

There is still a belief in the possibility of a Labour win. A few policy changes will suffice. Peter Tatchell has a programme which he outlines in The Guardian, that he thinks would do the trick. A few of the suggestions have a certain merit, others are worse than useless. Labour's problem, the Conservative's problem, the LibDem's problem, Britain's problem, is that they are not informed by a coherent view of how the economy works. Of course Peter Tatchell is not an influential political figure but he articulates a widely held set of views about what should be done, which make his suggestions worth attention.

[Peter Tatchell's proposals are in italics]

*Free home insulation for everyone with an income under £15,000 a year, which would assist these householders to permanently cut their energy bills, and also create jobs and reduce global warming.*

Good idea to encourage people to save energy but there is a nasty little poverty trap in that if anyone with an income of £15001, no free insulation for you, so that will need an army of bureaucrats to check and opportunity for cowboy firms. Besides, why should taxpayers pick up this bill?

*Stricter government regulation of energy and fuel prices, in order to curb excess profits.*

Maybe, but how does anyone decide or work out what is an "excess profit". And doesn't cheap energy go against the aim of reducing emissions, a few proposals on?

*Abolition of the £300 Home Information Packs and a two-year stamp duty holiday for first-time buyers of property worth less than £300,000, to help revive the housing market.*

HIPs were always a bad idea and so is stamp duty. They need to be abolished altogether. The Campaign has consistently resisted Stamp Duty, whilst HIPs conflict with the fundamental

principle of Caveat Emptor. It would be foolish to purchase a property without one's own surveyor's report, for what that is worth, which is not much, as some house purchasers I know have discovered to their cost, A curious effect of PT's proposal is that if someone's house goes for £299,999, no stamp duty, but if £300,000, they pay on the whole amount. And what happens at the end of the holiday period?

*Cheaper, more reliable public transport, which would aid low-income car-less households, get more vehicles off the road, ease traffic congestion and cut carbon dioxide emissions.*

Public transport investment is a good idea but it is reflected in higher land values in the areas that gain, so without a land value capture scheme, it is just putting money into landowners' pockets.

*Replacement of council tax with a local income tax, to end the hardship faced by low-income retirees who, because of increased house prices over the last decade, now live in high-value, high-tax properties.*

The arguments against income tax have been rehearsed ad nauseam since the idea was first put up nearly 30 years ago. Income tax is not a fair tax, as explained elsewhere on this site. It soaks the honest not-quite-poor, whilst the rich use tax havens and exploit the loopholes. Besides, why should people be punished for working? Council Tax is based on 1991 prices, not the prices of the recent boom. Tatchell should have checked this before going into print. Retired people need to have their pensions increased. The tax system should not be geared to the needs of people who the government has allowed to get poor, the answer is to deal with the poverty. Council tax and UBR need to be replaced by a site-value based system but that is another matter.

*Increase the deposit protection for savers to £100,000, to give security to seniors who have been wise enough to save for their retirement.*

Yes but who is supposed to pay for it and what about dealing with the underlying problem that led to these banking problems?

*Raise tax-free personal allowances from £6,035 to £8,000 for people earning under £20,000 a year and to £7,000 for those earning £20,000 to £25,000, which would be funded by a rise in tax on incomes over £80,000 and which would assist the lower-paid at a time of rocketing food prices.*

The arithmetic of this would be very complicated. Hitting high-earners is difficult because people will move or exploit the loopholes. Tax thresholds should be linked initially to 40 hours work at the national minimum wage, but the problem is income tax itself. And national insurance payments. These are a tax on employment and a major cause of - unemployment.

The UK needs to move to a system of land value taxation, as the Campaign urges, but the concentration of land ownership is such that the vested interests involved do their best to make sure the subject is never even discussed. So they need to be firmly challenged. But the Tatchell proposals, which would mostly do more harm than good, are not something the vested landowning interests would worry about - on the contrary, there are a few titbits for them in the package. The depressing thing about Tatchell's piece is that it reflects the state of thought in the contemporary Left.

[Read the article here](#)