THE BRITISH INFRASTRUCTURE REVOLUTION

A Labour Partnership Plan for Britain's Communities

Char Lawrence, Founder, Lawrence Institute April 2026

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A. FOREWORD

Labour came into government promising the biggest expansion of social housing in a generation, the first National Youth Strategy in fifteen years, the largest free school meals expansion since the war, and a Child Poverty Strategy designed to end the worst of what the last decade did to British families.

Eighteen months in, every one of those programmes is real. £39 billion committed for housing. 50 Young Futures Hubs by 2029. Free school meals extended to every Universal Credit family from September 2026. Best Start Family Hubs from April 2026. The two-child cap, gone.

This is more progress on community infrastructure than the country has seen in fifteen years. It is also, on the sector's own analysis, between a third and a half of what the underlying need requires. The youth services blueprint says £169-210 million a year is needed for a national hub network; the current commitment is around a third of that. The SAHP delivers about 30,000 social and affordable homes a year on average; the housing crisis needs more like 60,000. Free school meals reach 500,000 more children; full universality reaches 8.9 million. The 30-hour childcare entitlement excludes the poorest 30% of families.

Not a criticism. The gap any government inherits when it takes over a system stripped down by fifteen years of austerity. The Treasury cannot fund the rebuild from general taxation without crowding out the NHS, defence, and pensions.

The Community Transformation Fund is a way out of that bind. It funds the rebuild through a partnership with British corporations, off the Treasury balance sheet, on a footing that survives the next spending review and the one after it. It does not start anything new. It scales what is in motion.

I am the hub lead for the DCMS Young Futures Hubs pilot in Bristol, one of the eight national early adopters. I co-designed / co-developed the hub-and-spoke framework Bristol is operating under. I know what is being delivered, and have clarity around where it falls short. Here I share what changes if the funding is structurally adequate.

Companion documents address the Conservative, Liberal Democrat, and Reform UK cases.

B. THE NUMBERS

- £1 in, £4 back.
- £69.43 billion a year in savings by year five.
- £52.83 billion net annual benefit.
- 650,000 jobs, mostly union-recognised.
- 40% reduction in youth violence within five years.
- 300,000 mothers back into work.
- 641,400 social homes built over a decade.
- 8.9 million children fed.
- 35 million people directly improved.

C. THE FOUR PROGRAMMES

The full framework contains eleven programmes. Four align most closely with Labour's existing direction.

1. FREE SCHOOL MEALS — £4.4bn/year

Now. From September 2026, every child in a Universal Credit household gets free school meals. 500,000 additional children. 100,000 lifted out of relative poverty. £500 a year back into parents' pockets.

Gap. Still means-tested. Two to three million children in poverty under broader measures fall outside the new entitlement. Schools are reportedly absorbing roughly £310 million a year of the expansion cost from existing budgets. No breakfast provision in the package. Auto-enrolment not included.

Levy adds. £4.4 billion a year. Universal coverage. Every child in every state school gets breakfast and lunch, no questions asked. The £310 million currently absorbed by school budgets freed for teaching.

Labour case. Finishes a job Labour governments have been trying to complete since 1944. Universal provision is the natural endpoint of the direction of travel. Takes the politics of child hunger off the table for a generation.

Returns.

- 8.9 million children fed.
- £980 a year saved per child.
- £800 million a year in NHS savings.
- Educational attainment improves measurably (Finland's universal programme, in place since 1948, produces the highest in Europe).
- Stigma of means-testing removed.

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2. YOUTH SERVICES — £2bn/year

Now. £500 million National Youth Strategy (December 2025), the first in fifteen years. £95 million for Young Futures Hubs. £70 million Local Youth Transformation programme. Eight early adopter hubs open by March 2026; 50 by 2029.

I am the hub lead for the Bristol pilot.

Gap. The Youth Access *Blueprint for Young Futures Hubs* estimates £169-210 million a year for a national network. Current programme is around a third of that. The hub-and-spoke design needs more adequate funding. It is currently a very tight budget to operate under.

Levy adds. £2 billion a year. Brings total investment in line with Blueprint estimates. Funds 50 hubs at depth, 1,000 spoke youth clubs, and 49,200 youth workers, mentors, coaches, and support staff.

Labour case. Young Futures Hubs are the government's flagship youth policy. Funding them properly is funding a Labour priority properly. The single highest-impact intervention available on youth mental health & well-being, pathways to opportunities and employment and reducing knife crime and youth violence.

Returns.

- 1,000 youth clubs reopened.
- 2.5 million young people supported.
- 50,000 young people diverted from the criminal justice system.
- £5.8 billion a year in government savings.
- 49,200 jobs.

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3. CHILDCARE 0-5 — £1.5bn/year

Now. The 30-hour funded childcare entitlement for working parents completed rollout September 2025. 3,000 new school-based nurseries committed. Best Start Family Hubs from April 2026.

Gap. IFS, NEF, Sutton Trust, and LabourList have all flagged the same three problems.

1. Earnings threshold excludes the poorest 30% of families. The IFS finds the bulk of funding flows to families who would have paid for childcare anyway.
2. Nearly half of all under-fives live in a "childcare desert" with no supply at any price. Overlaps with the most deprived parts of the country.
3. Parents studying or retraining (student nurses, trainee teachers) are excluded entirely.

Levy adds. £1.5 billion a year. Closes all three gaps. Universal coverage. Capital for new provision in childcare deserts. 12,000 additional early years educator posts.

Labour case. Universal childcare is a Labour goal pre-dating this government. Sure Start in 1997 was the first systematic attempt. The 3,000 school-based nurseries is the most recent. Universal 0-5 provision completes a thirty-year arc. The single highest-leverage intervention available on women's labour force participation, child poverty, and educational attainment.

Returns.

- 2.5 million children supported.
- 300,000 mothers back into work.
- £15,000 a year saved per family.
- £7.9 billion a year Treasury gain.
- 12,000 jobs.
- School readiness gap closed before reception.

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4. LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESTORATION — £1.6bn/year

Now. English Devolution White Paper. Multi-year settlements. Mayoral Strategic Authorities. Council Housebuilding Skills and Capacity Programme (£12 million in 2025/26). Council house building support fund (£5.5 million across 29 councils).

Gap. Councils have absorbed roughly £16 billion in real-terms cuts since 2010. Reserves exhausted. Statutory services consume most remaining budget. Section 114 notices are routine. Adult social care and SEND pressures absorb new money before anything else gets it.

This affects every other programme. Hubs need councils to commission them. Housing needs councils to plan it. Free school meals are administered through councils. Childcare expansion runs through council early years teams. A collapsing council sector cannot deliver community infrastructure even when the funding for the programmes themselves is adequate.

Levy adds. £1.6 billion a year. Restores 10% of the cumulative cuts since 2010. Not enough to fully reverse the damage. Enough to restore the operational capacity councils need to deliver everything else. 29,000 council jobs.

Labour case. Local government is Labour territory. Most of the councils worst affected since 2010 are Labour-led councils in deprived areas. Restoring local government is restoring the institutional base that delivered the post-war settlement at local level. The precondition for delivering everything else.

Returns.

- 56 million UK residents benefit.
- 29,000 jobs.
- £4.3 billion a year in government savings.
- Planning processed faster, unlocking the housing pipeline.
- Social workers with manageable caseloads.

D. THE FUNDING

A 0.8% contribution from corporations operating in the UK with turnover above £1 billion. Lower rates for smaller firms. SMEs below £50 million turnover exempt. Roughly 2,000 companies pay. Total: £16.6 billion a year.

Three-year emergency levy. Years one to three only. 5% on annual profits over £1 billion at energy companies and banks. Raises £4.95 billion a year. Funds doubled housing investment (71,700 homes a year in the emergency phase) and direct energy bill support for 5 million fuel-poor households at £490 each.

AI Infrastructure Levy. One-time 18% levy on UK AI revenue from the major AI companies (Google/DeepMind, Microsoft/OpenAI, Meta, Amazon AWS AI, others). Raises £5.67 billion. Paid 2028. Funds NHS medical AI, fraud detection systems, and worker retraining.

Tax-deductible. The corporate contribution is treated as a Strategic Investment Contribution, deductible against UK Corporation Tax.

The Treasury position. The framework removes community infrastructure from the Treasury's general taxation envelope. The Chancellor keeps general taxation receipts for general government priorities. By year five the £69.43 billion in annual savings funds the framework's continuation, the corporate levy starts to taper, and the system is self-funding.

The political distinction. This funding model distributes the cost of rebuilding to the corporations that have benefited most from operating in a deregulated, low-tax environment for fifteen years. It does not pass the cost on to working-class voters through general taxation. That distinction is the political heart of the Labour case.

E. THE COALITION

Who pays

The 2,000 largest corporations operating in the UK. Energy companies and banks pay the additional emergency levy in years one to three. AI companies pay a one-time levy on UK revenue. SMEs below £50 million turnover exempt.

Who builds

Trade unions are the central delivery partner. Construction through Unite-organised firms. Local government through GMB and UNISON. NHS expansion through UNISON, RCN, BMA. Childcare through UNISON and NEU. Youth services through Unite Community and the NYA-aligned workforce.

Every government-contracted job pays living wage minimum, with union recognition written into procurement. The largest expansion of unionised, public-good employment since 1948.

Who delivers

The third sector delivers most of the community-facing programmes. The 2,500-hub estate is built on accreditation rather than direct state provision: existing community organisations meeting standards become accredited delivery partners. This protects the third sector capacity that fifteen years of austerity nearly destroyed.

Co-operative and mutual structures fit naturally into the hub accreditation model. Labour-Co-op MPs have a specific role here.

Who benefits

The 35 million people directly improved by the framework are disproportionately Labour's electoral coalition. Working-class families on Universal Credit. Mothers excluded from the labour market. Young people in deprived areas. Older people facing fuel poverty. Council tenants on social housing waiting lists. The voters who came back to Labour in 2024 because they were promised material change in their material lives.

Progressive philanthropy

Foundations and trusts that have funded the third sector through the austerity years (Joseph Rowntree, Sainsbury family trusts, Esmée Fairbairn, the Health Foundation) get a partner in the state for the first time in fifteen years. The Innovation Fund (£500 million a year, in the main framework) provides match funding for community-led experimental programmes. Foundations multiply their impact through state co-investment rather than substituting for it.

F. WHY THIS WORKS POLITICALLY

Polling

70%+ public support for community infrastructure investment. 78% back higher corporate contributions over general taxation. 82% back higher contributions from energy companies and banks. The framework moves with the electoral wind, not against it.

Narrative

Labour rebuilds Britain through partnership with British business. The corporations that have benefited from operating in this country contribute to its renewal. The benefits flow to communities, the costs are tax-deductible, the savings flow back to the Treasury.

A single, organising story that runs from the front page of a leaflet to the dispatch box without translation.

The doorstep answer

"What are you actually doing for my area?" Visible deliverables on a constituency timeline: homes built, hubs opened, school meals served, childcare available.

The election test

2029 election fought on the framework. Labour offer: 320,000 social and affordable homes built or under construction this Parliament, all 50 Young Futures Hubs operational, universal free school meals, universal childcare, child poverty down by a measurable percentage, youth violence down by a measurable percentage, Treasury balance improved by tens of billions.

The election is winnable on this framework. Harder to win without it.

G. THE OBJECTIONS

"We're already doing this." In part. The levy adds the scale and structural permanence the existing programmes need to deliver on their stated objectives within this Parliament rather than over the next twenty years.

"The fiscal rules don't allow it." The fiscal rules apply to public sector net debt and current spending. The Community Infrastructure Levy is a corporate contribution, off the public sector balance sheet, ring-fenced for community infrastructure. Savings to the Treasury improve the fiscal position, not worsen it.

"Corporations will leave." 0.8% of UK turnover, tax-deductible, falling to 0.3% within five years, reciprocated by procurement access to the largest peacetime construction pipeline in British history. Not a relocation trigger.

"It's too radical." More radical than the current trajectory. Less radical than 1945. Significantly less radical than the 1948 introduction of the NHS, which was opposed by the BMA, the Conservative Party, and significant elements of the press, and is now the defining institution of British public life.

"What about the unions on corporate partnership?" The unions are the core delivery partners and the central beneficiaries. Procurement rules require living wage and union recognition. The largest growth in unionised employment in eighty years.

"We can't do this in this Parliament." Legislation passes 2028. First money flows 2029. First visible deliverables in time for a 2029-2030 general election. The framework is structured for delivery within the political cycle, not in defiance of it.

H. THE TIMELINE

2025-2027. Framework published. Coalition-building with the TUC, third sector, housing associations, foundation sector, progressive corporates. Bristol Young Futures Hub opens. Manifesto integration. Corporate Founding Partner commitments secured.

2027-2028. Legislation: Community Infrastructure Contribution Act, AI Infrastructure Contribution Act, Three-Year Emergency Housing and Energy Levy Act. Designed to integrate with existing delivery architecture.

2028-2029. First £21.55 billion budget deployed. Universal free school meals from September 2029. First 100 hubs accredited. SAHP delivery accelerates from 30,000 to 60,000+ homes a year.

2030-2031. Independent evaluation. Emergency levy ends. Self-funding transition begins. Corporate levy starts to taper.

2035-2036. 641,400 homes built. Full national hub network. Universal childcare and free school meals embedded. Programme self-funding. Corporate levy at 0.3%.

I. THE ASK

To Labour MPs. Engage. Test the framework against your constituency need, your council leaders, your delivery experience. If the case holds, table it. Form an APPG on Community Infrastructure. The Conservative document being circulated alongside this one makes the same offer to Conservative MPs; the question is whether Labour or the Conservatives takes ownership first.

To trade unions. The largest expansion of unionised public-good employment since 1948. Procurement rules require living wage and union recognition. Engagement at general secretary level on the framework's substance and on the union role in design and delivery is welcomed.

To progressive corporates. Founding Partner status is available before legislation. The first ten signatories shape the design. Labour-aligned corporates with stronger ESG commitments are well-placed to lead.

To foundations and progressive philanthropy. Engagement on the Innovation Fund and on the wider role of philanthropy as state co-investor is welcomed.

J. WHY THIS WORKS

The architecture is operating now. The Bristol Young Futures Hub opens March 2026 as one of eight national early adopters. The hub-and-spoke framework is being delivered. The SAHP is awarding contracts. Best Start Family Hubs roll out from April 2026. Free school meals expansion implements September 2026. The childcare entitlement is operational.

What is missing is not the institutions. It is the funding that lets the institutions work at scale.

International evidence is consistent. Finland's universal school meals, since 1948, produces the highest educational attainment in Europe. Vienna's social housing model, covering 60% of the population, has produced the most liveable city in the world. Denmark's youth services produce the lowest youth unemployment in Europe. Scotland's free childcare expansion in 2014 returned 65% of mothers to work.

These are not radical experiments. Normal in successful countries. Britain is the outlier.

K. THE EMERGENCY PHASE, THE JOBS, THE GENERATION

The first three years are different

Years one to three are the emergency phase. Years four onwards are steady state.

Emergency phase budget: £21.55 billion a year. It delivers 71,700 social homes a year, £490 a year in energy bill support to 5 million fuel-poor households, the first wave of community hubs, the rollout of universal free school meals, and the acceleration of youth services.

By year three: 215,100 families housed. 6,000 excess winter deaths prevented. 200 youth clubs reopened. Universal free school meals delivered to 8.9 million children. First community health centres operating.

This is what an emergency response looks like when it is properly funded. It is also the phase that proves the framework works ahead of the next general election.

Where the 650,000 jobs go

- Construction and trades: 181,000 at peak.
- Youth and community work: 49,200. Including 20,000 youth workers and 15,000 paid Young Leaders aged 13-16.
- Healthcare: 25,000. Including 3,000 GPs, 6,000 practice nurses, 2,500 social prescribing link workers.
- Education and early years: 12,000.
- Sports, recreation, culture: 29,500. Including 3,000 librarians, 8,000 leisure centre staff.
- Local government: 29,000 restored. Parks, planning, social work, environmental health.
- Community hubs: 18,750.
- Green trades: 25,000. Including 8,000 solar installers, 6,000 insulation workers.
- Innovation and project work: 6,000.

Plus 200,000 indirect jobs in supply chains.

What happens after Year 10

Construction workers do not lose jobs at the end of the housing programme. Years 11-20 deliver school rebuilding, hospital construction, transport infrastructure, renewable energy, home retrofitting at scale, and ongoing social housing. Total construction employment in years 11-20: 233,000, higher than the housing peak. Long-term maintenance: 120,000 permanent jobs.

Workers trained in 2027 have forty years of work ahead of them.

The generation this is for

Children born in 2027 are now starting school. By the time they are eighteen, in 2045, the framework will have built 641,400 social homes, opened 2,500 community hubs and 1,000 youth clubs, fed every British child at school for two decades, and saved an estimated 200,000 lives.

CONTACT

Lawrence Institute E: TheLawrenceInstitute@gmail.com **W:** www.LawrenceInstitute.co.uk

ONE FINAL THING

I am not a politician. I am the hub lead for the DCMS Young Futures Hubs pilot in Bristol. I co-designed / co developed the hub-and-spoke framework Bristol is delivering under.

The current Labour government has launched the right programmes. I am not asking it to change direction. I am asking it to consider the funding architecture that lets those programmes deliver at the scale the manifesto promised, in a single Parliament rather than three.

Every Labour government has had a defining infrastructure project. 1945 had the NHS. 1997 had Sure Start. This generation has the chance to deliver universal childcare, universal free school meals, the largest social housing rebuild since the 1950s, and the most extensive community infrastructure network in British history. Operational, visible, delivered in one Parliament.

The work has started. The framework is the way to finish it.

Char Lawrence Founder, The Lawrence Institute Est. 2025

This is one of four party-aligned partnership documents prepared by the Lawrence Institute. Companion documents address the Conservative, Liberal Democrat, and Reform UK cases. Cross-party crossover documents address shared programmes. The full British Infrastructure Revolution framework remains the underlying evidence base. All documents available at www.LawrenceInstitute.co.uk.