

# **Oxfordshire Green Party County Council Manifesto 2017**

**FINAL**

## **Foreword**

The following document sets out the Manifesto of the Oxfordshire Green Party for the forthcoming 2017 County Council Elections.

Devolution proposals that would fundamentally restructure local government are being developed and considered by all the local authorities in Oxfordshire at County, District, City and Parish levels (the Oxfordshire Green Party approach to these proposals can be found in our *Devolution Review – County Manifesto supplement* with this manifesto at [www.greenoxfordshire.com](http://www.greenoxfordshire.com)).

No agreement has been reached between the local authorities (as of the 1st of December 2016) and subsequently the County Council Elections within a two tier system will go ahead, within the existing two tier system.

We have also made it clear that public consultation on the issues is desperately needed if democracy is to prevail. Labour and Conservative County Councillors have rejected the idea of public consultation saying it is frivolous (Conservative) and that people are concerned and don't understand local government (Labour).

As the County Elections will take place this manifesto presumes the County will run on for at least two years beyond 2017. This manifesto sets out the Green Party policy stance on existing structures and powers. However expected changes in responsibilities in service delivery, privatisation, transfers to QUANGOs and more cuts in financial support imposed by Central Government are alluded to in the document as these will influence whatever restructure is eventually adopted and in the short term the existing County Council.

BREXIT is another force that will have a significant impact on Council Services and the Economy of Oxfordshire. With support from Conservatives and Labour a start on withdrawal from Europe will begin in the spring of 2017. However, exactly what agreement will be reached with EU Members is still unclear or if there will be a new referendum on the terms agreed. As the situation is still fluid the 2017 manifesto is written for what will be the situation in May 2017 where the UK will still officially be within the European Union.

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## **INTRODUCTION: The Green Party: Setting an Alternative Agenda**

The Greens are the real opposition to Oxfordshire's Conservative- controlled County Council, providing an alternative model to cuts and privatisation. Our vision is to build a sustainable society that protects the environment and provides quality services that meet the needs of everybody in Oxfordshire. The Leave Vote in the referendum on UK membership makes this task more urgent than ever as BREXIT is endangering many areas of the local economy.

Each year, the Green Party sets alternative legal budgets for Oxfordshire County Council, showing year on year that services and employment provided by the County Council can be preserved. Cuts are repeatedly approved by Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat County Councillors, all of whom seem only too willing to undermine the services we need. The Greens have proven there is a local alternative to cuts that is possible. Mantras that state there is no alternative are false. For example:

In 2016, our Green Budget which would have protected the Children's Centres, homelessness services and Adult Social Care was voted down by Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat councillors.

**Only the Greens are providing a real opposition and a vision of a better tomorrow.**

We believe that fair taxation is essential to fund a decent society, in which everyone is included, and from which we can afford to educate our children, repair pavements and roads, house everyone and meet the needs of the elderly and the most vulnerable.

This manifesto will explain how each of our goals may be achieved in Oxfordshire. Our objectives are not utopian but a carefully costed programme of achievable changes to build a better local community.

**A vote for the Green Party will help make Oxfordshire a safer, environmentally stronger and a more prosperous county.**

***With your vote we can combat the most vicious cuts in our vital services***

## **1. Key issues**

Below are the key issues and needs that we consider to be the most important for Oxfordshire.

### ***1.1 Building homes without losing the countryside***

The main needs for housing within Oxfordshire are within existing urban areas, near to the existing employment hubs and facilities that people need. There is an urgency to plan for the extra housing need that is clearly there but there is no necessity to build on the Green Belt or to destroy the bio diversity or beauty of our Oxfordshire countryside. Development Plans that simply demand mindless GROWTH at any cost are unacceptable. Change and improvements to our housing stock that helps to meet genuine existing local needs which does not despoil the landscape and our community should be the key guides.

Further, the development of new homes by private housebuilders will not solve the problem of affordability as many of these properties are beyond the reach of most people. Only a comprehensive range of initiatives like: Direct Council Housing, Cooperatives, Community Self-build units, Land Trusts, Social Housing Organisations, and key worker part-rent, part-buy schemes are likely to produce housing at acceptable costs. For rents, the Greens are pressing for Housing of Multiple Occupation licensing, a Council lettings agency and the return of Local Rent Tribunals.

### **1.2 Protecting public services and community facilities**

We need a fair and progressive tax system which meets all our needs as a society. Current 'austerity' measures are driven by an ideological agenda to cut public services, supposedly designed to cut the national debt: they have achieved no such outcome. The deliberate planned cuts are resulting in damage to our National Health Service, cutting services to the most vulnerable in Oxfordshire, undermining education provision and closing community facilities.

While austerity measures are supposed to be needed to deal with debt created by banks, tax havens and tax loopholes remain open and our national debt has actually increased. Meanwhile the impact is being felt by ordinary people, particularly the most vulnerable. The Greens will continue to expose the deceit of austerity economics and seek to stop these fundamental attacks on our welfare state.

### ***1.3 Developing better transport for all***

Dramatic increases in the population of Oxfordshire have meant more traffic congestion and air pollution. Although many of these problems required national action, these issues can be tackled by better planning, improved walking and cycling networks, better bus provision and radical improvements in rail services. Simply building new roads is not the solution as these are proven to generate yet more traffic and even poorer air quality.

### **1.4 Developing a Greener economy and a sustainable future**

Better quality jobs which serve our long-term needs already exist in the form of about 1 million jobs in the Green economy, as advocated nationally by the Green Party. In this manifesto we set out policies which can deliver improved sustainability and more useful employment in Oxfordshire's growing green economy. The focus must be on the quality, not the quantity of employment in the County.

## **1.5 Local Democratic Control**

The Green Party places a strong emphasis on improving rights and responsibilities at all levels in society. We are strong supporters of devolution of decision making to truly local groups and that the County should conduct meaningful consultations on major decisions. The Greens believe Oxfordshire County Council should lead by implementing an Oxfordshire based *living* wage for its lowest paid workers, set at the same level as the Living Wage Foundation's London Living Wage because of our high local housing costs, and by supporting proportional representation as the voting mechanism for future unitary councils. Improved working conditions and remuneration plus a better democracy are clear Green objectives.

## **2. Education**

### **2.1 Educational Attainment**

#### ***Our Vision***

**We are committed to lifelong learning, free and accessible to everyone.**

We believe education should be considered as a process of personal development as well as training for a specific job. In our rapidly changing hi-tech world, those people with a wide breadth of knowledge, skills, creativity, understanding and a love of learning will be happier, and far more able to integrate into, and contribute to, our society.

Education is a dynamic process with new methods and practical applications emerging continually. We believe that innovation and creativity in teaching and learning are to be encouraged, to give everyone the opportunity to reach their full potential.

We consider encouraging the recognition of achievement in all things to be essential, not just through formal qualifications or state examinations. Greens believe that simply teaching to the Standard Attainment Tests narrows learning and a wider and more professional approach is more productive.

By encouraging co-operation between all individuals and schools, rather than competition and self-interest, society will gain a wider appreciation of everyone's strengths and talents.

Oxfordshire state schools are said to 'under-perform' with regard to educational attainment, for a number of social and economic reasons. Addressing the core reasons for this phenomenon requires national legislation related to the private and public sector in education and a new improved financial settlement for state schools, and we will push for this on a national level. The gross under funding we have seen for 30 years must end otherwise our standards will not improve while all around us in the world other countries are investing heavily in education and reaping substantial social progress.

Our approach to local actions for education in Oxfordshire is set out below:

#### ***Our Approach***

##### **Green County Councillors will:**

- Seek to re-establish local Authority control of planning educational provision rather than reliance on market or opportunistic activities between atomised providers.
- Bring all schools within Local Authority administration with a single fair common entry process in comprehensive non selective systems.

- To oppose Academisation and Free schools with all schools cooperating and accepting common minimum standards such as having qualified teachers, teaching the national curriculum and local staff wage bargaining with the LEA.
- Expand the role of the LEA in improving educational quality via expanding In Service Training and structured support networks such as the Music Service and Governor Training.
- Allocate resources to strengthen literacy and numeracy programmes in primary education as part of a concerted campaign to improve attainment levels then and in later years.
- Seek funding to expand nursery and free after school provision to help working parents.
- Look to re-establish links between local school kitchens and locally sourced, healthy food where possible to combat obesity in children and ensure that all have healthy and nutritious meals emphasising the benefits of a vegetarian lifestyle.
- Introduce a free school lunch for ALL primary age children and a subsidy for meals in secondary schools.
- Recognise that parents need to have access to structured support to care for their children via a range of support services such as the schools psychology service and wellbeing provision.

## **2.2 Multiculturalism**

### ***Our Vision***

Greens propose that education should be secular, and children of all religious backgrounds or none should be welcome in all our schools. This is because we believe that a social mix encourages understanding, tolerance and harmony, whereas segregation on religious grounds can lead to social division. We encourage the celebration of diversity within each school rather than religious separation between schools.

### ***Our Approach***

#### **Green County Councillors will:**

- Encourage all our schools to recognise the wealth of cultural diversity that we share in Oxfordshire and to find equal value in everyone.
- Encourage schools to make children aware of all belief and non-belief systems as part of their education, but leave worship and religious belief to be established by the family unit.
- Ensure our schools have an ethos that is welcoming to ALL participants.
- Resist attempts to reintroduce grammar schools which promote inequality via selection.

## **2.3 Working with Academies**

### ***Our Vision***

We do not support the governance and funding structures of academies and 'free' schools. Instead we think schools should be locally accountable and financed, rather than managed by private 'concerns'. Academies are clearly one step along the road to privatisation and fee charges. Local Governing bodies made up of local stakeholders such as parents, teachers and Community representatives should be the key to local management of schools not businesses, dubious 'charities' and distant faith organisations. Vital school assets such as land must not be handed over without recompense to these organisations.

## ***Our Approach***

### **Green County Councillors will:**

- Accept the reality that 50% of our secondary and several of our primary schools locally are now Academies.
- Work with Academies, where they have been established by Central Government, seeking to draw them into co-operative local authority networks of practical support services and community engagement. (Some have taken this path.)
- Reduce external contracting as much as possible in order to remove profit making from education services, and reinvest funds into teaching and learning.
- Seek to deliver local authority services in-house and maintain high standards with low cost which hopefully the Academies will continue to buy into.
- Launch a series of improvement packages sponsored and subsidized by the County Council e.g. Sport and Music festivals that Academies will wish to engage with.

## **2.4 Sustainability in All Areas of School Life**

### ***Our Vision***

We see many benefits to integrating sustainability into all areas of school life: educational opportunities to learn about longer-term resource management; economic benefits from energy efficiency and potential renewable energy generations; a wider appreciation of how individual lives connect with nature and the world. A sustainable school also offers many benefits to the community in terms of sharing its space and facilities to local groups.

### ***Our Approach***

#### **Green County Councillors will:**

- Help all schools to benefit from extensive insulation in building fabric, and to generate solar power, where feasible, in order to reduce energy consumption and reduce costs on energy and heating.
- Expand the “Eco Schools Programme”<sup>1</sup> to cover all institutional improvements on buildings.
- Plan for children to be able to walk and cycle to school safely and encourage our children to understand how to live a low carbon lifestyle.
- Re-establish a full programme of cycle safety in schools with training sessions and special events.
- Encourage the use of our schools as Community Hubs working with Adult Education provision and community groups, making better use of facilities and illustrating that education is a lifelong experience.

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<sup>1</sup> Find out more about the “eco-schools programme” here: <http://www.eco-schools.org.uk/aboutecoschools/theprogramme>



## **2.5 Special and Individual Needs**

### ***Our Vision***

We wish to see as much integration as possible of children with special needs into main-stream educational provision and as much separation as may be necessary for a child's own advantage. The safety of other children may be a relevant issue in some cases.

Separate special schools for children with physical, mental or behavioural issues may still be needed and we will support these but our focus must be acceptance of special needs children as far as is practical into our local schools and the communities they generate. This will be to the advantage of the special needs children providing more curriculum opportunities and for mainstream children a lesson in learning to live together with those who have special needs.

### ***Our Approach***

#### **Green County Councillors will:**

- Face up to the costs that may be involved in adapting mainstream schools to facilitate effective integration, and ensure adequate budget provision to achieve this aim over the long-term.
- Encourage and support suitable work experience and placements to give children, with special and individual needs, opportunities for the future.
- Ensure travellers' children are able to gain full access to all types of education provision whilst maintaining compatibility with their own culture, and the fact of moving between locations where this is relevant.

## **2.6 Expand the Role of the Local Education Authority**

### ***Our Vision***

The Green Party sees great advantages in school co-operation rather than competing and recognises that the Local Education Authority (LEA) can play a role in building networks to support teachers, governors, parents and children. We want to halt and reverse the overlooked potential of the LEA to play a dynamic role in Oxfordshire.

### ***Our Approach***

#### **Green County Councillors will:**

- Seek to expand the coordination, planning, and practical services of the Local Education Authority to all schools, in collaboration with education professionals and governing bodies.

## **2.7 Working with Teachers, Unions, Governors and Parents**

### ***Our Vision***

The Green Party sees great advantages in building networks to support teachers, governors, parents and children and to foster innovative approaches to learning.

### ***Our Approach***

#### **Green County Councillors will:**

- Welcome new teaching and learning techniques applicable to the 21st century as the way forward, rather than top down imposed reforms.
- Encourage schools to embrace new technology and explore new systems of teaching and learning where appropriate.
- Continue to work directly with trade unions seeking their involvement in consultative processes and where appropriate local negotiations.
- Emphasise that teaching and learning must build a love of learning and do so in a creative atmosphere of adventure.
- will enhance governor training and support for Parent Teacher Associations.
- re-establish the International Unit to assist schools to work internationally.
- work closely with child protection agencies and implement policies to combat child abuse in Oxfordshire.

### **3. Fire and Safety**

The County Council currently has the duty of running the local Fire and Rescue Service; however the Service is likely to be transferred by government to be the responsibility of the Police and Crime Commissioner in the near future.

The Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service's mission is to make it safer to live and work by reducing the incidence of serious fires and related emergencies. The Service has an impressive track record, and is staffed by dedicated men and women. Despite budget cuts the Service is only *just* meeting its target response times; however, this would not be possible if they face further budget cuts and even more reorganisation.

Community safety is largely the responsibility of the Police, the City & District Councils – not the County Council. However, the Safety Advisory Group (SAG), which reviews the safety of community events is County led. The Green Party has previously resisted decisions of the SAG which can be overly officious and conservative.

#### ***Our Vision***

The Green Party applauds the work of Oxfordshire's Fire and Rescue Service and will always protect its funding.

The Green Party is committed to community safety and welcomes developments where Fire Service staff can work more extensively within local communities and with professionals and trade unions to ensure that Prevention is built into decision making. We act to ensure that such opportunities are maintained throughout the County. Fire and Emergency Rescue must be a service that is publicly owned and publicly run.

#### ***Our Approach***

##### **Green County Councillors will:**

- We oppose the proposed move of the service to be under the control of the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- We will continue to protect Oxfordshire's Fire and Rescue Service funding and restore it to local government control.

- Continue to oppose any further closures of fire stations.
- Reform the Safety Advisory Group (SAG) to be more supportive of local events, so that the costs of community events (such as local carnivals) are as low as possible without compromising safety.
- Continue to place a greater emphasis on fire prevention education.

#### **4. Libraries, Museums & Arts Centres**

This is a key area of the Green Party vision for Oxfordshire.

We want to develop truly creative successful strategies that link different cultural services and agencies i.e. involving the County Council and District Councils, or future unitary arrangements, in order to maximise the use of public money.

##### **4.1 Libraries**

###### ***Our Vision***

At present, the County Council runs the Library Service and contributes to the running of a number of museums. Although it doesn't operate any leisure centres or swimming pools (these being either privately run or operated by the City and District Councils) it does impact on outdoor leisure pursuits in a variety of ways through its *Countryside* and *Transport* services.

In December 2011, the County reversed a previous decision to close some of the County's libraries, as a result of intense public pressure. The current plan for the immediate future is to fully fund 22 out of the 43 County libraries and hope that the remainder can continue to operate with the help of volunteer labour and through increased use of self-service. The mobile library service has been discontinued. So, at present, some of our libraries remain open but further cuts in funding or voluntary support could put them under considerable pressure to close. The annual Book Fund cuts continue year on year depleting a key resource.

The Green Party strongly believe that libraries are a valuable community resource which need investment to keep offering the services that people want and need. It is myth that Libraries are outdated. What is needed is a new emphasis on free access to electronic media making them free communication hubs.

Our vision is to preserve library funding and enhance their offerings to best suit the local communities' research and leisure needs.

###### ***Our Approach***

###### **Green County Councillors will:**

- Preserve libraries and seek to retain them at the heart of our communities. Making them even more community friendly, incorporating other County facilities. (e.g. Children's Centres)
- Reinstate the travelling library service especially for rural communities.
- Remain committed to keeping all of Oxfordshire's libraries open and work to explore how libraries can be operated in partnership with schools and other educational establishments.
- Seek funding to allow libraries to evolve and continue to offer services that people want.
- Place a new emphasis on electronic media and new technology providing free access systems and new technology training.

- Stop the decline in the Book Fund, as reading paper books has increased in recent years.

## **4.2 Museums**

### ***Our Vision***

The Green Party vision is to establish free public access to all museums and heritage sites, as this will help everyone to visit, appreciate, understand and cherish our shared cultural history.

Promoting heritage and our cultural activities also generates a great deal of tourist income which is good for the local economy and is our contribution to preserving national cultural heritage.

The County's museums are mostly free to enter and are generally well-respected.

The County Council has handed some properties over to charitable trusts to manage and some initiatives have proven successful. Less successful has been the transfer of County assets to private companies, a prime example being the Oxford Castle. The heritage aspects of the Castle have been largely ignored in favour of commercial interests. For example, access to the Castle Mound – once free – has been restricted and charges introduced.

There have also been extensive cuts to theatres, public cultural events and galleries over the last three years undermining their ability to innovate and develop. This has been especially the case for children's theatre which has been severely undermined.

### **Our Approach**

#### **Green County Councillors will:**

- Seek to protect free public access to all museums and heritage sites.
- continue our support for the museums and galleries that we part subsidise
- continue to fund and support a wide range of cultural events such as Cowley Road Carnival.
- re-establish our work with local theatre groups especially children's theatre and special needs groups.

## **4.3. Arts Centres**

### ***Our Vision***

The County's Arts Centres provide a rich mix of all kinds of entertainment and education for all ages, abilities and tastes, yet the Conservatives have reduced their budgets. The Green Party vision seeks to reverse these budget cuts. Our vision is to make Oxfordshire a County of Culture- a world centre of culture. The intellectual potential is there but the County must be the catalyst to action.

### ***Our Approach***

#### **Green County Councillors will:**

- Reinststate the full grants to Art Centres and ensure their management includes elected members and representatives of the communities they serve.
- Seek to coordinate and promote Oxfordshire as a world centre of the arts with a clear international marketing strategy

## 5. Business Links

Since early 2011, Oxfordshire County Council has been delivering most of its business support activities in partnership with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), an unaccountable business-led forum. Through its funding of the LEP, the County Council allegedly encourages “economic growth and diversification” based on four key programmes; skills, infrastructure, inward investment and broadband. A tremendous amount of public money (over £1billion) has been given directly to this unaccountable QUANGO.

The Green Party disagrees with some of the LEP’s priorities and especially its management system and guiding principle objectives: unsustainable economic growth, inflated housing targets which have been shown repeatedly to have no supporting evidence and decision-making without democracy have become the hallmark of the LEP. There is a need for planning, coordinating and directing investment but this must become an accountable service especially with such large amounts of public money involved.

### ***Our Vision***

The Green Party prefers a business approach that is based on the findings of the widely acclaimed *Green New Deal Group*<sup>2</sup>. That is, the promotion of sustainable economic development and job creation through investment in environmental and socially focused enterprises, as “Green industries” have a huge role to play in building the UK Economy and establishing a long-term economically sustainable future for Britain.

We believe that the County Council should closely scrutinize the work of any partners such as the LEP to increase accountability to local taxpayers. We believe that local, sustainable, environmentally efficient development benefits our community. As an example, the Greens helped establish the Westmill<sup>3</sup> Wind and Solar farms in Oxfordshire: one of the largest community-owned solar power stations in the world. These energy businesses provide good returns to investors, most of whom live locally.

### ***Our Approach***

- Seek to prioritise those LEP and County Council programmes which support community orientated aims and discontinue others. Ultimately, we would seek to move all LEP funds, functions and staff to new unitary councils, (or Council) if agreed.
- If the Government insist on an Elected Mayor to direct infrastructure projects the Greens will contest that election and seek to implement its Green Business programme. The Greens would insist on an Advisory Board of local authorities to direct the investment effectively.
- The emphasis for future job building must be on creating quality jobs focused on the knowledge based economy, and the expansion of the green economy to ensure long-term sustainability. Well rewarded high quality employment must be the aim rather than merely meeting consumer demand.
- Divert investment from unsustainable infrastructure development, such as the building of new airports or expansion of existing ones and focus instead on enhancing our local walking, cycling public transport routes and systems.

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on the *Green New Deal Group*, see <http://www.greennewdealgroup.org/>

<sup>3</sup> For more information about Westmill, see: [http://www.westmill.coop/westmill\\_home.asp](http://www.westmill.coop/westmill_home.asp) and <http://www.westmillsolar.coop/aimsandbackground.asp>

- Continue to fight against withdrawal from the Single Market and the customs union plus keeping EU infrastructure and research funding regimes in place along with European environmental and work regulations.
- Seek local investment, in preference to external investment, to maximise the likelihood that any profits generated remain within the region, giving Oxfordshire better protection from the uncertainty of global markets and the effects of Brexit.
- Remain committed to increasing scrutiny throughout local government, encouraging more local accountability. Ensuring equity between the various parts of Oxfordshire.
- Work to ensure that the County Council is more proactive in injecting money into the local economy. For example, the Greens propose an increase in Independent Advice Services to help people access benefits; as many millions remain unclaimed. The provision of these advice services would be led locally and so would not only help local people individually but also help unlock financial assistance which would then be spent locally, boosting the local economy
- Commit to expanding Oxfordshire's Credit Unions, to help to provide low cost credit for a greater number of people, who might otherwise have no option but to turn to unscrupulous 'loan sharks' or high interest bank loans.
- Support the proposed Oxford Cambridge Economic Enterprise Corridor without new road building but only if actually sustainable development is being implemented. The focus must be on partnerships to create leading edge technologies and innovative models.
- Encourage County Council support of sustainable and ethical enterprises through its own procurement choices by buying from sustainable and ethical local businesses.
- Encourage enterprises that prioritise local organic food production and distribution, and help establish or support local Farmers' Markets.
- Seek to prevent transfer of pensions to national Government control ensure that our Council pension funds are not invested in Fossil Fuel Companies and that investment returns for pensioners are sustainable in the long term.
- Seek to prevent transfer of pensions into the control of Government.

## **6 Health & Protection for Vulnerable People**

### **6.1 Services for Elderly People, Adults and Children with Severe Disabilities**

#### ***Our Vision***

For the Green Party, one of the most important functions of the County Council is to make life easier and more fulfilling for vulnerable people and people with disabilities, their families and friends.

The present system is seriously flawed. Social Care has been underfunded by Labour and Conservative Governments for decades and has been hit by unprecedented cuts. This Manifesto demonstrates a different model of care, centred on communities and participation, which is aimed at making life easier for people with disabilities.

We believe that the way in which social provision is provided is very important, but more funding is also needed. This is because of one of the great accomplishments of the last fifty years - the steady increase in average life expectancy for most people. In addition to the large increases in the number of older people, more infants with severe disabilities are surviving, and people with disabilities are living longer. However, long life can bring disability and loneliness to elderly people, and poverty and ill-health to the family and friends caring for them.

We must not conclude that we cannot afford care for our ageing population because many work in different capacities way beyond the official retirement age and this third age group are much healthier than their forbears making less demands of the system. Green Party policy favours a flexible rather than a fixed retirement age for this reason.

The Green Party is working at a national level to try and ensure that wealthy corporations and individuals pay the taxes they currently evade, to channel this lost revenue into funding Social and Health Care services. But we realise that this cannot be fully realised until there is a different kind of government in power. People do, however, need practical help here and now. Greens believe that many people of Oxfordshire share our concern that so many individuals and families are suffering unnecessarily due to ideologically-motivated cuts to these essential services.

### ***Our Approach***

#### **Green County Councillors will:**

- Continue to propose an increase in Council Tax The effect of our most recent proposals to the average Council Tax payer is small, at an extra 57p per week. This would be enough to keep Children's Centres open and maintain most key adult social care services for the most vulnerable.
- Hold a referendum (as we must by law) on any proposed increase to ensure it meets with the approval of local people.
- The Green Party would allocate most of the additional funds per year to reduce the impact of past and future cuts on social care services and provision.

## **6.2 Prevention and Early Treatment**

The Conservative led Oxfordshire County Council was one of the earliest to limit Community Care services to people with '*Substantial*' or '*Critical*' needs, allowing only those with an extremely high level of need to access any services. The council's definition of '*Substantial*' includes: 'abuse or neglect'; 'inability to carry out much of personal care'. A person can be very disabled and isolated before he or she falls within these criteria and is only then able to receive help.

**We must act on the maxim that prevention is better than cure.**

### ***Our Vision***

In addition to the lack of funding, we believe that there are major flaws in the current approach to the provision of health services and protection for vulnerable people. Prevention and early treatment provision is often the first to be cut when budgets are reduced, however we believe that to do so creates a false economy. This is because without early intervention, life becomes harder for the people involved, their condition deteriorates and they need more expensive care later.

### ***Our Approach***

#### **Green County Councillors will:**

- Allocate funds within our costed budget to help some of the people disqualified, by the present unreasonable criteria, to access social help and maintain their dignity.
- Make a major effort to increase access to prevention and early treatment and provide assistance before people become incapacitated. A Green Party Social Care system would centre on local communities so that people would know where to get the advice and help they need, when they need it.

- Build on, and help support existing luncheon clubs, befriending circles, healthy living advice, physical recreation, arts, drama and general recreation. A new minor grant regime should be established to fund these initiatives perhaps drawing on NHS funding as well as Council coffers.
- Scrap the rule that people who do not need help in getting dressed cannot have help with keeping their homes and gardens attractive and clean. Nothing depresses people more, especially if they are housebound, than the realisation that they are not able to keep up the same level of care to their home.
- Look to create joined-up initiatives to create local jobs and work experience opportunities to serve local needs and foster inter-generational links.

### **6.3 Services for a Fulfilling Life - Not Just Survival**

#### ***Our Vision***

The current policy is for shorter and fewer hospital stays, and sharp reductions in residential care provision. There is some value in this approach because most people prefer to remain in their own homes for as long as possible. But if that home life is simply about staying alive, spending long lonely days looking at four walls or facing unrelieved work by tired carers with diminished time for each client, that is not much of a life. Homeless people have also been targeted, they and so many people in Oxfordshire have faced increasing suffering year in and year out as a result of County Council service cuts.

**The Green Party's vision therefore is to try and help people lead fulfilling lives.**

#### ***Our Approach***

##### **Green County Councillors will:**

- Allocate funding to help communities and local groups to make it possible for people to get the help they need to have a rewarding life.
- Ensure that a range of supports for home living are available in terms of aids and adaptations.
- Aim to establish a focus on providing grants to voluntary organisations that bring the elderly together in community groups.
- Work with relevant public or charitable agencies to restore homeless hostel accommodation and reverse the cuts and closures.

### **6.4 Community Workers for Supportive Communities**

#### ***Our Vision***

Like all of us, older people and people with disabilities also want contact with other people, and to enjoy varied and interesting activities in life. Having contact with other people, and being active helps to delay and prevent severe depression, which is a major cause of disability. We propose that every community and neighbourhood in the County be helped to provide activities and befriending networks for all people, of whatever age, in the way that they desire.

There is a huge supply of good will, skill and talent in all our communities, and the desire to meet and help others. This is a wonderful baseline on which to build additional opportunities for all.



However, we understand that this does not always happen without assistance, and experienced workers and money are often required.

### ***Our Approach***

#### **Green County Councillors will:**

- Encourage full use of public buildings [by free lettings] , including schools by community groups, by agreement when necessary with Community centre management Committees.
- Increase support for village and community centres to enable them to offer services and facilities to help local groups.
- Seek employment of Community Development Workers, either directly by the County Council or by funding voluntary sector organisations. The duties of the Community Development Workers will include coordination and assistance to local people and groups to create and maintain the activities they choose.

## **6.5 Advice and Advocacy**

### ***Our Vision***

Many people who are eligible for disability and pension benefits and/ or Health or Social Care services do not receive them. This is for a number of reasons, but a key reason is due to the uncertainty over what is available, and the often-complex application procedure.

The Green Party proposes an increase in Independent Advice Services to help people access benefits and services. The provision of these advice services would be led locally and so would not only help local people individually but also help unlock financial assistance in such groups as local charities or social enterprise which would then be spent locally, boosting the local community.

### ***Our Approach***

#### **Green County Councillors will:**

- Substantially increase funding for Advice and Advocacy agencies which are effective but lack sufficient finance to meet the demand for their services.
- Propose that every GP surgery in the County and/or other centres where appropriate, have at least a weekly session that provides high quality benefits and service advice, so that they are within reach of most people.

## **6.6 Green County councillors will work on the principle that the County Council is capable of being an advocate for groups in need and those who help them, not just a source of services.**

## **6.7 Support for Carers**

### ***Our Vision***

There has been a significant improvement in the awareness of the importance of carers (family and friends) in supporting the elderly and other people with disabilities, but levels of poverty, loneliness and ill-health remain very high and pressures are increasing.

A very important recent development has been the creation of a local Emergency Card Scheme<sup>4</sup> which provides immediate cover when a carer becomes indisposed (for example has an accident). This came from the unanimous proposal of an All Party Parliamentary Working Group on Carers<sup>5</sup>. The idea of this Working Group originated with a Green Party local Councillor.

Respite care for carers is also critical to stop volunteer burnout, a process that is all too real.

### ***Our Approach***

#### **Green County Councillors will:**

- Allocate resources to continue the local Emergency Service to give peace of mind to carers that there will be an agreed plan ready to be implemented should they have an accident or fall ill, and be unable to continue caring.
- Protect the respite care for carers service from cuts and recognise that this is a critical element in maintaining volunteer support.

## **6.8 Transport in Social and Health Care**

### ***Our Vision***

The Green Party understands that people need to have satisfying lives, and to be able to get out to see others and enjoy the world. However, to do this requires access to transport; and a variety of public transport services is much needed in Oxfordshire to connect our rural communities, and offset issues of car ownership and parking in our towns, particularly Oxford.

### ***Our Approach***

#### **Green County Councillors will:**

- Fight to restore the cuts to subsidised bus services especially those to rural communities
- Explore options to maintain a bus service in those areas in which commercial bus services have been withdrawn.
- Explore options to support the Dial-a-Ride service centrally, and support local or Community initiatives to provide transport.
- Support activities that can be created in every locality to reduce the need for long distance travel, which can be tiring and distressing.
- Fund Community Development staff who would support and coordinate volunteer driving schemes.

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<sup>4</sup> For more information on the Emergency Card Scheme, see: <http://www.carerssupportcentre.org.uk/our-services/carers-emergency-card/>

<sup>5</sup> For more information on the All Party Parliamentary Group on Carers, see: <https://www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/appg-on-carers>

## **6.9 Care Workers**

### ***Our Vision***

The Green Party values people such as care workers, who do such difficult and responsible work in society. We recognise that care-workers have been badly treated, which is not only wrong in itself but will also not attract or keep staff or maintain high quality care standards.

In 2012, Oxfordshire County Council sacked its remaining 400 care-workers. The reason for this was attributed to the need for budget cuts. Despite the fact that the council care-workers were well-regarded by service users, better trained than most private agency staff, and could be deployed more flexibly around the County; the Conservative lead council believed that the costs of these staff was too much. The care-workers were not well paid but they were eligible for pensions and were paid for the time they spent going from client to client. They were therefore more expensive than the staff of (profit making) private agencies, many of whom have no pension provision and are not paid for travel within their working day. To uphold standards for the elderly and the staff a return to Council direct employment is essential.

### ***Our Approach***

Green County Councillors will:

- Create a Council employed resilience team that can respond to crises such as bankruptcy and fraud of a private agency providing care.
- Continue to support the use of the London Living Wage in Oxfordshire which would significantly raise the incomes of carers.
- In the long term, restore the role of dedicated County Council Home Care workers, with adequate budgets.
- Seek to establish at least one care home run by the County Council to establish clearly what real costs are as opposed to the exploitative charges made by the private sector for profit.

## **6.10 Protecting the NHS**

Policies to fragment and privatise the NHS were introduced by the last Labour Government, carried forward in an intensified form by the Con-Lib Coalition and further developed by the present Tory Government. These policies have the effect of removing large sums of tax-payer money injected into the NHS, and giving them to private profit making companies. The Green Party believes that this will have a very negative effect on health provision and will inevitably reduce the quality and availability of important services. It is becoming increasingly urgent to strengthen Green Party representation in the Council, in order to inform the public of what is happening and to maintain a public NHS with adequate resources.

Green Councillors had great success in getting the Oxford Community Hospital reopened after it had been closed for more than a year, albeit with a reduced number of beds. Oxford Community Hospital provides expertise in rehabilitation, allowing people to remain out of less pleasant and more expensive acute hospitals. Greens and other campaigners will support efforts to restore services such as at the Horton Hospital and maintain efforts to prevent the imposition of unacceptable contracts on Junior Doctors.

## ***Our Vision***

Our vision is to maintain a public NHS with adequate resources and to halt and remove fragmentation and privatisation. We recognise the value of good Community Hospitals and will support them in providing their services.

## ***Our Approach***

### **Green County Councillors will:**

- Continue to oppose the Labour and Conservative Parties' policies to cut, fragment and privatise the NHS.
- Continue to press for fair treatment and access to fully paid NHS care for those who need it rather than enforcing means-tested Social Services for nursing home or home care provision.

## **6.11 NHS Continuing Care**

By law, the NHS is required to provide fully paid care to people who need services because of ill-health, even when they do not need acute medical care. Oxfordshire NHS has been reluctant to accept their responsibility. This means that many people must use means tested Social Services for nursing home and home-based care; meaning they have had to sell their homes. In fact, in a five-year period up to 2013, one million family homes have been sold in England to cover care costs.<sup>6</sup>

Green Councillors passed a resolution calling on the County's Social Care team to press the Primary Care Trust (PCT) for the increased provision of free services. This made a major difference and Oxfordshire's provision had increased to the point that it matched the average for the whole country. However, since then there has been a determined effort to reduce provision, by the Conservatives. The latest version of the cuts is termed the Sustainability and Transformation Plan. This supposed rationalisation incorporates a devastating minimum of £200 million worth of cuts for Oxfordshire. This must be opposed.

## ***Our Vision***

Our vision is that support for people, especially those with disabilities, the elderly and the homeless, is a major responsibility of the County Council. Such support has been underfunded for years, and is said to be "in crisis" by a coalition of charities Age UK, the Alzheimer's Society and other groups<sup>7</sup> due to the unprecedented budget cuts of the Conservative County Council in adult social care. This causes serious distress to many people whom we all, as a compassionate and fair society, have a responsibility to protect.

The Green Party is working at a national level to try and ensure that wealthy corporations and individuals pay the taxes they currently evade, in order to channel this lost revenue into funding Social and Health Care services and other essential public services.

The NHS must be fully funded with an increase in spending of at least 4% per year to match the demands of an ageing population.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/personalfinance/10283259/Elderly-care-crisis-claims-a-million-family-homes.html>

<sup>7</sup> For example, see: [http://www.oxfordtimes.co.uk/news/14190156.Charities\\_form\\_coalition\\_to\\_stop\\_cuts\\_to\\_social\\_care\\_across\\_Oxfordshire/](http://www.oxfordtimes.co.uk/news/14190156.Charities_form_coalition_to_stop_cuts_to_social_care_across_Oxfordshire/)

## **Our Approach**

### **Green County Councillors will:**

- Allocate some of the extra revenue to enable individuals to access benefits for which they are currently eligible, but which they do not or cannot access.
- Seek ways in which we can help local people, including disabled people, to help themselves and each other.
- Fight to stop the implementation of the local Sustainability & Transformation Plan( STP) and its privatisation, closures and cuts in Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire.
- Be there on the picket lines in support of NHS staff striking against new contracts and privatisation.

## **7 Climate Change**

*Mitigating and adapting to Climate Change has always been a key concern of the Green Party*

### **The effects of climate change**

What might be the effects of climate change for the UK and Oxfordshire? Some of the potential effects are listed below. Some of these effects are inter-related, and they might form part of a chain of events.

One of the clear impacts of climate change is that the usual pattern of weather in the UK will become disrupted. The weather may change to a situation of increased frequency of extremely wet winters, with more intense downpours in the winter months driving a greater risk of flash floods and river flooding, alongside risks from sea-level rise. Increased flood risk, particularly flooding from heavy rain, is one of the key climate threats for the UK, alongside stresses on water resources, threats to biodiversity and natural habitats.

Extreme flood events will become more frequent and severe, putting homes, businesses and infrastructure at greater risk, and causing up to a tenfold increase in flooding damages. Critical municipal infrastructure, such as water-pumping stations, water treatment works, transport and electricity systems, and schools and hospitals could also be threatened with shutdown and /or contamination from sewer overflow.

The UK will experience warmer, drier summers, which, in extreme cases can lead to droughts and heatwaves. These events increase pressure on healthcare services, particularly when considering our ageing society and those susceptible to respiratory disorders. Infrastructure is vulnerable to extreme heat, as higher summer temperatures bring the threat of rail buckling and associated travel delays. A sustained lack of rainfall can lead to droughts causing restrictions to potable water supplies and also electricity generation.

The UK is susceptible to the repercussions from climate change impacts abroad (for example the cost of and availability of food crops and other products etc. Already food prices are starting to rise.

While some species, ecosystems and crops could benefit from climate change, far, far more will be vulnerable to the damaging effects of climate change. Some species may try to migrate to find tolerable conditions although they might not find suitable alternative habitats. Existing habitats will come under increased pressure and may change in nature and form a different ecosystem. Agricultural practices will also need to change.

### **Tackling Climate Change**

There are two broad approaches to tackling climate change: mitigation and adaptation, as explained below:

- “Mitigation” refers to actions to reduce the use of fossil fuels and the release of greenhouse gas emission to try to prevent climate change from happening or to reduce the scale of climate change. Such actions are imperative and are the only way in which to stop or minimise the cause of human induced change to the world’s climate systems and all the deleterious knock-on effects. Mitigation measures are invariably cheaper than adaptation measures but require changes to a low carbon or non-fossil fuel based economy. Resistance from fossil fuel vested interests can be expected when mitigation is discussed.
- “Adaptation” refers to actions or measures that are needed to reduce the impact of climate change effects, and to minimise and offset the negative effect on people and the environment. Given that the world’s scientists state that it is not possible to mitigate climate change completely, and that there will already be serious impacts, it is necessary to adopt adaptation measures so that we can cope with the significant, far-reaching and very damaging effects of climate change in all aspects of our lives.

## 7.1 Mitigation of Climate Change

### *Our Vision*

In view of the above, we believe that Oxfordshire needs rigorous policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from all sources. We believe that renewable energy with appropriate storage solutions should become the dominant source of power for our homes, public sector, social and private enterprises and transportation - as quickly as can be achieved. In addition, the National Centre for Alternative Technology’s “Zero Carbon Britain” reports indicates it is possible to make clear pathways towards a Zero Carbon economy and society<sup>8</sup>. In view of the failure to achieve adequate commitments which will radically and rapidly reduce emissions, Oxfordshire needs policies to allow communities to adapt to the damaging effects that climate change will wreak.

### *Our approach*

Oxfordshire’s low carbon economy is creating about £1.15 billion in sales per year and employing about 8,800 people, or the equivalent of 7% of the Oxfordshire economy. Bearing in mind that about 1 million people UK-wide are employed in the Green economy and that there is potential to add a further 1 million jobs, Oxfordshire is well-placed for expansion of its low carbon sectors. For example, the OxFutures<sup>9</sup> programme in Oxfordshire aims to achieve a 40% reduction in carbon emissions locally by 2020 and make the economic development of low carbon technology a mainstream activity.

### **Green county councillors will:**

- Be a clear voice lobbying central government to take the lead in international climate change treaties to seek a consensus amongst nations and a clear global plan to reduce carbon emissions.
- Seek to ensure that the decisions made at the County-wide level should always be viewed in terms of progress towards reducing the dependence on fossil fuels.
- Consider the likely impact on climate change in all planning considerations, including both the direct and indirect effects of decisions.

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<sup>8</sup> For more information on Zero Carbon Britain, see: <http://zerocarbonbritain.com/en/>

<sup>9</sup> More information on OxFutures can be found here: <http://oxfordsmartcity.uk/cgi-bin/oxfutures.pl>

- Explore the suggestions that energy system cost reductions – including the transport and construction sectors – could save about £900 million<sup>10</sup> per year for both public and private sectors in Oxfordshire (Ox LCE). We would establish clearly that all new build should be zero emissions and would seek to enforce that within the limits of the law.
- Call for the establishment of annual targets for global and national greenhouse gas emissions reductions in all relevant sectors, and help establish effective enforcement mechanisms.
- Support the sustainable use of land for biofuels throughout the County but only on land that would not normally be used for crops. Initiatives must address and resolve the question of whether additions to greenhouse gas emissions may be avoided or mitigated at source.
- Aim steadily to reduce all Oxfordshire greenhouse gas emissions to 10% of their 1990 levels by 2030 by a number of joined up initiatives.

## 7.2 Adapting to Climate Change in Oxfordshire

### *Our Vision*

The Green Party believe that the State needs to play the lead role in funding and implementing mitigation and adaptation measures and actions especially through local government and inter-agency cooperation, but that citizens will also need to play a role. There also needs to be much better coordination by the County Council between it and the Environment Agency.

Adaptation measures can be extremely effective but act only as a ‘sticking plaster’ treating the symptoms and not the cause.

### *Our Approach*

Green County Councillors will set up a team of officers to support adaptation measures and seek a broad range of funding sources to ensure their effective implementation. They will with existing and new stakeholders will explore, assess and implement a range of measures. The precise measures will need to be subject to scrutiny and bespoke to the situation or area of need, but the areas we anticipate as needing adaptation actions include the following:

- ***To adapt to periods of hot weather and drought:*** various means of voluntary water efficiency measures for households and for institutional users of water; increased adoption of drought tolerant crops; better prevention measures against the risk of forest fires; contingency plans in the NHS to deal with periods of increased dehydration, heat exhaustion, skin cancers and more prevalent sub-tropical diseases.
- ***Heavy or protracted rainfall:*** measures to deal with flooding, constructing flood protection assets for a longer life-span than currently; sustainable drainage (natural and constructed); heightened river defences; significantly improved defences around urban areas or transport routes built on flood plains; measures to prevent river erosion; managed re-opening of flood plains to allow flooding and to absorb water; better water management; relocation of facilities and people from locations that are exceptionally costly or practically very difficult to protect from flood conditions. We will support the Government’s Flooding Initiatives if they are properly resourced (see Appendix).

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<sup>10</sup> See p14 of the “Oxfordshire’s Low Carbon Economy” report, published by the University of Oxford’s Environmental Change Institute, available here: <http://www.eci.ox.ac.uk/research/energy/downloads/olce-report-oct2014.pdf>

- **More extreme storms:** more effective crop shelter belts; enhanced measures/resources to resolve storm damage, such as the use of the armed forces in this civil defence role; stronger buildings as a planning requirement.
- **The need for fundamental changes in agriculture:** changes in crop range to those with a greater drought and flood resilience; shift in cropping practices; more efficient irrigation; adaptation to a longer growing season, affecting planting and harvesting times; acting on changes in animal and crop pests and diseases with appropriate precautions.
- **Residential and built environment:** summer cooling measures to combat the 'urban heat island effect' such as tree planting in urban areas and superior ventilation and air conditioning in buildings; new build on brownfield sites well above river flooding levels; better home insulation; low water-use plumbing including use of recycled water both in new build and by retro-fitting; increase in NHS provision to match likely need during extreme weather periods; enhanced resources to implement effective building control measures for sustainable buildings and monitor their post-construction performance.
- **Changes to biodiversity and environment<sup>11</sup>:** create a link or chain of green spaces for recreation and for nature conservation, and promote the health benefits that these bring to all; protect existing wildlife sites and wildlife corridors and create additional green spaces to assist the free movement of plants and animals thus helping biodiversity in Oxfordshire cope with climate change; protect nature conservation areas via an expanded remit of local government alongside engaged community groups.
- **Specific and dynamic programme of action to safeguard bees:** Creating nectar bars and urban hives on public buildings plus a large range of other measures to stop bee colony collapse: a process taking place that threatens the pollination of crops and the collapse of the food chain.
- **Flood risk:** understand the flood risk of Oxfordshire, the insurance options available, plus the implications for properties built after 2009 with regard to the Flood Re scheme(see Appendix); promote effective and reasonably priced flood prevention measures for uptake by householders; engage with local councils to implement a decision making framework for planning applications, that considers the full cost of flood events for housing in flood risk areas, both on the homeowners and on the local government.
- **The Greens will push for the establishment of a cross service action team of professional officers:** who will make recommendations to all departments to implement mitigation and adaptation measures.

### 7.3 Energy Efficiency and Community Renewable Energy Schemes

#### *Our Vision*

We aspire to a Green economy in Oxfordshire that would reduce demand for energy to a sustainable minimum, and obtain that energy from renewable sources. Energy would be generated, stored and distributed as close as possible to the point of use as practicable, with maximum local control.

At a national level, the Green Party seeks the abolition of standing charges and a tilt in tariffs in favour of smaller users of energy. We also seek to extend the scope of local authorities' planning powers to include energy (through Local Development Frameworks for example). Specifically they will decide - in consultation with local communities - the extent and scope of demand reduction

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<sup>11</sup> See also the Green Party's Countryside policy: <https://policy.greenparty.org.uk/cy.html>



programmes, the location of heat networks, community scale energy (heat and power) sources, and energy storage capacity. We would encourage the ownership of decentralised energy production and energy saving by community and municipal companies through the implementation of favourable supply and demand feed-in tariffs as well as relief from all transmission charges and disproportionate distribution charges for local generation. Small- scale and community-owned renewables will be provided with fixed price feed-in tariffs for installations of up to 50 MW to ensure their output can be sold for a fair price. Community groups, cooperatives and local authorities would be supported by a Green Investment Bank to purchase renewable power plant and contribute to local energy supply at competitive rates.

Oxfordshire Green Party proposes an overall 60% reduction in energy demand in Oxfordshire as a goal for 2050.<sup>12 13</sup>

Restructuring Oxfordshire's energy system will significantly boost employment, and that investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy will generate market value in products and innovations worth millions of pounds.

### ***Our Approach***

#### **Green County Councillors will:**

- Work to ensure Oxfordshire County Council achieves safe and sustainable energy goals by:
  - a) linking energy policy to local housing and transport plans, as well as social and economic issues;
  - b) encouraging take-up of energy efficiency investment (through varying council tax rates for example);
  - c) seek to reform planning guidance where possible to have a presumption in favour of all types of renewable energy, with associated training for local councillors and planning officers;
  - d) engaging local communities in the strategic planning process for demand reduction and renewable energy generation in their areas;
  - e) managing the phased withdrawal of natural gas, coal and oil for building heating, allowing greater energy efficiency, use of sustainably-generated electricity to substitute in County Council buildings, cooperating with community energy groups where appropriate.
  - f) protecting low-income householders from the worst effects of higher fuel prices should they occur.
- Encourage the development of community energy.
- Seek to eradicate fuel poverty as a priority: about a fifth of households currently suffer fuel poverty in the UK. Support public advisory services which are responsible for maintaining and publicising authoritative information on all aspects of energy sources, and rolling out energy efficiency and conservation measures.
- Foster innovation in energy efficiency, renewable energy and energy storage – committing budget to the training and upskilling of the workforce to design, construct, operate and manage radical change to the current energy system.

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<sup>12</sup> More information on the Association for the Conservation of Energy can be found here: <http://www.ukace.org/>

<sup>13</sup> More information on the Tyndall Centre can be found here: <http://www.tyndall.ac.uk/>

- Ensure that local system operators will be given the responsibility for managing local storage, and to incentivise the provision of local demand management techniques to manage the fluctuations in supply and demand of energy in their areas.
  - Support the installation of genuinely smart meters in buildings linked to smart appliances (such as smart fridges and air conditioning) that will automatically respond to fluctuations in supply and demand to minimise energy use and align periods of heavy usage with times of low cost, according to user preference.
  - Seek to ensure the development of Tesla systems including energy storage capacity needed to balance daily and seasonal demand fluctuations through investment in research and development.
  - Encourage the formation of heat distribution networks planned and facilitated by local government to minimise transmission and distribution losses, and enable Combined Heat and Power stations to supplant thermal power stations (as these are phased out), facilitate the use of waste heat from industry and sewage, and allow the efficient generation of solar and other sustainable thermal energy sources.
  - Support the use of biogas generation from modern anaerobic digestion plants incorporating first stage hydrolysis where appropriate to optimise efficiency, to be utilised as widely as practicable, with heat recovery as far as is possible.
  - Oppose any new unsustainable energy projects or programmes such as hydraulic fracturing or coal, gas or oil extraction.
  - Assess all County-owned building roof spaces to determine if they are suitable for renewable energy generation via photovoltaic (PV) panels. This approach will help support local renewable energy jobs, and provide a mechanism to future-proof the generation of low cost electricity. We would examine whether the surplus energy generated can be linked to electric car charging points to provide further infrastructure of this sort, and to encourage and demonstrate the use of electric and hybrid vehicles. The reduction in vehicle emissions will also reduce pollution levels in the city and county, helping to improve local air quality.
  - Seek to ensure that fats, oils and grease do not reach the sewer system but are collected and converted to a biofuel usable, for example, to run the ageing diesel vehicles still operated by local government bodies.
  - Seek to ensure that all energy-related asset purchases and / or replacement decisions are subject to a cost-benefit assessment that looks at the whole life cost, thus giving proper scrutiny to the energy use and cost over a longer time period. In this way, the true value for money can be determined.
- 8** Aim to reduce the problem of heat loss. We would encourage a more active approach to make people aware of the energy and cost saving benefits and grants for insulation and water efficiency devices.

## **9 Transport Policy**

The Green Party believes that people can have better lives if they can reduce the necessity for tedious and sometimes unpleasant travel commitments. We think that good planning of additions to settlements and more opportunities to work at home must also play a part in Oxfordshire's future. Thoughtful planning will help to reduce the need for commuting and reduce congestion, pollution and danger particularly in town centres and their approaches.

We consider that accessibility matters more than mobility. We would implement a transport system that would enable everyone to have the access they need, that is, to access services, to shops, to schools and colleges, to relatives, friends and community groups. Not all of these journeys

have to be made by car: the more people can access what they need by walking, cycling, public transport and shared car use, the less air pollution, noise and traffic congestion there will be, and people would be healthier. It is important that planning in each part of our County addresses the need for access and how this can be achieved with the least use of unsustainable forms of transport. This involves having more decentralisation and properly funded local government, including parish and town councils, which can ensure better coordination of services in accessible locations.

Greens want to make it easier for all of us to choose the best mode of transport that does the least environmental damage to go about our daily lives.

### ***Our Vision***

Oxfordshire is a beautiful county with international and global appeal and the city of Oxford is known as 'the City of Dreaming Spires'. But on the ground, the experience can be sadly different. Residents, students, workers, shoppers and visitors to Oxford breathe a cocktail of toxic gases on very many of Oxford's central streets. County towns suffer from heavily-trafficked roads, and walking routes throughout the county are interrupted by hazardous traffic routes. This particularly affects wheelchair and pushchair users, and people who are unable to move fast. Cycling is the most energy-efficient form of transport however cycling in Oxfordshire is fraught with hazards.

In addition, the scattered nature of Oxfordshire's settlements in rural areas and the poor provision of public transport has made many people totally dependent on the private car. This is becoming increasingly unsustainable, with rising fuel costs, and prolific carbon emissions involved playing an all too large part in dangerous climate change.

*It doesn't have to be like this.*

If we are to have better transport of all types, we all have to recognise that piecemeal solutions do not work. An integrated County transport strategy is needed to cover the whole space through which people move for work and leisure. In practice, this means it should become easier for people to move between different types of transport on some journeys; ensuring road and pavement repairs are done for the long-term instead of being superficial and leading to further repairs much too quickly.

### ***Our Approach***

Our key twelve key point approach is as follows:

1. Walking and cycling must be enhanced for public health, and to reduce traffic;
2. Access to infrastructure matters much more than just increasing mobility over distances, and risking increased traffic congestion;
3. The planned decentralisation of public services to strengthen local government must focus on improving access for people, and reducing the need to travel long distances;
4. The expansion of teleworking is vital to keeping Oxfordshire's roads free of gridlock;
5. The geographical coverage of bus services and the incidence and interconnection of services must be improved: speeding up a move towards electric buses is a high priority;
6. Railway service provision and frequency of services must be increased, including options such as the re-opening of disused lines such as the East West Varsity line to Cambridge.
7. The Greens support the reopening of the Witney Oxford Rail link because this is the **ONLY** way to break the constant massive congestion on the A40.

8. Information for transport users must be upgraded and better publicised so that people can easily check travel routes and consider the best options on any given day. This could include advertising the Ox on time website on all bus-stops;
9. A speed limit of 20 mph need to be applied to all residential roads, outside schools and hospitals and on selected rural roads;
10. We need to recognise that although Park and Rides keep large amounts of traffic from the City Centre in Oxford we need to focus on reducing the number of car journeys rather than continually building and expanding Park and Rides
11. Greater efforts must be made to ensure more children travel to school using transport modes other than private cars.
12. Canals and waterways, and the use of powered electric bicycles and motorbikes can all provide some extra opportunities to reduce road traffic levels, by providing alternatives for some transport users.

## **9.1 Teleworking, Internet Shopping and Green Travel Plans**

### ***Our Vision***

The Green Party recognises that traffic levels rise substantially during school and university term times. We want all employers to increase the numbers of their staff that are enabled to telework, as a result of enhanced Green Travel Plans and reductions in employee car parking to discourage car commuting.

We also recognise that internet shopping may reduce car journeys, even where distribution journeys by delivery vehicles are being created, and we will support initiatives which allow small and medium sized enterprises to improve their internet sales, as this will have positive impacts to help cut traffic. Communities need 'virtual high street' websites to assist people in finding what they want, particularly from local, independent businesses. This initiative could contribute to people finding things they need within walking and cycling distance of home.

### ***Our Approach***

#### **Green county councillors will:**

- Fight for Oxfordshire County Council, and district councils, to ensure that new developments with additional employment implications have Green Travel Plans, and that a rigorous traffic impact assessment with appropriate mitigation measures is created and assessed before a planning decision is made.
- Support 'Smart Cities' initiatives, such as suggested by Nominet<sup>14</sup>, that would allow potential travellers within the County to assess traffic conditions; locate the locations of goods and services they need; and to consider which transport mode or modes are best for their journey if an internet shopping option does not exist.
- Support the promotion of teleworking by councils and other forms of working at home, such as improved broadband internet access, to reduce the need to travel, especially in rush hours.
- Support the development of live-work units to facilitate affordable accommodation and workplace space for local entrepreneurs and small business start-ups.

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<sup>14</sup> For information on Nominet's suggestions, see this website: <http://www.nominet.uk/emerging-technology/smart-cities/>

- Recognise that for many jobs travel to work will always be the only option.

## 9.2 Pedestrian, Wheelchair and Pushchair users

### *Our Vision*

The Green Party believes that the optimal hierarchy of road users should be one where the most vulnerable road users should be considered as a priority, and the least vulnerable should be at the bottom (as they have more choice). We believe that, if our built and rural environment was designed to assist wheelchair or pushchair users, and people who can't move fast, then we would have true accessibility for all and an integrated society. Our philosophy is simple to put pedestrians in urban situations first.

### *Our Approach*

#### **Green county councillors will seek opportunities to:**

- Plan networks of walking routes in all towns using the most direct 'desire' lines.
- Give walking routes priority wherever possible, eg. at junctions.
- Put pavement extensions across side roads, creating a level and continuous surface across main roads.
- Allocate funds to develop or keep up to date school travel and road safety plans, the identification of safe routes to schools, and encourage their take-up by local parents, to help promote a healthy start to the day, and help to reduce morning traffic and congestion. The school run is accountable for nearly a quarter (24%) of traffic at peak times and contributes significantly to the financial drain that congestion places on businesses and the economy.<sup>15</sup> It is estimated that there are 201 accidents involving a child near a school every week<sup>16</sup>.
- To take a stand against cuts to school bus routes.
- Prevent parking on pavements.
- Put cycle lanes in a Benelux system of separated lanes on the roads rather than on the pavements.
- Free pedestrian routes of clutter and ensure they are wide enough and with a good, even surface.
- Support the introduction of 20 mph zones in all residential areas throughout Oxfordshire.
- Improve safety for pedestrians and wheel and push chair users especially in villages and on rural highways
- Prioritise pedestrian and wheel- and push chair safety over car capacity when deciding on the need for pedestrian crossings.
- Ensure visually challenged pedestrians are considered and consulted when changes are made to the road network.

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<sup>15</sup> The information on the school run and economy information has been published by Sustrans: <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/press-releases/reduced-school-run-congestion-could-save-economy-billions>

<sup>16</sup> A report, from insurance company Axa and the Road Safety Analysis organisation, revealed that in the period 2011 to 2013 69% of all child road casualty accidents occurred within 500 metres of a school; and 201 road accidents and 257 cycling collisions happened near a school every week. You can download and read the full report here: <http://www.axa.co.uk/roadsafeschools/axaroadsafereport/>

- Create a culture where on shared spaces (e.g. towpaths) cyclists give way to pedestrians and are courteous.

### 9.3 Cycling

#### *Our Vision*

We realise that cycling is the most energy-efficient form of transport and is clean, efficient, healthy and enjoyable. However, cycling rates could be much higher than they currently are in Oxfordshire. Many children and people feel unsafe cycling in and between Oxfordshire's towns and villages. Even in Oxford city cycle routes are poorly thought out, they stop and start awkwardly, and are often closed off or blocked by markets, cars and vans, and/or buses with engines running.

Cycle routes also force conflict between cyclist and pedestrians by going on and off pavements, confusing cyclists about the rules of the highways. Despite being highly vulnerable road users themselves, cyclists are frequently the target of the anger of other road users. Cycling on rural routes is extremely hazardous, with fast traffic, narrow winding roads, and poor visibility. Incidences of cyclists seriously injured and killed are unacceptably high and this needs to be tackled urgently.

The Green Party will act to improve the provision for safe cycling within Oxfordshire.

#### *Our Vision*

Green county councillors will:

- Ensure cyclists are consulted on any road works to ensure their needs are included.
- Place most cycle routes on the major roads in urban areas where space allows, and less so on pavements save where physical size of pavements permits.
- Reduce traffic speeds to improve cycle safety, and give cyclists priority over motorised traffic at junctions.
- Upgrade or allocate space to cycle paths along all major roads between towns, and work with Sustrans to extend safe and direct off-road routes between towns. The Green Party, however, does not normally support the Sustrans practice of putting cycle ways on pavements.
- Increase on-street parking facilities for cycles in and around shopping areas, and in urban terraced streets, where parked cycles currently block the pavement
- Ensure cycle routes are not blocked by parked vehicles, or by buses standing for long periods with engines running
- Make cycle routes as continuous as possible; they should not disappear at hazardous junctions and in narrow streets.
- Ensure cyclists can cycle conveniently and directly both north-south and east-west through Oxford and directly through Oxfordshire's towns.
- Look into how desperately needed cycle routes in rural areas can be provided, perhaps in some places by making bridleways into shared use paths.
- Ensure that commuter cycle routes are prioritised; at present rural cycling is seen by the County Council as a leisure activity.
- Develop policies for greater uptake and use of electric bikes in conjunction with vulnerable road users.

- Support the proposal for an Eynsham to Oxford cycleway and community path via Farmoor along the B4044<sup>17</sup>.
- Support bike hire from all park and rides as an alternative to the bus.
- Strongly support initiatives like *Broken Spoke*: services where people could take their bikes and fix them paying just the cost of the pieces. similar to the Bike Doctor service from the University.
- Encourage better secure bike parking at places of work (with CCTV).
- Support more cycle lanes on wider roads/ wide pavements.
- Support the idea of cycle lift sharing e.g. via child seats on bikes.
- Support schemes encouraging cycling to work for universities and other employers.
- Actively support the concept of a very large Cycle Parking 'Hub' close to the new Westgate Centre in Oxford with spaces for over 2000 bikes.

## 9.4 Public Transport

### *Our Vision*

Since bus deregulation in 1985, services in Oxfordshire have been under private control. Competing companies run frequent services along the most popular routes but ignore the less popular routes. We see that this makes for inadequate services throughout much of the County, and pushes people to feel they can only drive everywhere.

In Oxford City, especially in the centre, even if the 'cleanest' engines possible were installed in buses, air pollution on bus routes would still breach air quality targets for the 'safe' minimum of particulates and other toxins.

Our vision is to improve public transport services so that they form part of an integrated County transport strategy covering the whole space through which people move for work and leisure, to help people to choose the best mode of transport for them, and reduce the need to rely on the private car for essential journeys. One change in technology would make bus use a lot easier: accepting contactless card payments on all buses.

### *Our Approach*

#### **Green county councillors will:**

- Commission a feasibility study into a modern lightweight electric tram system for Oxford city, running north-south and east-west.
- Free up space for the smooth-running of public transport by closing off Longwall Street and Hythe Bridge Street to through private traffic (except disabled drivers), meaning private traffic could drive into and out of Oxford city centre but not through. This will help to reduce air pollution and congestion, whilst still allowing accessibility. We would make access permits available for delivery vehicles before 10am/after 6pm, and for students at the beginning and end of each term.

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<sup>17</sup> Find out more about the Eynsham to Botley Community Path proposal here: <http://www.b4044path.org/>

- Encourage the use of cycle rickshaws and other pedal-assisted vehicles for deliveries and as short distance public transport options.
- Continue to subsidise essential but uneconomic bus routes, and consult with parish and district councils on the level of provision needed their areas.
- Work with bus companies to explore the feasibility of putting bike racks on buses.
- Explore the possibility of re-opening a municipal bus company.

## 9.5 Railways

### *Our Vision*

We consider that rail privatisation has reduced opportunities to co-ordinate and improve rail use in the County. Train services in the UK are amongst the poorest in Europe, being overcrowded, expensive, and hard to access by wheelchair, pushchair or bicycle users. Trains are often mal-proportioned according to need, that is, they often run with large numbers of empty 'first class' seats whilst people stand in very crowded 'economy' carriages, sometimes for many hours.

### *Our Approach*

#### **Green county councillors will:**

- Work in partnership with train and rail operators to seek improvements in service and timings wherever possible, particularly with regard to connections to county towns such as Banbury, Didcot etc.
- Strongly resist any attempts by train companies or government policies to reduce train services or close rail routes or stations.
- Promote and support the opening of new stations e.g at Grove, or currently disused railway lines, including for example, from Witney and Carterton into Oxford and then on to Cowley.
- Support the development of the potential Oxford to Stratford and Oxford to Cambridge rail links - under public control.
- Welcome any interim proposals to open disused railway lines for cycle use or walking
- Seek to improve co-ordination for integration of rail and local bus services which are frequent, reliable and affordable.
- Work with rail companies to address noise, vibration and air pollution issues arising when residents live near railways and their sidings. This is a particular issue at those lines involving intensified freight-related rail movements.
- In the very long-term, work towards fully electrified rail lines and electric trains.
- Work with rail companies to ensure more bicycles can be carried on trains and without the need to book in advance.
- Continue to oppose the construction of the HS2 high speed rail link whilst campaigning to mitigate the worst impacts if it is built, and for a move towards more local, joined-up, provision of rail services.
- Support the campaign to bring back public ownership and control of the railways.



## **9.6 Canals and Waterways**

### ***Our Vision***

Despite the waiting lists for residential moorings, mooring spaces are under threat from profiteering landlords and unsympathetic County and District Councils. We believe that canals are an under-utilised means of transporting heavy goods to and between town centres and their tourism potential has not been fully realised.

### ***Our Approach***

#### **Green county councillors will:**

- Promote and protect residential moorings as a form of affordable housing, and increase them wherever possible.
- Resist attempts by the City Council or any other body to force those using residential moorings to move frequently, whether by using a PSPO or other means of coercion.
- Investigate the greater use of canals as a means of transport for heavy goods throughout the County.

## **9.7 Powered Bicycles, Motorbikes and Scooters**

### ***Our Vision***

We see that electric bicycles can be a welcome addition to people's mobility options. We would seek to encourage the use of electric bicycles to implement a county -wide network of adequate charging points for electric modes of transport.

We consider that conventional motorbikes and scooters are currently more efficient means of personal transport than cars. We predict that a changeover to electric motorbikes and scooters will, like electric personal mobility vehicles for the elderly or disabled, increase steadily and parking opportunities will need to be adequately provided in a long-term County transport plan.

### ***Our Approach***

#### **Green county councillors will:**

- Welcome electric bicycles as an addition to the roads of Oxfordshire as they allow more people, to use bicycles, to avoid car journeys.
- Seek to implement a County-wide programme to ensure adequate charging points for electric modes of transport.
- Plan for the long-term needs of the shifting trend in transport modes, for example with regard to parking, appropriate for the level of their use within the City.

## **9.8 Policies for Private Vehicles**

### ***Our Vision***

For many people, car-dependency is part of daily life. Those who can afford them and can drive are forced to depend on cars when they live in places with inadequate or absent public transport links

and no safe cycling routes. Motor vehicle use is rising steadily throughout Oxfordshire and defeating attempts to tackle the urgent issue of toxic air pollution in our towns.

This creates a vicious cycle of car dependency further undermining local public transport, leading to yet more car use. This cycle has led to many localised problems in Oxfordshire, such as traffic congestion, noise, poor air quality and pollution, a dirty hazardous environment and a shortage of public space for activities other than getting from A to B. Children feel unsafe to play outside or walk to school, and health issues, due to a lack of basic exercise such as walking, are on the rise across all age groups. These problems are spread across urban and rural communities alike.

### ***Our Approach***

#### **Green county councillors will:**

- Commit to motorised-traffic reduction targets.
- Support car-clubs and car sharing schemes and use of Community Buses.
- Oppose planning applications which will generate extra car traffic, with all sizeable new developments well-served by public transport, and wherever possible, car free.
- Object to unsustainable building of new major roads, such as by-passes, which invite further traffic growth.
- Introduce 20mph zones on all residential streets, near schools and where people congregate e.g. health centres. A 20 mph speed limit may also be applied on certain rural roads, where necessary for safety reasons.
- Campaign for extended powers of Local Authority Enforcement as this will allow money from fines to be kept locally and invested locally to improve safety.
- Where communities support this, seek to extend Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs), but oppose the painting of white lines on pavements for car parking. Where this has already happened, steps will be taken to reverse this, focussing first on streets where the space left on the pavement for walkers and other pavement users is below the County minimum width standard of 1.2 m.
- Improve park and ride facilities for car users, with fair charges to cover improvements. Continue to oppose new Park and Ride sites throughout the County but consider decking existing sites to increase capacity where needed.
- Support the creation of apartments or workspaces above the surface level in Park and Ride sites.
- Increase on-street parking charges, and use the income to boost public transport subsidies, especially for buses connecting the county's settlements.
- Support other measures, such as tree-planting, to minimise traffic noise and pollution
- Propose measures to reduce the width of the roadway on St Giles, Oxford to create a public pedestrian area with tree planting.
- Investigate the use of congestion charging as a means to raise revenue for public transport and to reduce car-dependency.
- Support the introduction of average speed cameras that monitor average speed over a distance, rather than point measurements, as these are more effective at controlling speeds and promote better driving behaviour.
- Encourage the introduction of a large employers car park levy built into the Business rates in congested areas, and generally seek to reduce car use.

- Extend the network of speed cameras as soon as financially viable to reduce excessive traffic speeds on our roads.
- Clamp down on the current practice of allowing builder's vans to park on pavements and in cycle lanes.
- Seek provision of parking spaces for those undertaking essential work in the locality, for example health visitors, builders.
- Welcome new possibilities for implementing creative transport management solutions in Oxfordshire arising from new technologies. These would include, for example, active traffic monitoring, transport applications on mobile phones, electric vehicles, and autonomous vehicles.
- Encourage a county wide roll-out of electric vehicle charging points.

## **10 Countryside Policy for Oxfordshire**

### **Our Principles**

The Green Party recognises that meeting the varied needs of rural and urban communities may require different approaches. These therefore need to be harmonised so that the interests of one community do not dominate another and that experiences gained are shared for mutual benefit.

We believe that the countryside is a living ecosystem that is essential for the survival of human communities both rural and urban. It has an innate value that cannot be assessed in solely monetary terms. We all have an obligation to live within the natural limits of our environment and to adopt lifestyles that will not irrevocably damage the environment for future generations.

### **Background**

In developing our policies for the countryside, Oxfordshire Green Party recognises the conflicting interests behind the pressures faced by both the human and nonhuman populations. By doing so we seek to protect and enhance quality of life, not only for rural communities, but also for urban populations that rely on the many services provided by the countryside. These include the supply of food, water and natural resources and for a wide range of recreational pursuits ranging from the casual to highly organised events that are enhanced by or depend on their rural setting. We recognise our responsibility to future generations in the policies we advocate.

### **10.1 Countryside policy**

#### ***Our Vision***

The Green Party believes that Oxfordshire's diverse landscapes are hugely important to the health and wellbeing of its people, providing attractive places for people to live, work, and enjoy, and provide food from farming.

We are committed to enhancing the sustainability of the economies of both rural and urban areas, which should be seen as a whole. Greens promote partnership working on conservation with other public bodies, campaign groups, businesses and the general public. We seek to protect and improve the lives of wild and domesticated animals and enhancing wildlife habitats.

The objective of our countryside policy is to create self-reliant communities that retain the fruits of local investment and activity and preserve the conditions where people can live in ways which care for habitats and wildlife and allow them to fulfil spiritual, emotional, social, intellectual and physical needs.

The Greens believe in further expanding public rights of way and improving the quality and biodiversity of our countryside. We are proud that Oxfordshire has several habitats recognized to be of national and international importance which include calcareous (chalk or limestone) and neutral grassland.

### ***Our Approach***

#### **Green county councillors will:**

- Seek to integrate environmental, social and economic objectives in all areas of countryside and rural policy via use of by-laws where possible, with the overall aims to:
  - a) Revitalise the economy and life of rural communities;
  - b) Reform land tenure and access to land;
  - c) Focus on stopping bee colony collapse meaning that the Council should discourage the use of pesticides such as neonicotinoids and build a programme to actively helping bees with flower nectar bars and municipal hives.
  - d) Seek to ensure enforcement action is funded to stop further destruction of wildlife habitats, the soil, the landscape, ancient monuments and our countryside heritage;
  - e) Enact policies that will make the whole countryside more hospitable to wildlife, entailing increased protection for wildlife and habitats and delivery of meaningful landscape-scale conservation and restoration;
  - f) Increase the area and quality of woods, orchards, agroforestry, hedges and other tree cover; and
  - g) Ensure food security, integrating human health and wellbeing, environmental protection, animal welfare and decent livelihoods for farmers, farm workers and growers.

## **10.2 Green Infrastructure**

### ***Our Vision***

Green Infrastructure is a strategic, multi-functional network of public green spaces and routes, landscapes, biodiversity and heritage. It includes a wide range of elements such as country parks, wildlife habitats, rights of way, commons and greens, nature reserves, waterways and bodies of water, and historic landscapes and monuments. The network comprises rural and urban Green Infrastructure of different sizes and character, and the connections and links between them. It is part of (and contributes to) the wider environment.

Green Infrastructure is essential to the quality of life of existing and new communities. The benefits include:

- a) creating attractive and distinctive places that respect and enhance local character and heritage;
- b) recreational and cultural opportunities and experiences for residents and visitors
- c) a healthy and high quality environment;
- d) support for and enhancement of biodiversity, landscapes, heritage and geodiversity
- e) ecological or ecosystem services<sup>18</sup>; and a sustainable future.

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<sup>18</sup> "Ecosystem services **are the benefits provided by ecosystems that contribute to making human life both possible and worth living**. Examples of ecosystem services include products such as food and water, regulation of floods, soil erosion and disease outbreaks, and non-material benefits such as recreational and spiritual benefits in natural areas. The term 'services' is usually used to encompass the tangible and intangible benefits that humans obtain from ecosystems, which are sometimes separated

We believe that existing Green Infrastructure should be protected and well managed, and networks of existing and new Green Infrastructure should be planned and delivered at all spatial scales from the countywide and local level to regional, national and trans-national level.

Our vision is that a Green Infrastructure Strategy at the heart of, and influencing all other local plans and policies affecting the County.

### ***Our Approach***

#### **Green county councillors will:**

- Campaign for the County Council to adopt a holistic approach with the Green Infrastructure Strategy, based on the Cambridgeshire model<sup>(19)</sup>
- Raise awareness that Green Infrastructure is part of our natural life-support system. Green Infrastructure is vital to quality of life for both existing and future residents of Oxfordshire and is nationally acknowledged as an important element of well-designed and inclusive places.
- Develop the Strategy to assist in shaping and co-ordinating the delivery of Green Infrastructure in the county, to provide social, environmental and economic benefits now and in the future. The Strategy will demonstrate how Green Infrastructure can be used to help to achieve four objectives:
  - 1) To reverse the decline in biodiversity;
  - 2) To mitigate and adapt to climate change;
  - 3) To promote sustainable growth and economic development; and
  - 4) To support healthy living and well-being.

## **10.3 Wildlife, Habitat and Species Protection**

### ***Our Vision***

The Green Party's policies to increase self-reliance and address our consumer-based lifestyle will help to ensure that we do not make environmentally damaging demands on the countryside or the rest of the world. We will work to extend globally our policies to support sustainable rural communities and will support at every level of the international community effective measures to protect the environment.

The Green Party aims to ensure good quality habitat restoration and avoid the introduction of harmful or invasive non-native plants. Relevant policy is in place under the Convention for Biological Diversity, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora and the Habitats Directive but there remain loopholes and the problems that Brexit may create.

We have urged the County Council to press the Government to consolidate existing EU origin legislation and regulations and retain them in UK law for the time being. At a national level we will seek to review legislation and implement new laws where currently there are only codes of

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into 'goods' and 'services'." <http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/EcosystemAssessmentConcepts/EcosystemServices/tabid/103/Default.aspx>

<sup>19</sup> More information on the Cambridge model can be found here: [http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20012/arts\\_green\\_spaces\\_and\\_activities/344/protecting\\_and\\_providing\\_green\\_space](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20012/arts_green_spaces_and_activities/344/protecting_and_providing_green_space)

practice or voluntary measures. We will collaborate at a European level to achieve this, including both live plants and seeds in the review.

### ***Our Approach***

#### **Green county councillors will:**

- Work to maintain a healthy environment, which necessitates the maintenance of species diversity and the vigorous protection of wild habitats.
- Ensure that wildlife-rich sites are adequately protected and extend a basic level of habitat protection to the whole countryside. We will ensure that there are sufficient resources to enforce the legislation in the hands of local government throughout Oxfordshire. Oxfordshire Green Party notes how the current Conservative Government is engaged in a relentless effort to marginalise environmental considerations in public policy.<sup>20</sup>
- Strive to make it a general offence to cause cruelty to wild animals or suffering where it can be practicably avoided. Those committing such acts will be prosecuted in the same way as for domestic animals. Humane methods of killing, for instance in pest control, will be researched and implemented; the Green Party will bring in an outright ban on snaring.
- Work to ensure that legislation is adequate to prevent wildlife crime and that there are sufficient resources to enforce the law and prosecute perpetrators.
- Work with appropriate partners to strengthen international wildlife law and to ensure that it is implemented, where relevant to Oxfordshire.
- Support the continuance of the Nature 2000 network of Special Areas of Conservation established by the European Habitat Directive and its associated legislation. Although the UK has a good record of reporting on such sites, biodiversity is still threatened at many types of sites in particular grassland, wetland and coastal sites.
- Work to address the problem that introduction of non-native wild plants and non-native genotypes of British species may have a negative impact on wild plant populations and communities in the UK.
- Pay more heed to the findings of the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study<sup>21</sup> which identified several priority habitats which must be protected. The majority of these are designated as sites of special scientific interest or County wildlife sites.
- Work to ensure that Ramsar Convention sites within Oxfordshire remain highly protected and that other designated areas retain a high degree of protection from development.
- Maintain funding for Oxfordshire's Road Verge Nature Reserves<sup>22</sup> which connect all areas of the county allowing wildlife to move through an inhospitable landscape in some areas.
- Oppose badger culling.

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<sup>20</sup> See, for example: <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/jul/24/the-9-green-policies-killed-off-by-tory-government>

<sup>21</sup> The Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study can be accessed here: <http://owls.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wps/wcm/connect/occ/OWLS/Home/>

<sup>22</sup> Read more about the reserves here: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/road-verge-nature-reserves>

- Stop bee colony collapse meaning that the Council should discourage the use of pesticides such as neonicotinoids and build a programme to actively helping bees with flower nectar bars and municipal hives.

## **10.4 Food and Farming**

### ***Our Vision***

We appreciate that agriculture forms an important part of the rural economy, producing food and other products, generating income and providing employment. Agricultural land makes up a large part of the countryside and rural landscape and supports diverse wildlife habitats.

A city like Oxford, with its considerable numbers of allotments and open spaces and gardens, can become, for example, an ‘agropolis’ as part of a feasible long-term realistic sustainable plan for the future, reducing the city’s ecological footprint in the process.<sup>23</sup> The developing Oxford City Farm<sup>24</sup> project in the Florence Park area will add to this process alongside such successful ventures as the Barracks Lane Community Garden<sup>25</sup>.

We encourage these efforts in Oxford and seek to emulate them in other urban areas of the County.

### ***Our Approach***

#### **Green county councillors will:**

- Work to ensure that policies on Food and Agriculture aim to improve farming livelihoods, provide safe and nutritious food, improve long-term food security and increase regional and local self-reliance in food.
- Support shorter supply chains and direct links between producers and consumers to maximise income generation in rural areas and to supply healthier, fresher food.
- Discourage the amalgamation of farms, support family farms, improve access to land for new entrants to farming and horticulture and favour the setting up of sustainable, small-scale and labour-intensive enterprises and their associated dwellings. We support the sustainable diversification and multiple use of agricultural land and buildings, for instance for appropriate renewable energy, tourism, recreational pursuits and low-impact enterprises.
- Support small-scale, environmentally benign farming systems that protect the soil, biodiversity and water resources, minimise greenhouse gas emissions and pollution, support ‘joined-up’ wildlife habitats and provide secure jobs in rural communities. Through legislation and support for agri-environment schemes, the Green Party will ensure that all farming and land uses protect and enhance the soil. Soil is the biggest pool of carbon stored in the land, and is an important wildlife habitat in its own right.
- Support a strategy to reduce the release of nitrogen compounds and other pollutants, increase monitoring of watercourses and enforce penalties for pollution of watercourses and unsafe or inappropriate use of pesticides.
- Work towards replacing the Common Agricultural Policy as we move toward BREXIT with a radical reorientation of agriculture to support sustainable farming systems that protect and

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<sup>23</sup> Luc J A Mougeot (2005) “Agropolis: the social, political and environmental dimensions of urban agriculture”

<sup>24</sup> The Oxford City Farm is described here: <http://www.oxfordcityfarm.org.uk/>

<sup>25</sup> Find out more about the Barracks Lane Community Garden: <http://www.barrackslanegarden.org.uk/>

enhance wildlife habitats and biodiversity, ensure fair and secure farm incomes, support sustainable and thriving rural communities and promote regional and local self-reliance in food. See Green Party policy on agriculture.<sup>26</sup>

- Promote organic and local farms and seek to ease their sale of local food to local communities and schools.
- Encourage young people to consider farming as an option, after full-time education.

## **10.5 Land tenure**

### **10.5.1 Our Vision**

We seek changes to land use policies and advocate a move to Land Value Taxation. Land Value Taxation taxes land not buildings, creating a tax on the annual rental value of all land. Land value is not just about the current but also the potential use of that can be made of land. This can be related to the location of a site and its designated use according to local and national planning policies. Different rates of Land Value Taxation (LVT) would be applied to different types of land, effectively encouraging appropriate use and discouraging speculation, land-banking and building upon greenfield sites that have other uses than accommodating development which belongs on brownfield sites. The owner of the land pays the tax, which could be used to replace National Non-Domestic Business Rates. For a detailed study of how could work, see a report from the Greater London Assembly.<sup>27</sup>

### **Our Approach**

The introduction of Land Value Taxation in the long-term, which will be calculated to take into consideration the economic effects of having to conserve wildlife habitats, archaeological sites and other landscape features. This would reduce inequality and would help both new entrants into farming and also local people to access affordable housing.

### **10.6.1 Planning**

#### **Our Vision**

As the County Council is a strategic planning authority we will work towards planning decisions being made at the lowest appropriate level that is by elected parish, town, and district county or unitary councils.

We seek to abolish the Infrastructure Planning Commission, or any similar separate fast-track body for national infrastructure decisions, as we consider it to be democratically unsafe: we will review the case for the right to appeal against local planning approvals. However, we would take steps to avoid unnecessarily long hearings into major developments.

We wish to strengthen planning controls for large-scale or damaging land-use changes in the countryside, in particular, large-scale farm buildings, new and improvement works by drainage bodies and water authorities, clearances of woodland, works affecting woodland and large-scale afforestation and quarrying for minerals and aggregates. The Green Party recognises the importance of re-use and recycling of minerals and aggregates from building works and demolitions to ensure minimum wastage and minimal new quarrying.

We will act to retain, strengthen and enforce existing national policy that encourages local renewable energy installations, and introduce legislation to halt and reverse the spread of light

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<sup>26</sup> <https://policy.greenparty.org.uk/fa.html>

<sup>27</sup> Greater London Assembly – *Tax Trial: a Land Value Tax for London*, February 2016.



pollution, in order to protect the dark night sky and to minimise disturbance to wildlife from artificial light.

### ***Our Approach***

#### **Green county councillors will:**

- Ensure that planning for the sustainable use of the countryside, for multiple purposes, is a major and integral part of the Local Development Frameworks to be implemented by all Local Planning Authorities and National Park Authorities
- Seek to ensure ecological criteria are given full weight in all local planning decisions and ensure ecological criteria are integrated into the use of the Community Infrastructure Levy<sup>28</sup> for infrastructure development.
- Ensure that planning decisions are made at the lowest appropriate level, and ensure that decision makers have the necessary training and access to knowledge to make appropriate and informed decisions.
- Strengthen planning controls for large-scale or damaging land-use changes in the countryside seeking to change planning criteria to include environmental reasons.
- Recognise the importance of re-use and recycling of minerals and aggregates from building works and demolitions to ensure minimum wastage and minimal new quarrying.
- Incorporate, into all Local Development Frameworks, a presumption against new lighting in the countryside, and ensure the optimal use of energy efficient lighting for new developments or replacement of existing lighting.
- Promote energy conservation, including the removal or reduction of unnecessary lighting, to preserve dark skies and minimise unnecessary energy use.
- Fight to preserve recycling centres in the County, as having fewer centres, remote from people's locality will only encourage fly-tipping, increase traffic and reduce recycling rates.
- Seek the end of incineration sites such as Ardley. They may well generate some electricity but they add carbon to the atmosphere and discourage recycling.

## **10.6 Countryside Designations**

### ***Our Vision***

The Green Party endorses the extra controls and incentives for specially protected areas but wishes to see their successes replicated as widely as possible. We will work with Natural England to link the current protected areas into a wider network of sites to seek the continued expansion of conservation principles to the whole of the countryside.

We understand how National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty provide a popular expression of the nation's love of the countryside, and which provide a special combination of access, recreation and tourism. In the long term, we would implement the lessons learnt from National Parks, and their successes in arresting unbridled agricultural, forestry, industrial and mining developments, to the whole countryside.

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<sup>28</sup> More information on the Levy can be seen here:

[https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200126/applications/70/community\\_infrastructure\\_levy](https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200126/applications/70/community_infrastructure_levy)

We would help to strengthen and widen the role of National Parks and the Park Authorities by encouraging better democracy in their governance, addressing the lack of investment in species and habitat protection, and by encouraging further take-up of renewable energy opportunities.

### ***Our Approach***

#### **Green county councillors will:**

- Treat all farmland and open country as potentially environmentally sensitive land.
- Actively enforce protection of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)
- Consider how an area of the County might be turned into a National Park or Forest.
- Ensure that the National Planning Policy Framework continues to provide strong policy protection against mineral extraction and fracking in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

## **10.7 Environmentally Sensitive Areas**

### ***Our Vision***

On a national level, the Green Party seeks to ensure that Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty will receive comparable status to National Parks. As with National Parks, we believe they are they are exemplars for the whole countryside.

We seek changes to land use policies and advocate a move to Land Value Taxation to free up access to land.

### ***Our Approach***

#### **Green county councillors will:**

- Provide adequate funding for the management of designated sites, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs) Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs), retaining EU designations where necessary. In addition, we will request that local authorities have the power to make Countryside Conservation Orders to protect vulnerable features which require conservation, consistent with our aim to disseminate good practice more widely.
- Retain and rigorously strengthen Green Belt legislation as a positive measure to revitalise the countryside, improve quality of life for people in cities and large towns and encourage the extension of 'green wedges' into the cities. Stand opposed to all development on the Green Belt.
- Extend environmental and social impact statements into all areas of local authority decision-making.
- Help to make rural communities rewarding places to live and work in, helping stop the trend of rural depopulation and out-migration. This will involve ensuring district, town and parish council policies are focussed on supporting existing and new enterprises in the countryside and to emphasise teleworking by ensuring access to high speed broadband links.
- Encourage the development of thriving urban and rural communities by assessing how to restore post offices and local services; supporting further education training to help expand agriculture, forestry and horticultural enterprises.

- Try to reduce speculation in land in both urban and rural areas, assisted by Land Value Taxation.

## **10.8 Sustainable Drainage Systems**

### ***Our Vision***

Greens are concerned about the obvious neglect of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) and equivalent drainage measures taken in the countryside. Sustainable Drainage Systems include techniques or materials such as permeable paving, grass-crete, porous asphalt, soakaways, infiltration trenches, interception ponds or swales etc. For these schemes to be sustainable and continue to work over the long-term, regular maintenance is essential, but often overlooked. Green Councillors are already acutely aware of SUDs as a key issue in flooding and water-logging, but this is an issue for the entire County.

### ***Our Approach***

#### **Green county councillors will:**

- Campaign to ensure Sustainable Drainage Schemes (SUDS) and equivalent measures in the countryside are actually 'sustainable' by having regular maintenance. This means removal of dust, silt or vegetation at frequent intervals, forever. Without this, drainage will be blocked by dust and moss. This may require national legislation to secure progress.
- Fight for people living in areas down-hill of new SUDS who may well not be safe from future flooding as claimed. The County Council maintains highway SUDS only. In small city developments, the district councils or local residents are responsible for SUDS and their maintenance, and yet no one or no organisation is actively checking that these systems are maintained.
- Promote a rolling programme of SUDS renewal since they all have a limited life-span: for example, permeable paving has a life span of 20 years, after which it should be replaced.
- Raise awareness that a truly 'sustainable', cost-free, infinitely self-renewing (maintenance-free) system for getting rainwater safely into the soil and reducing risk of downslope flooding is to have un-compacted soil with growing vegetation and a good earthworm population, creating natural drainage.

## **10.9 Woodlands, Forests and Trees**

### ***Our Vision***

Woods, plantations, orchards, agroforestry, hedges and trees are especially important to our policies to protect the countryside.

Woods and trees play a vital role in the landscape. They protect soil from erosion, protect water supplies and water quality, provide wildlife habitats and protect the climate by storing carbon both above ground and in the soil. They can provide us with renewable supplies of timber, wood fuel and healthy food, and can make landscapes more beautiful.

### ***Our Approach***

#### **Green county councillors will:**

- Seek to protect existing areas of woodland from damage and fragmentation.

- Ensure that woods are considered as an integral part of Local Development Frameworks. We will require planning authorities to liaise with the Forestry Commission and other bodies when dealing with the establishment of new woods and the management of existing ones.
- Rigorously protect the ownership of woods and plantations that are currently in public ownership, such as those managed by the Forestry Commission
- Rigorously protect public rights of access to such woods and plantations whenever this is compatible with wildlife protection and good forestry management.
- Encourage and support the good management of existing woods, plantations, orchards and hedges, for example through agri-environment schemes. Farmers and landowners will be encouraged to allow new woods to grow and, where appropriate, to create new plantations, orchards, agroforestry and hedges.
- Seek to prohibit the destruction of ancient woodland.
- Launch a programme of Tree planting not only in the countryside but also in urban plots.

## **10.10 Access to the Countryside**

### ***Our Vision***

Our vision is one where people can access the countryside, as we believe this has many positive benefits, such as recreation, health, and a feeling of reconnection with the outdoors and nature. Such access would also help promote the economy of local towns and the tourism although the pressure of extra people needs to be carefully planned for in order to prevent pressure on this fragile environment.

### ***Our Approach***

#### **Green county councillors will:**

- Extend the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to provide wider public access, such as that granted in Scotland by the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. Access Authorities will ensure that the law is properly implemented. We will ensure public access to woods and plantations is protected (see above).
- Ensure that adequate funding is provided to protect and maintain existing rights of way and to create new ones.
- Create a programme to promote countryside walks with leaflets and guided walks illustrated.

## **10.11 Flooding**

### ***Our Vision***

Our vision is that a holistic, wide ranging approach to water management should be adopted that considers measures to ameliorate additional aspects of climate change such as drought. We oppose development on greenfield sites as these will likely have unintended consequences in terms of

flooding. We would use the funds allocated to the proposed 'Oxford Relief River'<sup>29</sup>, also known as the 'Western Conveyance' (£125 million) to fund smaller flood protection measures within Oxford and in other urban settlements as a long-term programme of work.

### ***Our Approach***

A halt to the proposals for the proposed 'Western Conveyance Channel', on the following grounds:

- The Environment Agency cannot constrain development of the land. This means that further development will cause increased water runoff and will reduce flood storage capacity;
- Based on past experience we do not believe that the standards needed for the proposed sustainable drainage systems will be sufficiently high to prevent flooding from run-off.
- We believe that the real intention behind the Channel idea is not about flood relief, instead the priority is to drain land to facilitate development. This development in itself will likely undermine the posited aims of the Channel which is to relieve flooding. Plus there seems little point is simply diverting the flood to towns and villages outside Oxford.

### **Green county councillors will:**

- Consider flooding as an increasingly serious problem brought about by climate change that needs to be addressed.
- Work with all agencies to implement plans that look at the river catchment as a whole, and put forward wide ranging solutions from appropriate building regulations and sustainable drainage measures to green infrastructure actions such as increased tree planting and wetland capacity. We recognise that the development 'footprint' of new homes and other developments in the countryside may contribute significantly to flooding and that is another factor which justifies a general restraint on greenfield site development.
- Continue to develop and refine the County's response to flooding emergencies, In partnership with other agencies.
- Encourage and support the formation and maintenance of Flood Action Groups, and local street flood representatives
- Increase advice and support to residents and businesses on how to make their properties more flood resilient and on cheap insurance options.
- Follow closely the recommendations in the specially commissioned Green Party Flooding report outlined in Appendix One.

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<sup>29</sup> For more information, see: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/oxford-and-abingdon-flood-alleviation-scheme>

## 10.12 Local Authorities

### *Our Vision*

We see local authorities as custodians of local democracy, being the primary agents for conserving the countryside and building strong and resilient rural communities. We will act to protect this role and local authority responsibilities.

### *Our Approach*

#### **Green county councillors will:**

- Support the further devolution of powers from central government and higher-tier authorities to lower-tier authorities. We will act to strengthen the role and responsibilities of Parish and Town Councils.
- Be active in whatever forum is eventually determined by the current devolution debate and seek always to that decisions be made with as much public consultation as possible and at the smallest most community level forum as possible.
- Campaign for our preferred option of three unitary authorities North South and City as illustrated in our Devolution Review, available at [www.greenoxfordshire.com](http://www.greenoxfordshire.com)

#### **a. Rural Tourism**

### *Our Vision*

The countryside is probably the largest recreational resource in the country. Most people spend some recreational time in the countryside during the year, in pursuits ranging from the very informal to the highly organized. A great many people benefit from a 'reconnection' with nature, and countryside recreation serves to enhance general health and wellbeing, both physical and mental.

Recreation and tourism are important parts of the rural economy and benefit the economy of the locality where they takes place. At the same time, all recreational visits have some impact on the countryside and those who live there; increasingly people are expecting facilities and ease of access. In considering planning proposals for countryside recreation and tourism developments, we will seek to ensure that local planning authorities will be required to consider the sustainability of the enterprise, the quality and permanence of the net employment the applicant claims would be created and its overall landscape and environmental impact. Periodic reviews will take place, incorporating an environmental impact assessment, [review of effects on wildlife](#) and the input of local residents.

### *Our Approach*

#### **Green county councillors will:**

- Attempt to develop balanced recreation / tourism and locally orientated opportunities which have the potential to enhance the lives of people living in rural areas. This can help to offset the isolation of people in rural areas by offering opportunities for people to meet and interact for mutual benefit.
- Work to ensure that this can include inward investment and development in local communities. The Green Party will encourage the development of multi-purpose facilities,

usable throughout the year, to meet the needs of local people as well as visitors. Such facilities would offer more regular employment than seasonal facilities.

- Recognise that developing attractive recreational and holiday facilities closer to centres of population is important in supporting our policies to reduce long-distance and air travel.
- Seek to ensure that facilities are designed and managed to minimise social and environmental impact offering rigorous protection of all animal rights.

## **APPENDIX ONE**

### **Flooding and Flood Re**

Launched in April 2016, Flood Re has been set up by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the Association of British Insurers (ABI) to ensure even the highest risk homes can insure against floods. The aim of the scheme is to ensure that certain properties at risk of flooding can obtain affordable insurance cover for both buildings and contents insurance. The Flood Re plan will only last 25 years and it will not cover new houses, or houses built after 2009. This is a deliberate short term policy in order to encourage people to move away from living in houses in flood risk areas.

#### **How it works**

Flood Re is not an insurance scheme available to the public: instead it is a scheme through which insurance companies can insure themselves against losses caused by flooding. Flood Re would be operated as a not-for-profit reinsurance scheme managed by the insurance industry. This means that Flood Re would allow insurers to transfer the premium they receive for the flood risk part of home insurance policies to Flood Re and, in return, Flood Re would reimburse insurers for flood claims that they pay to their customers in relation to such policies. Flood Re would not have any direct relationship with customers itself and so the way in which a householder buys insurance and makes a claim does not change. In order to generate the funds for this approach, a levy is charged on all home insurance policies to subsidise the cost of insurance flood risk policies. A quoted figure is that this levy will be, on average, £10.50 a year to the cost of the insurance policy.

#### **Eligibility**

There are a number of criteria for UK homes to be eligible under the Flood Re scheme, notably that they need to be built before 1 January 2009, and be a domestic property of council tax band H or less. Flood Re does not cover commercial properties.

#### **Benefits**

The Flood Re scheme is one of the first scheme of its kind anywhere in the world. Set up government legislation, it is managed as a not-for-profit reinsurance company, owned and managed by the insurance industry, and is publicly accountable. The benefits of the Flood Re scheme are that householders in flood risk areas will be able to obtain insurance cover, though the usual interface with insurance companies over the next 25 years, if the eligibility criteria is met. The year of 2009 has been set as a cut off for cover to ensure continuity with the 'Statement of Principles'. The 'Statement of Principles' was signed in 2002 between the then government and the Association of British Insurers (ABI). This was a set of commitments by the industry to provide flood insurance for homes that were protected at or above government minimum standards of flood defence and those properties which would be covered in the future by planned improvements to flood defences. It was agreed that the statement would not apply to buildings constructed after 1 January 2009.

It is thought that the double effect of the 25-year duration of the Flood Re scheme, and the ineligibility of houses built after 2009, should incentivise rigorous and responsible planning decisions to stop the development of housing in flood risk areas.

### **Criticism**

There are a number of criticisms of the Flood Re policy. Two focus on the cost of the scheme and the level of cover it provides.

A criticism of the eligibility criteria is that while very wealthy householders are covered by the scheme, other vulnerable householders in more modest properties are not, such as those in blocks of residential flats, Housing Association's residential properties, multi-use under commercial or private ownership; or social housing properties.

In February 2015<sup>[1]</sup>, Prof Lord John Krebs of the Committee for Climate Change, criticised Flood Re by stating that its current configuration will not achieve step-change in the uptake of household flood protection needed and resilience measures over its lifetime, and, as a consequence, Flood Re's costs are higher than necessary at the expense of other households' insurance bills. He also made reference to a Government's impact assessment which demonstrated that value for money is poor. He considered the costs of the scheme, stating that, *"Flood Re is set to subsidise many hundreds of thousands of households more than the estimated number that might struggle to afford cover in a free market. This makes Flood Re needlessly expensive, and renders the costs of Flood Re three times the economic benefits. There is a strong case to narrow the scheme at the earliest opportunity, to allow the levy to fall and improve value for money. Including Band H homes at this stage would be a retrograde step."*

### **Links**

The Flood Re website: <http://www.floodre.co.uk/>

Report on the Water Bill Flood Insurance: Flood Re - Finance and Accountability December 2013<sup>[2]</sup>: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/265445/water-bill-flood-insurance-finance-accountability.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/265445/water-bill-flood-insurance-finance-accountability.pdf)

Letter from Lord Krebs to Brendan McCafferty regarding Flood-Re: <https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2015-02-02-Lord-Krebs-to-Brendan-McCafferty-Flood-Re.pdf>

House of Commons Library Briefing Paper, Number 06613, 9 February 2016, Household flood insurance  
<http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN06613#fullreport>