

HOUSING

Labour's defeat in December 2019 will have come as a shock, if not a total surprise, to Labour Housing Group members across the country.

We are united in feeling that we have missed an opportunity to begin remedying the many problems faced in particular by those without a secure and comfortable roof over their heads.

The LHG Executive, while sympathising with that feeling, is reminded that in only five months' time, Labour activists will be fighting local elections in which housing will be a very real issue and one on which we have far more and better things to offer than our opponents and the issue of Brexit will play far less a part.

We encourage you to plan to attend our Annual General Meeting in March and participate in that fight back.

We plan to provide every local Labour Party with campaigning tools on housing matters, but we need your support - intellectual, moral and financial - to make this possible.

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If you cannot spare time and energy, you can still help us in our work by making a donation by bank transfer to "Labour Housing Group", account number 50478080, sort code 08-90-06, Co-operative Bank, PO Box 1AN, Blandford Street, Newcastle, NE99 1AN.

Of course, you can also send a cheque made payable to "Labour Housing Group" c/o **The Treasurer, Flat 2, 8 Torrington Park, London N12 9SS**

PLEASE QUOTE "LHG2020 CAMPAIGN"

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LHG ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2020

LHG's AGM for 2020 will be held on **Saturday 21st March 10.30am-3pm** at

Crowndale Centre, 218 Eversholt Street, London NW1 1BD

Invited speakers include **John Healey MP** (Shadow Secretary of State for Housing), and **Stephen Cockburn** (Labour Campaign for Human Rights).

There will also be a debate on key housing issues will be for the next 5 years- including **Where next for Grenfell?** This will lead into a workshop on a model housing resolution for Annual Conference.

If you are wondering whether to put yourself forward for the Executive and have any questions, do feel free to contact the Secretary on



BORIS IS A DISASTER - BUT THERE'S PLENTY OF WORK FOR LABOUR TO DO

That great bastion of objective journalism, the Daily Mail, reported recently that the Secretary of State Robert Jenrick and Housing Minister Esther McVeigh were at loggerheads over housing.

Jenrick wanted to spend virtually all the money on helping people onto the famous if slightly mythical housing ladder. McVeigh, to my surprise, was evidently arguing for more of the money to go into council/social housing.

The Mail proclaimed a 'class war' between posh Jenrick and 'blue collar' McVeigh, which will have to be adjudicated by a Prime Minister who for eight years was responsible for housing in London.

Johnson's record was lamentable. He went big time for the totally unaffordable 'affordable rent' product.

His claims to have built social rented housing were about as credible as his garden bridge. Virtually all the social rented housing built during his tenure (2008 onwards) was inherited from Ken Livingstone's programs and funded by the Labour government up to 2010.

Once these worked through the system, virtually nothing that was genuinely affordable was built.

We have a charlatan for a Prime Minister and two vacuous ministers. It would be easy to just give up (I'm tempted I must admit). **But despite the thundering gloom of defeat, we must ask what should Labour now do?**

The first thing to say might sound obvious: we must be an effective and united opposition. *It is harder than it sounds.*

We must constantly highlight rising homelessness, growing housing need, and increasing unaffordability. At the same time, we must remind everyone of our positive policies, especially building social rented housing, meeting need and benefiting the economy.

And we should provide detailed analysis of the likely failings in the government's policies which aim to cut the cost of home ownership.

Secondly, we must be smart in opposition and take those limited opportunities that exist to engage with the government where people on low incomes might benefit.

The most obvious case is social care, where the government claims to want to build a consensus across parties. But in their housing manifesto there are also some opportunities to engage to mitigate the likely outcomes, for example:

- they are committed to a strong programme of devolution. This should play into Labour's strength in local government where councils are now expert at finding new ways of doing things, including building new social rented homes.
- they claim they will bring in 'a better deal for renters', including abolishing no fault evictions. Labour has a raft of progressive policies for the private rented sector and we should be looking to amend any Tory legislation to include some of our own manifesto commitments.
- Johnson promised to bring forward a Social Housing White Paper which will 'empower tenants and support the continued supply of social homes' and include measures to provide 'greater redress for tenants, better regulation, and improvements to the quality of social housing'. Working with tenants, there is a lot that Labour could influence.

There are two areas in particular where Labour should hit the Tories hard. Johnson was famous as London Mayor **for promising to end rough sleeping** by 2012. He was never held accountable for his gross failure to deliver this promise.

Once again, the Tory manifesto promises 'to end the blight of rough sleeping by the end of the

BORIS IS A DISASTER (cont'd)

next Parliament'. Labour should highlight this constantly.

Equally cynically, the Tories also say that, following Grenfell, they will work to **ensure that every home is safe and secure**. Their record to date is miles off this target and many thousands of residents will continue to live in fear for many years to come. This should also be a major campaigning priority for Labour.

There is no way that the prospect of another five years of Tory housing policy can be seen as anything other than a complete disaster. On every measure, prospects are likely to get much worse.

But there are things that Labour can do, locally, regionally, and nationally. We need to get the candidates for leadership to commit to retain the progressive policies contained in the manifesto and to continue to campaign for them vigorously.

In housing at least, we must put aside factional disputes and shout loudly for our agreed policy platform. In doing this, local parties, trade unions, and community housing organisations can work together effectively to make sure that the public is aware that there are alternatives to both Jenrick and McVeigh.

Steve Hilditch [730]

LABOUR'S LEADERSHIP ELECTION 2020

Nominations

For the first time, organisations such as ours which are affiliated to the Labour Party, will be able to make nominations, i.e. have a say in who should be on the ballot paper for the Leadership and Deputy Leadership elections.

All LHG members are being invited to participate in the nomination process. **You must be a paid-up member of both LHG and the Labour Party to take part.**

You will receive a notification either by e-mail or by post.

We need at least 10% of our members to respond so that we can send in a nomination, so you must let us have your response by **Wednesday 12th February**.

Those candidates who received sufficient nominations from MPs/MEPs to get onto the list will have until 14th February to secure backing from 3 affiliates, of which at least 2 must be Trade Unions.

Balloting

The actual ballot of members will open Friday 21st February and close at noon on Thursday 2 April. Voting is by one member one vote. Anyone who is a member of an affiliate and a member of the

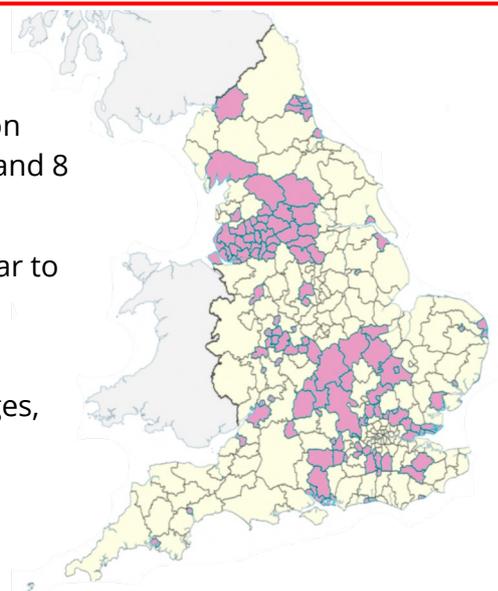
ELECTION BATTLEFIELD 2020

Local elections in the United Kingdom are scheduled to be held on Thursday 7 May 2020, involving about 118 English local councils and 8 directly elected mayors in England and Wales.

New unitary authorities will hold their inaugural elections this year to replace the county and district councils in Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire .

With the exception of those areas that have had boundary changes, the seats up for election were last contested in the 2016 local elections.

There will also be an election to the London Assembly in conjunction with the London mayoral election.



TALKING TO JOHN HEALEY, SHADOW SECRETARY OF STATE

We met John on 10th January to discuss how we might best work together after the disappointment of the 2019 General Election.

Policy development

John said that policy development in itself will not be a priority for the next year or two. Instead, Labour will focus on the following:-

- Holding Government to account on key areas, such as ending Section 21 “no fault” evictions, and allowing councils to build the housing they need.
- Other issues arising from the Housing & Planning Act.
- Supporting this May’s local government elections.
- Helping Labour Councils to continue to innovate.

Raising LHG’s Profile

John agreed that LHG should aim to become the “go-to” place on Labour housing policy, based on a much larger membership. John was happy to support LHG to grow our membership, and will help to raise our profile amongst MPs and Peers.

Leadership campaign and hustings

We discussed the leadership election and the role of affiliated organisations such as LHG. Debate about housing should have a crucial role in the next few years, given that Labour had a **17 point lead over Tories on housing matters in the 2019 General Election**; together with the front bench team (which we hope will continue to be led by John Healey, given the sterling work he has done over the last 5 years), LHG will work to maintain the support for housing as a key political issue across the country.

Sheila Spencer, LHG Secretary

JOHN HEALEY’S BRIEFINGS

Shadow Secretary of State for Housing, John Healey has produced information to help Labour activists with housing issues.

Your attention is drawn to a publication entitled “**The Best of Labour in Power - Housing Innovations from Labour Councils**” and it is particularly welcome because it provides encouragement for local councils, showing what their fellows have managed to achieve even against indifference and hostility from central government. There are case-studies of varying sorts to point to practical solutions.

<http://www.johnhealeyp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/The-Best-of-Labour-in-Power.-Housing-Innovations-from-Labour-Councils-2019.pdf>

An earlier related publication is also available:-

<http://www.johnhealeyp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Housing-Innovations-Second2.pdf>

LHG AND THE POLICY-MAKING PROCESS

POLICIES - DO WE NEED THEM?

Following the General Election, it would be easy to conclude that we have enough policies for now and that we should reflect on the absence of a Labour Government to implement them.

However, local elections are scheduled for Thursday 7th May 2020, when about 118 English local councils and 8 directly elected mayoralities will be contested in England. There will also be an election to the London Assembly in conjunction with the London mayoral election.

Additionally, inaugural elections will be called for the new unitary authorities that will replace the county and district councils in Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire this year.

(See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2020_United_Kingdom_local_elections for more details.)

HOW DO WE MAKE THEM?

Since March 2019, when I was appointed LHG's Policy Officer, my main task has been to develop LHG Briefings which are basic introductions to a range of housing issues (see below).

Although each has revealed areas of interest and complexity, *none has so far required the making of any new policies* – they just describe our current ones and the issues faced. **However, they have sometimes pointed to the need for LHG – and the Labour Party – to review existing policies.**

NEGLECTED AREAS

Drafting policy on housing in rural areas, for instance, has shown me how rarely this topic gets concerted attention by any political party and how Labour appears to struggle with an issue which engages relatively few active members. That doesn't make it unimportant to our potential supporters or those Labour activists who seek to represent them. (I have so far found it impossible even to find a record of how this has been debated at Labour Conference!)

I strongly believe that a key role for Socialist Societies is to act as “think tanks” for Labour, taking the time and collecting the necessary evidence to make “policies that will stick”. What tests should we set for new policy-making?

My starting point would be to ask the following five questions about any policy proposals.

1. Are they based on a sound analysis of the issues?
2. Has the case for change been made effectively?
3. Is there a clear sense of priorities?
4. Have the relationships between different policy items been made clear?
5. Is there a plan for approving, amending and implementing these policies?

These are some of the issues that the LHG Executive will need to consider at its forthcoming meetings.

Paul Martin (Policy Officer)

We have now published three **Labour Housing Group Briefings** aimed at a wide readership on current topics, namely *Rough Sleeping, Affordable Housing* and the *Private Renting Sector*. (See <https://labourhousing.org/resources/lhg-briefings/>)

We want to publish more of these short, readable guides on topics such as *Right to Buy, Homelessness, Sustainable homes, Co-operative and Mutual Housing*. If you would like to contribute, please email our Policy Officer, Paul Martin at pauljmartin@clara.co.uk.



INTRODUCING THE SOCIALIST SOCIETIES

One of 21

LHG is one of 21 Socialist Societies ("SocSocs "). Like trade unions, the SocSocs are "affiliated" to the Labour Party, which is to say that they pay a fee per member to the Party, but are responsible for their own organisation and funding.

Each Society is unique in its history and driving forces, but we are all lobbyists of some kind aiming to improve a chosen aspect of society.

By the standard of trade unions, most SocSocs are very small and consequently exert much less direct influence. We need to strengthen our position though our own individual and collective efforts.

Two key factors in achieving greater influence would be a) having something important to say and b) making friends and allies willing to support one another.

We continued this process by holding a joint fringe meeting with SERA at Labour's 2019 Conference. In practice, a shared platform at Conference of any kind requires a lot of preparation if we are to "sing from the same hymn sheet".

Scope for sharing

The SocSocs have a limited amount of shared "back office" support, but there is a lot more useful work that might be done. This may now need to be given greater prominence since the Party's partially completed Democracy Review of 2018 which recognised the SocSocs as specialists in their fields and also said they should be more firmly integrated into policy making.

At that time, Labour was benefiting financially from the increased membership, but in 2020 we will lose some of the "Short money" which is a form of state funding provided to the Parliamentary party. This loss will need to be made up, so the financial climate will be more demanding for SocSocs . They will need to look both to their own members and elsewhere.

In and out of power

During the consecutive Labour Governments of 1997-2010, it may be that elected politicians grew

too dependent upon the Civil Service for developing policy, particularly for its practical implementation.

The limitations of this approach became all too apparent once Labour was out of office. Members might be surprised at how few staff even a Front Bench MPs have to provide support and that is very largely preoccupied with the immediate day-to-day demands of Shadow Ministerial life.

Our Mission

The SocSocs can and should be "think-tanks" for the Party, providing a repository for ideas and practical experience. They can also be a place to "think the unthinkable" while remaining a "plausibly deniable" way to raise new ideas without attracting the wrong kind of attention from opponents and the media.

Credibility

But we cannot achieve any of these things without growing our own organisations and making us the preferred source of advice/feedback for Labour members.

AFFILIATED SOCIALIST SOCIETIES		
Black, Asian Minority Ethnic Labour	Labour Business	National Union of Labour and Socialist Clubs
Chinese for Labour	Labour Campaign for International Development	Scientists for Labour
Christians on the Left	Labour Housing Group	Socialist Educational Association
Disability Labour	Labour Movement for Europe	Socialist Environment and Resources Association (SERA)
Fabian Society	Labour Party Irish Society	Socialist Health Association
Jewish Labour Movement	Labour Women's Network	Society of Labour Lawyers
Labour Animal Welfare Society	LGBT Labour	

AND IT'S GOODBYE FROM ED

As you know, Labour Housing Group has recently shifted to an e-newsletter from its traditional hard copy format. This is a welcome change, one that reflects the changing methods of political and personal communication, and the expectations and interests of our members and supporters. We don't want our newsletter to end up in the heaps of unread postal communications that lie inside so many front doors.

So we move with the times in a general sense - and there is a specific sense in which it's important to understand and develop our use of contemporary social and other media. It's how opinion forms these days, how political 'mood music' is created, ultimately how elections are won and lost. Here in the north-east of England, the Tories didn't win seats with newsletters, or armies of supporters on the ground - such people don't exist anyway. I suspect they won those seats in part because they had a much more sophisticated social media and on line campaign which they developed and ran over a considerable time before the recent election.

We in LHG need to be part of Labour's long term media campaign, and our Newsletter has to be an integral part of it. So the change is necessary and welcome.

So I feel that it's time for me to move on to another role within LHG, whatever that may be. I've edited the Newsletter since 2008, and have produced 25 editions. Some were good, some bad, some indifferent. It's been interesting, at times frustrating, and always enjoyable. What is needed in an editor now is a better understanding of contemporary media than I have, and an ability to drive the development of the links between the Newsletter and LHG's website. All I would counsel my successor with is the need to remember that for most of LHG's members across the country, the Newsletter is their only contact with us, and is the key to sustaining and developing our membership and our role and influence in the Party and elsewhere.

And I promise I'll try to get my copy in on time.

Ed Derrick

Key roles supporting LHG

Speaking about housing policies for LHG

We get regular requests for speakers, which is a great way to help LP members to campaign on housing issues in their local areas.

We will supply a template and notes so that you do not have to start from scratch.

Editing this newsletter

After 11 years of sterling service in this, we will be looking for someone to take over Ed Derrick's role as Editor of this newsletter.

If you are interested in doing this, please contact the Secretary at

info@labourhousing.org).

Editorial

We are very grateful to you, Ed, for having edited our newsletter for so long and so well. We wish you good luck in your new endeavours.

Thank you,

Acting Editor, Paul Martin

pauljmartin@clara.co.uk

P.S. I hope we can continue to publish an engaging and informative newsletter.

Contributions welcome!



WHO WE ARE - GETTING INVOLVED

WHAT IS THE LABOUR HOUSING GROUP?

The Labour Housing Group is a lobbying group that is affiliated to the Labour Party and dedicated to the development of a socialist housing policy.

You can contact us at <http://labourhousing.org/#main-contact-form> and join us at <http://labourhousing.org/account/join>

Individuals must be members of the Labour Party and agree to be bound by Labour Party rules and the LHG constitution

LHG OUTGOING EXECUTIVE 2019-2020	
LHG's Executive was elected at the AGM on June 16th 2018 for the two years to 2020.	
Executive member	Constituency/role
Janet Berry	Winchester CLP (Membership Secretary)
John Bevan	Tottenham CLP (Vice-chair)
John Cotton	Birmingham Perry Bar CLP (Chair)
Ed Derrick	Newcastle Central CLP (Newsletter Editor)
Katherine Dunne	Hounslow CLP
Paul Eastwood	Hemel Hempstead CLP
Ross Houston	Finchley & Golders Green CLP (Treasurer)
Heather Johnson	Hampstead & Kilburn CLP (Vice-chair & Events Organiser)
Paul Martin	Tower Hamlets CLP (Policy Officer)
Amanda Pinnock	Huddersfield CLP
Kerry Pollard	St Albans CLP
Sheila Spencer	North Tyneside CLP (Secretary)
Sharon Thompson	Birmingham Ladywood CLP (co-opted Executive member)

LHG EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ELECTION 2020

The LHG Exec is elected every 2 years, and the [election is due this year](#). Nominations are invited from any LHG member for the 10 spaces and the Executive can co-opt up to five additional members.

We need people with knowledge of the housing world and Labour politics, but also, very importantly, people who can give their time by taking action.

For instance, taking part in meetings, managing the finances and raising funds, organising events, looking after the newsletter or the website. We are also seeking someone to link to our developing branches and another to organise LHG speakers as part of a drive to get housing on the agenda of the whole Labour movement.

In short, we need activists, with enthusiasm as well as time!

Nominees must submit a personal statement - up to 150 words - by Monday 10th February 2020.

Ballot papers will then be sent to all members, for return by Monday 9th March. The result of the ballot is announced at the AGM, and the Executive Committee meets immediately after the AGM (3-4pm) to elect the officers.

If you want to know more about standing for Exec, do contact me on info@labourhousing.org

Sheila Spencer (Secretary)

The opinions expressed in articles in this Newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Labour Housing Group.