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Open Letter to Gordon Brown, David Cameron and Nick Clegg



The economic crisis and coming recession threatens the livelihoods of millions of people globally and across the UK.

It is time for bold and decisive action from Government to protect those hardest hit by the perfect storm caused by the global economic slowdown, escalating food, fuel and energy prices, a housing crisis, rising unemployment and the growing prospects of a recession at home.

An Economic Recovery Plan on a similar scale and ambition to that proposed by US President elect Obama is required to protect those least able to survive the shock waves of the global economic crisis engulfing the livelihoods of millions across the UK.

We therefore call on the Government – with cross party support - to launch a UK Economic Recovery Plan to invest in housing, energy efficiency, job creation and income protection measures for the most vulnerable, combined with bold measures to prevent irresponsible lenders and energy companies profiting at the expense of their poorest customers.

Elements we would wish to see included in the Economic Recovery Plan include:

- Taking immediate action to tackle fuel poverty this winter, by funding winter fuel payments for all households in receipt of benefits.
- Spending £3bn to boost the incomes of the poorest families, and ensure the Government gets back on track with its commitment to halve child poverty by 2010.
- Introducing automatic payment of Pension Credit and Council Tax benefit, for older people who are entitled to benefits but not receiving them. This could take 500,000 pensioners out of poverty immediately in England alone.
- Substantially increase the level of funding available for social house building for the period 2008/9-2010/11, safeguarding thousands of jobs in the housebuilding industry in the process.
- Making it illegal for energy companies to charge people on pre-payment meters higher tariffs. These are often poorer people on fixed incomes.
- Requiring banks to end their de facto discrimination against the poorest customers and communities, and taking tougher action to regulate predatory lending practices by doorstep, payday and other sub-prime lenders to low income consumers.
- Allowing people seeking asylum to work after six months here, while they remain in the UK, so they can contribute to the economy

c/o Central Buildings
Oldham Street
Manchester
M1 1JQ
Tel: 0161 236 9321
Fax: 0161 237 5359
www.geffair.org.uk


Where appropriate, we call on the Government to act in concert with devolved administrations on this matter.

The duty of Government in a crisis is to stand up for those least able to pay the price of the coming recession and to protect the vulnerable in times of economic hardship.

At the same time, Government must address structural weaknesses within the UK economy, which have led to a situation in which a quarter of the population are struggling to make ends meet.

To this end, we call on the Government to deliver on its existing commitment to end child poverty by 2020 and extend this goal to ending poverty across all generations, by a combination of boosting incomes; investing in affordable housing and safe secure neighbourhoods and ensuring public services are of high quality and accessible to all.

Yours sincerely




Adam Sampson
Chief Executive
Shelter



Paul Cann
Director of Policy and International Affairs
Help the Aged



Toby Blume
Chief Executive
Urban Forum



Niall Cooper
Chief Executive
Church Action on Poverty



Donna Covey
Chief Executive
The Refugee Council



Sarah Payne
Chief Executive
YWCA



Tim Bissett
Chief Executive
Church Urban Fund



Lesley Morphy
Chief Executive
Crisis

Kevin Flynn
Chair
National Unemployed Centres Combine



Steve Wylor
Director
Development Trusts Association

Ben Hughes
Chief Executive
Bassac

Ruth Lister
Professor of Social Policy
University of Loughborough

Neil Jamieson
Executive Director
Citizens Organising Foundation

Paddy Boyle
Director
The Manna Centre

Matthew Scott
Director
Community Sector Coalition

Kathy Galloway
Leader
The Iona Community

Dave Simmonds OBE
Chief Executive
Centre for Economic & Social Inclusion

Danny Curtin
National President
Young Christian Workers

Rev Roberta Rominger
General Secretary
United Reformed Church

Danny Dorling
Professor of Human Geography
University of Sheffield

Rt Rev Stephen Lowe
Bishop for Urban Life and Faith

Gary Craig
Professor of Social Justice
University of Hull

Alison Gelder
Chief Executive
Housing Justice

Martin Johnstone
Chief Executive
Faith in Community (Scotland)

Alistair Cameron
Director
Scottish Churches Housing Action

Victor Momodu
European Anti Poverty Network (England)