

# Ownership for everyone

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Now is the time to galvanise free enterprise and boost the UK economy by promoting wider ownership. The big idea is to encourage and help many more people own a stake in the property and business of the country. The campaign would inform and influence many individual policies and proposals that could assist and encourage people in such a popular direction. The first task is to show how possible it is for the many to be owners, and the second task to create the policies and background to accelerate the trend.

Changing attitudes – being positive about ownership

It is time to tell everyone they have the opportunity to be owners. We should want more to own their own home. More people should set up and own their own business.

More people should come to own a share in the business they work for. More employees should be able to buy out their business and run it as a co-op or partnership or employee owned enterprise.

More people could save and own investments for their retirement or for life's events.

Owning some capital is transformational. It gives you more freedoms to change your job or move your home or set up or expand your business. Owning realisable assets gives you more self confidence, more choices, and a better sense of participating in the wider society. Having some capital enables you to take more control of your life. Owning capital gives you the power to borrow or to release cash from your assets for new purposes.

Too many think ownership is for the few or for the richer half of the country. They think you need to inherit wealth or go to a posh school or university to be a person of property. Government treats those with some wealth as a cash machine for the state, or even as potential criminals who broke rules to come by their wealth. People who make money and save it are taxed on earning and then again on saving it. They may be subject to special enquiries into where they got their wealth, and to endless inspections of their tax returns to make sure they have not undertaken aggressive tax avoidance. Parliament debates how the rich can be taxed more or kept out of our country by tough rules. The impression is created by some in Parliament that there is something unclean about an entrepreneur or investor who has been successful.

We need a revolution of attitudes. We want a state that promotes and helps the accumulation of assets by individuals and sees it as a good, not a bad to tax. We need to show how individuals who failed at school and who inherit nothing can build businesses, build or renovate their own homes, or get stakes in someone else's business so they too can participate in the wealth of the economy.

## Changing policies to promote wealth and ownership

It will need new approaches to bring about a very British coup, a coup for a new generation of owners to take control of homes and businesses. The policies would include changes to the way we tax and to way we spend public money, to the rules we set over business and capital and to attitudes towards success.

We need to roll back some of the aggressive policies on wealth accumulation. Stamp duties need to come down on acquiring a home or a rental property. VAT needs to be taken off doing up a property. Capital gains tax rates need lowering so there is no great penalty on wishing to move between properties or change the assets you hold. Mobility of capital and change of uses and ownership of property is a good thing which helps capital accumulation . People can be happier if they can move home to the accommodation and location of their choice without a large financial penalty for daring to do so. Doing up a home and moving to another should not be highly taxed as it improves the building stock and gives people equity in their main asset.

Higher rate income tax needs to come down. More revenue would be collected as more earn higher incomes, working harder to do so. The range of reliefs on your own business should be extended. HMT should stop trying to force people who work for themselves to pay tax as employees. The VAT threshold for a small business should be raised higher.

The state can help build a bigger population of owners by changing the way it operates. It should spin off more of its activities to employee controlled enterprises. These thrive from the unity of interest between the employees and the government, providing a better service at a lower price to the state and empowering the employees. They will work smarter when they work for their own benefit as well, discovering that higher quality service is also more efficient and better value . The John Lewis and the Co-op models should be more widely adopted in bidding for public sector contracts. The employees as business owners will be able to expand their business activities with other clients whilst benefitting from an initial contract to serve the state. This was done, for example, with the Property Services Agency in the late 1980s.

The rules of the business world need amending to allow more flexibility for start ups and small businesses . They are subject to the disciplines of the market and their customers anyway. The totality of controls and requirements is a major impediment to the average business start up.

We need a new wind in favour of people doing well, running their own show and owning property and assets as a normal part of their lives. We want capital and income to reinforce each other and to be flexible . A new generation of owners will then have the means to get better training, to improve their businesses, upgrade their jobs and improve their homes.

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## [Martin Schulz calls for a United States of Europe](#)

The former leader of Germany's SPD (Labour party) and possible candidate for Chancellor of Germany has called for a federal Europe and the exit from the EU of any country refusing to ratify the Union treaty needed.

Perhaps those Remain advocates who said there was no such plan may like to comment, given similar ideas from the President of France.

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## [What you want to read about](#)

I have had some criticism for writing about environmental issues. Looking at the blog stats you found habitats as uninteresting as the Withdrawal Agreement. The two most commented on recent blogs were the one on how to have a more prosperous UK out of the EU, and what laws we should change on exit. A good number of readers are interested in waste and plastics.

This is different to the volume of emails I get as an MP, where environmental ones greatly exceed Brexit ones. Most of them are copies of lobby group emails which people want to route on.

I will continue to write about a range of relevant topics. Those who are only interested in Brexit will find regular update posts they can respond to.

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## [Tax cuts for all](#)

Tax is a necessary evil. We need substantial revenues to run a government and to provide decent public services. The UK believes in state payment for most people's health care and school education, whilst we need police, armed forces and intelligence services to help keep us safe. We also need to send money to those who cannot earn enough to support themselves and their families to an acceptable standard.

There is a common thread amongst politicians to want to use tax as a means of changing or controlling people's behaviour. Many favour so called sin taxes, imposing taxes on drinking alcohol, smoking or eating too much sugar, as a means of changing diets, ending smoking and cutting down on alcohol consumption. Government often is pulled both ways with such taxes. They both

want high revenues from them to afford public services, and claim to want lower taxes as people cut out the sinful product. This reinforces the idea that taxes are bad news.

There is also common thread of redistribution in tax plans. Many politicians want to tax the rich because they do not want them to be so rich. The problem with this approach is it can act as a disincentive to behaviours which politicians usually claim to back. Taxes on the rich can become taxes on hard work, on saving, on investing, on building a business or on backing a good idea. Taken to excess taxes on the rich drive the seriously rich out of the country, demotivate the not so rich and create an atmosphere hostile to enterprise.

The UK currently has a very complex tax system, and high rates on various conducts. There is a high rate of tax on those who dare to invest in residential property, high taxes on motorists, on people who earn higher salaries and on buying a home in expensive parts of the country.

We need a tax simplification, and a move to lower rates. Working hard or buying a home should not be seen as a sin that needs curbing but as a free choice the government is relaxed about. People who set up businesses, take risks and create jobs should be particularly welcome, not objects of suspicion by the tax authorities.

This is why I continue to press government to have an early economy boosting budget that includes tax cuts. Income tax, Stamp Duty , VED and VAT cuts are much needed to boost our homes market, car market and to leave people more of their own money to spend.

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## [Tackling plastic waste in the oceans](#)

David Attenborough's Blue Planet II has done much to focus public attention on the birds, sea mammals and turtles which die every year from eating and getting tangled in plastic waste. I have received numerous emails about it so will share here my reply to the campaign email.

More than eight million tonnes of plastic enter the world's seas each year. For sea birds and larger marine creatures, the danger comes from being entangled in plastic bags and other debris, or mistaking plastic for food. Larger pieces of plastic can also damage the digestive system of animals and can be potentially fatal.

In the UK alone, during its recent Great British Beach Clean Up, the Marine Conservation Society found 718 pieces of litter for every 100 metre stretch of beach surveyed, and of this rubbish from food and drink made up at least one fifth.

If I buy a food product in plastic packaging because it is a fluid which needs containment it does not end up in the oceans. I dispose of it through the local Council who get it recycled, or burned for energy from waste, or dumped to landfill. The plastic in the oceans comes from people deliberately discarding plastic waste as litter.

The Government recognises the danger that plastic waste poses to marine life and has taken significant steps to tackle this by seeking to reduce the amount of plastic packaging people might be able to throw away carelessly. It has introduced a ban on plastic microbeads and taken 9 billion plastic bags out of circulation with the carrier-bag charge. It realises that more needs to be done to protect our environment from the blight of plastic pollution and it has recently launched a consultation around deposit reward and return schemes for plastic bottles and other drinks containers. The Government also plans to ban the sale of plastic straws, stirrers and plastic-stemmed cotton buds.

Responding to the public mood, seven major supermarket chains have announced they will make drastic reductions in plastic use over the next five years. Much current plastic packaging would be replaced with paper and pulp trays and paper bags, which would be recyclable through domestic waste collections or in-store recycling facilities. It can only be a matter of time before other supermarket chains follow suit.

The Government recognises that tackling the use of plastic cannot be done in isolation. It is directing some of its development spending to help developing nations reduce plastic waste, increasing our own marine protected areas at home, and establishing new Blue Belt protections in our Overseas Territories.

We need to stress it is not just the responsibility of the Government to care for the environment. We must all do our part by using the litter bins, taking our own reusable bags to the shops and reducing the use of throwaway plastic items.

The challenge is to stop people on boats treating the seas as their waste bin and to stop people on land throwing plastic away where it can be caught by the wind or a river and sent to the ocean. We also wish to stop people littering the countryside, so waste does not reach the oceans or pollute areas where wildlife lives.

It is up to all of us to encourage and persuade our friends and family to avoid littering and to report or discourage others we see who are throwing litter away carelessly. We also have to work internationally on the problem as most of the litter in the oceans does not come from the UK.

Parliament must play its part to contribute towards reducing plastic waste. Parliament recently announced a comprehensive range of steps to drastically reduce its consumption of single-use plastics this year by switching non-recyclable disposal items such as take-away boxes, cups and soup containers to sustainably sourced, plant-based and certified compostable alternatives. Bottled water in plastic bottles will also no longer be on sale in

Parliament, eliminating 120,000 plastic bottles annually.

What do you think we should all do to curb the plastic threat to the seas?