



Photo: Helen Clifton

2020 Vision of the Good Society

**An ecumenical resource and a contribution to public debate
in the run up to the 2015 UK General Election**

This document is offered as a discussion resource by
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland,
working with member bodies and others.

2020 vision: The Good Society and the General Election

A 2020 vision of society

Our society is facing some fundamental challenges – rising levels of poverty and inequality, declining social mobility, squeezes on both personal and government budgets, the prospect of climate crisis. None of this is new, but whoever forms the next government has a tough job and key decisions ahead. These will ultimately shape the type of society that we become.

“Without a vision, the people perish.”

Proverbs 29:18

Although we represent a range of different theological approaches, this statement is drawn from our common desire to see a society that works for all – in which each of us are valued and which respects the Earth. In short - a society for the common good.

We focus on five key areas – wealth and inequality, home, children and young people, livelihoods, and the environment and climate – as key issues in relation to what it means to be a ‘Good Society’. We recognise that these are not the only fundamental issues of our time. However they do represent areas where we collectively feel that we have something particular to contribute right now.

As in other areas of life, much has been said about negativity in politics. There seems to be a growing awareness in faith communities and wider society that if we truly want to create a more just and sustainable society we need a positive vision to work towards. Our starting point is therefore a positive vision of the Good Society we want to live in by 2020, and how we can work together to build it.

We offer this vision to all involved in the political process in the run up to May 2015, not expecting everyone will necessarily share our vision, but in order to stimulate a wider, national debate about what constitutes the ‘common good’.

The theological basis of the Common Good and the Good Society

“The notion of the common good is not unique to Christianity, but it is rooted in our beliefs about God’s relationship to his people and is an inescapable part of a Christian world-view. From its earliest days, the church has understood its mission to be for all the world and its message of salvation addressed to all peoples and all generations.”

The Common Good, Church of England General Synod, June 2013

When Jesus began his ministry, he announced that he had come to bring good news to the poor and to proclaim the year of the Lord, the year of Jubilee when wealth will be redistributed (*Luke 4:18, 19*). Jesus spent most of his time among the poorest of the land, teaching, healing and restoring them to full inclusion in their community. Jesus directly confronted the economic inequality of his day.

“Christians are called to confront the poverty of our brothers and sisters, to touch it, to make it our own and to take practical steps to alleviate it.”

Pope Francis

That people struggling with poverty are very close to Jesus' heart is illustrated in the Sermon on the Mount and in the story of the poor widow whose small gift was of more value because she gave of her substance while others gave of their surplus (*Mark 12:42f; Luke 21:2*). And he identifies himself with the hungry, the thirsty, the strangers, the naked, and the sick in the story of the sheep and goats (*Matthew 25:31ff*).

“The Christian community, if it is to be faithful to Jesus Christ, must consider anew its relationship to money, and bear witness to its calling to be a community of hope, justice and love. This should inform our preaching, teaching, action and prayer, and our engagement with public policy and debate.”

Church of Scotland report on the Purposes of Economic Activity, 2012

Do we see ourselves as a members of one 'Good Society'? Are we content simply to strive for our own individual comfort, and to see our individual rights protected? Can we find ways of reconciling our own interests with those of others, within a broader vision of the 'Good Society'? In what ways is our quality of life connected together, or our wellbeing and happiness connected with that of others? Whatever answers we may come up with, is it not worth debating such fundamental issues – issues which take us far beyond mere party politics to the very foundations upon which our society is built?

In the search for a 'Good Society' theology could be an active partner, bringing an affirmation of our need to build a common life together; the importance of genuine and truth-seeking dialogue; the imperative that societies practice justice and compassion

with respect to those who are most weak and vulnerable; and the value of vision.

How far would we want to see such values underpin our common life?

“Remember your responsibilities as a citizen for the conduct of local, national, and international affairs. Do not shrink from the time and effort your involvement may demand.”

Quaker Advices and Queries 34

Using this document

We hope that what follows will be of particular use to worshipping communities as they engage with the political processes over the coming months.

As well as setting out our vision for 2020 each section contains some background information about the situation today, some suggestions about how as a society, we could move from today's reality towards the vision and finally a set of questions to form the basis for discussion with parliamentary candidates and others.

Election Hustings

We encourage using the 2020 Vision statement as the basis for local Hustings meetings which many churches organise in the run up to the General Election. Separate guidance on how to organise a Hustings, in compliance with the new Lobbying Act, is available on the CTBI election website:

www.churcheselection.org.uk

2020 Vision: Dignity and secure livelihoods for all

2020: The Vision

Our hope and vision for 2020 is that all citizens have access to a secure livelihood and sufficient income, enabling them to live with dignity. For the majority this comes from secure work, regular hours, paid at at least a Living Wage. For those on the lowest incomes, including people unable to work, the social safety net guarantees a secure income, enabling people to live free from fear of destitution or the stigma of poverty.

“A good society is one where every person has the chance to work, earn enough to support themselves and their family and have a home. Where resources are shared not concentrated on a few powerful people at the top.”

Grounding the vision

By seeking the welfare of all, the church expresses its conviction that God wants his creation to flourish (*Jer. 29: 7*). When Jesus began his ministry, he announced that he had come to bring good news to the poor and to proclaim the year of Jubilee when wealth will be redistributed (*Luke 4:18, 19*). Jesus spent most of his time among the poorest of the land, teaching, healing and restoring them to full inclusion in their community.

The ability to ensure an adequate livelihood and to provide protection to its poorest and most vulnerable members is a key litmus test for a good society. The common good is not served by treating anyone as an ‘underclass’, or by demonising people for living in poverty.

Churches have long affirmed the importance of human dignity and the place of ‘Good work’ within it. In the words of the 1997 Churches Enquiry into Unemployment and the Future of Work, ‘Work is a social activity. Indeed, from one point of view, it is work which makes society possible.’ At the same time, there are many for whom work is not, and cannot, be the ‘route out of poverty’. For this reason, Churches have also long affirmed the positive role of the Welfare State in ensuring the dignity of all.

2015: The reality

Increasing numbers of families are struggling to make ends meet, which undermines human dignity. There has been a dramatic growth of food poverty and hunger in recent years. Thousands of Churches across the country have responded to this need by starting or supporting local foodbanks. In 2013/14 Trussell Trust foodbanks alone fed over 900,000 people including more than 300,000 children. Once the numbers being fed by independent foodbanks are included, the numbers are likely to be significantly higher.

The increase in food poverty can, in part, be explained by the long-term effects of the economic crisis: a combination of low pay and insecure work, rising food, energy and housing costs, and an increased reliance on high cost lenders, which push people into unaffordable levels of personal debt. Low pay in particular is a growing problem, with nearly five million people now paid less than a Living Wage. In overall terms, wages have

largely stagnated for several years, with increasing numbers working in poorly paid, temporary or part-time jobs which do not provide a sustainable livelihood.

At the same time, the evidence collected by the Trussell Trust and others points to the fact that around half of people turn to foodbanks due to problems directly linked with delays, errors or removal of benefit payments. This points to the fact that the benefits system has been eroded to the point where it is no longer providing sufficient protection for the people who need it most, and leaving tens of thousands literally at risk of destitution.

“The best measure of society is how we treat the poorest and most vulnerable. A good society is one where the richest contribute most to eradicate poverty and improve society as a whole.”

Churches have also highlighted the way in which public attitudes to poverty are shaped by powerful myths and lies we tell ourselves which seek to lay the blame for poverty on those who are affected by it. When repeated with great frequency by sections of the press, these myths serve to undermine public support for welfare and for further action to tackle poverty.

How might we get there from here?

Churches and others in civil society have stepped in to provide emergency assistance to people going hungry. However, Government should also play its proper role in working with wider society to tackle the underlying causes, and to ensure that by 2020 the numbers referred to foodbanks has fallen to the point that emergency food aid is no longer needed.

Firstly, action needs to be taken to ensure that there is enough good work for everyone. Central to this is encouraging much more widespread acceptance amongst employers of the Living Wage. At the same time, Government should lead the way in reducing reliance on temporary, part-time or ‘zero hours’ contracts, and instead encourage the creation of jobs which are secure enough to enable those in work to escape from poverty.

Secondly, the core principle of the welfare safety net should be put back at the heart of welfare policy. Action should be taken to ensure that all people living in the UK are able to live free from the fear of destitution. This is not just about the adequacy of benefits, but that people are able to receive them without undue delay, and are not subject to unjust ‘sanctions’ which leave them facing extended periods of destitution.

Thirdly, more can be done to promote affordable credit and to regulate the activities of usurious and predatory lenders.

Lastly, politicians and leaders of public opinion should resist the urge to use language which denigrates or blames people for their poverty. The common good demands that all people are treated with dignity and respect, and their intrinsic value as human beings is respected.

Discussion questions

What concrete steps can be taken to put the safety net principle back at the centre of the welfare state and ensure that no one needs to be referred to a foodbank by 2020?

What more can Government do to promote the Living Wage or in other ways to encourage employers to provide good work that enables families to live with dignity?

2020 Vision: Enough homes for all to flourish

2020 : The Vision

Our hope and vision for 2020 is that reasonably priced homes where people can flourish are available for everyone who needs them. House prices are stable and speculative investment for short term gain has been replaced by long-term investment in affordable housing. Good quality rental properties are found at fair rents and there is a reliable safety net for all homeless people.

“Everyone should have a clean safe bed.”

Grounding the vision

The Old Testament books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy state very clearly the responsibilities of the community to provide for widows, orphans and strangers, i.e. for all the people for whom there was no other source of provision because they fell outside the normal scope of the family group, beyond the bounds of the main provider of ‘welfare’ at the time. Leviticus (25:29-31) includes specific rules about houses, designed to prevent homelessness and exploitation.

The writings of the prophets, critiquing their society and the rulers of their day, call people to account and require them to provide for the needs of poor people in their midst. So Isaiah tells us that God wants his people to take in the homeless poor, to support their family members and to share their food with the hungry (Isaiah 58:7).

This concern has not gone away in modern times. Care for homeless people and for the creation of stable and secure homes is still part of the Christian message, as can be seen in these words of Pope John Paul II:

“A house is much more than a simple roof over one’s head. The place where a person creates and lives out his or her life, also serves to found, in some way, that person’s deepest identity and his or her relations with others.” What Have You Done To Your Homeless Brother?

2015 : The reality

It is widely accepted that house building in Britain has failed to keep up with demand for at least the last 15 years. Even if all the unoccupied properties were filled we would still need to build more than 200,000 new homes a year to keep up with the formation of new households and tackle the backlog of homeless and poorly housed families and individuals.

One consequence of the shortage of housing, together with its role as a safe (and profitable) investment, is that the cost of a home, whether to buy or to rent, has become prohibitively expensive. The average home costs just over £250,000 but the average household income is around £23,000 meaning a home costs more than 10 times income. London in particular is facing an acute housing crisis, due to the continuing escalation in both rents and house prices.

Rents are rising faster than house prices at the same time as more people are making their homes in the private rental sector. So the cost of Housing Benefit, the government subsidy for the housing costs of people paying rent (available to people in work as well as the unemployed and retired), keeps going up despite the introduction of benefit caps, the spare room subsidy and other welfare changes.

There are lots of other problems with housing apart from high costs. More than a quarter of a million families are living in severely overcrowded conditions. There are endemic issues with poor insulation, damp, mould and disrepair, especially (but not exclusively) in the private rented sector. The annual street homeless count found more than 2,400 people sleeping rough in England and Wales in November 2013 and there are hundreds of thousands more people who are the hidden homeless, sleeping in cars, squats, bin sheds and on friends' floors. The situation for young people and for destitute migrants and asylum seekers is especially dire.

"A good society is where everyone, planet-wide, feels as appreciated, warm, fed, healthy and housed as I am."

How might we get there from here?

Creating enough reasonably priced homes for everyone who needs them is a huge task and cannot be the responsibility of any one player in the game. National and Local Government, house builders, the finance sector, Housing Associations, private landlords and faith groups all need to work together.

Government should prioritise house building, including reasonably priced homes for families and single people. Mixed housing developments should be prioritized over luxury housing, especially in London. Collectively, we should work towards the goal of no household needing to spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs.

The government could encourage a shift away from speculative or short-term investment eg in luxury developments, and towards long-term investment in the provision of affordable housing, eg through working with the finance sector and the churches to create incentives to invest in Housing Bonds.

An adequate safety net providing emergency shelter for all homeless people (including migrants), followed up with good quality advice and assistance will greatly reduce rough sleeping. Other nations could follow the example of Scotland, where assistance is provided irrespective of whether people are considered to have made themselves 'intentionally' homeless. This must be combined with a continued focus on preventing homelessness and on support for the newly housed. Christian volunteers have an important role to play here.

Christian landlords should set an example of best practice in their sector. New standards for rented property, including controls on letting agent fees and regulation of rent increases could be introduced. Longer leases will enable private renters to put down roots in their communities.

Churches and other religious institutions should plan to make land available for development, and especially for Community Land Trusts – non-profit making companies that are able to develop and own affordable housing on behalf of a local community in perpetuity.

"A good society involves a sense of community, underpinned by justice, fairness and the inclusion of all."

Discussion questions

What would you do to find the money and the land to build the affordable homes both to rent and to buy that are needed?

In a situation of shortage we need to make best use of the houses we already have. How can we cut the number of empty homes and reduce both overcrowding and under-occupation?

Who is responsible for providing emergency shelter for all homeless people and how can it be done better?

2020 Vision: Fulfilled lives for children and young people

2020 : The Vision

Our hope and vision for 2020 is that all children and young people are enabled to live fulfilling lives, to flourish in their friendships, families and local communities; their contributions are respected and valued, and they are allowed and enabled to grow and achieve their potential.

“A good society values everyone, regardless of age or ability.”

Grounding the vision

Biblical visions of children and childhood have two complementary facets. One, exemplified by the child Samuel (*1 Samuel 3*) is of children as leaders, who have much to contribute to society and from whom adults have much to learn. The second, best characterised by Jesus’ teaching, is of the vulnerable, including children, being at the heart of the Kingdom of God. Both have much to say about how society should treat children and young people.

Jesus says (*Matthew 18:5*) that to welcome a child in his name is to welcome him, so the care and welcome of children must be central to how churches respond, particularly to the most vulnerable and marginalised. The incarnation of Jesus as a baby tells us that children and young people are fully human and created in the image of God. As such we need to care not just for the future well-being of children, reducing them to nothing more than future adults, but for their well-being as full members of our communities and society now.

The story of Samuel with its suggestion that wisdom is found in children and young people has a further implication; that children can and should be participants in their own destiny. This makes it essential that we listen to the voices and experiences of children and young people as we seek to shape society for the better.

2015 : The reality

In the UK, at any one time, about one in ten children suffer from low subjective well-being. This is not a transient experience but a deep rooted unhappiness. Children with low well-being are less likely to enjoy their home and family life, to feel safe, to enjoy going to school and to feel positive about their future. As they grow up, they are more likely to be victimised, to adopt risky behaviours and to suffer from eating disorders and depression.

One of the significant contributors to low well-being is growing inequality and poverty. In spite of the broad consensus among political parties to commit to eradicating child poverty by 2020 there are still 3.7 million children living in poverty, one of the worst levels of child poverty in the industrialised world. More than half of all children in poverty live in families with at least one adult in paid work. Children are much more likely to live in low-income households than the population as a whole.

Poverty can have a significant impact on children’s quality of life and has limiting effects on future life chances, from health

and well-being, to education and employment.

In addition to poverty, neglect among adolescents between the ages of 11 and 17 (both within the family and institutionally) is also significantly linked to well-being. The NSPCC estimates that more than one in eight young people experience neglect. Neglect has a significant impact on education, physical and emotional health and anti-social behaviour and is linked to longer-term impacts, eg increased risk of offending, violent crime and drug taking.

“In a good society everyone needs to be equal; for example some someone says to someone else that they won’t be friends because of their background. That wouldn’t be right so you need everyone to feel like they are equal to the other people in the world.”

How might we get there from here?

Creating an environment in which children flourish requires us to tackle poverty and neglect.

Action should be taken to lift children and their families out of poverty by improving welfare support, reducing reliance on high cost lending, increasing pay and employment opportunities, reducing the costs of working and increasing access to affordable housing. Children’s resilience to poverty should be built, reducing the chance of poor children growing up to be impoverished adults through improving educational attainment and health outcomes. This needs to take place at the level of individual children, families and communities. In particular the demonisation of people in poverty in media and public

debate must be reversed if children are to avoid being bullied and victimised due to their economic circumstance.

Reducing adolescent neglect will require a stronger focus on early intervention. Professional with regular access to young people, including school staff and church youth workers have a key role in early identification and onward referral. This will also require a shift in the attitude of the public, who frequently believe young people are more troublesome than troubled and professionals, who overestimate the resilience of young people. Statutory services will need to adopt more integrated and less piecemeal attitudes and to reverse dwindling investment in responsive services. There is a particular need to address neglect of older adolescents, especially 16 and 17 year olds, who are too often seen as not in need of support.

Underpinning all of this is the need to actively listen to children and young people and include their experiences of poverty or neglect in designing statutory or voluntary responses. Church communities could lead the way in children’s participation and co-production of services.

Discussion questions

In what ways might you show that children and young people are valued? What can you do to ensure their voices are heard?

What do you need to do to create an environment where all children and young people can flourish and grow?

What interventions do you think would be important in reducing the impact of poverty and neglect to enable all children and young people to fulfil their potential?

2020 Vision: A moral economy in the service of all

2020 : The Vision

Our hope and vision for 2020 is of an economy that is in service to every human being irrespective of their wealth or the market value of their labour. An economy that is as responsive to the knowledge and experience of the poorest communities as it is to the wealth and power of the richest.

“For many years we have been creating an economy where the dominant values are greed and fear. It is an economy in which the weak and the vulnerable suffer disproportionately and where non-renewable natural resources are squandered. We need to re-think what kind of people we want to be and what kind of society we want to live in.”

Church of Scotland report on the Purposes of Economic Activity, 2012

Grounding the Vision

The word “economy” is derived from the Greek “*oikonomia*” meaning housekeeping. Successful housekeeping ensures that the house itself is maintained and the people within it are able to grow and flourish – a successful economy is not an end in itself but instead a mechanism to achieve these goals within society as a whole.

The Old Testament gives some indication as to what such a society might look like. There are clear statements that all share responsibility for ensuring the most vulnerable are cared for. There are also clear warnings about the consequences, for the whole of society, of a group abusing power or dealing with the weakest unfairly.

The themes of people being loved and valued creations of God, irrespective of their wealth, are reinforced in the New Testament. An idea is developed that both the longing for wealth and wealth itself can be corrosive and form a barrier between ourselves and God. This vision is of an economy that respects and provides for even the most marginalised, that is not designed to concentrate wealth into the hands of a few people. Moreover it is profoundly distrustful of motivations rooted in a lust for wealth or power. This is an economy that heeds the call to hear the voice of the poor.

2015 : The reality

The global economy frequently appears to lack a clear moral dimension. Whilst it has generated great wealth, this has been at the expense of also creating growing inequality.

The UK has the second highest levels of income inequality in the developed world after the United States. The chief executive of one of the UK’s top 100 companies earns on average in one year what it would take the average person 156 years to earn. This is matched by extraordinary levels of wealth inequality – the richest fifth of families in the UK own over 100 times more than the poorest fifth – £5,970 billion.

Globally, there has been some good progress towards the eradication of absolute poverty, often defined in income terms at \$1.25 a day. More children are in school and there are fewer preventable child deaths. However, the inequalities are stark and many people are being left behind – in South Sudan, a

woman still has a 1 in 7 chance of dying during her lifetime from pregnancy-related causes; an estimated 260 million people continue to be affected by discrimination based on work and descent such as caste; and over 600 million people living in rural communities around the world still do not have access to clean water.

“A Good Society is where people respect others for who they are - not only what they do. Where there is no discrimination and people have what they need, not what they don’t need.”

Tax dodging by wealthy individuals and corporations is estimated to cost the UK at least £60 billion a year, and the world’s poorest countries an estimated \$160 billion – more than the entire global aid budget. People have witnessed exposé after exposé of large multinational companies and wealthy individuals dodging their basic civic duty to pay their fair share of tax. As a result, those least culpable are hit hardest by declining public services and living standards.

How might we get there from here?

Inequality is made up of thousands of small decisions made each day. If the poorest have no voice when the decisions are taken, inequality will continue to flourish. In our own churches as well as amongst employers and in government we must commit to seeing the poorest represented.

The Living Wage, transparent pay ratios, and the use of taxation to encourage lower pay differentials should all be promoted. However, the key change required is the belief that wider society, working through the democratic process, has the ability to

regulate and intervene in markets that are unjust, and that the voice of those without wealth should be a key part of that process.

The Government should reform the UK tax system to ensure it rewards businesses for their contribution to the UK economy, not for dodging taxes.

As a major financial centre, and with control over many tax havens, the UK Government must be a champion for reform of the global trade and tax systems, to ensure that both developing countries and those reliant on hard-pressed public services at home benefit.

In 2015 autumn new series of UN goals for ‘sustainable development’ are due to be agreed, to replace the current Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This is a key opportunity to include goals for reducing inequality, which would apply to both ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ countries.

Whoever finds themselves in Downing Street, should therefore commit themselves to negotiating for an ambitious set of goals – including for reducing inequality – and commit to implementing these goals within the UK as well as globally.

Discussion Questions:

What can Government do to put morality back at the heart of global and national economic policy-making?

How can our political life be made to include the voices of those without money?

What can Government do to narrow the gap in wealth and incomes and tackle tax dodging at both domestic and global levels?

2020 Vision: A global climate deal that works for us all

2020 : The Vision

Our hope and vision for 2020 is that greenhouse gas emissions are falling rapidly in the UK; the Government has shown leadership in helping to agree a global climate deal which limits global temperature rises to two degrees centigrade in a way which is fair for the poorest; and people are taking their own personal responsibility seriously, by seeking to reduce their own emissions as part of the overall solution.

“A good society is a place where we don’t just care about the present but learn from the past and prepare a better place for future generations.”

Grounding the vision

Stewardship is the theological belief that humans are responsible for the world, and should take care of it. A biblical view of stewardship can be defined as ‘utilizing and managing all resources God provides for the glory of God and the betterment of creation.’

God is the creator of the world and thinks it is ‘very good’ (*Genesis 1:31*). God is involved with creation, sustaining it and caring for it (*Psalms 65:9–13; Matt 10:29; Hebrews 1:3*).

We have also been given a special task – to look after the rest of what God has made (*Genesis 1: 26–28; Gen. 2:15*). This is not an optional extra for a few environmentalists, but a fundamental part of what it means to be human.

Climate change is both a cause of suffering and a threat to God’s creation. It increases the number of extreme weather events like floods, droughts and hurricanes. The people with the least resources – and who have contributed least to global emissions - are least able to cope and it can trap them in poverty. As Christians we must take a prophetic approach to climate change – speaking out about the injustices we see and helping people to imagine a different future.

2015 : The reality

While the UK has some good long-term emission reduction targets in place, it is not always clear that economic and political decisions made in the short-term will help us put the building-blocks in place to ensure that those ambitious targets are actually met.

We often hear political figures in the media presenting a case of ‘economic growth versus tackling climate change’ rather than highlighting the win/wins that investment in a green and renewable economy could bring both for the UK and our global neighbours. Although the scientific evidence is overwhelming, there are still prominent public and political voices, who say that we should ignore the warnings of scientists and continue with business as usual to retain competitiveness, rather than facing into the problem squarely and imagining a more radically different economy in the long run.

Ignorance of the issues that challenge our current ways of living is no longer a valid argument. Peer-reviewed academic studies draw our attention to a devastating loss of natural habitat and wildlife, whilst others argue that fossil fuel reserves cannot continue to be exploited without corresponding costly measures to reduce the impact on the natural environment.

How we might get there from here

The UK Government needs to stand firm on its commitments in the 2008 Climate Change Act for reducing the UK's carbon emissions.

At the same time, the UK Prime Minister should show global leadership to help generate political progress.

The UK should encourage the EU to agree ambitious targets for reducing carbon emissions and increasing both energy efficiency and the amount of energy Europe generates from renewable sources such as wind and solar power. The UK Government must also take an active lead in promoting a fair and ambitious global deal on climate change at the UN climate change talks in Paris in December 2015.

At the same time, reducing domestic demand will be key to moving towards a low carbon economy and this can be supported by incentivising energy efficiency. Action at a domestic level to end fuel poverty will not only improve people's lives but also help tackle climate change.

The Government could commit to carrying out a national programme to improve the heating and insulation standards of the homes of low income households such that by 2030 they are at least the same standard as homes built today. At the same time, it could improve the homes of all low income

households so that nobody has to live in a dangerously cold and unhealthy home by 2020.

The Government should also invest in the necessary infrastructure to support a vision for growth in renewables consistent with the advice of the Committee on Climate Change that urges a substantial decarbonisation of the power sector by 2030. This might require a greater capacity for connecting our grid to that of the rest of Europe, diversification in renewable energy sources and storage capacity in our grid to reduce the need for spare generation capacity at times of peak demand.

Governmental action is vital, but not enough on its own. Churches and individuals need to play their part in reducing emissions, because this is the right thing to do; it means we can speak to politicians with integrity; it will help the UK to meet its targets; and it will send a signal to politicians that the public do really want them to take action.

“A good society is one where we all think about the impact of our choices on others especially those who are marginalised in any way.”

Discussion questions

What can Government do to ensure that the transition from a high-carbon to a low-carbon economy happens in a way which is least harmful to those living in poverty, both in the UK and overseas?

Where will the political will come from to ensure that the UK Government exercises genuine global leadership to secure effective international agreement to reduce greenhouse gases by 2020?

A prayer for the Good Society

God of creation
we live in the world you have made
Give us generous hearts
to share your wealth with others
Your kingdom come
Your will be done

God of power
Help us to remember that you can do impossible things
Inspire us to work with you for change in our society
Your kingdom come
Your will be done

God of hope
Be present in our communities
Give us the strength to show your love right here
Your kingdom come
Your will be done

God of love
You bring us healing and comfort
Come close to those who need your peace
Your kingdom come
Your will be done

God of truth
Draw us into your story of hope
Challenge us to speak out for justice
Your kingdom come
Your will be done

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland would like to record its thanks for the support and input of a range of Christian denominations and agencies in preparing this statement including:

- Arocha
- Caritas Social Action Network
- The Childrens Society
- Christian Aid
- Church Action on Poverty
- Church Urban Fund
- Churches Environmental Issues Network
- Housing Justice
- Joint Public Issues Team of the Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed Churches
- National Justice and Peace Network
- Quaker Peace and Social Witness
- Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office
- Vincentians in Partnership

Quotations used in this document, where no source is attributed, are from members of the public attending the Greenbelt Festival 2014, who were invited to share their own thoughts and reflections on what it means to be a Good Society.

The organisations whose logos appear below have signalled their formal support for the 2020 Vision of the Good Society statement. Clearly, the 2020 Vision statement covers a broader range of themes and topics than those covered by many of the supporting organisations. A number of organisations have contributed specialist expertise (eg in relation to housing, young people or climate change), but their support for the 2020 Vision statement cannot be taken to imply that they support or endorse policies or statements beyond their specific area of competence.





Photos: Helen Clifton



39 Eccleston Square
London SW1V 1BX

www.churcheselection.org.uk

www.ctbi.org.uk

