

For publication: 19 November 2008

## Open Letter to Gordon Brown, David Cameron and Nick Clegg



### **The economic crisis and coming recession threatens the livelihoods of millions of people globally and across the UK.**

It is time for bold and decisive action from Government to protect those hardest hit by the perfect storm caused by the global economic slowdown, escalating food, fuel and energy prices, a housing crisis, rising unemployment and the growing prospects of a recession at home.

An Economic Recovery Plan on a similar scale and ambition to that proposed by US President elect Obama is required to protect those least able to survive the shock waves of the global economic crisis engulfing the livelihoods of millions across the UK.

We therefore call on the Government – with cross party support - to launch a UK Economic Recovery Plan to invest in housing, energy efficiency, job creation and income protection measures for the most vulnerable, combined with bold measures to prevent irresponsible lenders and energy companies profiting at the expense of their poorest customers.

Elements we would wish to see included in the Economic Recovery Plan include:

- Taking immediate action to tackle fuel poverty this winter, by funding winter fuel payments for all households in receipt of benefits.
- Spending £3bn to boost the incomes of the poorest families, and ensure the Government gets back on track with its commitment to halve child poverty by 2010.
- Introducing automatic payment of Pension Credit and Council Tax benefit, for older people who are entitled to benefits but not receiving them. This could take 500,000 pensioners out of poverty immediately in England alone.
- Substantially increase the level of funding available for social house building for the period 2008/9-2010/11, safeguarding thousands of jobs in the housebuilding industry in the process.
- Making it illegal for energy companies to charge people on pre-payment meters higher tariffs. These are often poorer people on fixed incomes.
- Requiring banks to end their de facto discrimination against the poorest customers and communities, and taking tougher action to regulate predatory lending practices by doorstep, payday and other sub-prime lenders to low income consumers.
- Allowing people seeking asylum to work after six months here, while they remain in the UK, so they can contribute to the economy

c/o Central Buildings  
Oldham Street  
Manchester  
M1 1JQ  
Tel: 0161 236 9321  
Fax: 0161 237 5359  
[www.geffair.org.uk](http://www.geffair.org.uk)

Where appropriate, we call on the Government to act in concert with devolved administrations on this matter.

The duty of Government in a crisis is to stand up for those least able to pay the price of the coming recession and to protect the vulnerable in times of economic hardship.

At the same time, Government must address structural weaknesses within the UK economy, which have led to a situation in which a quarter of the population are struggling to make ends meet.

To this end, we call on the Government to deliver on its existing commitment to end child poverty by 2020 and extend this goal to ending poverty across all generations, by a combination of boosting incomes; investing in affordable housing and safe secure neighbourhoods and ensuring public services are of high quality and accessible to all.

Yours sincerely




Adam Sampson  
Chief Executive  
Shelter



Paul Cann  
Director of Policy and International Affairs  
Help the Aged



Toby Blume  
Chief Executive  
Urban Forum



Niall Cooper  
Chief Executive  
Church Action on Poverty



Donna Covey  
Chief Executive  
The Refugee Council



Sarah Payne  
Chief Executive  
YWCA



Tim Bissett  
Chief Executive  
Church Urban Fund



Lesley Morphy  
Chief Executive  
Crisis

Kevin Flynn  
Chair  
National Unemployed Centres Combine



Steve Wyler  
Director  
Development Trusts Association

Ben Hughes  
Chief Executive  
Bassac

Ruth Lister  
Professor of Social Policy  
University of Loughborough

Neil Jamieson  
Executive Director  
Citizens Organising Foundation

Paddy Boyle  
Director  
The Manna Centre

Matthew Scott  
Director  
Community Sector Coalition

Kathy Galloway  
Leader  
The Iona Community

Dave Simmonds OBE  
Chief Executive  
Centre for Economic & Social Inclusion

Danny Curtin  
National President  
Young Christian Workers

Rev Roberta Rominger  
General Secretary  
United Reformed Church

Danny Dorling  
Professor of Human Geography  
University of Sheffield

Rt Rev Stephen Lowe  
Bishop for Urban Life and Faith

Gary Craig  
Professor of Social Justice  
University of Hull

Alison Gelder  
Chief Executive  
Housing Justice

Martin Johnstone  
Chief Executive  
Faith in Community (Scotland)

Alistair Cameron  
Director  
Scottish Churches Housing Action

Victor Momodu  
European Anti Poverty Network (England)