

Campaign!

The NPC's monthly bulletin for activists in the pensioners' movement

Paxman says over 65s should lose the vote

Former BBC Newsnight presenter, Jeremy Paxman has hit out at the older generation by blaming them for Britain's housing crisis and describing them as "spoilt children".

The 67-year-old claims that buying a house and seeing its value appreciate over the years is the fault of the "baby boomer" generation born after WWII.

He believes that because political parties have been scared of the "grey vote" and have



pandered to their demands, the answer is to stop people voting at 65.

Mr Paxman also stated that he didn't take his winter fuel allowance or state pension.

Jan Shortt, NPC general secretary said: "Mr Paxman is completely wrong to suggest that today's housing crisis has been caused by older people, or that the answer is to stop pensioners from voting."

"Not only has he benefited from years of having an inflated salary at the BBC, over the last few years he has also seen a reduction in the amount he pays in income tax—but he doesn't seem to be complaining about that."

The former TV presenter doesn't blame a lack of affordable housing for the housing crisis, but older people who bought their homes as they were encouraged to do in the 1950s and 60s

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Ex-minister calls for private care insurance

Disgraced minister, Damien Green has been circling the media recently with his "new" idea about how to pay for social care - which he calls voluntary care insurance.

Mr Green has suggested that people nearing the end of their working life who had benefitted from rising property prices could put aside some of their wealth to fund their social care.

He told Radio 4's Today programme that people should contribute voluntarily to a private insurance policy.

Mr Green may not remember, but this idea has been suggested before.

Essentially, it requires eight

people to take out a policy to pay for the one person who needs to cash it in, but most people either do not have the spare money to put aside in this way or feel that they will never need to pay for any care.

The private insurance model Mr Green is suggesting also links in to the "financialisation" of care, whereby private equity investors have pounced on a £16bn industry, attracted by a steady stream of income in the shape of fees from a growing population of older people.

However, a recent report from the Markets Authority warned that some providers "may be carrying unsustainable levels of

debt, and therefore may be at risk of financial distress".

The consumer group Which? has also ranked providers of homes for the over-65s by the percentage deemed inadequate or in need of improvement, and those private equity-backed firms are rated among the worst.

Dot Gibson, NPC deputy general secretary said: "There can be no suggestion that the answer to the crisis in the funding and standards of social care can be solved by the private sector."

The NPC is currently preparing a detailed plan for the introduction of a tax-funded, National Care Service that is free at the point of delivery.



National Pensioners Convention

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Campaign Dates

12-14 June 2018
NPC Pensioners' Parliament

Event includes a march, opening rally, keynote speakers on pensions, health and social care, transport, loneliness and funeral poverty. Confirmed speakers include Dr Lydia Hayes, Cardiff University and Mark Serwotka PCS general secretary. There will also be a lively exhibition area and social evening. Tickets on sale now for the 3-day event, priced £10 or day ticket £5 from the NPC office or www.npcuk.org

1 October UN Older People's Day

Every year the NPC marks this date with a series of activities and events around the country. More details to follow

A bus pass, but no buses

New research from the BBC has revealed that Britain's bus network has shrunk to levels last seen in the late 1980s.

Rising car usage and cuts to public spending are being blamed for a loss of 134 million miles of coverage.

The worse affected areas are Wales and north-west England.

Excluding London, all regions have seen bus subsidies reduced in the past four years.

At the same time, bus companies have also been cutting back on the number of commercially-run routes in the North, while increasing them in the South.

As a result, some communities around the country are being abandoned, with many unable to reach basic services such as shops and GP surgeries.

Ron Douglas, NPC president said: "Having a concessionary bus pass is vitally important to millions of older people, but for some there is little point if there are no buses that they can use."

"The bus pass is a lifeline for millions and we must ensure it stays for today's and tomorrow's pensioners."

The NPC is planning to celebrate ten years of the bus pass by delivering a giant birthday card to Number 10 on 28 March at 2.30pm.

Groups from across the country are encouraged to come along and show their support on the day.

The NPC will also be producing materials that can be distributed in local areas to show the benefit that the concessionary bus pass brings to individuals, local economies and the wider community.

Affordable homes needed

An expected government Green Paper on social housing this spring is unlikely to address the housing crisis, the NPC has claimed.

Independent assessments suggest that around 78,000 new affordable homes are required for each of the next 20 years in order to meet demand.

Yet this is almost double the 41,500 affordable homes that were built last year.

This means that only 19% of new homes in 2017 were affordable.

Whilst many experts agree that the country needs an additional 300,000 properties every year in order to meet demand, a far greater proportion of these would need to be genuinely afforda-

ble homes to rent and buy - and include the types of properties that were suitable for an ageing population.

Analysis from the Local Government Association shows that specialist homes for older people will need to increase by 75% by 2035 if we are to meet a growing older population.

This represents just over 51,280 dwellings a year for the next 18 years, well below the current building rate.

Housing charity Shelter also says that affordable housing should cost no more than 35% of your household income after tax and benefits.

The NPC is currently consulting on a new housing policy for older people.

Copies of the document are available at www.npcuk.org.

Longevity gap still exists

Life expectancy between England's richest and poorest neighbourhoods has widened since 2001, according to a new academic study.

On average, a boy born in one of the most affluent areas will outlive one born in one of the poorest by 8.4 years.

The study also found that girls born in the top fifth of areas on average live 5.8 years longer than those born in the bottom 20%.

Most worrying was the finding that the poorest pensioners are now 80% more likely to die before their richer counterparts, compared to a probability of between 41% and 52% in 2001.

Peter Rayner, NPC vice president said: "We should recognise that plans to keep raising the state pension age are going to have a devastating impact on the poorest in society, when life expectancy is falling."

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