

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 WEDNESDAY, 17 JUNE 2009 **PRESS RELEASE**

**BUILD BRITAIN OUT OF RECESSION
UNITE CALLS FOR ACTION TO KICK-START SOCIAL HOUSING
BUILDING PROGRAMME**

An action plan to kick-start the social housing building programme for the 4.5million people on the waiting list was launched by Unite, the largest union in the country, today (Wednesday, 17 June).

Unite argues in its blueprint, *Meeting housing need: Building Britain out of recession*, that such a massive council house building programme would meet social need and be an engine for economic revival generally, by creating thousands of jobs in the construction industry and its suppliers.

Unite's five-point programme is being launched today (Wednesday, 17 June) at a London conference being addressed by the new Minister for Housing and Planning, John Healey.

Unite Deputy General Secretary, Jack Dromey said: 'Unite welcomes the progress the government has made, including in the recent budget. There is still much more to do however.'

'As the recession bites and home repossessions mount, the demand for social housing is expected to rise from the already 4.5 million people on local authority social housing waiting lists – 1 in 12 people in the country. A shortage of housing also fuels tensions in hard-pressed communities, exploited by the brain-dead boot boys in suits of the BNP.'

'A large-scale social housing programme, including council built and rented property, is urgently needed to meet social need. The government must devote more resources to a new deal for housing, building Britain out of recession.'

Unite is calling for:

- A massive programme of 'new build, high quality, environmentally sustainable social housing, including council homes which would create jobs, meet housing need, and redress the inequality of social housing in rural areas.
- A comprehensive construction apprenticeship scheme for the 16-24-year olds whose job prospects have diminished during the recession.

- Investment in a ‘retro-fit’ programme for existing homes to improve energy efficiency i.e. the seven million homes that require solid wall insulation. It is estimated that such action could generate a further 25,000 jobs and would greatly contribute to the government’s environmental targets.
- The government to use its large stake in the banking sector to do more to prevent repossessions and strengthen the regulatory framework.
- Greater support for housing associations to ensure they receive sufficient funding to provide housing and support for tenants; and that staff numbers and employment conditions are maintained and enhanced, as outlined by Unite’s *Recession Charter* for the Not for Profit Sector launched in April.

Gail Cartmail, Unite Assistant General Secretary for the Public Sector said: ‘We believe that if these measures in *Building Britain out of recession* were implemented in a coordinated manner the waiting lists for decent housing would be reduced, much needed jobs would be created, and the positive impact of a dynamic house building programme would percolate through to other sectors of the economy.’

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NOTES TO NEWS EDITORS:

Journalists are warmly invited to attend the *Meeting housing need: Building Britain out of recession* conference at Unite House, 128 Theobald’s Road, London WC1X 8TN. The event is between 10.30am – 1.00pm on Wednesday, 17 June.

Unite is uniquely placed to comment on the current housing situation, having as it does members in housing associations, local government, and the construction and finance sectors.

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