THE BRITISH INFRASTRUCTURE REVOLUTION

A Refined Five-Year Proposal - Four Pillars

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Foreword

I often ask myself what would make this country better for all. That question started me down this path.

I'm not aligned with any one party. I am passionate about opening a conversation about what we can do collectively to make Britain work for the people who live here.

This is the refined version of the British Infrastructure Revolution framework, focused on the four areas that need attention most urgently and where, working together, we could deliver visible, measurable change within five years. It's offered as an invitation to think with me, not as a finished plan.

Working in the voluntary sector, I've seen what happens when communities have the infrastructure they need to thrive, and what happens when they don't. The proposal that follows draws on what works in my work and on the evidence base from across the UK and internationally.

I welcome your thoughts.

Char Lawrence Founder, Lawrence Institute

Part 1. The Proposal in Brief

The British Infrastructure Revolution proposes a focused, five-year partnership between business and government to deliver four interconnected pillars of community infrastructure.

The four pillars:

1. **Social housing** at scale: 337,000 new homes over five years

2. **Universal school lunch** for every state school child
3. **NHS community health centres** in underserved areas: 500+ centres serving 5 million people
4. **Local government restoration**: partial restoration of councils' lost capacity

The cost:

£43 billion over five years, declining year on year as the system begins to fund itself.

The funding model

A 0.4% Community Infrastructure Contribution from companies with annual turnover over £1 billion, treated as deductible community investment for five years, supported by an optional time-limited emergency housing levy on the highest-profit energy companies and banks.

The return:

By Year 5, the four pillars generate approximately £33 billion per year in government savings and £5-7 billion per year in new tax and NI revenue. Combined fiscal benefit of £38-40 billion annually. The system pays for itself within three years and produces a net 5-year fiscal surplus of roughly £57 billion. From Year 6 onwards, the programmes are self-financing from the savings they generate. No further corporate contribution required.

What it delivers in human terms:

- 1.1 million people moved into stable affordable housing
- 8.9 million children fed a hot lunch every school day
- 5 million people with access to a community health centre that catches problems before they become crises
- Councils able to do the basics again: parks maintained, social workers with manageable caseloads, planning processed properly

This is not a programme of permanent state expansion. It is a five-year bridging investment that delivers infrastructure capable of paying for itself once built. The proposal that follows sets out the case.

Part 2. The Build

Britain in five years if we build this infrastructure:

Every state school child eats a hot lunch in the school day. No questions asked. No registers of who pays and who doesn't.

Families currently waiting seven years for a home have homes, because we built 337,000 over five years.

When a parent in St Pauls notices a worrying lump or their child's persistent cough, the community health centre two streets away catches it that week, not in three months at A&E.

The council still picks up the bins, repairs the parks, processes planning applications, and runs the social work caseload at the size it should be. The library is open.

Construction sites across Britain are running because there are homes to build. 181,000 people have jobs they didn't have before, in places that were stripped of work decades ago. The supply chains around those sites are alive.

A teenager in Bristol whose mum worked two jobs to feed her, and could rarely afford lunch money, is now studying at college with a steady stomach and the educational attainment that comes when children can think clearly because they've eaten.

A grandmother in Birmingham, who used to be admitted to hospital every winter with respiratory illness from her damp flat, has been rehoused into a home that's dry and warm. She has not been admitted this year.

None of this requires utopia. It requires investment in the four things that hold a society together: shelter, nourishment, health, and the local infrastructure that delivers them.

This is what the proposal builds. Here is how.

Part 3. The Four Pillars

Pillar 1: Social Housing

What it delivers

- 71,700 homes built per year in Years 1-3 (emergency response phase)
- 60,900 homes built per year in Years 4-5 (steady state)
- 337,000+ new social homes over five years
- 215,000 families housed in the first three years alone
- 181,000 construction jobs at peak, 125,000 steady state

Who benefits

The 1.3 million households currently on social housing waiting lists. The 300,000 people in temporary accommodation or homelessness. The 1.1 million people who would be housed by Year 5.

Why this matters

Housing is the single biggest driver of UK household poverty. Stable affordable housing changes the financial reality of low and middle income families overnight. Average UK social rent is roughly half private rent. Moving 1.1 million people into stable affordable housing keeps roughly £4-6 billion per year in family budgets that was previously going to private landlords.

It also reduces the costs the state currently absorbs because housing is unstable: temporary accommodation, A&E use, children's services, mental health crises, adult social care.

Annual cost

- Years 1-3: £5 billion additional per year (on top of current £11.5 billion government spending)
- Years 4-5: £2.5 billion additional per year

The delivery partners

Housing associations (Clarion, L&Q, Peabody, Sanctuary, Riverside, Places for People) have been calling for exactly this level of investment for years. They have development capacity that's been constrained by grant funding, not by ambition. The National Housing Federation, the sector's trade body, would be a natural delivery partner. Major construction firms (Wates, Lovell, Willmott Dixon, Hill Group) have the capacity to deliver the build pipeline.

Pillar 2: Universal School Lunch

What it delivers

- A hot lunch every school day for 8.9 million state school children
- Universal provision: no eligibility forms, no registers, no separation between children who pay and children who don't
- Improved educational attainment (fed children learn better)
- £980 per year saved per family in food costs
- An NHS saving of approximately £800 million per year through better child health

Who benefits

Every state school child in England. Particularly the 2 million who currently go to school hungry every day.

Why this matters

Children cannot learn well on empty stomachs. The educational attainment gap between hungry children and fed children is measurable and significant. Universal provision removes the stigma and administrative cost of means-testing.

The model works. Wales has universal primary free school meals. Scotland is rolling it out. London is funded by the Mayor. The political precedent exists. England is the gap.

Annual cost

Universal lunch only (breakfast clubs are being rolled out separately under Labour's plan):

- Full programme cost: roughly £3-3.2 billion per year
- Minus existing means-tested FSM and universal infant FSM (around £1.6 billion)
- Additional cost: approximately £1.5 billion per year

Why lunch only

Universal breakfast clubs are already being delivered under the Department for Education's current plans. This proposal opens distinct ground rather than competing with existing rollout. Lunch is the meal children reliably eat at school. The delivery model is established.

Pillar 3: NHS Community Health Centres

What it delivers

- 500+ community health centres in underserved areas
- 5 million people gaining proper GP access
- 500,000 hospital admissions prevented per year
- 15,000 lives saved per year through early diagnosis and prevention
- 25,000 healthcare jobs created

Who benefits

5 million people currently in the areas with the worst GP-to-population ratios. The whole NHS, through preventing crises rather than managing them.

Why this matters

The NHS is overwhelmed by preventable crises. The economics of prevention are clear. A diabetes prevention programme costs £250 per person to deliver against £3,000 per year for life to treat. The same logic applies across chronic disease, mental health, respiratory conditions, and early cancer diagnosis.

Community health centres place the NHS where people live. They catch problems early. They reduce A&E use, hospital admissions, and chronic disease costs.

Annual cost

£1.5 billion per year. Sustained at this level across the five years.

The NHS savings generated

Approximately £15 billion per year by Year 5 across:

- 500,000 hospital admissions prevented at £7,000 each = £3.5 billion
- Chronic disease prevention = £6 billion
- Mental health crisis interventions reduced = £800 million
- Preventive care infrastructure = £5.5 billion

For every £1 spent on this pillar, the NHS saves approximately £10 by Year 5.

Pillar 4: Local Government Restoration

What it delivers

- Partial restoration (10%) of the £16 billion cut from council funding since 2010
- 29,000 council jobs restored (social workers, planning officers, parks workers, street cleaners)
- Functioning local infrastructure that delivers the other three pillars

Who benefits

All 56 million UK residents through restored local services. Particularly people relying on adult social care, children's services, mental health, and local services that have been cut to breaking point.

Why this matters

Local government is the delivery infrastructure for everything else. Housing gets built through councils' planning systems. School lunches get delivered through councils' procurement. NHS community work happens in partnership with council services. Without functioning councils, the other three pillars have nowhere to land.

Birmingham, Nottingham, Woking and others have issued Section 114 notices (effectively council bankruptcy). Even councils that haven't are running on fumes. Both parties acknowledge the crisis. Neither has put forward serious restoration.

This pillar opens the territory.

Annual cost

£1.6 billion per year. This restores 10% of the cuts. It's not the full restoration the sector needs, but it's enough to restabilise services.

The savings generated

Approximately £4.3 billion per year by Year 5 through:

- Early intervention preventing crisis costs
- Better child protection (housing instability and council pressure are major drivers of care entry)

- Adult social care that keeps elderly independent
- Economic activity from functioning local services

Part 4. The Funding Model

Five-Year Total: £43 Billion

Annual costs of the four pillars:

Pillar	Years 1-3	Years 4-5
Housing (additional)	£5bn	£2.5bn
Universal school lunch (additional)	£1.5bn	£1.5bn
NHS community health	£1.5bn	£1.5bn
Local government restoration	£1.6bn	£1.6bn
Annual total	**£9.6bn**	**£7.1bn**

Five-year total: £43 billion

How It's Funded

Source 1: Community Infrastructure Contribution

A 0.4% contribution on the annual turnover of UK companies with turnover above £1 billion. Sliding scale for smaller companies:

Annual Turnover	Contribution Rate
£50m - £250m	0.15%
£250m - £1bn	0.25%
Over £1bn	0.40%

Treated as deductible community investment for five years

The Treasury creates a new fiscal category through Finance Act: the Community Infrastructure Contribution. It is mandatory in substance but classified as deductible community investment, not as a tax. Companies can claim it as community investment in annual reports, ESG reporting, and B Corp certifications. After corporation tax relief at 25%, the effective cost is 75% of the headline contribution.

This raises approximately £8.6 billion per year from approximately 2,000 of the UK's largest companies.

Source 2: Emergency Housing Levy (Years 1-3 only)

A 5% levy on annual profits over £1 billion for energy companies and banks. Time-limited to the first three years of the emergency housing acceleration phase.

This raises approximately £2.5 billion per year for Years 1-3 only, dedicated to the housing pillar.

Combined annual revenue:

- Years 1-3: £11.1 billion per year (CIC + Emergency Levy)
- Years 4-5: £8.6 billion per year (CIC only)

Sufficient to fund the four pillars with a small annual surplus held as contingency.

Why This Funding Model Works

For business:

A 0.40% contribution, deductible against corporation tax, time-limited to five years, classified as community investment. Effective cost is 0.3% of turnover. Comparable in burden to the existing Apprenticeship Levy (0.5% on payroll), which businesses have accepted for years.

For Treasury:

A defined, time-limited revenue stream funding programmes that generate savings exceeding the contribution by Year 5. After Year 5, the programmes self-finance from departmental savings.

For the political economy:

A 0.4% contribution avoids the heavier political fight that a 0.8% levy would trigger. The "community investment" classification softens the optics. The five-year sunset clause limits the commitment.

What Businesses Get In Return

Direct, measurable returns to the contributing business:

1. **Tax relief**: 25% corporation tax saved on the contribution amount
2. **Larger customer base**: 1.1 million more households with £4-6k per year in disposable income that previously went to private landlords. Consumer-facing businesses see direct revenue uplift.
3. **Healthier, more stable workforce**: Lower sick days, lower churn, reduced recruitment costs, lower employer health and occupational health costs. For employers with 10,000+ staff, this is material.
4. **Lower wage pressure**: As cost of living drops, wage inflation eases. Salary budgets stabilise.
5. **Brand and ESG benefit**: Founder corporate status. Consumer trust. ESG investor confidence. B Corp certification routes opened.
6. **Reduced operating risk**: Lower retail crime, lower social unrest risk, more stable operating environment.

For example, for Tesco specifically, the 0.40% contribution is approximately £260 million per year. After tax relief, effective cost £195 million. In return: a fraction of £5-7 billion per year in additional UK consumer spending, lower workforce churn across 300,000 employees, and brand equity as a founder of the programme.

Part 5. The Return

Government Savings and Revenue

By Year 5, the four pillars generate a combined fiscal benefit of approximately £38-40 billion per year.

Annual savings (costs avoided) at Year 5:

Source	Annual saving
NHS savings	£15bn
DWP savings	£4bn
Education savings	£4bn
Home Office (criminal justice)	£1.5bn
Social services savings	£3-4bn
Productivity gains	£3-4bn
Total savings	**£30-33bn**

New revenue (funds generated) at Year 5:

Source	Annual revenue
Income tax and NI from new workers	£1.5-2bn
VAT from increased consumer spending	£2-3bn

Corporation tax from supplier businesses	£1-2bn
Council tax from new homes	£500-680m
Total revenue	**£5-7bn**

Combined annual fiscal benefit by Year 5: £38-40 billion

Year-by-Year Net Position

The savings ramp up as the infrastructure matures. The real "ask" of the Treasury is upfront in Year 1, with break-even reached in Year 2 and surplus from Year 3.

Year	Cost	Savings + Revenue	Net
1	£9.6bn	~£3bn	-£6.6bn (real cost)
2	£9.6bn	~£10bn	break-even
3	£9.6bn	~£20bn	+£10bn surplus
4	£7.1bn	~£28bn	+£21bn surplus
5	£7.1bn	~£40bn	+£33bn surplus

Five-year cumulative position:

- Total cost: £43 billion
- Total savings and revenue: approximately £100 billion
- **Net 5-year fiscal surplus: approximately £57 billion**

Self-Funding from Year 6

By Year 6, the programmes are paying for themselves out of the savings they generate. Each department redirects a fraction of what it saves back into the infrastructure producing those savings:

- NHS saves £15 billion per year, redirects £1.5 billion to keep community health centres operating
- DWP saves £4 billion per year, contributes to ongoing housing programmes
- Local government savings of £4.3 billion fund restored services on an ongoing basis
- Education savings of £4 billion fund continued universal lunch

The corporate Community Infrastructure Contribution can either end at Year 5 or be reduced to a small ongoing rate (0.1-0.2%) for new programme development. The political commitment to business is honoured: the five-year ask was the five-year ask.

My Pitch in One Paragraph

This is not a £43 billion ask. The Treasury needs to find approximately £7 billion in Year 1. By Year 2 the system is at break-even. By Year 3 it's in surplus. By Year 5 it's generating £33 billion more per year than it costs to run. The infrastructure built does not disappear. The savings continue indefinitely. From Year 6 onwards, the programmes self-finance from the savings they generate. No further corporate contribution required.

Part 6. The Delivery

Year-by-Year Rollout

Year 1

- Community Infrastructure Contribution Act and Emergency Housing Levy Act pass
- First contributions due
- Universal school lunch announced for the following September
- First 100 NHS community health centre sites identified
- Construction procurement begins
- Housing association contracts awarded
- LGR funds flow to councils

Year 2

- Universal school lunch launches (visible impact: 8.9 million children fed)
- First 15,000 homes completed
- First 50-100 NHS community health centres open
- First measurable LGR outcomes (caseload reductions, services restored)
- Construction at peak employment

Year 3

- 215,000 homes completed (three-year emergency target reached)
- 200-300 NHS community health centres operating
- Universal school lunch normalised
- LGR savings becoming measurable
- System at break-even

Year 4

- 60,900 additional homes built that year
- 400+ NHS community health centres operating
- 15% reduction in hospital admissions visible
- System in surplus
- Emergency housing levy ends

Year 5

- 337,000 homes built cumulatively
- 500 NHS community health centres operating
- Independent evaluation: full impact visible
- System generating £33 billion more than it costs
- Transition to self-financing for Year 6 onwards

Who Builds What

- **Housing**: Housing associations (Clarion, Peabody, L&Q, Sanctuary, Riverside, Places for People and regional partners), construction firms (Wates, Lovell, Willmott Dixon, Hill Group)
- **Lunch**: Existing school catering services, expanded procurement, council partnerships
- **NHS community health**: NHS England, Integrated Care Boards, primary care partnerships
- **LGR**: Direct restoration to local authorities through fair funding settlements

Measurable Outcomes

By Year 5, evidence will be visible across these indicators:

- Housing waiting list reduced by approximately 17% (and continuing to fall)
- Universal lunch served to 8.9 million children every school day
- 500,000 hospital admissions prevented per year
- Independent evaluation of savings produced
- Council Section 114 notices reduced or eliminated

Part 7. What I'm Asking

This proposal is offered as an invitation to think collectively about what could be built. It needs:

From political leaders across parties

A serious conversation about what's possible. The framework is offered for refinement, not as a finished plan. I'd value your view on what would make it stronger, what you would push back on, and what would make it possible to champion within your party.

From business leaders

A first conversation about whether a 0.40% Community Infrastructure Contribution, structured as deductible community investment over five years, would be acceptable as a partnership rather than imposed as a tax. I'd value early indications of which companies might be willing to be founder corporates if such a programme were created.

From housing associations and the National Housing Federation

A serious assessment of delivery capacity. Could the sector deliver 71,700 homes per year for three years? What capacity constraints would need addressing? What would scale require?

From NHS leaders, integrated care boards, and primary care

The clinical and operational case for community health centres at this scale. Where would they need to be? What partnerships would be required? What's deliverable in five years?

From local government and the LGA

What restoration looks like in practice. What's the minimum viable funding that restabilises councils? What would the £1.6 billion deliver if directed effectively?

From academic colleagues and policy researchers

Help in strengthening the evidence base. The figures in this proposal are working estimates based on the BIR original modelling. They need rigorous testing. I welcome collaboration on that work.

From the public

Conversations with your MPs, your councils, your local civic leaders. The framework is here. If it's worth building, the political pressure to build it has to come from communities, not from a single charity CEO in Bristol.

Part 8. Why Now

Three reasons.

The crises are visible and worsening. Housing waiting lists, council Section 114 notices, NHS pressures, and child food insecurity are at levels that political leaders across parties acknowledge as serious. The political question is no longer whether these problems exist. It is whether anyone has a plan to address them.

The political moment exists. Wales and Scotland have moved on free school meals. Labour has prioritised NHS prevention and family hubs. The Conservatives have raised childcare entitlements. Cross-party agreement on community infrastructure exists in principle. What's missing is a coordinated, funded plan.

The economics work now. A five-year bridge investment funded by a deductible business contribution, generating savings that pay back within the investment period, with no permanent expansion of state spending, is the kind of proposal that can attract support across the political spectrum. It is fiscally responsible by design.

The window will not stay open indefinitely. The cost of inaction is rising every year.

A Note on This Document

This proposal builds on the original British Infrastructure Revolution framework I published in November 2025. That version covered eleven programmes at a total cost of £16.6 billion per year. This refined version focuses on the four pillars where the case is strongest, the political ground is most viable, and the evidence base is most directly anchored in the work I lead.

The figures here are working estimates drawn from the BIR's original modelling. I welcome collaboration with academic colleagues, sector specialists, and policy researchers to strengthen the evidence base on every claim made.

I am not a politician, an academic, or a theorist. I am a charity CEO and a passionate Bristol local, building a research and policy vehicle (the Lawrence Institute) to think about what could come next.

If this framework is useful, build with me. If it needs refining, refine with me. If it needs challenging, challenge me. The conversation and the action that should follow matters more than the document.

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