

NEF working paper

A new social settlement for people and planet

Understanding the links between social justice and sustainability

Written by: Anna Coote

With thanks to Ian Gough, Steven Devlin, James Angel and Julia Slay

New Economics Foundation

www.neweconomics.org

info@neweconomics.org

+44 (0)20 7820 6300

@nef

Registered charity number 1055254

© 2014 The New Economics Foundation

Contents

Summary	3
What are the main links?	3
Implications for a new social settlement.....	3
Towards a new social settlement	5
Introduction	6
Working definitions.....	6
Links between social justice and environmental sustainability	7
Implications for a new social settlement.....	14
In conclusion	25
Questions for discussion	
Endnotes	26

Summary

This paper sets out the distinctive and essential premise of NEF's work on a new social settlement: that the goals of social justice and environmental sustainability are profoundly connected and interdependent. It examines why they are linked together and how they affect each other. It then explores the implications for policy and practice.

What are the main links?

Widening inequalities and accelerating damage to the natural environment are rooted together in capitalism. Social and environmental resources make it possible for the economy to function, but capitalism has given them no value. Instead, it has expropriated them in the drive to accumulate and to the detriment of both.

The twin goals of social justice and environmental sustainability share an interest in the future and in the impact of present policy and practice on the conditions of people and the planet in generations to come. Neither goal can be achieved by means of individual action or market transactions alone. They require collective action at local, national and global levels, and investment of public resources to address shared risks.

Each goal depends on the other for fulfilment. Human well-being depends on a healthy environment. The negative effects of damage to the natural environment affect those who are most disadvantaged first and most. Socio-economic inequalities drive up aspirations for resource-intensive living standards and undermine the social solidarity that is needed for collective action. The institutions of the welfare state, such as schools and hospitals, have a significant ecological footprint, and can lead by example to mitigate climate change.

Implications for a new social settlement

Understanding these links must be at the heart of planning for a new social settlement. Both goals must be pursued simultaneously. This means abandoning the conventional assumption that the economy will continue to grow unchecked, releasing ever more public funds to expand and improve public services. Unchecked growth carries risks of grave damage to the natural environment; public resources must be invested to safeguard the environment, not just in public services.

Growing the 'core economy' is an alternative way of expanding the resource base and it will help to promote both social justice and environmental sustainability. The

'core economy' consists of the abundant uncommodified human and social resources and relationships that are embedded in everyday life. It can grow if it is recognised, valued, nurtured and supported – and this must be done in ways that enable everyone to benefit on equal terms.

Promoting co-production will help to grow the core economy: this means bringing citizens and professionals together in equal partnerships to pool different kinds of knowledge and skill, and to work together to define needs and to plan and deliver activities to meet those needs.

A new social settlement must also shift investment 'upstream' to prevent harm, promote systemic change for greater equality, foster solidarity and promote sustainability through public services putting their own house in order and leading by example. It must offset any regressive effects of pro-environmental policies and support a slow but steady move towards shorter and more flexible hours of paid work.

There is a strong case for promoting measures that serve both objectives together, with mutually reinforcing effects. Examples include promoting active travel and access to green spaces, increasing the volume of food produced and consumed locally, and making homes more energy-efficient.

Towards a new social settlement

This working paper is part of a series of discussions, publications and blogs that explore ways of building a new social settlement for the UK. It is NEF's contribution to broader debates about the future of the welfare system and a new economics.

At the heart of our work is a quest for policies and practice that recognise the vital links between social justice and environmental sustainability. We celebrate and champion the best elements of our embattled welfare state. And we address new problems such as widening inequalities, climate change, and the prospect of little or no economic growth over the coming decade. By valuing our abundant human assets, our relationships and our time – and fostering collective policies and practice – we envisage a new settlement to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Our work on a new social settlement is jointly supported by NEF and Oxfam. Working papers, blogs and news of events will be posted on our website during 2014 with a final report published towards the end of the year.

Visit www.neweconomics.org/newsocialsettlement to find out more.



Introduction

This working paper sets out the distinctive and essential premise of **nef's** work on a new social settlement: that two fundamental goals of the settlement, social justice and environmental sustainability, are profoundly connected and substantially affect one another. We examine why and how they are linked and suggest why, together, the two goals are central to the task of envisaging a welfare system for the 21st century. We then explore the implications for policy and practice.

Working definitions

Social justice has been variously defined. For this paper, we take it to mean that every individual is of equal worth before the law; has an equal right to the essentials of a good life; and is entitled to equal opportunities to enjoy well-being, fulfil their potential and participate in society. While not all inequalities are unjust (sometimes they compensate for unfair disadvantage), unjust inequalities should be reduced and where possible eliminated.

Environmental sustainability can be defined as living within environmental limits and respecting planetary boundaries, ensuring that the natural resources needed for life to flourish are unimpaired and remain so for future generations.

The two ideas are linked in definitions of sustainable development, most notably by the Brundtland Commission's 1987 report, *Our Common Future*: "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."¹ The UK government's definition of sustainable development includes as one of the primary components: 'A strong, healthy and just society: meeting the diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities, promoting personal wellbeing, social cohesion and inclusion, and creating equal opportunity for all.'² Oxfam has envisaged a 'safe and just space for humanity' by combining 'social and planetary boundaries' within a single framework.³

We do not assume that the pursuit of one will always help to achieve the other – especially as there are different dimensions to each goal and varying interpretations. To give just one example, protecting biodiversity, as a key component of environmental sustainability, does not lead inexorably to social justice, although arguably failure to do so will have socially unjust consequences. It is beyond the scope of this paper to engage in definitional combat. But we will try to explain why understanding the connections between the two (according to our own working definitions of them), is so important for a new social settlement.

Links between social justice and environmental sustainability

1. *Common roots*

The problems of dramatically widening inequalities and a severely degraded natural environment are rooted together in capitalist accumulation. Social and environmental resources make it possible for the economy to function. Essentially, they provide the people who produce and consume, and the necessary materials. This has been the case since well before capitalism took hold in the era of industrialisation. But then capitalism achieved two things (among much else). It disconnected economic value from social and environmental value, rendering the latter invisible and irrelevant to economic accounting, so that this obscured the impacts of economic activity on society and environment. At the same time, it not only exploited waged labour, but also expropriated these (unvalued) resources, free-riding on reproductive labour and on nature in the drive to accumulate, to the extreme detriment of both.

Of course, poverty and inequality predate capitalism, which has – albeit unevenly – brought extraordinary levels of prosperity. However, the patterns of social injustice that are prevalent today - between the global north and south, between women and men, and between rich and poor – have been set in train and intensified by capitalism. No doubt, some pre-capitalist societies ruthlessly exploited natural resources, but only in the last two centuries, under capitalism, has exploitation reached catastrophic levels. As Nancy Fraser puts it, ‘Capitalism brutally separated human beings from natural, seasonal rhythms, conscripting them into industrial manufacturing, powered by fossil fuels, and profit-driven agriculture, bulked up by chemical fertilizers.’⁴

The neoliberal phase of capitalism has ratcheted up these damaging effects. The gap between the richest and the rest grows wider. Picketty observes that ‘the process by which wealth is accumulated and distributed contains powerful forces pushing towards divergence or at any rate extremely high levels of inequality.’⁵ Fraser notes a new round of ‘enclosures’, such as commodification of water, which captures ‘more of nature’ for capitalist accumulation.⁶ Power follows wealth, giving rise to cultural and political forces that shore up the status quo and resist changes in favour of social justice and sustainability. ‘Success’ continues to be measured in ways that take little or no account of social or natural resources.

So, while the unregulated pursuit of GDP growth and accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few have exacerbated poverty and inequality, the same tendencies have

contributed to climate change, resource depletion, pollution of air, water and land, and other forms of environmental degradation. The key point for this paper is that both developments are part of the same process. Understanding how they are knitted together as ‘conditions of possibility’ for capitalist markets⁷ is a useful starting point for addressing the goals of social justice and environmental sustainability.

2. Shared interests in the future

Linked together within the concept of sustainable development, the twin goals of social justice and environmental sustainability are concerned with both the present and the future, and with the impacts of present policies and practices on the future conditions of people and the planet.

Most obviously, the goal of environmental sustainability projects into the future. It involves protecting natural resources, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and respecting planetary boundaries, in order to safeguard the carrying capacity of the planet, for intrinsic as well as extrinsic reasons, which primarily include the capacity to sustain human well-being over the long term.

Where the goal of social justice is concerned, it may be possible (if not ethical) to pursue the goal in the present without concern for future generations. However, there is compelling evidence that the factors that contribute to – or detract from – social justice can accumulate over time and pass from one generation to the next. This applies to the distribution of socio-economic factors, such as income, employment, housing, education and diet, as well as to the various psycho-social effects of disadvantage, such as loneliness and isolation, anxiety and stress, low self-esteem and lack of confidence. The ways in which parents’ social and economic circumstances affect their children’s life chances are well documented.⁸ Diseases such as obesity and hypertension are known to recur in successive generations; they can intensify over time as children are exposed to ‘multiple processes of deprivation or vulnerability’, and are thought to influence genetic predisposition to some types of illness. The World Health Organisation observes that ‘sustainable reduction of health inequalities requires action to prevent parents’ relative and absolute disadvantage blighting the lives of their children, grandchildren and subsequent generations.’⁹

Health has been identified as a basic human need, along with critical autonomy and social participation, as discussed in another working paper in this series.¹⁰ Meeting basic needs is the first and essential step towards well-being for all. Creating the conditions for everyone to have an equal chance of enjoying well-being is central to our understanding of social justice. A key point for this discussion is that basic human needs are universal and enduring: it should be possible to satisfy them for

every individual, now and in the future. The means by which needs are satisfied will vary between people, places and generations, for example, by different types of housing, education or food. But some essential aspects of needs satisfaction are constant and some of these arise from the natural environment. To the best of our current knowledge, the basic need for health will always depend for satisfaction on at least minimal standards (for quality and quantity) of air, water and nutrition, which must therefore be sustained over time.

Ensuring that basic needs continue to be met involves preventing future harm. As NEF has argued elsewhere, this involves moving investment and action ‘upstream’ to address the factors that have caused harm to occur, to reduce the danger of problems intensifying, and to avert the risk of future societal and environmental damage.¹¹ This requires a perspective on policy and practice that understands the interdependence of society and environment, cares about the long-term implications, and seeks to safeguard the interests of future as well as current generations. The allied principles of intergenerational equity and environmental justice underpin the essential links between the two goals.

3. Shared need for public investment and collective action

Neither promoting social justice nor safeguarding the natural environment can be achieved by means of individual endeavour or market transactions (although both have a role to play). They require strategic collective action, locally, nationally and globally. Notwithstanding the coalition government’s efforts to shrink, dismantle and re-commodify the welfare state, public funds are still generously invested in education, healthcare, benefits and pensions, as well as in a range of other services that help create the conditions for well-being for all. In the UK, 66 per cent of public expenditure in 2014 (£475 billion)¹² goes on education, health, welfare and pensions. There is strong evidence that post-war welfare states across Europe have helped to narrow inequalities and to engender a shared interest in social justice. This is underpinned (at least to some extent) by civil liberties and human rights legislation, enforced through the European Court of Human Rights and through national jurisprudence, which are of course only realisable through the mechanisms of government and state.

At the same time, achieving environmental sustainability calls for public investment in appropriate infrastructure, renewable energy sources, and measures to reduce GHG emissions and encourage sustainable consumption. While some claim that climate change is a problem to be ‘solved’ through market pricing alone, a more compelling case has been made for a combination of regulation, market pricing and public investment.¹³ Indeed, there is a growing body of evidence and argument in favour of governments, nationally and globally, using powers not only to regulate,

incentivise, sanction and persuade, but also to tax, invest and redistribute, if there is to be any real prospect of curbing and reversing current trends towards environmental catastrophe.¹⁴

Public expenditure on pro-environmental measures amounts to one per cent of GDP in the UK.¹⁵ This compares with some 25 per cent of GDP on welfare spending. The discrepancy is partly explained by cheaper mechanisms: regulating carbon emissions is far less costly than providing free healthcare and education, for example. But there is a strong case for greater investment in developing renewable energy sources and 'green' infrastructure, which would require a larger share of public spending.

Public funds will always be finite, even if growth continues, more taxes are raised and loopholes closed. It is widely predicted that the UK's economy, in common with others in the rich world, will experience much lower rates of economic growth in coming decades than in the last 60 years; indeed, continuing high rates of growth are not only unlikely, but are incompatible with environmental sustainability, as Jackson and others have argued.¹⁶ So there can be no expectation that the public coffers will expand as they have in the past, allowing enough to go on spending at current rates on the welfare state, as well as spending considerably more on pro-environmental measures. Planning for spending on social policies will have to take this into account: even when the coalition government's 'austerity' regime comes to an end, there is no prospect of infinitely expanding resources. Choices about how any new funds are directed will have to respond to claims for investment in both areas: social justice and environmental sustainability. They may be seen as competing, with two different sets of interests pitted against each other. Or they can be understood to be interdependent and addressed accordingly, seeking out synergies, where investment can bring mutually reinforcing benefits to society and to the environment.

Much depends on whether public attitudes and political culture support the idea of collective endeavour, not only to pool resources and spend them through the state, but also to act together in practical terms to address shared interests and goals. There is evidence that, at a national level, states that express and support a collectivist ethos not only tend to have stronger traditions of shared welfare and commitment to social justice, but are also better able to deal with the need to mitigate environmental damage and cope with its consequences.¹⁷

In another working paper for this series, we argue that solidarity is an essential component of a politics that supports social justice and environmental sustainability. We consider what is likely to strengthen or weaken feelings of shared sympathy and

responsibility between groups and across generations. The dominant neoliberal political narrative denigrates collective action, favouring individualism, competition and choice with minimal state 'interference'. Yet there is a strong base of public opinion – and a wealth of practical examples - on which to build a new narrative that encourages a sense of shared responsibility and purpose, common action to address risks that individuals cannot tackle alone, and mutual support between groups.

4. *Interdependence*

Social justice and environmental sustainability are interdependent. Each goal depends on the other for fulfilment. A healthy natural environment is good for human well-being.¹⁸ There is evidence that access to natural green spaces, such as gardens, parks and countryside, can help to reduce health inequalities.¹⁹ Several studies have shown the positive effects of exposure to nature in organisational settings, such as hospitals where patients have faster recovery times, fewer painkiller requirements and lower stress levels, and prisons, where inmates with access to a garden have lower need for healthcare. As we have noted (above), societies with a stronger commitment to social justice are better placed to protect the environment.

The reverse is also true: damage to the natural environment and social injustice affect each other negatively. Climate change, resource depletion, pollution of air, land and water undermine human well-being, with those who are poorest and most vulnerable suffering first and most, globally and in the UK. As Lyndley *et al* argue in their report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, a variety of personal, environmental and social factors are involved in converting external stresses into losses in well-being; these will include 'income inequalities, the existence of social networks and the social characteristics of neighbourhoods.'²⁰ Those on low-incomes are more likely to live on flood plains, for example, or near busy roads and factories, in poor quality housing, and to lack insurance against risks associated with weather extremes. Poverty tends to make people more vulnerable to ill-health, which can be caused or exacerbated by exposure to poor air quality or heavy traffic, or by higher food and energy prices that result from crop failures and fuel shortages. Unless such developments are checked and reversed, inequalities will widen and social justice will be harder to achieve.

Socio-economic inequalities themselves can make a significant contribution to environmental damage. Not only do those on high incomes consume more than their fair share of planetary resources, but the consumption habits of the better-off drive up aspirations among lower income groups and generate resource-intensive living standards that come to be seen as 'normal'. As Kate Raworth points out, 'the

biggest source of planetary-boundary stress today is excessive resource consumption by roughly the wealthiest 10 per cent of the world's population, and the production patterns of the companies producing the goods and services that they buy.' A growing global middle class, aspiring to emulate high-income lifestyles, is expected to push up demand for water by nearly a third by 2030, and demand for both food and energy by half as much again. These pressures are further compounded by rampant inefficiencies in the use of natural resources to support 'normal' everyday living - for example through wasted food, leaking water supplies, fuel-inefficient vehicles, intensive air conditioning and planned obsolescence in product design.²¹

Paradoxically, measures aimed at promoting environmental sustainability can have a negative effect on social justice, and vice versa. For example, increasing taxes on fossil fuels as a way of reducing carbon emissions will, without countervailing measures, increase domestic energy bills and put more low income families at risk of fuel poverty; it may also increase isolation and unemployment among rural populations by raising the costs of transport. A major programme to build new social housing may be intended to improve living conditions for poor families but could also have a range of adverse effects on the environment, by using non-renewable materials, installing resources-intensive systems and using high-carbon construction methods.

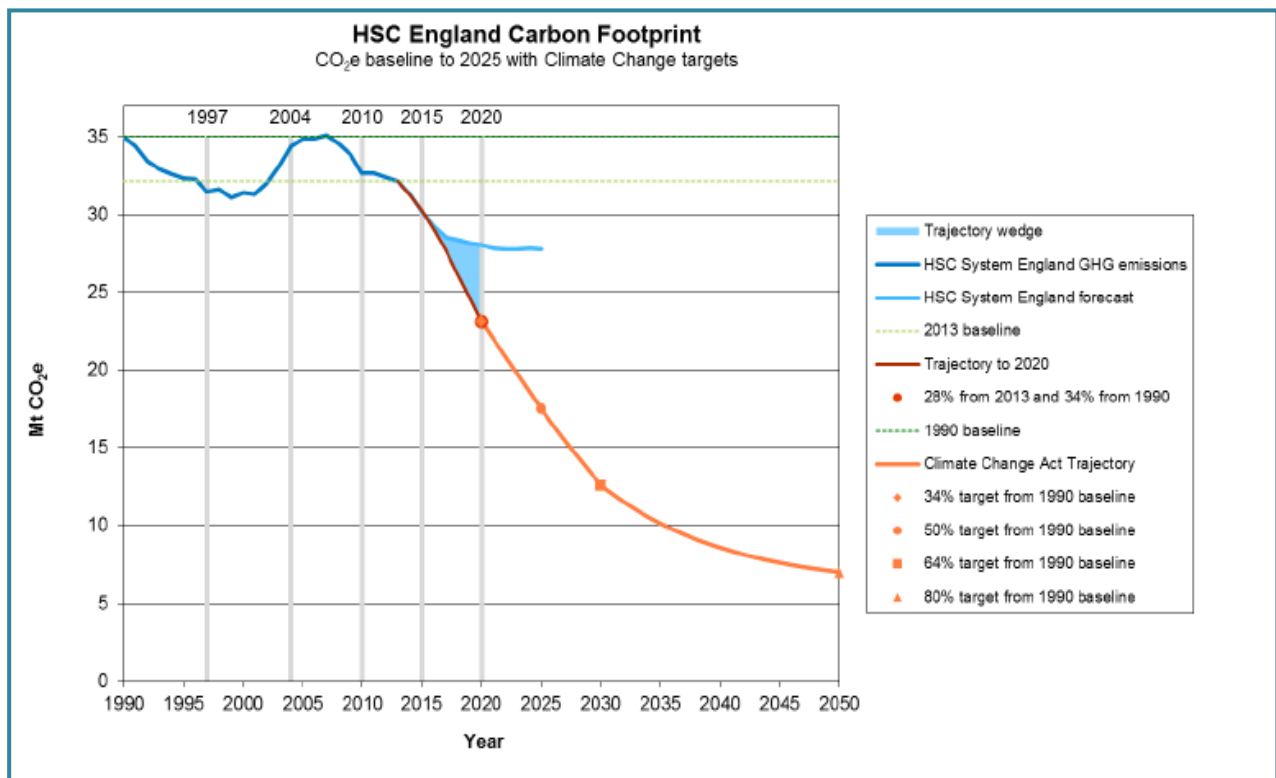
We have noted that collective action and feelings of solidarity are important for promoting social justice and environmental sustainability – and here, too, their interdependence is significant. Widening social inequalities can encourage people in different income groups to feel they have separate and even incompatible interests. The better-off may imagine they can go on buying their way out of problems related to the environment – through their choice of housing, for example, or being able to purchase more expensive food, fuel and other increasingly scarce materials. Meanwhile, those who are beset by the practical demands of surviving poverty and deprivation may feel they have little or no stake in a society where opportunities and privileges are manifestly reserved for others – or that, whatever their views about the natural environment, nothing they do or say can make any difference. Ultimately, neither rich nor poor can escape the worst effects of climate change, but without greater equality there is less chance of building a sufficiently powerful political consensus in time to achieve sustainability.

Meanwhile, institutions that are intended to promote and defend social justice have a significant environmental footprint. Hospitals, schools, town halls and prisons are heavy users of natural resources. All have considerable power to design and run

services and to commission and purchase goods in ways that reduce or expand the footprint.

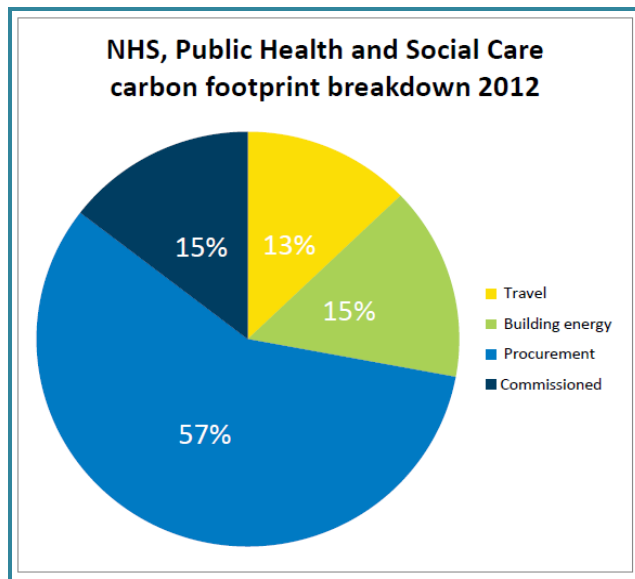
The health sector, which outstrips others by a wide margin, provides a stark illustration of this point. Current CO₂ emissions from Health and Social Care in England account for approximately 12 per cent of all domestic consumption of goods and services produced in the UK, and five per cent of all CO₂ emissions associated with all UK consumption.²² Table 1 below shows the gap between the footprint of current activity in Health and Social Care in England, and reductions necessary to achieve targets set out in the NHS carbon reduction strategy under the Climate Change Act. Table 2 shows how carbon emissions are distributed.²³

Table 1: Health and Social Care England Carbon Footprint



Analysis for the NHS shows that the carbon intensity of activity in the sector has declined markedly over the last decade, but rising levels of activity have countered the effect. In other words, the more activity there is in the health and social care sector, the harder it is to reduce the ecological footprint. Where this sector is concerned, the evidence strengthens the case for prevention. Measures that promote health and well-being - and thereby diminish needs for health and social care services over time - will play a crucial role in preventing damage to the natural environment.

Table 2: Distribution of carbon emissions



Implications for a new social settlement

These multiple and mutually reinforcing links between social justice and environmental sustainability must be at the heart of planning for a new social settlement. In this section, we outline some of the main implications for policy and practice. We look first at broad approaches for framing a new social settlement and then turn to specific policies that can help to create virtuous circles by serving both objectives. Where evidence and argument are set out elsewhere, we refer to other documents and include less detail in this paper.

1. Change assumptions about growth and resources

The welfare state has been developed on the assumption that the economy will continue to grow, providing more resources to fund more and better services. That assumption does not hold. It is possible to make new resources available, for example by raising taxes and collecting them from avoiders and evaders, by issuing government bonds and/or by means of strategic quantitative easing, as NEF has argued elsewhere.²⁴ But any such additional resources will be needed not just for public services, but also for urgent investment in measures to safeguard the natural environment. It is therefore sensible to plan collective actions for social justice that do not rely on continuing economic growth releasing ever-increasing funds for spending on public services.

2. Expand the resource base: grow the 'core economy'

What can be done to expand the resource base for health, education and other public services? Governments have tried to do this over the last two decades by introducing market rules and commercial practices, and by contracting out services to for-profit companies and (less often) to charities. There is no convincing evidence

that these changes have made any substantial positive impacts on costs or quality. They have, on the other hand, siphoned off public funds into private hands, and have steadily eroded the capacity of services to narrow inequalities and promote social justice.

There are, however, alternative ways of expanding the resource base. These involve tapping into the abundant uncommodified human and social resources that are embedded in the everyday lives of every individual (time, wisdom, experience, energy, knowledge, skills) and in the relationships among them (love, empathy, responsibility, care, reciprocity, teaching, and learning). We have argued (as have others) that the formal economy depends entirely on these resources, which nevertheless remain largely unrecognised and unvalued. Together, they constitute the 'core economy'²⁵, which includes reproduction and extends beyond it, providing an essential underpinning for all human activity. The resources of the core economy support the market economy by raising children, caring for people who are ill, frail, and disabled, feeding families, maintaining households, and building and sustaining intimacies, friendships, social networks, and civil society.

When it comes to creating the conditions for satisfying human needs and promoting well-being, a great deal already happens through informal, unfunded activities and relationships among family members, friends, neighbours and networks based on shared experience and/or reciprocal exchange. This is where the potential lies for expanding the resource base without relying on economic growth. The core economy can flourish and expand, or weaken and decline, depending on the circumstances and conditions within which it operates. It can 'grow' if it is recognised, valued, nurtured, and supported.

Making more and better use of the resources of the core economy can also play a key role in safeguarding the natural economy. The core economy consists of human and social transactions that involve unpaid time and effort, and make minimal demands on public resources. People care for each other and help each other to achieve their goals; this does not primarily involve producing or consuming things, or using public services. The state has an important role to play in endorsing and supporting these activities, providing spaces for people to meet and opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills they can put to use in the core economy. But this enabling role is less resource-intensive than directly providing services. It can also help to reduce the volume of need for services by strengthening social networks, by promoting well-being and by building people's capacity to help themselves and each other. Resources that are not used to meet social needs can be directed towards investment in 'green' infrastructure, retro-fitting homes and other measures to build a more sustainable economy. And since the activities of the core economy are largely

relational, they are less materially intensive than most activities in the formal economy and tend to have a smaller ecological footprint.

Valuing and supporting uncommodified, relational activities could also help to foster more sustainable living, by changing attitudes, building capacity and influencing patterns of behaviour. It is a counterpoint to life in the fast lane – where people are encouraged to compete with others, look out for themselves, work hard for long hours, earn as much as possible and keep on shopping.

Arguably, then, growing the core economy can bring both social and environmental benefits. But there are important caveats. First, the core economy is not inherently good or right. It is profoundly influenced by the rules, protocols, and power relations that emanate from the state and the market. While it shapes and sustains human activity, it also reflects and reproduces social and economic divisions and inequalities. Most of its transactions involve women working without wages – a pattern that generates lasting inequalities in job opportunities, income and power between women and men. These are often compounded by age, race, ethnicity, and disability. So measures aimed at ‘growing’ the core economy must go hand in hand with measures to promote well-being and equal life chances for all (see 5 below). Otherwise, stimulating more activity in the core economy will continue to privilege some at the expense of others, and will widen inequalities.

Second, time is a key resource in the core economy. While everyone has the same amount of time, some people have a lot more control over how they use their time than others. Some have low-paid jobs as well as caring responsibilities, so they are poor in terms of time as well as income. A significant redistribution of paid and unpaid time, especially between women and men, will help the core economy to flourish, and to promote both social justice and environmental sustainability. (See section 9 below.)

Third, the aim is not to transfer collective responsibilities from the public to the private sphere, or to call for more ‘volunteering’ to substitute for employed service workers. Either strategy would tend to widen inequalities, for reasons set out above and elaborated in our critique of the Big Society.²⁶ The aim must be to build a strong, dynamic relationship between the uncommodified resources of the core economy and the public resources of the state so that they complement and enhance each other – alongside policies to promote greater equality. Co-production is one promising example of how this can be done.

3. Promote co-production

In optimal conditions, involving people in co-producing decisions and actions that affect their lives can bring real benefits. The case for co-production is set out in

more detail in other publications by NEF²⁷ and most recently in our working paper on transforming public services. We define co-production as involving people who use services, alongside professionals and other service workers in equal partnerships, pooling different kinds of knowledge and skill, and work together to define needs, plan activities to meet those needs and – where possible - deliver those activities. There are three key points for this discussion.

First, it will be essential to encourage co-production in ways that help to narrow inequalities, rather than widen them: this will require parallel policies that are outlined briefly below. Secondly, at its best, co-production can achieve ‘more for less’: it can improve outcomes for those directly involved without significant extra expenditure, and help to prevent needs for costly services arising in future - and so help to conserve public funds for investment in pro-environmental measures. Thirdly, co-production taps into the wisdom and experience drawn from people’s everyday lives; it builds the skills and confidence of individuals and groups so that they are better able to cope with problems when they arise; it strengthens social networks and feelings of solidarity. All these qualities are needed for preventing needs arising or intensifying in future (see below), as well as for meeting the challenge of mitigating climate change and for dealing with the consequences of damage to the natural environment.

Linked to co-production is the idea of fostering different models of ownership and control, which we discuss in another working paper in this series.²⁸

4. Shift investment towards preventing harm

Since public funds are needed for environmental as well as social measures, and because social justice and environmental sustainability are interdependent, it makes sense to invest in ‘upstream’ measures to prevent harm on both fronts – not only to minimise costs of coping with the consequences of harm (ill-health, climate change, etc), but also to promote a flourishing society and environment. Prevention brings multiple social and environmental benefits and helps to safeguard the interests of future generations, as NEF and others have argued elsewhere.²⁹

5. Promote systemic change for greater equality

The goal of greater equality is central to our definition of social justice and, as we have argued, a precondition for achieving environmental sustainability. A new social settlement must aim to reduce inequalities of income, wealth, power, knowledge, health and opportunity – both within and between generations. This requires a range of measures that address the underlying causes of inequality. Examples proposed by NEF include raising the minimum wage to a sustainable living wage; a statutory maximum ratio between high and low pay within organisations; high quality,

universal childcare; strengthening workplace collective bargaining; and establishing a green investment bank to generate new jobs in the transition to a sustainable economy.³⁰

6. Foster solidarity and a shared sense of purpose

As we have noted, an important link between social justice and environmental sustainability is that both can only be achieved through collective action, which in turn depends on people having shared values and objectives. The new social settlement must include measures and ways of working that encourage solidarity, as set out in another working paper for this series.³¹

7. Promote sustainability through public services

In addition to the proposals outlined above, public institutions can do a great deal to promote environmental sustainability. This applies across the board to organisations owned, run and/or funded by the state. Until it was abolished by the coalition government, the UK Sustainable Development Commission had the job of advising and monitoring progress by all government departments, including operations and procurement, to help achieve the government's commitment to 'lead by example on sustainable development'. The SDC's final report on this was published in 2010³² and the job of monitoring progress then passed to Defra and the Committee on Climate Change³³.

For this discussion, we focus on organisations associated with the welfare state, such as children's centres, schools, colleges, healthcare centres, hospitals, job centres and town halls. All of them can do more to understand their impact on the natural environment, to reduce their ecological footprint and to raise awareness and encourage behaviours that promote social justice and environmental sustainability – by their own staff and by people who use their services. Buildings can be constructed with renewable materials and local labour; institutions can reduce their environmental footprint through energy efficiency, active travel programmes, waste reduction and more ecological use of land and water. They can lead by example through their own practice, use their commissioning and purchasing power to ensure that their contractors to do the same, and they can raise awareness, and encourage service users to change attitudes and behaviour.

All this requires not just a declaration of strategy, but a systemic approach and strong, sustained commitment. On the health front, the Sustainable Development Unit, jointly sponsored by NHS England and Public Health England, has produced an integrated strategy which is a useful model for this approach.³⁴ It sets out a vision for a 'sustainable health and care system [that] works within the available environmental and social resources protecting and improving health how and for

future generations'; it explains that this means 'working to reduce carbon emissions, minimising waste and pollution, making the best use of scarce resources, building resilience to a changing climate and nurturing community strengths and assets.' It locates responsibilities, identifies drivers for change and sets out a 'route map' for achieving its goals.³⁵ It aims for transformation 'where sustainability has become totally routine, culturally embedded, and self-regulating' and to achieve this through a series of transitions set out below.

Table 3: Transitions required for creating a sustainable health and care system

From	health and social care as institution led services based on needs	To	community focussed health and social care based on needs and assets
From	a predominantly medicalised approach	To	a more holistic approach that empowers individuals and communities
From	a focus on sickness	To	a focus on being well
From	professional centred	To	person centred
From	isolated and segregated	To	integrated and in partnership
From	buildings	To	healing environments
From	decision making based on today's finances alone	To	decision making that also accounts for current and future impacts on society and nature
From	single indicators and historical measurements	To	multiple balanced scorecard information in real time
From	sustainability as an add on	To	integration in culture, practice and training
From	waste and overuse of all resources	To	a balanced use of resources where waste becomes a resource
From	nobody's business	To	everyone's business

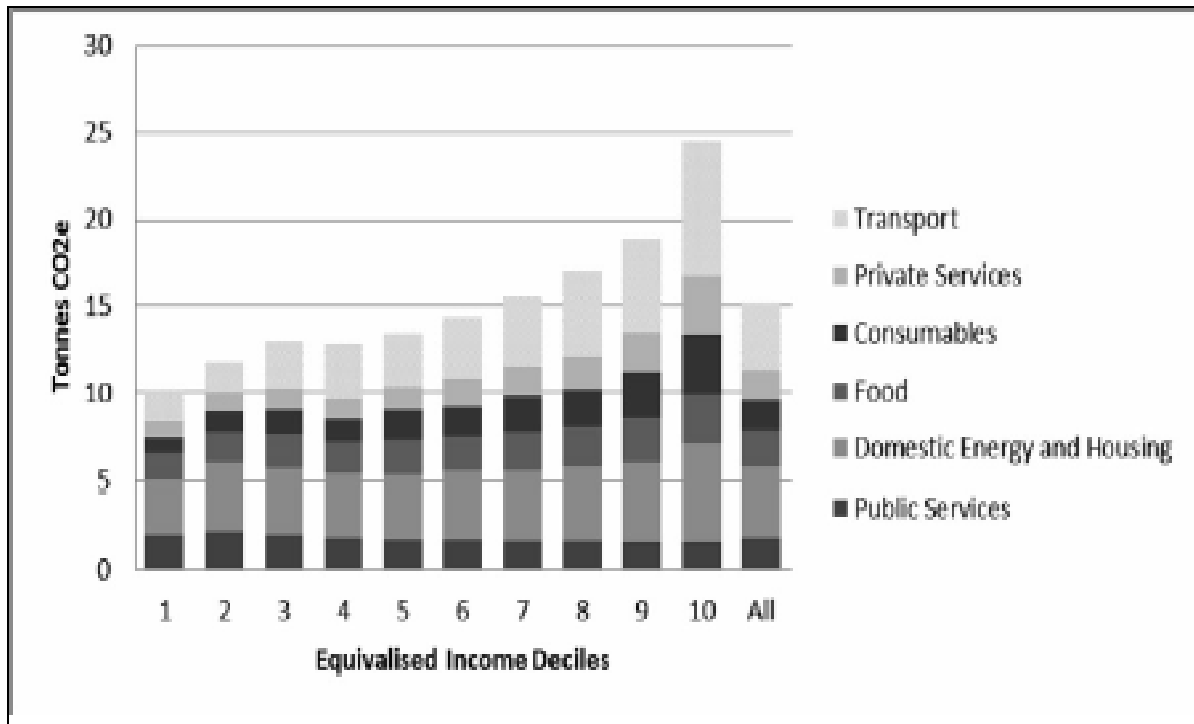
In the education field, 'Sustainable Schools' sets out a framework for driving school improvement through sustainable development. This integrates work through 'curriculum, campus and community' and identifies 'doorways' for changing practice.³⁶

8. Offset regressive effects of pro-environmental policies

Where measures to reduce GHG emissions lead to higher prices – for example, the effect of carbon levies on domestic energy bills – there is a role for social policy to prevent these widening inequalities. But it matters how this is achieved: fuel allowances help in the short term, but do nothing to improve energy efficiency. Retro-fitting homes, using local labour to insulate and to install solar panels will help households to use less energy and cut their emissions, as well as providing more jobs. In a similar way, providing more local bus services and making it easier and safer for people to travel by foot or bicycle will be more sustainable than capping the price of petrol.

Measures aimed at moderating the distributional impact of carbon mitigation policies have been assessed by Gough.³⁷ As Table 4 below shows, there are considerable differences between the GHG emissions of rich and poor households, with the main variations in transport, private services and consumables.

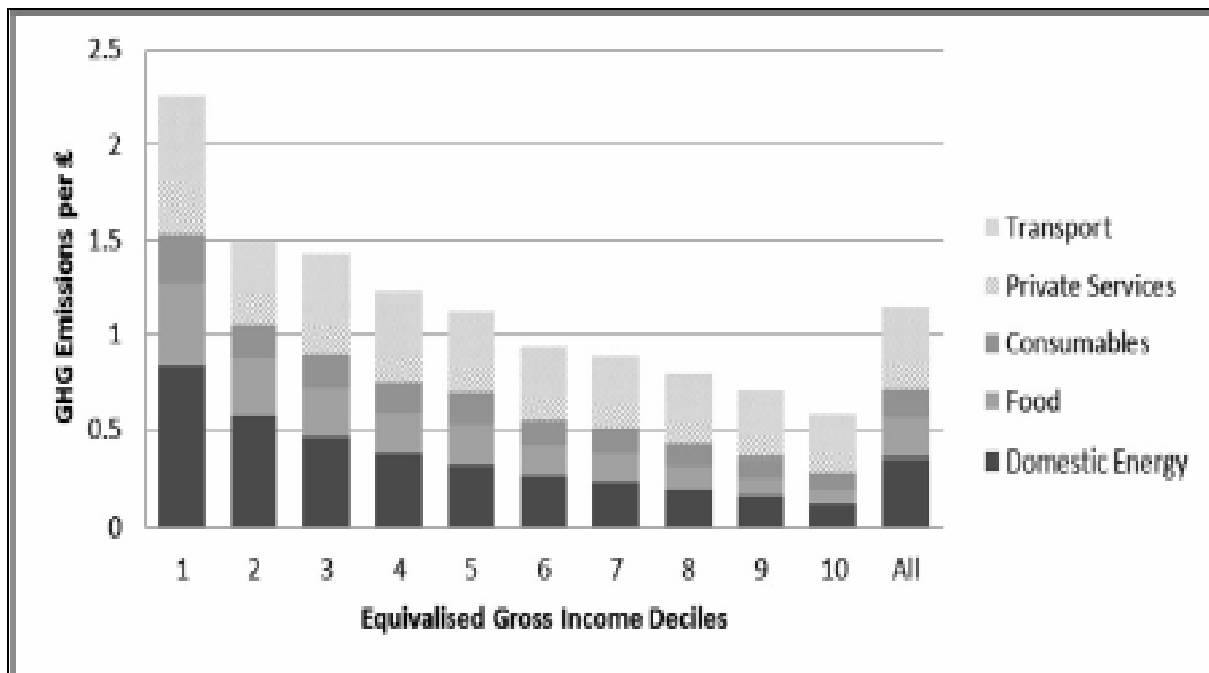
Table 4: Emissions by income group: per capital GHG emissions by equivalised gross income decile (tonnes CO₂e), UK 2006³⁸



As Table 5 shows, low income households spend a far larger portion of their total income on direct and indirect energy use. This provides useful guidance for developing emission-reduction measures that do not penalise the poor.

The main strategies for reducing direct UK energy use (through domestic fuel and travel) are raising the price of fuel through taxation, introducing differential tariffs to energy bills with higher charges for greater usage, and increasing energy efficiency. The latter is found to be more progressive by a wide margin, but to make any real impact it would need sustained public investment in renewable energy and retrofitting homes. Options for reducing consumption-based emissions include a progressive tax on luxury goods, carbon rationing and trading, and reduced working hours. Each is found to have progressive potential, although only in optimal conditions.

Table 5: Emissions as proportion of income: Kilos of GHG emissions per £ of Gross Household Annual Income by sector and equivalised income decile, UK 2006³⁹



Most products consumed in the UK are made overseas. This means not only that emissions from UK based consumption are effectively exported to developing countries, but also that domestic policies to reduce energy-intensive consumption will impact on the well-being of producers in (mainly) poor countries. It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore global strategies for social justice and environmental sustainability. Nevertheless, as Gough concludes, ‘there is an ethical and political case for monitoring and targeting the total consumption-based emissions of rich countries like the UK’ and developing ‘integrated eco-social programmes’ to reduce them.⁴⁰

9. Move towards shorter, more flexible hours of paid work

We have noted that a flourishing ‘core economy’ will depend on redistributing paid and unpaid time, especially between women and men. NEF has set out the case for a shorter paid working week, with 30 hours as a new standard, moving towards 21 hours over time, arguing that it will bring a range of social, environmental and economic benefits.⁴¹

Markets have developed – globally – by encouraging people to buy and consume more and more. Faster cars, bigger houses, more furniture, ‘convenience’ foods and labour-saving devices, gadgets galore, copious clothing and cosmetics, toys for children, toys for adults, flights and foreign holidays. All these things have become ‘normal’ accoutrements of everyday life in the rich world, and aspirational goods for

many in the developing world. Accelerating climate change and steady depletion of the earth's natural resources are largely a consequence of the high-rolling consumerism of the rich world. In a nutshell, people have been working long hours to earn money to buy stuff that's made and used in ways that inflict profound and irreversible damage on the ecosystem on which all life depends. Time, money, consumer goods and planetary boundaries are interdependent. Moving towards a shorter paid working week would release more time for caring and for other relational activities that are less materially intensive. It would release more employment for those who don't have any paid work. It would help to change attitudes and behaviours in favour of both social justice and environmental sustainability.

10. Promote specific policies that serve both objectives

Last but not least there is a strong case for promoting, as part of a new social settlement, specific policies that help to achieve *both* social justice and environmental sustainability, simultaneously. This can make the best use of public resources by achieving multiple and mutually reinforcing benefits. The list of examples below is not exhaustive. It simply indicates some examples of existing initiatives, briefly setting out potential advantages and potential problems, and suggesting action that may help to increase their positive impacts.

- *Promote active travel.*
 - *Advantages.* Physical exercise in the open air brings positive benefits to physical and mental health. Walking and cycling are free or low-cost forms of travel, so they can help to reduce living costs. They produce zero or minimal carbon emissions (associated only with bicycle manufacture). As more people travel by foot or bicycle, this can reduce the volume of motorised transport and improve air quality.
 - *Problems.* Pedestrians in poor neighbourhoods tend to be more vulnerable to injuries caused by traffic, however, or to suffer from air pollution.
 - *Action.* Measures to promote active travel must ensure conditions are safe and positively encouraging, especially for those in poor neighbourhoods.
- *Increase access to green spaces*
 - *Advantages.* Access to gardens, parks, verdant playgrounds and open countryside has positive impacts on mental and emotional well-being.⁴² Physical exercise in green spaces, such as gardening, rambling and 'green gyms', has positive impacts on physical health. Activities in green spaces often (though not inevitably) produce little or no GHG emissions.

Spending time in and around green spaces can encourage people to appreciate – and want to safeguard – the natural environment.

- *Problems.* In towns and cities, green spaces tend to be more plentiful and/or nearer to better-off neighbourhoods. In disadvantaged areas, parks and other green spaces are often considered unsafe, especially for children and women. It can be harder for disabled people to gain access to green spaces.
 - *Action.* Measures to promote access to green spaces must ensure they are inviting, accessible and safe, especially for those in disadvantaged areas, for children and women, and for disabled people.
- *More food produced and consumed locally*
 - *Advantages.* Fresh, seasonal food, produced and consumed near to home, may be more nutritious and less energy intensive than processed food or ingredients transported over long distances. It can keep money circulating within local economies, helping to create and maintain local employment. Learning about how to produce food and prepare it for eating can raise awareness about the value of land, water, crops, livestock and weather systems, and about the pros and cons of different agricultural methods – all of which helps to create favourable conditions for pro-environmental policy and practice.
 - *Problems.* People who live in towns and cities are less likely to be involved in local food production. ‘Farmers’ markets’ are increasingly popular, but more so in middle-class neighbourhoods. Locally produced food can be more expensive than imported food; it is not always more sustainable than food from other sources. There are strong vested interests in retailing and agri-business that are ranged against people who want to have more control over the provenance and quality of the food they eat. Many local councils are selling off allotments and other land as a way of dealing with shrinking budgets. Institutional structures currently inhibit systemic planning for food, agriculture, health and environment. Too often, departments of health, environment, agriculture and trade take partial perspectives.
 - *Action.* Measures to encourage local food production should ideally be locally controlled and strong enough to counteract the influence of big business in the food sector. Relevant government departments should work together, with shared policy frameworks.⁴³

- *Making homes more energy efficient*

- *Advantages.* Programmes to retrofit existing housing stock and to build new homes that are energy-efficient can bring multiple benefits, as we have noted. By training and using local labour, they can create new jobs with transferrable skills. By using renewable materials, they can reduce the impact on natural resources. By making homes more energy efficient, through insulating walls and roofs, and installing solar and PVC panels, they can reduce domestic energy bills – as well as stress and anxiety associated with high living costs in low-income households. A combination of ventilation and renewable energy can help to maintain good health by keeping people cool in summer and warm in winter. The benefits of this approach are widely recognised and have been encouraged by a sequence of government programmes, including Warm Front and Green Deal
- *Problem.* There has not (yet) been the level of investment needed to transform the nation's housing stock or to bring domestic energy consumption down to sustainable levels.
- *Action.* What is needed urgently is action by government, nationally and locally, to bring all UK homes up to maximum energy efficiency.

- *Collaborative community-based initiatives*

- *Advantages.* This includes a wide range of activities and organisations, including food co-ops (as distinct from food banks); car clubs; centres for repairing and recycling discarded and broken goods; schemes for sharing and exchanging machinery and household equipment to avoid multiple purchasing; community cafes and restaurants run by and for local people; childcare co-ops; intergenerational mutual aid ventures, where younger and older people learn from and help each other – and much more. By strengthening local networks, building confidence, social solidarity and local capabilities, and by helping to reduce living costs, these can have many positive impacts on health and well-being. By reducing consumption and energy use, they can have a positive impact on the environment.
- *Problem.* Initiatives of this kind are on the increase, but many struggle to find and keep premises they can afford, to extend their reach or to keep going over time.

- *Action.* Local authorities could do more to support them by making premises available, providing training and help with back-up functions such as accounting, by spreading information and, more broadly, by helping to generate a congenial atmosphere and encouraging conditions.

In conclusion

The kind of new social settlement that we envisage is about more than social policy, as this paper makes clear. It seeks to achieve systemic change over the medium and longer term. That is not simply because we are committed to the goals of social justice and environmental sustainability, but because we recognise that the two can only be achieved by acknowledging their interdependencies and pursuing both together.

We welcome comments on parts or all of this paper, and responses to the questions set out below.

Questions for discussion

- Are there other ways, not mentioned in this paper, in which social justice and environmental sustainability are linked together?
- What are the most important links between these two goals?
- What are the main barriers to achieving a new social settlement that is environmentally sustainable – and how can such barriers be overcome?
- We have listed some specific policies for pursuing both goals together. What other policies could have similar effects?

Endnotes

¹ http://conspect.nl/pdf/Our_Common_Future-Brundtland_Report_1987.pdf , Section 3, para 27

²

http://collections.europarchive.org/tna/20100104171600/http://defra.gov.uk/sustainable/government/publications/uk-strategy/documents/SecFut_complete.pdf

³ <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/blog/2012/02/can-we-live-inside-the-doughnut-planetary-and-social-boundaries>

⁴ Fraser, N (2014) 'Behind Marx's Hidden Abode' *New Left Review* 86, p.63

⁵ Picketty, T. (2014) *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Belknap Harvard, Cambridge, p 27.

⁶ Fraser, N, *op cit*

⁷ Fraser, N, *op cit*.

⁸ See for example <http://www.instituteoftheequity.org/projects/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review> p. 60-82.

⁹ <http://www.instituteoftheequity.org/projects/who-european-review/executive-summary-in-english> p.6-7; for the main report, see <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-policy/health-2020-the-european-policy-for-health-and-well-being/publications/2013/review-of-social-determinants-and-the-health-divide-in-the-who-european-region.-final-report>

¹⁰ <http://www.neweconomics.org/blog/entry/basic-human-needs-what-are-they-really>
http://b.3cdn.net/nefoundation/e256633779f47ec4e6_o5m6bexrh.pdf See also: Doyal, L and Gough, I (1991) Macmillan, London.

¹¹ http://b.3cdn.net/nefoundation/b8278023a5b025649f_5zm6i2btq.pdf ; see also <http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/the-prevention-papers>

¹² http://www.ukpublicspending.co.uk/government_expenditure.html

¹³ Grubb, M, Hourcade, J and Neuhoff, K (2014) *Planetary Economics: Energy, Climate Change and the Three Domains of Sustainable Development*. Earthscan, Routledge.

¹⁴ http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130129110402/http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/Executive_Summary.pdf See also <http://mitigation2014.org/>

¹⁵ Gough, I., & Marden, S. (2011<<http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/cp/CASEpaper145.pdf>>). Fiscal costs of climate mitigation programmes in the UK: a challenge for social policy? CASE Paper 145, London School of Economics and Political Science.

¹⁶ Jackson, T (2009) *Prosperity without Growth: economics for a finite planet*, Earthscan/Routledge.

¹⁷ Gough, I., Meadowcroft, J., Dryzek, J., Gerhards, J., Lengfeld, H., Markandya, A. and Ortiz, R (2008) 'Climate change and social policy', *Journal of European Social Policy*, 18(4): 325-344.

¹⁸ http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/data/files/publications/health_inequalities.pdf

¹⁹ Mitchell, R and Popham, F (2008) Effect of exposure to natural environment on health inequalities: an observational population study. *The Lancet*, 372: 1655-1660.

²⁰ <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/climate-change-justice-vulnerabilityEBOOK.pdf>

²¹ <http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/dp-a-safe-and-just-space-for-humanity-130212-en.pdf> : p5.

²²

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/261692/Consumption_emissions_28_Nov_2013.pdf

²³

http://www.sduhealth.org.uk/documents/publications/HCS_Carbon_Footprint_v5_Jan_2014.pdf

²⁴ http://b.3cdn.net/nefoundation/e79789e1e31f261e95_ypm6b49z7.pdf

²⁵ http://b.3cdn.net/nefoundation/82c90c4bb4d6147dc3_1fm6bxppl.pdf

²⁶ http://b.3cdn.net/nefoundation/fe562b1ef767dac0af_g0m6iykyd.pdf

²⁷ See, for example, <http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/right-here-right-now>

²⁸ http://b.3cdn.net/nefoundation/d2675fe54cb1ce0203_ldm6bkjoz.pdf

²⁹ <http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/the-wisdom-of-prevention> ; <http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/the-prevention-papers> . See also <http://personal.lse.ac.uk/goughi/prevention.pdf>

³⁰ <http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/addressing-economic-inequality-at-root>

³¹ <http://www.neweconomics.org/blog/entry/we-need-to-talk-about-solidarity>

³² http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/data/files/publications/SDC_SDiG09_webFINAL.pdf

³³ <http://sd.defra.gov.uk/progress/>; <http://www.theccc.org.uk/about/>

³⁴

http://www.sduhealth.org.uk/documents/publications/2014%20strategy%20and%20modules_NewFolder/Strategy_FINAL_Jan2014.pdf

³⁵ http://www.sduhealth.org.uk/documents/routemap/Route_Map_folder_Sep13_FINAL.pdf

³⁶ http://www.se-ed.org.uk/restricted/resources/S3_Planning%20Guide.pdf

³⁷ http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/47949/7/Gough_Carbon_mitigation_policies_2013_published.pdf

³⁸ Gough, I., Abdallah, S., Johnson, V., Ryan-Collins, J. and Smith, C. (2011), *The Distribution of*

Total Embodied Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Households in the UK, and Some Implications

for Social Policy, CASE PaperNo. 152, London: Centre for the Analysis of Social Exclusion, London School of Economics.

³⁹ *Ibid* (recomputed)

⁴⁰ http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/47949/7/Gough_Carbon_mitigation_policies_2013_published.pdf p. 209.

⁴¹ <http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/time-on-our-side> . See also <http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/21-hours>

⁴² <http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/natural-solutions>

⁴³ Laing T, *Food matters: an integrative approach to food policy*. Paper based on talk to 'Mobilising the Food Chain for Health', Third Meeting of the OECD Food Chain Analysis Network, 25-26 October 2012, OECD Conference Centre, Paris.
<http://www.oecd.org/site/agrfcn/>