



REFORMING LAND USE

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FOR A
GREEN
NEW DEAL



Reforming Land Use

Land use and land ownership are an underlying and often overlooked driver of both social and environmental injustice in the United Kingdom. Addressing these injustices should be at the heart of any socialist Green New Deal. Working well with the land will be key to reducing and sequestering future emissions, be it through afforestation, peatland restoration or improving the sustainability and equitability of agriculture. Agricultural intensification, in particular, is considered significant a driver of the United Kingdom's [substantial biodiversity loss](#) over recent decades.

As it stands, land decisions are often imposed by large landowners seeking to benefit from environmental schemes. A Green New Deal would see decisions about how our land is focused on the environment crises and center those who work on the land and local communities. A key structural challenge to creating a more ecologically healthy environment is land inequality; land ownership in the United Kingdom is massively unequal, with half of England owned by [less than 1%](#) of the population. This policy primer sets out how a Green New Deal could empower local authorities, organisations and communities to steer land use towards more ecological ends in a democratic and egalitarian fashion. Crucially, reforming land use would allow us to create a society that protects our ecological wellbeing whilst creating a more equitable system.

Key policy

Empowering communities and not-for-profit groups to take ownership of land for sustainable farming, ecological restoration or more environmental and accessible forms of home ownership

Reforming Land Use explained:

In order to put land into the hands of communities, legislation facilitating and strengthening Community Right to Buy, [as seen in Scotland](#), should be extended throughout the United Kingdom. This right would give community groups the first option on land coming up for sale in both urban and rural areas. In alignment with Labour's [Land for the Many](#) report this legislation should be supported by the establishment of a Community Land Fund that would seek to put £200 million worth of land in the hands of Community Land Trusts by 2030. One way of funding this could be redistributing the existing financial surplus of £530 million generated by the Land Registry.

As well as providing finance for community land ownership, a Green New Deal could see the establishment of appropriate regional and local governance and financial mechanisms that would further facilitate and strengthen these proposals. Regional government-backed financing schemes could encourage the acquisition of land for community supported agriculture or rewilding projects. Similarly, unionised and green public-sector jobs and training opportunities could be created to coordinate, educate and galvanise these projects, as well as projects run by local authorities, National Parks and the other relevant agencies.

This approach could be further strengthened in a number of ways, central of which could be an increasingly proactive approach towards land nationalisation. The government has sold off large amounts of land since the 1970s and strategic re-acquisition of land could then be entrusted or leased to community groups, charities and regional authorities exclusively for the purposes of ecological restoration or sustainable farming.

The break-up of large estates to aid this could be facilitated through a more progressive taxation on land ownership payable by owners not tenants. Empty homes and second homes should automatically be taxed at a higher rate. A land value tax could be established and Offshore Company Property Tax and tax exemptions for land ownership altered to ensure that land is being used for the public good, not for profit.

Successful examples:

- The [Scottish government](#) has moved ahead of the rest of the United Kingdom in this regard already, having legislated for a Community Right to Buy, established a Scottish Land Commission and a Scottish Land Fund and by providing guidance and support for the broadening of community land ownership.