

# PROGRESSIVE BRITAIN

## LAUNCH STATEMENT, 16 May 2021

Today we are launching Progressive Britain – a platform for imaginative thinking that aims to rebuild the nation. Rooted in the Labour Party, Progressive Britain will be dedicated to the intellectual revitalisation of the centre-left in the United Kingdom. It will stimulate fresh thinking about the policy challenges facing us at home and abroad, whilst championing the revival of progressive social democracy.

The seismic shocks and crashes of the past decade have fragmented our politics and undermined both our national and local institutions. Meanwhile, disruptive forces, from technological change and automation to the climate emergency, undermine social cohesion and threaten levels of poverty and inequality not seen in years. Political, social and economic instability has led to polarisation and the growth of xenophobic nationalism and extremism. If we do not act, the vision of an open, tolerant and progressive Britain, anchored in the radical centre-left of politics, might be lost for a generation.

Our aim is to forge a broad-based post-Brexit, post-pandemic settlement for the future of the United Kingdom, a programme of national and local renewal that tackles deep-rooted structural inequalities and injustice. We believe the task of social democratic politics is to set out a new compact – where the state takes a proactive role in shaping an economy that delivers sustainable and inclusive growth with opportunities and security for all.

The inability, if not unwillingness, of our current institutions to promote such a settlement means the leadership and heavy-lifting must come from beyond – and below – Westminster and Whitehall. We believe there is a once in a generation opportunity for Progressive Britain to become the intellectual driving force for political change and reconciliation. For this process of renewal to be a success, it requires the active involvement of citizens and local communities; local, devolved and national politicians; policymakers, businesses and trade unions.

We think that Labour and the centre-left require fundamental reconstruction. We have to stop taking for granted that voters will stick with Labour because of ancestral loyalties. And we can't get drawn into Conservative attempts to create 'culture wars', division and competition between different parts of the country. Our work must be to knit together new coalitions by focusing on the big things that can really change Britain and make people's lives better. Most people want good public services, decent work, safe housing, opportunities for their families and to feel proud of the places they live. A Green New Deal is inspiring for those who care about the climate crisis, and it means lower fuel bills for those struggling to get by. By focusing on the big things that connect people we can learn to win again.

Our vision must also be internationalist. The pandemic has underlined the fundamental interdependence of our societies and we must learn from the experience of social democratic and progressive forces in Europe, the United States and beyond.

The best hope for progressives in preventing a prolonged period of Conservative dominance lies with the long-term revival of the Labour Party. Labour in power changes lives – we have seen this in the consolidation of power in Wales – and only Labour can defeat the Tories in England and offer a plausible governing alternative in Scotland. To achieve this task requires the organisational and political revitalisation of the party. Labour's continuing difficulties are not because it has changed too

much, but because it hasn't changed enough to respond to the social and economic challenges that face the country and the wider world. We need a sustained effort to reimagine our policies and win the battle for a Progressive Britain.