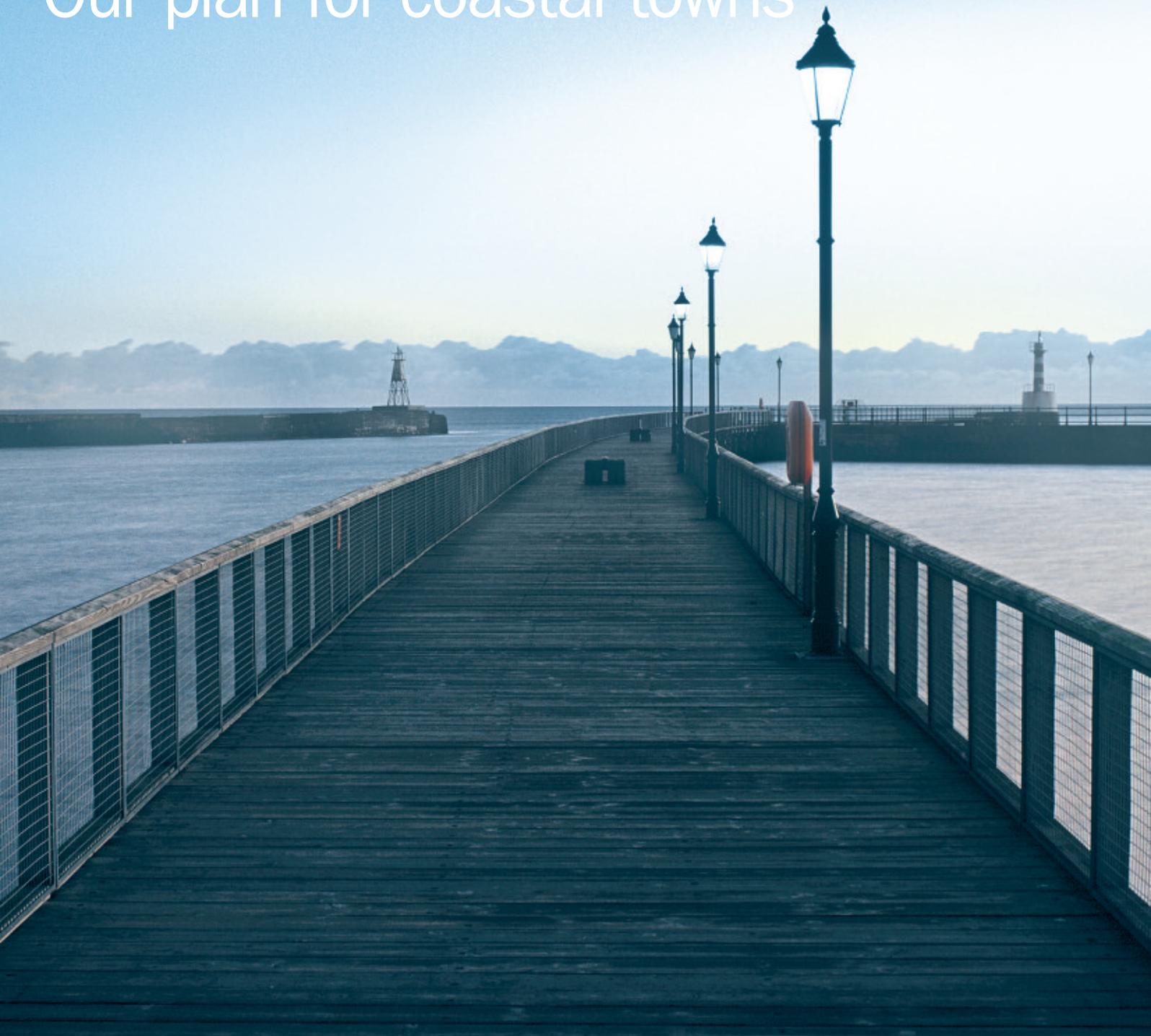


NO LONGER THE END OF THE LINE

Our plan for coastal towns



Conservatives

No Longer the End of the Line

Our plan for coastal towns

Mark Simmonds MP

Foreword by David Cameron MP

Britain is an island. This accident of geography has shaped our entire history and identity. Being an island has kept us safe, made us prosperous, and led to the development of a unique range of coastal towns.

Our coastal towns are one of the most iconic and popular features of our country. Every year thousands of people visit these places on day trips and holidays. And for many people, these coastal communities provide jobs, homes, schools and hospitals.

But today, coastal towns face a number of problems. There are issues such as worklessness, poor transport, and educational failure, as well as problems such as rising sea levels and coastal erosion. Indeed, when it comes to the fight against climate change, these towns are right in the front line.

So we all have a responsibility for the welfare of these communities – and that is why we have produced this plan for coastal towns. This paper will ensure that coastal towns are placed high on the Conservative agenda, meaning that those who live on the edges of our country are never pushed to the back of our minds.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Cameron', with a stylized, cursive script.

David Cameron MP

Foreword by Mark Simmonds MP

Every coastal town in Britain is different. From Blackpool to Bournemouth, Sheerness to Skegness they are all unique, and face distinct challenges. However, as I have travelled around the country visiting Britain's coastal towns, I have been repeatedly struck by their similarities, both in their importance to the country and the problems they face.

Seaside towns are crucial to our country's success. They contribute to our Gross Domestic Product and have been traditional bases for industry. Britain has 18,000km of coastline, 3.1 million people live or work near the sea and no settlement in England is more than 70 miles from the coast.¹ Our coastal towns are assets, not liabilities, and we must do more to highlight their positive attributes and maximise their appeal.

In addition, our seaside towns are an enjoyable destination for a holiday or a day out. Eight of the top twenty destinations for domestic visitors are coastal, and these visitors spent £4.8 billion in our seaside resorts in 2005.² Most importantly, seaside holidays remain an iconic symbol of Britain. Bucket and spade holidays, piers and donkey rides on the beach are a part of the national psyche, and are still enjoyed by millions every year.

Yet, whilst being an enjoyable destination to visit, our coastal towns also face many challenges which must not be overlooked. The majority of coastal towns have lower levels of employment, higher levels of benefit claimants, lower educational aspiration and attainment, poorer health outcomes and worse transport links than comparable inland towns.

We believe this Government has ignored and marginalised our coastal towns, and this must change. Conservatives want to re-invigorate our coastal towns, so that they are not just places for a great day out, but are also economically diverse, environmentally secure and attractive places to live and work. Under the Conservatives we will ensure that our coastal towns are no longer 'the end of the line'.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Simmonds' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mark Simmonds MP

Policies relate to the United Kingdom and in areas where the UK Government has competence. On issues which are devolved, Welsh Conservatives, Scottish Conservatives and UCUNF have policies which reflect local circumstances.

Executive Summary: Our Plan for Coastal Towns

Economic development

Encouraging enterprise:

- A new power for local authorities to levy business rate discounts and consult on allowing privately owned listed seaside-heritage attractions, such as piers, to apply for Lottery funding.
- Give councils the opportunity to come together and develop their own enterprise partnerships.
- Give back to coastal towns and other councils powers over housing, planning and other responsibilities.
- Remove responsibility for tourism from RDAs and replace them with a stronger VisitEngland.
- Cut the main rate of corporation tax from 28p to 25p and reverse the Government's planned increase in the small companies' rate from 20p to 22p.
- New businesses will pay no national insurance on the first ten employees they hire during their first year.
- A simple and fair Business Increase Bonus so that councils which encourage enterprise are rewarded.

Getting coastal towns working:

- Introduce 'The Work Programme' ensuring that anyone who is out of work receives tailored help to get them into a job, and including a 'Work for Yourself' programme to help people start businesses by offering them loans and access to business mentors.
- Reassess all existing Incapacity Benefit claimants; those fit for work will be transferred off Incapacity Benefits onto to Jobseeker's Allowance and will be expected to look for work immediately.
- 400,000 apprenticeship and training places – over two years – and a £2,000 bonus for each apprenticeship at a small or medium-sized enterprise.
- A £100 million fund to support young people who are not in education, employment or training.

Fair funding for coastal towns:

- Give an existing independent audit body a new duty to report to Parliament on the draft local government finance settlement each year, and ask this body to consider alternative measures, such as National Insurance Number registrations and GP enrolments, in assessing councils' need.
- End political meddling in health funding allocations by giving the independent NHS Board responsibility for allocating resources.
- Expand the funding passport scheme already proposed for voluntary groups to include small and medium sized enterprises and local authorities, to make it easier to access European funding.
- Cancel Labour's plans for an expensive and intrusive council tax revaluation.

Infrastructure and environment

Better and more affordable housing:

- Abolish stamp duty for first time buyers on properties worth up to £250,000.
- Create local homes trusts, new bodies which can build homes solely for use by existing residents.
- Give social tenants with a good record of tenancy a 10 per cent equity share in their social rented property, which can be cashed in when they leave the social rented sector.
- Abolish the unsuccessful regional planning system and the counterproductive regional housing targets.
- Incentivise new house-building by matching local authorities' council tax take for each new house built for six years – with special incentives for affordable housing.
- Create a 'Community Right to Buy' for threatened community assets and a 'Right to Bid' to take over the management of publicly owned community assets.

A modern transport network:

- A new high-speed rail network to link up our major cities.
- Create a powerful Rail Regulator to speak up for passengers and get tough on train companies when they underperform.
- Require all electricity network operators to provide electric car charging points.

The coastal environment:

- Support the Floods Bill that is currently in Parliament.
- Ensure as many householders and property owners as possible who live near the coast have access to flood insurance.
- Establish a network of large scale Marine Energy Parks and lay DC cables to support the development of offshore wind farms.

Improving public services

A better health service:

- Ensure that funding allocations better reflect the burden of disease in each area.
- Ring fence the public health budget and establish local Directors of Public Health paid by results to improve the health of local residents.
- Introduce a new universal health-visiting service.

Support for the elderly and vulnerable People:

- Introduce personal health and social care budgets so that elderly people are in greater control of the care they need.
- Help elderly people who own their own home protect their home from being sold to pay for residential care costs through the payment of a one off £8,000 insurance premium upon retirement.
- Facilitate the introduction of innovative social care provision – from telemedicine to social network-based community care.

Improving schools and colleges in coastal towns:

- Replace the worst performing schools in the country with Academies run by proven sponsors.
- Give good schools the resources to expand if they so choose.
- Divert more resources to pupils from deprived backgrounds through a new pupil premium.
- Create a £100 million adult Community Learning Fund to help people update or gain new skills.
- Introduce a National Citizen Service for 16 year olds to provide a compelling and challenging programme that will help teach young people about their responsibilities in society.

Fighting back against crime:

- Impose significant tax increases on strong alcohol which contributes to violence and disorder on our streets, and ban retailers from selling alcohol below cost price.
- Give local councils and the police new powers to restrict the large number of late licenses.
- Scrap the form filling that goes with ‘stop and search’ powers and cut the paperwork associated with carrying out routine surveillance.
- Get tough on knife crime by ensuring everyone carrying a knife without reasonable excuse should expect to be prosecuted and that anyone convicted of carrying a knife should expect a custodial sentence.
- Introduce an abstinence-based Drug Rehabilitation Order.
- Introduce locally accountable Police Commissioners, directly elected by the communities they serve.
- Require all police forces to publish local crime statistics online every month and hold ‘beat meetings’ at which members of the public can hold the police to account for their performance.

1. Economic development

1.1 Encouraging enterprise

As the recession bites, many sectors of the economy are struggling to retain productivity and profitability. Yet a strong, vibrant economy is vital, not only to provide jobs and disposable income but also to boost confidence, encouraging investment in new enterprises and businesses. The seaside economy has long lagged behind that of the rest of the United Kingdom, and has been over-reliant upon a few narrow sectors such as tourism and fishing. Overall levels of entrepreneurship in coastal towns are lower than those in non coastal towns,³ and 21 of the 88 most deprived communities are in coastal areas.⁴

In order to encourage enterprise we will **cut the main rate of corporation tax from 28p to 25p and reverse the Government's planned increase in the small companies' rate from 20p to 22p**. This will boost the competitiveness of the British economy in these difficult economic times. We will make small business rate relief automatic, to provide extra help for struggling firms. And under the Conservatives **any new business will pay no employer national insurance on the first ten employees it hires** during its first year, provided it starts in the first two years of a Conservative Government.

Many coastal towns would like to encourage more businesses to set up and expand in their areas. So a Conservative Government will **introduce a simple and fair Business Increase Bonus so that councils which encourage enterprise get rewarded for doing so**. Under this scheme any council in whose area the amount of business rates in a given year rises by more than the indexed rise in the national business rate will be entitled to keep the difference for six years. This scheme will bring major benefits to coastal towns with successful tourism industries.

We will also **give local authorities a new power to levy business rate discounts to encourage enterprise**, as long as they can fund them from other local income or avoided costs, and we will **consult on allowing privately owned listed seaside-heritage attractions, such as piers, to apply for Lottery funding**, if appropriate undertakings are given for public access.

We believe that coastal towns should have more control over their economic development, but too often their actions and funding are directed by remote and unaccountable regional development agencies (RDAs). We want to put coastal towns back in charge of their own destinies, which is why we will **give councils the opportunity to come together and develop their own enterprise partnerships** which better reflect shared ambitions and needs. So instead of following arbitrary boundaries – drawn in Whitehall – they would be able to join together to direct their economic development if they wanted to. We believe that other activities of the RDAs should be localised, so we will immediately **give back to coastal towns and other councils powers over housing, planning and other responsibilities**.

It is also the case that by handing much of the responsibility for English tourism to the RDAs, Labour has allowed a confusing and inappropriate infrastructure to develop. The abundance of overlapping and competing bodies within the tourism sector causes gross inefficiencies and often prevents funds from getting to the front line. The structure needs a complete overhaul.

The Conservative Party will simplify the structures involved by **removing responsibility for tourism from RDAs and replacing them with an empowered VisitEngland**. This will be responsible for streamlining England's tourism infrastructure and distributing funding for domestic tourism.

In keeping with our policy on encouraging local decision making, we would encourage councils to form Local Tourism Partnerships and produce tourism development plans. VisitEngland could then provide funding for large scale tourism projects proposed by these partnerships.

This new structure would ensure there is a clear sense of direction and guidance on tourism originating in the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, working alongside VisitEngland, and a new opportunity for local authorities to make accurate judgments on what is appropriate and necessary for their local area.

1.2 Getting coastal towns working

Even in the so called ‘heyday’ of British seaside holidays, when people visited seaside resorts and stayed for two weeks, the British seaside holiday trade was highly seasonal, concentrated for the most part in July and August. Most seaside residents have always had to have a means of getting by for the rest of the year. There have always been other sources of economic activity, and in many areas this was fishing – which has also seen a notable decline in recent years. The number of fishermen in the UK has fallen dramatically, by around a third since Labour came to power, from 18,604 in 1997 to 12,761 in 2008, and one in five fishing boats have gone out of business.⁵ As a consequence, many of our coastal towns currently have higher levels of unemployment than the national average, and those jobs that do exist tend to be seasonal, low-skill and concentrated in a few sectors: 34 of the 37 principle seaside towns have lower employment rates than the regions of which they form a part.⁶

Labour’s piecemeal plans are not providing the support that people who are out of work need. They have had twelve years to get people off benefits and back into work, but unemployment is now higher than it was when they came to office.⁷ We will refocus the money the Government is using to fund these schemes and instead introduce a big, bold scheme called **The Work Programme**. This will ensure that **anyone who is out of work receives tailored help to get them into a job**, with welfare-to-work providers paid only if they get someone into a sustainable job. We will **introduce a ‘Work for Yourself’ programme to help people start businesses by offering them loans and access to business mentors**. We will work with proven specialists such as the Prince’s trust and The Bright Ideas Trust to build a network of business mentors and appropriate business support and loans to help the next generation of entrepreneurs.

In addition to higher than average numbers of recipients of Job Seekers Allowance, there are also higher levels of Employment and Support Allowance and Incapacity Benefits in coastal towns. For example, since 1997 Great Yarmouth has experienced a 33 per cent rise in the number of people claiming sickness and disability benefits.⁸ We are aware that a number of people who are unable to work due to a long-term disability or ill-health also choose to move to the coast, and we must ensure they are fully supported. Just as importantly, we need to make sure that all those who are able to work and participate in economic activity are encouraged and supported to do so. So we will **reassess all existing Incapacity Benefit claimants and those fit for work will be transferred off Incapacity Benefits and onto to Jobseeker’s Allowance and will be expected to look for work immediately**. Incapacity Benefit claimants with the capacity to work will be referred to specialised welfare-to-work providers. We will continue to support those who are unable to work.

Our challenge is to assist coastal towns to diversify their economies and reduce their dependency upon tourism. We must attract a variety of employers, offering jobs at a range of skill levels and in a variety of sectors, to coastal communities in order for them to thrive and to become an attractive place for working age people to live. That is why we have pledged to **deliver 400,000 apprenticeships, training places and work pairings– over two years – as part of our plan to Get Britain Working**. We will also **offer a £2,000 bonus for each apprenticeship at a small or medium-sized enterprise (SME)** to assist them in covering the costs of training and supporting an apprentice, and we will introduce a **£100 million fund to support young people, aged between 14 and 19, who are not in education, employment or training**. This funding will support social enterprise projects, such as Seagull in Skegness and the Hill Holt project in Lincolnshire, which provide training for young people to assist in their entry to the labour market.

1.3 Fair funding for coastal towns

People who live in coastal towns do not believe that the Labour Government has provided them with a fair allocation of resources. Many coastal towns are facing the double financial burden of a large number of elderly and vulnerable residents, as well as having to cater to the needs of large numbers of visitors. Under Labour the funding system has been skewed for political reasons – we need to get back to a system that distributes funding according to need, not the diktat of ministers.

We want to maintain our seaside resorts' appeal to visitors, residents and business, but believe for this to happen there needs to be a fairer and more transparent system for allocating local government funding. Therefore, a Conservative Government will **give an existing independent audit body a new duty to report to Parliament on the draft local government finance settlement** each year. This body will be given a specific duty to report on whether the basis for allocation is transparent and in accordance with objective criteria set out by Ministers. We need to bring an end to Labour's practice of manipulating local government funding for political reasons.

This body will also be able to take an impartial view of the impact of rapidly changing factors that affect councils' need for central funding. In particular, it will be expected to comment on demographic changes, including those resulting from migration. The current system has been widely criticised for relying on population numbers and estimates that are long out of date. We will **ask this independent audit body to consider alternative measures, such as National Insurance Number registrations and GP enrolments, in assessing councils' need**. We believe this proposal will improve the equity of local government funding, to the benefit of many coastal towns, which have been historically under-funded.

Likewise, in the health service, the funding formulae do not accurately account for the number of visitors, and undervalue the impact of age on prevalence of disease.⁹ We believe that NHS resources should be allocated to areas in order to ensure, so far as possible, equal access to healthcare. Resources should be matched to the relative burden of disease. We would **end political meddling in funding allocations by giving the independent NHS Board responsibility for allocating resources**.

In addition, we will make it easier for coastal towns to make greater use of European Union money. There are numerous European funding streams on which coastal resorts in the UK can draw; for social inclusion, lifelong learning, reducing health inequalities and to encourage entrepreneurship and innovation. Many councils and small businesses are not aware of these funding streams, or even if they are aware, do not have the resources and manpower to complete the bid documentation. We will **expand the funding passport scheme already proposed for voluntary groups to include small and medium sized enterprises and local authorities**, to prevent repetitive due diligence procedures and make it easier for these organisations and businesses to access European funding.

Finally, we will **cancel Labour's plans for an expensive and intrusive council tax revaluation** in England after the general election. The Government's revaluation database is specifically targeting homes with scenic views, with 'sea views' being logged, recorded and taxed as a 'value significant' feature. Government tax inspectors, the Valuation Office Agency, have already recorded 100,000 homes as having a room with a view.¹⁰

2. Infrastructure and environment

2.1 Better and more affordable housing

Housing in coastal towns has long been the source of many challenges. As overnight visitors decline, many former guesthouses and B&Bs are transformed into low-quality bed-sits or houses of multiple occupancy (HMOs).¹¹ These attract migrant workers and those dependent on benefits, with low rents and often short tenancies. There is anecdotal evidence of HMO owners placing adverts in local newspapers in former coalfield towns and industrial cities, advertising low rent properties by the sea. As the number of HMOs increase the number of well maintained guest houses and owner occupied residences declines, contributing to an overall deterioration in the appearance and character of the neighbourhood. For example, in 2004, 57 per cent of houses in Margate were judged 'non-decent' by the council.¹² Nationally, the estimated annual cost to the NHS of treating ill-health as a result of sub-standard housing is around £2.4 billion.¹³

Elsewhere, challenges are raised by the large number of caravans. We are aware that many people live on 'holiday parks' as their main home, moving into temporary accommodation or travelling abroad during the months the holiday park is closed. This places additional burden on councils, as this 'hidden population' use local services, but do not appear in official population figures, and are not accounted for by funding formulae. In Conwy, the ONS population figure in June 2006 was 111,273 yet the number of individuals registered with GPs in September 2006 was 114,943. These additional 3,670 are likely to use Council services, without the Council receiving funding for them to do so.¹⁴

At the other end of the scale, in many of the more prosperous coastal communities an increase in second homes and holiday rental properties has pushed properties prices out of the reach of first time buyers, further contributing to the out-migration of working-age people and young families. So a Conservative Government would **abolish stamp duty for first time buyers on properties worth up to £250,000** – taking nine out of ten first time buyers in coastal towns out of paying stamp duty. We will **create local homes trusts, new bodies which can build homes solely for use by existing residents who need housing**. And we will introduce a new 'foot on the ladder' scheme to **give social tenants with a good record of tenancy a 10 per cent equity share in their social rented property, which can be cashed in** when they leave the social rented sector.

Labour's system of imposing regional house building targets has been unsuccessful and unpopular; with 24,000 fewer houses being built each year than in the 1990s.¹⁵ The rate of new housing development is the lowest on record.¹⁶ Coastal towns desperately need new homes to house local people. So we would **abolish the unsuccessful regional planning system and the counterproductive regional housing targets** – under the Conservatives local people would once again be in charge of delivering the housing they need. And to make sure there is enough housing, we will **incentivise new house-building by matching local authorities' council tax take for each new house built for six years – with special incentives for affordable housing**. This would be financed by scrapping the Government's bureaucratic and inefficient Housing and Planning Delivery Grant and by top-slicing a proportion of annual increases in formula grant for councils.

As well as giving people more control over their local housing we also want to encourage community ownership – people taking a direct stake in the economic and social vitality of their own neighbourhoods. We believe that local assets, local businesses and local people are often better served by local management solutions. So we will legislate to provide a **'Community Right to Buy' for threatened community assets**. This will ensure that, when a publicly owned community asset is being closed or sold off, or losing all its public funding, local not-for-profit community bodies such as schools, churches or voluntary groups will have a right of first refusal to buy that asset, at fair price, provided they commit to maintaining the asset for community use.

We will also create a **'Right to Bid'** to take over the management of publicly owned community assets, allowing community groups to submit, at any time, an application to take over from the public body currently running the asset, provided it can show it will be more efficient. The decision as to whether to accept the bid will rest with the public body in question, although it will be obliged to consider any bids made.

2.2 A modern transport network

For our coastal towns to be attractive places for people to live and businesses to invest then it is vital that they are not the 'end of the line' in terms of transport. If we want to rebalance our economy we need to encourage growth in all corners of the country. To achieve this goal while respecting our environmental ambitions, we will build a **new high-speed rail network to link up our major cities**. Initially going from London to Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds, our long-term aim is to reach the North East and Scotland. This will make it substantially easier for coastal towns in the North West and North East to connect to the mainstream economy. All too often coastal towns are on the receiving end of under-performing railways, yet when problems happen – overcrowding, delays and cancellations – no-one ever seems to pay the price apart from passengers. The rail industry needs to take responsibility for its performance, so we will **create a powerful Rail Regulator to speak up for passengers and get tough on train companies when they underperform**.

Modern, efficient and green transport links to major cities are necessary if our coastal towns are to flourish and grow. Once at the coast, it must be easy for residents and visitors to move around. We are supportive of a greater use of buses and bus lanes and would incentivise the increased use of technological developments such as GPS tracking, on screen information in call centres and routing software as well as smartcard ticketing. We will monitor the impact of the Cambridge to St Ives guided busway with interest, and consult on the expansion of such schemes on train lines which were closed as a result of the Beeching Inquiry. As part of commitment to green transport we will **require all electricity network operators to provide electric car charging points** to enable all car owners to move to plug-in electric hybrid vehicles.

2.3 The coastal environment

People living in coastal communities are well aware of the risk of rising sea levels, flooding and coastal erosion caused by climate change. Maintenance of the UK's 4,300km of coastal defences already costs around £243 million per annum.¹⁷ In England, an estimated five million people, two million houses and 185,000 businesses are at risk from the effects of inland or coastal flooding with the total value of exposed property, land and assets amounting to £214 billion.¹⁸

Rising sea levels and more extreme weather conditions are expected to bring higher and more frequent tidal surges and increased flooding, as well as exacerbate coastal erosion.¹⁹ The recent flooding in Cumbria shows the damage that severe flooding can wreak on communities, and as a result of climate change we can expect more extreme weather conditions. The Environment Agency is planning to manage a predicted one metre rise in sea levels and to cope with increased threat of coastal surges.²⁰ That is why we **support the Floods Bill that is currently in Parliament**.

The Government and Environment Agency has pursued a policy of 'managed retreat'.²¹ This can be damaging for those whose homes and business are set to be lost to the sea, for loss of premium farmland, and also in terms of reducing development and increasing insurance premiums in many of our coastal areas. Our starting point should be to defend our communities wherever we can, giving local

communities greater powers to find local solutions to coastal defences, and ensuring that the Environment Agency takes greater account of local knowledge in their decision making. We would also undertake negotiations with insurers to **ensure as many householders and property owners as possible who live near the coast have access to flood insurance.**

We must learn to view the coast as an asset not a liability. There is a large and unexploited national resource in the latent power of the waves and wind. Wave farms alone could generate fifty billion kilowatt-hours per year²² and Britain has the largest amount of offshore wind capacity in the world. These resources are currently significantly under-utilised, and further development would not only reduce our carbon emissions it could also bring skills and jobs to our coastal towns.

The Government has established a Marine Renewables Deployment Fund of £50 million. But the fund remains unspent – partially due to the fact there is not sufficient, readily available infrastructure which can be exploited by those seeking to research and develop emerging marine technologies in different locations. We accordingly propose to use the £50 million to back a vehicle to **establish a network of large scale Marine Energy Parks** – run on a commercial basis by a company after tender. Suitable coastal sites will be identified by feasibility study and with regard to government conservation duties under the Marine and Coastal Access Bill. This will promote economic diversification and regeneration as well as bringing employment opportunities to coastal towns. We will also **lay DC cables to support the development of offshore wind farms.** We recognise that any such major developments must be in keeping with the environment, and must not damage fishing beds, marine wildlife or watersports tourism.

The coastal environment is about more than just the natural environment. Many of our coastal resorts are famous for their attractive Victorian and Edwardian properties as well as welcoming public spaces, including piers, parks, proms and bandstands. Over 10 per cent of all our designated heritage assets, including over 50,000 listed buildings are found within one mile of the coast.²³ We would also like to see the construction of coastal defences which are in harmony with the character of the town, and contribute to regeneration, as is occurring in Blackpool with the construction of the ‘Spanish Steps’ which will protect the town whilst increasing public access to the seafront.²⁴

Yet maintaining these attractions, particularly in the face of inclement weather, can be costly and time consuming. The historic exteriors of our coastal towns are as attractive to visitors as ever; with 77 per cent of people agreeing that ‘the historic character of seaside towns is what makes them beautiful and enjoyable’. In the same poll almost as many people agree that ‘many seaside towns are shabby and run down’.²⁵

It is vital that the ‘public realm’ of our seaside resorts is maintained and enhanced, not only to attract visitors, but also to make them pleasant and attractive places to live all year round. Despite the challenges of maintaining these properties it is important we acknowledge them as assets which attract visitors, provide a focus for events, and offer a quality of townscape difficult to replicate in modern developments. They are also valuable icons in publicising and attracting visitors to these towns, and must be maintained and cherished.

Conservatives understand the importance of securing a sustainable future for both the marine environment and our coastal communities. We need to reverse Labour’s centralising approach to fisheries policy that has alienated fishermen and failed to address our dwindling fish stocks. And we need to put in place measures which will conserve our marine habitats. The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) has failed to deliver a fair deal for Britain’s fishermen or protect our marine environment and we will fight for wholesale reform. There must be a fundamental shake-up of the CFP to encourage sustainable practices, give local communities a greater say over the future of their fishing industry and bring to an end the scandal of fish discards – with fish being regularly dumped back into the sea dead.

3. Improving public services

3.1 A better health service

Many of our coastal towns, particularly in Devon and Cornwall, are at the forefront of the move towards greater use of locally caught and locally produced food, and must be encouraged in this endeavour. Whitstable has managed to turn its oyster fishing industry into its unique visitor attraction, peaking in the annual oyster festival.

But improving health outcomes is not only about improving diets; it must be about an overall improvement in lifestyle; including increasing exercise, reducing teenage pregnancy and improving housing stock. Many of our coastal towns offer excellent sporting and activity facilities, from sailing and windsurfing to rock climbing and cycling. Local organisations must be encouraged to invest in local sporting facilities, which would not only attract visitors but benefit the health of local residents.

26 of the 37 principle seaside towns in England have an overall level of deprivation greater than the English average²⁶ and there is much evidence to link socio-economic deprivation to poor health outcomes and inequalities. The health and social care services in coastal towns are often over-stretched, by a combination of overall levels of poor health combined with high numbers of elderly residents, large numbers of vulnerable people and influxes of visitors. This is being exacerbated by the distortion in the allocation of resources, to favour socio-economically deprived areas at the expense of areas with a large elderly population. Coastal towns, which often have both, must receive their fair share of funding. By taking the politics out of NHS funding we will **ensure the funding allocations better reflect the burden of disease in each area**. We would also like to see a greater awareness of the burden that visitors place on healthcare resources, and ensure our seaside resorts are adequately funded for this additional burden, particularly in the busiest summer months.

Many people at the seaside live in caravans or other temporary dwellings for large parts of the year. These lodgings are prone to dampness, which can lead to respiratory diseases. East Riding of Yorkshire Council and its Primary Care Trust (PCT) conducted a survey of caravan residents around the town of Withernsea, which has a 2,600 caravan-strong population. They found considerably worse health among the caravan population compared with the general population, with falls and wheezing of particular concern.²⁷

We want to educate people not only about the risk factors of illnesses, but the symptoms of illness to encourage early presentation which will in turn improve overall health outcomes. In Great Yarmouth, the Primary Care Trust has established an innovative programme whereby fruit and vegetables are delivered to socio-economically deprived communities to promote a healthy diet and lifestyle. We would also make greater use of the skills and expertise of healthcare professionals, such as pharmacists, who are close to the communities they serve, and well placed to provide information about medical conditions, lifestyle choices and medicines management.

We believe that improving public health is one of the key priorities for the Health Service, and we would **ring fence the public health budget**, to prevent it being raided to plug deficits. We would also **establish local Directors of Public Health paid by results to improve the health of local residents**. This will be particularly beneficial in coastal towns, the majority of which currently have worse public health indicators than the national average, and might involve using schemes like 'health coaching' and cognitive behavioural therapy to deal with long-standing health problems.

Seaside towns have some of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in Britain. In 2004, Blackpool had 74.8 conceptions per 1,000 girls aged 15 to 17, compared with the national average of 42.6.²⁸ All parents can find the birth of a new child tough, which is why we will **introduce a new universal health-visiting service**. This will involve a minimum guarantee of two visits in the home from the twentieth week of pregnancy until birth; six hours home support in the first two weeks after birth; and then additional visits up to a minimum guarantee of 23 hours of contact time between health visitors and children immediately before and in the first years of life.

3.2 Support for the elderly and vulnerable people

There has long been evidence to suggest that vulnerable people, those who as a result of a physical or mental illness, addiction or circumstance, are unable to meet their own needs, are gravitating toward coastal towns. The 2005 Thanet Enquiry found that Cliftonville West ward in Margate had over seven times the proportion of 'looked-after' children as the Kent average, and noted that half of these were placed there by authorities outside the County.²⁹ Some families are coming of their own choice, attracted by low rents and childhood memories of holidays by the sea and others are being relocated, often with the express support of their existing council. Additionally, many of our coastal towns have traditionally been associated with the older generation, as they are attractive and peaceful places to retire - 24 per cent of people in seaside towns are over the state pension age, compared with 19 per cent nationally.³⁰ and for every two people aged 18-24 who move out of coastal Lincolnshire, three people aged 60 or over move in.³¹ In Sidmouth, Minehead and Swanage over one third of the population is over retirement age.³²

We do not want to prevent older people moving to coastal towns, as by using services and the retail sector they help maintain the local economy. Instead, we will help coastal towns to adapt and benefit from the demography of their area by introducing **personal health and social care budgets** so that elderly people are in greater control of the care they need. We will **help elderly people who own their own home protect their home from being sold to pay for residential care costs** through the payment of a one off £8,000 insurance premium upon retirement. And we will **facilitate the introduction of innovative social care provision – from telemedicine to social network-based community care – to lift the burden on elderly people** and the local authorities who support them.

3.3 Improving schools in coastal towns

Education is fundamental if people are to have the skills and confidence to make a worthwhile contribution to the economy, and keep Britain at the forefront of innovation and creativity. But educational aspiration and achievement in many of our coastal towns is comparable with that of inner city areas; although coastal towns rarely have the ethnic diversity or comparable numbers of 'English as an Additional Language' (EAL) students. The estimated share of pupils in seaside towns achieving 5 or more A* to C's at GCSE is below the English average – 54 per cent compared to 58 per cent.³³ So Conservatives will **replace the worst performing schools in the country with Academies run by proven sponsors**. Any school that has been in special measures for a year or more by the end of summer 2010 will be immediately taken over by a successful Academy provider and reopened as a new school with new leadership. School funding would follow the pupils in coastal towns, so that **good schools will have the resources to expand if they so choose**. And we will **divert more resources to pupils from socio-economically deprived backgrounds through a new pupil premium**, which would ensure resources reach pupils in need rather than being diverted by bureaucracies.

Many coastal towns face challenges caused by the transience of students, which disrupts education and lowers attainment for many children. Many coastal towns also do not have further education and training facilities, and those students who want to continue their education are required to make long and costly journeys elsewhere. For example, 40 per cent of workers in Skegness have no formal qualifications.³⁴ By reforming the failing Train to Gain programme we will **create a £100 million adult Community Learning Fund to help people update or gain new skills**. Further Education colleges will be given the freedom to deliver the courses that best suit the needs of their communities, and provide the most flexible and accessible form of local learning for people. This will help support courses that offer training relevant to coastal areas, such as marine environment management and social care.

Unemployment and the level of qualifications are highly correlated. Data from the Annual Population Survey show that just 50 per cent of those who have no qualifications are in work.³⁵ Tackling low educational attainment is therefore vital if we are to see a long-term reduction in unemployment. It is vital that we give young people in our coastal towns the aspiration and opportunities to continue their education, and remove them from the low-skill, low-wage trap in which many residents of coastal communities have been caught. As part of our plans to Get Britain Working we will **create 400,000 apprenticeship, college and training places over two years**. And we will **introduce a National Citizen Service for 16 year olds to provide a compelling and challenging programme that will help teach young people about their responsibilities in society** and provide a focus for participating in community service.

3.4 Fighting back against crime

For our seaside resorts to remain attractive places to live, work and visit we must ensure that residents and visitors alike feel safe and secure. Although overall levels of crime in seaside towns are relatively low; anti-social behaviour and low-level crime, often alcohol-related, are prevalent. And crime in coastal towns is seasonal, with around 33 per cent of all crimes committed in the three summer months.³⁶

This has had a detrimental impact on coastal towns; blighting their public spaces and consuming police time. There needs to be a new approach to alcohol, to reduce the social problems which all too often result from binge-drinking and which make our town centres no-go areas at weekends. We must reinvigorate our coastal town centres, and make them welcoming and attractive to all age groups, every day of the week.

Almost a million people were the victims of alcohol-related attacks in 2008-09³⁷ and Britain's teen drunkenness is the highest in the OECD.³⁸ In 2007, 2,941 people aged 16-17 were given fixed penalty notices for being drunk and disorderly, and 172 for consuming alcohol in public.³⁹ We would seek to **impose significant tax increases on strong alcohol which contributes to violence and disorder on our streets**, such as alcopops, strong beer and strong cider. We would **ban retailers from selling alcohol below cost price** and would **give local councils and the police new powers to restrict the large number of late licenses** awarded to shops, takeaways and other venues. We want tough new powers to close down premises that sell alcohol to under-age drinkers, where illegal drugs are sold on the premises or where there is a persistent disorder problem. We will make changes to the licensing regime so that shops that persistently break the rules can be shut down permanently, not just for a short period.

We need to give the police more power to impose law and order in coastal towns. Under Labour, policemen and women spend too much time behind their desks doing paperwork instead of out on our streets tackling crime. We would **scrap the form filling that goes with 'stop and search' powers and cut the paperwork associated with carrying out routine surveillance**. And we will return more charging discretion to the police, so that they do not have to spend as much time filling in forms for the Crown Prosecution Service at the pre-charge stage. We will also give police officers the discretion to deal with young troublemakers committing anti-social behaviour quickly and effectively, before they go on to commit more serious offences.

Conservatives will **get tough on knife crime**. We will ensure that **everyone carrying a knife without reasonable excuse should expect to be prosecuted** – currently a quarter of people found with a knife are let off with a caution. We would also ensure that **anyone convicted of carrying a knife should expect a custodial sentence**.

Coastal towns have a particular problem with drug dependency and the crime that goes with it. Since 1998/99, drug offences have increased, contributing to social breakdown.⁴⁰ Labour have tried to manage drug addiction rather than break the cycle of addiction. We want to help people break their addiction, and will **introduce an abstinence-based Drug Rehabilitation Order**. The Order would require residential treatment or, depending on the nature of the offence and circumstances of the offender, day-care.

People want to feel that the police are responding to the needs of citizens, not the direction of distant bureaucrats in Whitehall. So we will **introduce locally accountable Police Commissioners, directly elected by the communities they serve**. The commissioner would be responsible for setting the police precept, and for other areas of responsibility currently held by police authorities such as the power to hire and fire the chief constable.

And we will require all police **forces to publish detailed local crime statistics online every month** and ensure that **Forces hold monthly ‘beat meetings’ at which members of the public can hold the police to account** for their performance.

Appendix

During the course of compiling this plan Mark Simmonds MP travelled to a number of coastal towns. In addition to Skegness and Ingoldmells within his constituency, Mark Simmonds visited Rhyl, Prestatyn, Llandudno, Blackpool, Great Yarmouth, Cleethorpes, Ramsgate, Dover, Isle of Sheppey, Deal, Weston-Super-Mare, Swanage, Bournemouth. He also travelled to Brussels to meet Commissioners, Embassy staff and EU civil servants with responsibility for regeneration funding to discuss European funding streams and enabling greater access to funds for coastal towns.

Footnotes

- ¹ DEFRA, *A strategic review of the potential for aquaculture to contribute to the future security of food and non-food products and services in the UK and Specifically England*, April 2009, <http://www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/fisheries/documents/aquaculture-report0904.pdf> [accessed 14 December 2009]; House of Commons Communities and Local Government Select Committee Report on 'Coastal Towns', March 2007, pp96 and 5
- ² House of Commons Communities and Local Government Select Committee Report on *Coastal Towns*, March 2007, p25
- ³ House of Commons Communities and Local Government Select Committee Report on 'Coastal Towns', March 2007, p31
- ⁴ House of Commons Communities and Local Government Select Committee Report on 'Coastal Towns', March 2007, p8
- ⁵ Marine and Fisheries Agency, *United Kingdom Sea Fisheries Statistics*, 2007 and 2008
- ⁶ DCLG, *England's Seaside Towns 'A Benchmarking Study'*, Nov 2008, p25
- ⁷ JSA – May 1997 1.62 million, October 2009 (latest figures) 1.64 million (ONS, Time Series Data, Data Series BCJD) ILO unemployment – May 1997 2.05 million, August 2009 (latest figures) 2.46 million (ONS, Time Series Data, Data Series MGSC)
- ⁸ House of Commons Communities and Local Government Select Committee Report on 'Coastal Towns', March 2007, para. 50.
- ⁹ DH, *Resource Allocation: Weighted Capitation Formula*. Sixth edition. December 2008.
- ¹⁰ Freedom of Information Act response by the Valuation Office Agency, June 2009 <https://share.acrobat.com/adc/document.do?docid=5534abc0-b46a-426b-861c-838b093f8baa>
- ¹¹ Communities and Local Government Select Committee, *Coastal Towns*, February 2007, para 43
- ¹² Shared Intelligence, *Margate Renewal Study*, p18
- ¹³ The Conservative Party, *'Strong Foundations, Building Homes and Communities'*, April 2009, p19
- ¹⁴ Private correspondence to Mark Simmonds MP
- ¹⁵ The Conservative Party, *'Strong Foundations, Building Homes and Communities'*, April 2009, p5
- ¹⁶ Total housebuilding, including social housing, is at its lowest levels since 1947, with just 90,430 starts in England in 2008-09 (Source: DCLG, *Live Tables: Table 208 and 244, Housebuilding*, August 2009).
- ¹⁷ English Heritage, *An Asset and a Challenge: Heritage and Regeneration in Coastal Towns in England*, October 2007 p7
- ¹⁸ SCOPAC, *Coastal Risk Management, A non-Technical Guide*, October 2008, p37
- ¹⁹ DEFRA, *Consultation on Coastal Change Policy*, June 2009, p6
- ²⁰ Environment Agency, Press Release, 10 November 2009
- ²¹ A. Browne, 'Canute was right! Time to give up the coast', *The Times*, 11 October 2002
- ²² The Conservative Party, *The Low Carbon Economy*, p16
- ²³ English Heritage, *Regeneration in Historic Coastal Towns*, October 2007, p2
- ²⁴ www.reblackpool.com
- ²⁵ <http://www.icons.org.uk/news/icons-in-the-news/british-seaside-still-dear-to-the-heart-say-english-heritage>
- ²⁶ DCLG, *England's Seaside Towns 'A Benchmarking Study'*, Nov 2008, p9
- ²⁷ Improvement and Development Agency, <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=8270929>
- ²⁸ 'Welcome to Casual Sex on Sea', *The Telegraph*, 1st August 2004
- ²⁹ Shared Intelligence, *Margate Renewal Study*, p6
- ³⁰ DCLG, *England's Seaside Towns 'A Benchmarking Study'*, Nov 2008, p7
- ³¹ Centre for Rural Economy, *'Ageing and Coastal Communities'*, September 2009, p7
- ³² DCLG, *England's Seaside Towns 'A Benchmarking Study'*, Nov 2008, p18
- ³³ DCLG, *England's Seaside Towns 'A Benchmarking Study'*, Nov 2008, p28
- ³⁴ DCLG, *England's Seaside Towns 'A Benchmarking Study'*, Nov 2008, p28
- ³⁵ Shared Intelligence, *Margate Renewal Study*, p37
- ³⁶ House of Commons, Communities and Local Government Report on 'Coastal Towns', Volume II, p126
- ³⁷ Home Office, *Crime in England and Wales 2008/09*, 16 July 2009
- ³⁸ OECD, *Doing Better for Children*, September 2009, Figure 2.16
- ³⁹ Parliamentary Question, 6th May 2009, PQ Number 272022
- ⁴⁰ Recorded drug offences have increased from 135,945 in 1998-99 to 243,406 in 2008-09, an increase of 79 per cent (Home Office, *Crime in England and Wales 2008-9*, 22 October 2009, Revised Table 2.04).

