bn	Year 1 setup, Years 2-4 hire 6,000/yr; partly offset from £700m DfE central admin reallocation and consolidated payments

Commitment	Annual Cost	Notes
National Resurfacing Programme (5-year ring-fenced)	£2.5–4bn	Uplift above current government commitment of £7.3bn/4yr; ring-fenced to councils; addresses £18.6bn backlog
Channel Patrol Fleet + border enforcement	£0.5bn	Fast patrol boats, bilateral returns funding
MP salary increases (clean wage)	£0.05bn	650 MPs × ~£60k increase average
TOTAL ESTIMATED ANNUAL COST	£38–52bn	(school coaches phase-in: full cost from Year 4)

The balance: Internal estimates show revenue and savings of £43 to 67bn annually at full implementation versus costs of £38 to 52bn, a surplus of £24bn annually at Year 5, rising to £25 to 28bn at full steady state steady state on conservative OBR-style estimates. Applying OBR-style conservative methodology (30 to 40% behavioural response discounts on revenue, 50% implementation delivery assumption on savings), the conservative realistic surplus is approximately £4 to 10bn by Year 5.

The honest phased position: the fiscal position is negative in Years 1 to 3 because costs are front-loaded and savings back-loaded. Year 1: approximately -£11bn (employer NI cut and VAT compensation are immediate; structural savings are not yet accrued). Year 2: approximately -£10bn. Year 3: approximately -£3bn. Year 4: approximately +£18.5bn. Year 5: approximately +£24.1bn annual surplus, +£40bn cumulative. Annual steady-state surplus at full effect: £18 to 22bn on conservative estimates. This trajectory is normal for a transformative programme and is not new borrowing: it is absorbed within the existing government deficit reduction path. The purpose of the OBR verification commitment is specifically to have this phasing independently scored before we take office. Welfare reform savings are phased over 5 years – they grow as the system transitions. PIP transition costs (social worker workforce recruitment and cash transitional protection for existing claimants) add approximately £1.5 to 3bn annually in Years 2 to 5, tapering to a net ongoing cost of approximately £200 to 400m once Atos and Capita contractor savings are realised. School activity coaching workforce phased over the parliament (Year 1 legislation, Years 2-4 hiring 6,000 each year). National Resurfacing Programme spending front-loaded in Years 1-3 to clear the worst of the backlog, tapering to maintenance levels thereafter. Defence capital spending is additionally front-loaded via £10–15bn in Defence Bonds (off-balance-sheet). Water infrastructure (£120bn over 25 years) is funded directly from customer bills. Toll-funded

infrastructure is financed by private capital repaid through tolls. All figures subject to independent OBR verification.

THE DEBT – AN HONEST ACCOUNT

The UK currently carries £2.9 trillion in national debt – approximately 93% of GDP – and runs an annual deficit of £138 billion. Debt interest alone costs £106 billion per year, more than the entire defence budget. This manifesto does not promise to eliminate the deficit in one parliament. That would require either enormous tax rises or devastating spending cuts, neither of which we propose.

What we do promise: every new commitment is funded by a specific saving or revenue source. The structural reforms we make – a broader tax base, reduced fraud, digital efficiency, an end to the cottage industry of tax avoidance – will improve the underlying fiscal position over time. **We set a target of reducing the annual deficit by £20–30 billion within the parliament**, funded by the savings in this manifesto, with the remainder addressed through growth.

We also learned from 2022. Markets reward credibility, not surprises. A Forge government will publish a full Budget within 60 days of taking office, scored by the OBR, before any reform takes effect. No policy will be implemented without independent fiscal verification. The manifesto's reforms are phased over five years precisely so that markets can see the revenue before the spending.

We will not promise what we cannot pay for. We will not pay for what does not work.

Britain's problems are not mysterious. The tax system is too complex. Council tax punishes the poor and subsidises the rich. The welfare system is too easy to exploit. The water companies have stolen from the public. The North has been neglected while defence has been hollowed out. The borders are not controlled. The public sector is overstaffed in offices and understaffed on the frontline.

None of this requires genius to fix. It requires honesty, simplicity, and the political will to upset comfortable arrangements.

Forge exists to provide that will.

Founded by Dr Robert King – Founding Leader of Forge

First published March 2026. This document is the founding manifesto of Forge, authored and directed by its founding leader. All policy positions originated from and were approved by the founding leader. This manifesto is a living document subject to citizen amendment via the Forge Forum, but the founding leadership and authorship is a matter of permanent public record.

All costings subject to independent OBR verification.