

Citizens UK calling on London's mayoral candidates to prioritise climate change, by making London Carbon Neutral, and working with community groups to create deep change.

London Citizens are asking for the Mayoral candidates to make London 'carbon neutral' by 2030. 'Carbon neutral' means that carbon (equivalent) emissions will have been reduced to zero - which in reality means some of the emissions will have to have been offset, as the Mayor does not have control over all elements of London's emissions. Since the start of the campaign, Sadiq Kahn has already pledged to aim for this target. However, what matters most is *how* this target is pursued and measured. Kahn, or any other mayor, may choose to measure only certain sources of emission – such as public transport – or to over-prioritize offsets, in calculating whether or not London is carbon neutral. There is a risk that commitments to carbon neutrality become shallow and tokenistic, allowing socially and environmentally damaging practices to continue, but there is also a real opportunity to use such commitments to build deep change with justice at its heart. This is where community organising can play a vital role, and why we are asking the mayoral candidates not only to commit to making London carbon neutral by 2030, but to commit to working closely with London Citizens and our member institutions and communities to make this happen.

Mayor Khan's commitment is an important first step. Setting 2030 as a date contrasts with the UK Government which has put 'net zero' target in law for 2050 – it makes London more ambitious on climate change, and shows that the city can take a leading role globally. Sadiq Khan has also described it as a 'green new deal' for London, which is a particular framing of climate change as an opportunity to upgrade infrastructure in a way that addresses inequality, and ensures fairness in the transition.

Why does this matter?

Climate change is no longer a distant issue, with reports of Australia on fire in the news, while global greenhouse gas emissions and temperatures continue to rise. The UN has warned we are close to the point at which we will cross the global goal of remaining within 1.5 degrees – the 'safe' levels of climate change (which will itself still bring challenges). We are fast running out of time and delaying action on climate until 2050 does not match this urgency.

London faces risks even if climate change is restrained to 1.5 degrees. It faces particular flood risks from Thames flooding and sea level rising as well as flash/surface floods, extreme temperature/heatwaves and water scarcity. Some parts of the city may become submerged. Climate change, and its associated air pollution, are also exacerbating inequality. The most polluted streets are the poorest ones. People living in social housing are not able to simply relocate away from pollution or flooding. The health effects of air pollution are already severe enough for the World Health Organisation to have issued warnings that children's brain and lung development is being stunted. A lot of London's old housing stock, whether social housing or privately rented, has very poor insulation, is damp and drafty and with 20th century expensive heating systems. A massive upgrade to a 21st century, clean and renewable heating systems and improved energy efficiency will in the long term save money as well as improve health.

Mayor Khan's commitment has put climate change at the heart of the mayoral elections, which has increased the pressure on the other candidates to show their green credentials. That is a good outcome whoever wins. It also puts some pressure on the UK government to act with more urgency. It shows a response to the huge increase in public concern about climate change, as seen by the massive participation in climate action over the past 12 months.

Why does action in London make a difference to global climate change?

London is a global city with global influence. This is likely to have a ripple effect on other major cities internationally – which in turn helps address global greenhouse gas levels. The London Mayor can influence some key sectors on climate action – notably the finance sector and other corporations, which have global ramifications. In addition to their direct power over areas like transport, and their partial power over areas like housing, the Mayor also has convening power which can be used to gather together and exert pressure on powerful global actors with a presence in London.

Climate change is the ultimate global social justice issue. Although London will be impacted by climate change, the parts of the world who will, and indeed are already, feeling its impacts are often the poorest areas, whose contributions to carbon emissions are far less than those of wealthier nations. Bangladesh will lose a large chunk of densely populated land to sea level rises, some islands will simply disappear, and already crop failures, water shortages, and extreme heat are causing famine and drought, and displacing people from their homes. London is one of the most diverse and international cities, and many of its residents will have friends and family in some of the most impacted parts of the world. This is an issue of global fairness and responsibility.

What would London need to do to achieve net zero by 2030?

In many ways London is doing quite well in its emissions reductions – the introduction of the Ultra Low Emission Zone, the congestion charge, electrifying of buses, increase in cycle lanes, have all helped reduce emissions. But in order to meet this new target, there will need to be accelerated action across all sectors, housing, transport, energy, waste, water, land use, and all at the same time.

What would London look like by 2030 if this happens?

Many measures to address climate change will dramatically improve health, wellbeing, quality of life and inequality – improved housing quality, cleaner air and streets, less traffic and congestion, less time spent travelling to work, reduced health problems. Streets could be greener, cleaner and safer.

Citizens UK policy changes to create a carbon neutral city by 2030

London Citizens are asking the mayor to prioritize working with them and their member organizations and communities in moving London towards carbon neutrality. Working in collaboration with communities, instead of simply top down, will mean that changes are accountable, genuinely empowering, and woven more deeply into the fabric of ordinary lives. It will also mean that the mayor can feel confident that carbon reduction measures will have energetic popular support.

The new Mayor should prioritise policies that support tackling climate change and improving air pollution in the lowest income neighbourhoods first. All new revenue raising measures should contribute to a 'fair green transition fund' which would then be spent on measures to improve the housing, transport and green spaces in the most deprived areas of London.

A few examples of the types of measures the Mayor could introduce include:

- Coordinate with the boroughs to initiate a 10-year housing upgrade – eliminating fossil fuel-based heating which will address inefficient, drafty, damp and unhealthy housing, and expensive out of date systems, and insulating homes while ensuring that social housing is upgraded first.
- Work with boroughs to ensure all new builds meet a high standard of energy efficiency
- Ensuring that the GLA uses 100% green energy, and prioritizes contractors and suppliers who do the same.

- Promote community approaches to renewable energy generation and ownership by identifying land and rooftops and providing seed funding.
- Organise community orchards in areas of deprivation
- Convene business leaders to plan for a 10-year transition to carbon neutral
- Ensuring that all public transport is carbon neutral by 2030.
- Progressively increase ULEZ emission standards

Negotiation Strategy [Not to be circulated]

A different strategy will be required with Sadiq Khan, who has already made a broad commitment to carbon neutrality by 2030, and the other candidates, who have not. With Khan, the emphasis needs to be on 1) commitments to collaboration with London Citizens, and 2) commitment to specific high-carbon-reduction and pro-poor policies. Of the latter, initial listening is suggesting that social housing retrofitting for energy efficiency is the most popular and urgent, but the list above provides some different options for negotiation.

For the former, negotiations should aim to get some sort of structure of community accountability in place. At a minimum this would be a commitment to regular meetings with London citizens with an initial post-election date already in the diary. More robustly, this would committing to creating involve a sitting citizens-policy board, with members selected from civil society institutions across London, supplemented by climate experts. This board would be connected to local Citizens climate campaigns, and be able to test city-wide policy with local campaign members and likewise to feed up local ideas in need of support or scaling. For this we would need a date in the diary, post-election, to meet around how to set this up, as well as a commitment that this board would be up and running within 9 months post election.

Either way, it should be emphasized that this is in the mayor's self interest – that they can claim greater legitimacy for policy measures if they invest in organising within communities to identify empowering solutions and to build action around these solutions. Needed solutions, such as increasing vehicle emission standards, creating more rigorous standards for granting planning approval of new builds, and retrofitting social housing, are only viable for the mayor if they are able to show that these are solutions emerging from, and supported by, local communities and not policies being imposed from above on them.

With candidates other than Khan, much of the above applies, but there is the extra step of getting them to commit to the 2030 carbon-neutrality target first. Much can be made about being behind Khan on this, and the community-organising element of working with communities can also be presented as a way to move out *ahead* of Khan, by offering a more robust and grassroots vision.