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LAND

Background

LD100 In UK law the sovereign owns all land. Over time, the right to occupy and use, which was gained by feudal service to the sovereign, then through payment of rent to the Crown, has been transmuted to payment of a one-off lump sum. It thus appears that the free-holder has ownership of land in perpetuity, with apparent control over use or non-use, and the right to retain or sell at will. Since everyone needs access to land for homes and work, this system of tenure has historically contributed to extremes of poverty and wealth.

LD101 Ownership of land brings unearned benefits deriving both from nature and from the activities of the community, as improvements in infrastructure and technology. This is most apparent in towns and cities where population levels, transport facilities, etc. and/or quality of life bring high demand for goods, services and homes.

LD102 Ownership of land brings unearned benefit if the value of goods and services produced on that land exceeds the amount required for labour and capital to make its present use viable.

LD103 The ability of land-owners to set their own price for access to job opportunities or amenities means that much, if not all, the value of any new services

or technical improvement created by the community is siphoned off as unearned benefit to the land owner.

LD104 Changes in land-use, through such factors as the granting by the community of planning permission to build, or the development of the surrounding area by the activities of the community, frequently increase land value, perhaps by as much as 100 times. Such increases create unearned benefit in the form of windfall profits for land owners, either by exploiting the land themselves in the new ways that have become possible, or by selling at enhanced prices. The possibility of such windfall gains encourages speculators to buy up land and hold it, often unused or under-used and of little or no benefit to the community.

Principles

LD200 Land, the primary source of all real wealth, is the common heritage. We acknowledge that land is held in trust by human society on behalf of other species and future generations, and that land should not be treated as a capital investment nor traded for speculative profit.

LD201 We therefore assert the principle that no person and no body should have absolute control of land, but only particular rights over the use of it. These rights to specific agreed categories of use should be under the

control of the community through land-use planning.

LD202 A clear framework of land-use planning must therefore be established which puts a high priority on the natural environment. Within such a framework, land should be used in ways which promote those activities which maintain and sustain the environment, while encouraging those activities with minimal environmental impact and discouraging those with high environmental cost.

LD203 The Green Party believes that the unearned benefits from land-use should be shared amongst the community, and that the community should collect such unearned benefits through a system of Land Value Taxation. Revenues raised by Land Value Taxation would be in substitution of, and not in addition to, other revenues.

LD204 Within an agreed land-use planning framework, a policy of taxing land value would act as an incentive both to encourage good stewardship, and to reduce corporate land ownership. It would encourage the best use of all land compatible with the agreed permitted use, encouraging urban land to be used to its fullest extent, and discouraging land ownership for investment purposes only.

LD205 A policy of taxing land value would bring net benefits to a large majority of the population

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whether urban or rural, including owner-occupiers on small or medium plots, and those who do not own land.

LD206 Taxing land values thus contributes to the creation of a decentralised, sustainable society. Eliminating speculation in land and stabilising prices should make more land available at cheaper prices, enabling more worker's co-operatives, small-scale enterprises and other community ventures to flourish.

Policies

Land-use planning and registry

LD300 Criteria for reformed and strengthened land-use planning should include:

- a) protection of sites of special importance as habitats or amenity value;
- b) support for the overall sustainability of the economy;
- c) promotion of community self-reliance;
- d) devolution of decision-making on land-use to community level;
- e) best use of land already developed, especially in urban areas;
- f) reduced pressure for inappropriate building on green-field sites.

LD301 Land-use planning to determine permitted uses would be undertaken by local authorities within U.K. guidelines. There would be a regional system agreed by groups of local authorities. (see LP402)

LD310 Land registry: The record of HM Land Registry would be

made compulsory for all land within an agreed time limit and would be open for public inspection. Any land remaining unregistered after expiry of due notice would revert to the local authority for re-allocation.

Land Value Taxation (LVT)

LD400 The Green Party proposes introducing LVT (previously known as Community Ground Rent) as a tax payable on the annual value of land. The valuation would be of the land alone, exempting all buildings on it, recent and future improvements to it, or minerals extracted from it. LVT would therefore not be a tax on the rent of buildings, the value of crops, manufactured products or the product of other forms of work. (Minerals extracted from the land would be taxed separately - see NR423 & EC710s)

LD401 The proposed LVT would be levied by the local community at rates to be agreed amongst Districts and Regions. Any necessary redistribution between Districts and Regions would be undertaken by agreement between local governments in accordance with the principles agreed in EC551.

LD402 The level at which the tax would be levied would be based on the full value of the current permitted use of the land. Permitted use would mean, for example, that the taxable value of land which is deemed by the community to have special amenity or habitat value, thus inhibiting use for possible greater financial return, would be reduced. When it is considered desirable to change the use through the land-use planning framework, this new permitted use would then form the basis of the assessment.

LD403 Assessments would be reviewed automatically on change of use and every few years, or more frequently, on request. An arbitration process would be made available to provide compensation for those adversely affected by permitted use, and provision made for appeal against assessment.