NEW GROUND AUTUMN 2016
Campaigning for environmental change & social justice

SERA
Labour Environment Campaign

BREXIT
WHAT NOW FOR NATURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE?

Michael Jacobs,
Kerry McCarthy MP
& Nick Mohlo
On the green challenge of Brexit

Melanie Smallman
SERA launches clean air campaign

Down Under
Greening the Australian Labor Party
Welcome to our 2016 Autumn Edition

ANDREW PAKES

It feels like a lot has happened since the UK voted narrowly to leave the European Union on 23 June, yet we seem to be no clearer about what Brexit would mean either for the environment or wider policy concerns. It has been a depressing few months for the progressive left – losing the referendum, watching a new (even more) right-wing Prime Minister take up residence in Downing Street, and Labour battling amongst itself. Despite these challenges, there is a job of work to be done for those of us who care about nature and tackling climate change.

This edition of New Ground looks at what Brexit could mean for the environment and how the progressive left can respond. It is going to take a major effort to protect the environmental gains that have been won over the last three decades. But there are also opportunities to forge ahead, especially with a new Labour Mayor in London committed to radical action on air pollution. The Mayor of London’s commitment matches SERA’s new campaign on air pollution, which Melanie Smallman writes about in this issue.

The referendum campaign threw up two lessons for me. One, that too many people did not realise the positive impact that the EU had had on driving up environmental standards in the UK. Secondly, we didn’t campaign hard enough or smart enough. To be fair lots of people did get stuck in, with Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth amongst some of the best Remain campaigners. Yet too many green NGOs sat on the sidelines refusing to take a proactive campaigning role; some were scared by Conservative anti-lobbying laws, but others just didn’t see campaigning as their role. We cannot afford to allow this to happen again. We need to make our case on the environment better – a theme this issue of New Ground begins to explore.

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ABOUT

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No-one really knows what Brexit means for the UK, let alone its impact on our environment. We know that nearly half of our trade (£12 billion) is with Europe and that getting the right negotiators with the right goals for our own version of TTIP or CETA or joining the European Free Trade Agreement alongside Norway, Iceland, Lichtenstein through the EEA or through a bilateral agreement such as with Switzerland, will be important for delivering strong environmental policies which underpin our quality of life. Many trading partners demand a level playing field, and this gives some shape many to environmental policies, and will likely continue ahead.

On a positive note we know that those countries within the EFTA EEA countries are expected to follow the full body of EU law, setting out specific environmental measures including cross cutting EU legislation. However, a small number of measure relating to birds, habitats and bathing water could be excluded. See table top right for a list of what would apply.

Even without the daily challenges of Brexit uncertainty, we are in a somewhat precarious position, in part due to government inaction and policies. A shadow has been cast over the UK’s standing as a global centre for research and development of new products and technologies many of which are essential to a sustainable low carbon economy. Many solar businesses for example have folded due to the Government’s changes to the subsidies.

Despite issuing the fifth carbon budget, the UK has yet to ratify to the Paris Agreement, and we need to put pressure on the Government to show leadership and move this forward. Eyes are on new Ministers for climate change Nick Hurd and Baroness Lucy Neville Rolfe, in the new BEIS department (the merger of BIS and DECC). Looking outside Britain, there are also red flags flying with a concern that one of the candidates to be the next US president would attempt to unpick the pact.

| Future status of important environmental legislation if the UK left the EU and stayed in the EEA |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
| WOULD CONTINUE TO APPLY | WOULD NO LONGER APPLY |
| Treatment Directive | Habitats Directive |
| Nitrates Directive | Bathing Water Directive |
| Groundwater Directive | |
| Priority Substances Directive | |
| Air Framework Directive (and daughters) | |
| Industrial Emissions Directive | |
| Emissions Trading Directive | |
| Directive on Carbon Capture and Storage Seveso Directive | |
| Directives on contained use and deliberate release of GMOs | |
| Waste Framework Directive | |
| Sewage Sludge Directive | |
| Waste Shipment Regulation Landfill Directive | |
| End of Life Vehicles Directive WEEE Directive | |
| Mining Waste Directive | |

7/10 of the most sustainable cities in the world are in Europe.

1. Frankfurt
2. London
3. Copenhagen
4. Amsterdam
5. Rotterdam
6. Berlin
7. Seoul
8. Hong Kong
9. Madrid
10. Singapore

Is it too much to suggest that being part of Europe has influenced the quality of life in the UK’s 69 cities? How sustainable cities are, is important for our quality of life and economies.

CITIES HOUSE OR PRODUCE:
• 54% of the world’s population
• 70-80% of business
• 80% of energy consumption and greenhouse gas production
DON’T PANIC, BREXIT DOESN’T HAVE TO SPELL GLOOM FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

AMID ALL THE OTHER NEWS HAPPENING RIGHT NOW, YOU MIGHT HAVE MISSED A VITAL STORY: THE GOVERNMENT HAS ACCEPTED THE CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE’S RECOMMENDATION FOR THE ‘FIFTH CARBON BUDGET’. THIS IS THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF GREENHOUSE GASES WHICH THE UK ECONOMY WILL BE ALLOWED TO Emit IN THE 2028-30 PERIOD, WHICH WILL NOW BE CUT BY 57 PER CENT ON 1990 LEVELS.

This would be important for the UK’s contribution to tackling climate change at any time. In the aftermath of the EU referendum campaign it takes on special significance, for it nails the myth that Brexit will tear up all of the UK’s environmental policies and commitments. The environmental movement has been in visible despair since the recent leave vote. That’s not surprising: most of the UK’s environmental laws and regulations spring from the EU, and environmentalists know that they would not have been nearly so strong if the UK parliament had acted on its own. Indeed, British governments have often tried to resist the EU’s push for stronger environmental protection. Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and the Green Alliance were rightly vocal remain campaigners.

But now that the decision has been made, mimicking Fraser from Dad’s Army and crying that we’re all doomed is not what’s needed. On the contrary, it will merely encourage those who oppose environmental and climate policy to believe that they now have a new mandate to get rid of it.

It has not gone unnoticed that in the Venn diagram of the right there’s a lot of overlap between Brexeters, climate sceptics and anti-greens. Indeed, Nigel Lawson’s Global Warming Policy Foundation has already claimed that following the referendum the UK should abandon its climate policies. But the Brexit result provides absolutely no grounds for doing so, and the public and media should not be encouraged to believe that it does.

The UK’s climate change targets and policy derive, not from the EU, but from the 2008 Climate Change Act, passed by the sovereign UK Parliament with cross-party support. It is the act which requires the government to set legally-binding carbon budgets: indeed, the one just proposed is more ambitious than the targets set by the EU. Though the UK signed the Paris climate agreement as part of the EU, it has to be ratified in the UK parliament, so Brexit will not change our long-term decarbonisation goals.

It is true that on leaving the EU we will no longer be required to meet its renewable energy and energy efficiency targets. But we will still have to implement them, because they are part of our national climate and energy policies, aimed at meeting the three goals (decarbonisation, affordability and security of supply) set by the UK government, not the EU.
Investment in energy infrastructure will inevitably be subject to some general economic uncertainty, but the energy market is almost entirely domestic and not for export, so concerns over whether the UK will be in the EU single market do not apply. Many of these investments are now on hold – but that is nothing to do with Brexit and all to do with the lack of a long-term UK policy framework. Once the government announces a proper post-2020 support package, investment should begin flowing again.

Outside the climate and energy field, leaving the EU does not guarantee the loss of EU environmental regulation. If Brexit takes the form of the ‘Norway option’, in which we remain part of the European Economic Area (EEA) in order to gain access to the single market, almost all EU environmental regulation will continue to apply. EU law is designed to prevent lax environmental standards undercutting competition in the single market, so it’s all part of the package.

But even if we come out of the single market, key elements of EU environmental law will remain. Product regulations such as energy efficiency standards for white goods and emission limits for vehicles will not disappear, because most products sold in the UK will continue to be the same ones sold in the rest of Europe. Other EU regulations will remain in place because they have been transposed into British statute. Air pollution limits fall into this category: outside the EU we will lose the vital enforcement regime provided by European law, but the regulations themselves will remain. Yes, a future government could weaken these limits. But politically it would surely be impossible to do so. With air pollution now estimated to lead to around 40,000 premature deaths in Britain every year, which politician is going to call for weakening the law?

And this, surely, is the point. Leaving the EU will unquestionably be bad for the environment, and is deeply to be regretted. In some fields, such as nature conservation (where the key directives do not apply to EEA members such as Norway), we should be particularly alarmed at the prospect of Brexit leading to the collapse of regulation. But the proper response to this is not to cry woe; it is to mobilise the public in support of environmental protection. This must now be the green movement’s overwhelming priority.

In the climate and energy field, where policy is domestically driven, the task is particularly urgent. It is to get the government to diminish investment uncertainty through a series of key announcements. Energy Secretary Amber Rudd made a good start, but there is more to do.

First, post-2020 support for low-carbon energy must be included in the autumn statement. Second, the government should announce that the UK, and UK firms, will continue to belong to the European emissions trading scheme under any Brexit scenario. Third, the government should confirm that a new comprehensive climate action plan will be published by the end of the year showing how the government intends to meet the fifth carbon budget, including core policies for renewable energy and energy efficiency. Fourth, it should announce its intention to pass a new Air Quality Act to replace the EU-based provisions of current air pollution regulations.

There are many rightful reasons for despair at the referendum result. But the imminent destruction of the UK’s environmental policy need not be one of them. The country is experiencing a political earthquake. But we can still ensure that it does not pull down every house.

A version of this article first appeared in the Guardian in summer 2016

MIchael Jacobs is an academic, writer and commentator on international climate change and energy policy

The proper response is to mobilise the public in support of environmental protection
THE BREXIT VOTE MAKES THE NEED FOR AN AMBITIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER. THE LABOUR PARTY HAS A CRITICAL ROLE TO PLAY IN MAKING SURE THIS HAPPENS, ARGUES NICK MOLHO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE ALDERSGATE GROUP

Most of the media coverage during and after the EU referendum was focused on immigration and the economy. Yet, the impact of the vote to leave the EU has important – and often overlooked - implications for the environmental agenda.

Many of the UK’s environmental laws come from or are the result of a close collaboration with the EU. While not perfect, these laws have on balance provided some important benefits to UK businesses. Most notably, they create a more level playing field with other competing businesses in the EU that are subject to the same rules and they have in several cases driven positive environmental innovation by developing standards such as on energy efficiency that apply across the single market and its 500 million consumers.

So the question of what next for the environment after the Brexit vote is far from trivial. And whether one looks at the future role of Britain in the world, the future of its economy or of its environment, the Brexit vote has made the case for an ambitious environmental policy in the UK stronger than ever.

A THRIVING LOW CARBON ECONOMY MATTERS TO BRITAIN’S GLOBAL STANDING...

A key tenet of the Leave campaign was that the UK needed to look beyond the EU and aspire to be a competitive and relevant player on the global stage. All indicators globally point to an increased recognition that tackling climate change is a priority. More than 170 countries signed the Paris Agreement on 22nd April this year, the most first-day signatories for any global agreement ever. Financially, investment is increasingly flowing towards low carbon infrastructure. Over $285bn was invested in clean energy globally in 2015, compared with $130bn going to new coal and gas generation.

Much of this low carbon investment is coming from outside the EU, with countries like China, India, Brazil, South Africa and the United States being major investors. A strategy that wants the UK to punch above its weight on the global stage must therefore include an ambitious low carbon policy.

The UK’s Climate Change Act, which requires the UK to cut its emissions of greenhouse gases by at least 80 per cent by 2050 by meeting a series of five yearly ‘carbon budgets’, provides the framework through which this can be achieved. A priority for Theresa May’s new government should be to put forward a detailed Emissions Reduction Plan by the end of 2016 that sets out how the UK will attract the affordable private sector investment in low-carbon technologies that will be needed to meet the 57 per cent cuts in emissions by 2030 that is required by the ‘fifth carbon budget’.
The impact of the vote to leave the EU has important – and often overlooked - implications for the environmental agenda

...AND TO ITS ECONOMY

This isn’t just important for the UK’s global standing. Much of the ongoing investment in low carbon technologies is taking place in parts of the UK where there is a pronounced feeling of economic disenfranchisement, which was partly reflected in a strong Brexit vote in June. The investments by Associated British Ports, Siemens and Dong Energy to modernise the port of Hull, develop an offshore wind turbine blade factory and build the world’s largest offshore wind farm off the coast of Yorkshire is a good example. Up to 1,000 people will be employed in the Siemens blade factory, a significant and positive contribution given the high rates of unemployment in the region.

A 25-YEAR PLAN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT IS ESSENTIAL

The importance of the environmental agenda stretches beyond the necessary growth of the UK’s low carbon economy. Many of the UK’s natural resources on which our economy and society are heavily reliant, such as good quality soils, are in decline. As highlighted in a recent report from the Committee on Climate Change, the UK’s infrastructure, businesses and communities are currently poorly prepared to cope with the likely impacts of climate change which will include more frequent risks of flooding, heat waves and droughts.

A strategy to significantly improve the state of the UK’s natural environment, by for example improving the quality of soils to support food production in the long-term and restoring coastal wetlands to strengthen flood defences, could help address many of these concerns. This is where Theresa May’s government should deliver on the previous government’s pledge to put in place a comprehensive 25 Year Plan to deliver a healthier and more resilient natural environment. This is also potentially where the government could incorporate important aspects of EU environmental law, such as on water and air quality, that are important to the state of the UK’s environment.

With all the competing priorities that Theresa May will be faced with in the coming months, ensuring that the UK has an ambitious environmental and low carbon policy will depend on the new government understanding the environmental, economic and foreign policy benefits of doing so. The Labour Party will have a critical role to play in the coming months in ensuring this happens.

NICK MOLHO, is the executive director of the Aldersgate Group
He tweets at @NickMolho
AS THE NEW ENVIRONMENT SECRETARY STARTS TO GET HER HEAD AROUND THE IMPLICATIONS OF BREXIT FOR HER DEPARTMENT, SHE MAY CALL TO MIND, RUEFULLY, THE OLD IDIOM ‘BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR’

Defra’s work - on food, farming, fisheries and the environment - is intertwined with the EU more than almost any other part of Government; untangling it will be a mammoth task for a Department which has already had its budget slashed and lost a quarter of its workforce.

Obviously what happens now is still very much up for negotiation. But if we are to leave the EU, we have to see this as a once in a generation opportunity to design a sustainable, ethical and healthy food system.

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is obviously the starting point. We should not lose sight of why CAP was developed – to ensure that everybody had enough food to eat. Amid all the old jokes about wine lakes and butter mountains, it is easy to forget that Europe’s food supply has not always been so secure, and that rationing continued well after World War Two ended.

Food shortages are now mostly a thing of the past, but food security – or food sovereignty as it is sometimes called – is still very much a live issue.

The UK produces less than 60 per cent of the food we eat. Twenty-seven per cent of our food comes from the EU, including 40 per cent of our fruit and vegetables. Imports of indigenous foods – food we could grow here – are increasing. The collapse of the pound is likely to put food prices up. Labour shortages could have a significant impact on food production and prices if freedom of movement is halted. Ninety per cent of fruit and vegetables grown in the UK are picked and packed by 60,000 to 70,000 migrant workers, and there is already talk of moving production overseas: not because we can’t grow things here, but because we can’t harvest them.

Producing our own food is better for the economy, better for the environment and gives us more confidence about the provenance of what we eat. If we are to feed ourselves as a nation, we will have to address not just the labour issue, but other big challenges ahead.

Our farming industry is set to lose 55 per cent of its income when CAP payments end. Countries like New Zealand have abolished farming subsidies but, without radical change in the UK, such a move would devastate farmers who are used to making a loss on their produce. With farmers receiving just £10 billion of the £198 billion UK consumers spend on food each year, CAP essentially subsidises market failure.

But simply substituting CAP with a like-for-like replacement would be a
wasted opportunity. Public subsidies must promote public goods.

The UK must build on CAP reforms that were intended to promote more environmentally responsible approaches. Current farming practices too often increase flood risk, pollute our water and air, contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, damage our soil and threaten biodiversity. We cannot continue to subsidise environmentally damaging behaviour. Instead, we need to incentivise a more sustainable approach to farming, look at how this could actually reduce farmers’ costs, and ensure they are not penalised for safeguarding our countryside.

The market’s failure to recognise farmers’ costs has encouraged some to consider moving towards intensive farming as a way to reduce overheads and increase output. This is not the solution, particularly for dairy farmers when supply already outstrips demand. Intensive farming is too often associated with increased environmental damage and lower animal welfare standards. Such a move would be counter-productive, particularly if we want to promote British produce around the world on the basis of its high quality.

In years gone by, the UK led the way on animal welfare, pushing for EU-wide bans on veal crates and sow stalls. More recently, the EU has been showing the way forward, and the UK lagging behind, with this Government’s recent attempts to downgrade the Farm Animal Welfare Codes discrediting any claim to take animal welfare seriously. We must not allow the Tories to use Brexit – and its ideological drive towards cutting ‘red tape’ and regulation - as an opportunity to row back on animal welfare standards.

Europe has sometimes been a convenient excuse for Ministers who can claim their hands are tied by the EU. We will, for instance, now see whether the Government genuinely cares about curbing live animal exports, or better food labelling.

If we are to support British farmers, we do need mandatory country of origin labelling. If we are to improve farm animal welfare standards, we need to expand method of production labelling – as we have already done for eggs - and ensure consumers aren’t misled by labels which merely hint at higher welfare systems. A better labelling system could promote choice and consumer confidence, and help us market British produce around the world on the basis of its quality and ethical standards.

But we also need a Government that takes food safety and food standards seriously. It was the EU that intervened to block misleading food claims and to give us reliable nutrition labelling. It was the EU that responded to salmonella concerns and the BSE crisis by creating the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). And EFSA’s work has been
credited with helping to expose the horsemeat scandal. Compare and contrast with the Tories’ slow and timid response to that, when they had already cut the Food Standards Agency’s budget and undermined its ability to protect consumers.

We need vigilance on food crime and food fraud, but the Tories just aren’t interested. Nor are they interested in the safety of our food, which could be an issue in negotiating trade agreements.

One of the many misconceptions during the referendum campaign was that leaving the EU would protect us from TTIP (the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership the EU is negotiating with the USA). Aside from concerns about the NHS, dispute settlement and other issues, some of us have also been worried that TTIP would open up our market to food riddled with chemicals, meat injected with growth hormones and chicken washed with chlorine. There were fears also that the EU would be forced to abandon the precautionary approach that has been key to protecting consumers.

But the EU has said it will not compromise on standards and citizens across Europe have united against a deal that could damage our environment, threaten our health and put jobs and rights at risk.

Now, our fate rests with Liam Fox – someone who has failed to support climate change legislation and who has based his career on an unfounded paranoia about “red tape”. He will be tasked with negotiating bi-lateral trade agreements. We should be under no illusions about how far down environmental protections, food standards and workers’ rights will be on his list of negotiating priorities.

And our new Secretary of State for International Trade will find that it is more difficult to “take back control” than he claimed. The combined EU economies are greater than the US economy, but the UK will now be trying to negotiate a deal with a country whose economy is more than six times the value of ours.

So the new Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs faces a daunting in-tray. We will need to remind her why this all matters. We will need to ensure that she does not simply see this as a bureaucratic exercise to repeal EU rules and cut up the “red tape” that protects us all.

Also in her in-tray will be Defra’s long-delayed and much-criticised (by those who have seen it in draft) 25 Year Food and Farming Plan, which now needs to be rewritten in the wake of the referendum result. I hope the revised plan has more to say about the environment and sustainability, and about climate change, which is one of the greatest threats to food security. Our food supply could contribute 2°C to global warming by 2050, yet food and farming was barely on the agenda at the Paris talks.

We need a strategy that does not ignore a mounting social justice scandal and growing health crisis. The Trussell Trust had to provide more than 1.1 million food parcels last year. In 2014/15, more than 7,000 people were admitted to hospital with a diagnosis of malnutrition - a 57 per cent increase under the Coalition Government. A third of 11 year olds are overweight or obese and children in deprived areas are twice as likely to be obese than children in least deprived areas. Only a quarter of adults eat the recommended five portions of fruit and veg a day.

So we need the new Environment Secretary to work with the Departments of Health and Education, and with the remnants of the former Department for Energy and Climate Change, as well as the new EU Exit team. We need from her a long-term vision for our food and farming industry, and a comprehensive strategy to improve our food sovereignty, protect our environment and promote healthy, affordable diets. Labour needs to be watching her and pushing her every step of the way.

KERRY MCCARTHY MP, former Shadow Secretary for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Sixty years ago the UK Government passed the Clean Air Act, introduced in the aftermath of the London Great Smog Disaster when as many as 12,000 people died due to air-pollution, the 1956 Clean Air Act regulated domestic and industrial smoke emissions.

While we are no longer worried about smoke from coal fires, air pollution – primarily from diesel vehicles - is thought to cause the deaths of more than 40,000 people annually in the UK.

In 2015 the World Health Organisation estimated that the UK suffers just under £54 billion in economic costs a year associated with air pollution. Around £15-20 billion of those economic costs are the health impacts, and represent around 7 per cent of the National Health Service budget. After smoking, it is the biggest public health risk and claims more lives than alcohol and obesity combined.

Yet, for too long air quality has been ignored. No longer. We are seeing strong leadership from London Labour Mayor, Sadiq Khan. After years of campaigning from SERA and organisations like Clean Air London, we finally have a Mayor who is making air quality a key priority of his administration. And this is being backed by decisive action with proposals such as a £10 T-Charge on the dirtiest vehicles, expanding the Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ), bringing in the ULEZ in 2019 not 2020 and creating clean bus corridors.

But there is more to do. The GLA’s Environment Committee, chaired by SERA’s Leonie Cooper, has made a number of suggestions for London’s plans to go further, faster. And Sadiq’s leadership should be replicated across the country with administrations given more powers to act and make air quality a priority for action. This is why we have launched a campaign, joining the call of the London Mayor, to secure a new Clean Air Act for the 21st Century.

Over the coming months A Breath of Fresh Air, SERA’s clean air campaign, will be building support for an act, encouraging research, shaping policy changes, actions including outlining the additional powers councils and administrations need, and hosting discussions with key organisations.

The campaign has already gathered support from a number of Labour MPs, MEPs, AMs and Councillors. From Matthew Pennycook MP and former UK Environment Minister Huw Irranca-Davies AM, to Seb Dance MEP and Deputy Leader of Brighton Council Gill Mitchell.

They, like the SERA Executive, know that now more than ever we need ambitious action to tackle the UK’s dirty air. Especially in light of the United Kingdom’s vote to leave the European Union, which puts at threat the rights we have to hold the UK Government to account through EU legal powers.

Cleaner vehicles, clean fuels, a greater use of public transport, more walking and cycling schemes, less polluting buildings, more tree planting, local air quality plans, ultra-low emission zones, proper pollution warnings, and transferring...
EU air quality laws into UK law are just some of the ways we can tackle the world’s largest environmental challenges and health risks and will be pursued through our campaign.

SERA has been campaigning on air quality for some time. In 2013 we ran a successful campaign to stop the Government abandoning the National Air Quality Monitoring network and we are proud of the work that we have done with others to ensure that pollution was a key issue for this year’s London Mayoral Elections. But with 40 UK towns and cities in breach of safe particulate matter levels dirty air should be a serious issue for Labour campaigners across the UK: pollution isn’t restricted to London.

Tackling air pollution isn’t just an environmental issue – it’s one of social justice too. It is a killer that affects the poorest and the weakest the most – those who have little choice but to live or go to school near busy roads, delivery drivers who spend hours a day in traffic, breathing in toxic fumes and those who are already vulnerable to breathing problems due to underlying health problems like asthma.

Today it is time to back the campaign for A Breath of Fresh Air and call for a Clean Air Act fit for the 21st Century.

Sign our UK Government & Parliament petition to secure change.

MEGAN SMALLMAN, is Co-Chair of SERA
Sadiq Khan, the new Labour Mayor of London, made tackling London’s dirty air one of his key campaign pledges. Less than a week after he took office in May, he made his first statement on improving air quality, saying that he would be launching a consultation in 2016. True to his word, Sadiq chose the 60th Anniversary of the Clean Air Act, the 5th July, to deliver a keynote speech that outlines some of his proposals that he wants Londoners to consider. These include:

- A £10 Toxicity or T-Charge, on top of the existing Congestion Charge, for the dirtiest vehicles;

- Bringing in the ULEZ in 2019, not 2020 – and all double-decker buses to be compliant with ULEZ requirements from 2019 not 2020;

- Creating clean bus corridors by putting the cleanest buses onto the dirtiest routes, in a bid to tackle air pollution hotspots.

Sadiq is also instructing officers to draw up detailed proposals for a diesel scrappage scheme, to hopefully put pressure on the government to introduce such a scheme nationally and has starting negotiating on Vehicle Excise Duty. He also called for a new Clean Air Act, fit for the 21st century – a major SERA and green groups campaign.

As the Chair of the London Assembly’s Environment Committee and Labour lead on the environment, I really welcome the fact that Sadiq has not let this slip at all, and is pressing ahead on his pledge to improve air quality. Unlike 60 years ago when city smogs caused by coal fires were visible and obvious to all, nitrogen dioxide gas and the tiny particles that lodge in our lungs are completely invisible.

So with many London schools situated in air pollution hotspots and many routes to school involve children travelling along the most polluted roads, we are stunting the lungs of generations to come – children are especially vulnerable for two reasons, as studies have now proven. Firstly, children are shorter, so they are much closer to the emission sources, but also their lungs are not fully developed and are much more susceptible to the impact of nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter.

The Tory Government (and the previous Tory Mayor) have a shameful record on dealing with dirty city air. The last Mayor alone allowed a further 170,000 diesel vehicles to come onto London’s roads since 2012 alone, just adding to London’s dirty air. While it is fair to say that 15 years ago, when less was known about the negative...
... many routes to school involve children travelling along the most polluted roads, we are stunting the lungs of generations to come.

health consequence of diesel, that the then Labour government made buying diesel vehicles more attractive by changes to vehicle duties, since 2012 when the World Health Organisation defined diesel as “definitely carcinogenic” nothing has been done.

Client Earth, the environmental lawyers, also thought the Tory Government’s approach was woeful – and took the Government to Court and won, due to the fact that the national air quality improvement plan was woefully inadequate. Client Earth are going back to Court again in October 2016 to get the government’s revised plan reviewed – and Sadiq has joined their action, as it still is inadequate.

We really need to push ahead as quickly as we can, taking action that will have a real impact on the situation. A new and determined Mayor, who has started by putting out some strong ideas to tackle a major health problem is a refreshing change. There is no doubt we can encourage him to go further – introducing the ULEZ in early 2019 or even in late 2018, or expanding it to completely cover London, coinciding with the Low Emission Zone are potential additional asks. The London Mayor is bound to receive opposition from motorists organisations and businesses – but I for one will be doing my best to make sure that the Mayor delivers on his pledge to clean up London’s dirty air and encouraging him to be bolder and think bigger.

LEONIE COOPER AM is Chair of the London Assembly Environment Committee and member of the SERA executive.
BREXIT POSES MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS, WE MUST PROVIDE THE RIGHT RESPONSE TO SAVE THE UK’S ENVIRONMENT, SAYS SEB DANCE MEP, MEMBER OF THE EU ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY COMMITTEE

Before June’s vote, the environmental case for Britain remaining a member of the European Union had been overwhelming.

Once decried as the ‘Dirty Man of Europe’, our membership of the European Union has consistently driven up environmental standards and given our country a vastly cleaner bill of health.

The EU has guaranteed laws that protect our natural environment and wildlife. It has entrenched European cooperation and prevents a race to the bottom on environmental standards on traded products such as cars. It has extended Britain’s influence, giving us greater clout on the global stage and providing direct means to affect the policies of our European neighbours.

Up until the 23rd June these benefits had been assured, but looming Brexit, as in so many areas of British life, has since created unprecedented levels of uncertainty.

Since being elected to the European Parliament in 2014 I’ve focused on tackling the greatest public health crisis that currently faces the UK, air pollution.

SERA members will be well versed in the deleterious consequences of toxic air on the environment and people's health. 50,000 lives lost prematurely every year, a 14 per cent higher chance of dying early if you live in a polluted area.

They will also be aware that the vast majority of rules that regulate the levels of toxins in the air we breathe are formed at EU level.

The Ambient Air Quality Directive sets standards for reducing local concentrations of fine particles. The recently passed revision of the National Emissions Ceiling Directive, very close to my heart after a protracted two-year negotiation with EU Member States, forces governments to meet national emission limits on five toxic pollutants, including NOx. There is also a patchwork of regulations that target air pollution at its source, including ‘Euro standards’ for road vehicles and emission limits on a range of engines from construction machinery to train locomotives.

In post-Brexit Britain, there is absolutely no guarantee that these laws will still be in place.

If Britain opted for EEA (European Economic Area) membership and received full access to the single market, we would have to accept a large body of existing EU laws, including those that regulate air pollution. But it would also have to accept free movement of people, continue to pay a significant amount into the EU budget, and accept future laws without any say over their composition.

The other most likely alternative is a bilateral trade deal between the UK and EU. Such a deal would make environmental laws, including those covering air pollution, subject to negotiation. Under the current government, environmental projects would be a long way down the
list of priorities and not seen as they should be - as a precursor to growth, not a hindrance.

In any event, once the UK formally leaves the EU, it will cease to be bound by EU law. The 1972 European Communities Act, which implements EU Directives and gives direct effect to EU law in the UK, would need to be repealed and all legislation passed under it would immediately face an uncertain future.

The state of existing domestic legislation regulating air pollution is woefully inadequate. The Environment Act 1995 and the Air Quality (England) regulations 2015 are much weaker than their European counterparts and lack any legally binding limits which would force the government to act.

Furthermore, both pieces of legislation place the main responsibility of meeting these objectives with cash-strapped local authorities, who lack both the financial muscle and political power to make a significant impact.

That’s why a rearguard action to protect the environmental protections we currently enjoy is so crucial.

The inconvenient truth for those who sought to argue the environmental benefits of a Britain outside the EU, is that air pollution has an unfortunate habit of not respecting borders: over one-third of the UK’s air pollution is blown in from across the English Channel.

Cross-border co-operation and common laws across European countries will be crucial, whether Britain is part of the EU or not. Any new regulation in the UK must reflect this reality.

The launch of SERA’s ‘A Breath of Fresh Air’ campaign is timely. In difficult circumstances the time has come to build support for a new British Clean Air Act.

We need to encourage research, focus political minds, and secure key policy changes that give local councils the powers they need, but also ensures we do not enter into a race to the bottom with our European neighbours.

Brexit has steered us into uncertain waters, creating far more questions than it has answers. We must do all we can to provide the right response to save the UK’s environment.
At the Paris Climate Summit, the determination by community climate activists from across the globe was palpable. This inspired me to make a short video with interviews from Scottish cyclists, to a community worker from El Salvador.

In order to meet the 1.5 degree commitment, it is essential that community groups are supported in changing culture and lifestyles as we shift to the low carbon economy, bringing better choices for people in energy, transport and housing. We are supportive of a new Scottish Sustainable Energy Centre, as a catalyst to create synergies in research and development and commercialisation in all these sectors.

Here in Scotland, cross party working can be effective. Shifting people’s habits to active travel is hampered by a range of challenges. The idea for an award for a competition for Local Authorities, which I developed, was adopted first by the Cross Party Group for Cycling, and then taken to the Transport Minister only a year ago. The Scottish Government adopted it as CommunityLinksPlus, and the first winner is Glasgow City Council. Their South City Way route connects a challenged residential part of the city to its very heart – an example that can inspire real culture change.

There are even more opportunities to work in a cross party way on long term issues now that the SNP is a minority government.

At a strategic level, however, it is shocking that one of Theresa May’s first actions as Prime Minister was to abolish DECC. This, on top of the deplorable lack of vision by the Tory Government in suddenly cutting a range of renewables feed-in-tariffs, has contributed to a serious lack of confidence within the sector.

The utter unpredictability of politics was shown by May’s Review of Hinkley Point. After years of arguing, from a SERA Scotland perspective, that nuclear power is not the future - not least as waste issues can never be truly solved - I hope there will be a political consensus on this.

Here in Scotland, this is the first time the Scottish Government has made Climate Change and Environment a Cabinet post, appointing Roseanna Cunningham MSP. In my new role I will be shadowing her. The first debate I led was a Scottish Labour victory as our motion to introduce a fracking ban in Scotland was agreed by the parliament. Our principal argument was that it is unacceptable to start to extract unconventional gas as a transition fuel, though there are many other arguments against it.

I am also exploring ways to develop robust Just Transition policies which will ensure workers and communities are not left behind in the shift to the low carbon economy. We must have a detailed, long term industrial strategy and skills development for oil and gas, construction and transport workers, as well as farmers and fishermen.

The core of our way forward is sustainable development.

There is a wide range of bills in this new parliament. Scottish Labour had a manifesto commitment to a Warm Homes Bill, which the SNP came late to. I am determined that a properly funded energy infrastructure project will feature, making a significant impact on fuel poverty, including in rural Scotland. There will also be a Climate Change Bill, a Circular Economy Bill, and a Transport Bill: we will ensure there are amendments to all of these to strengthen and ensure social justice.
Regulation will also be key, as will facilitation of co-operative and community ownership models.

Our portfolio includes responsibility for land reform, which Shadow Minister David Stewart will be taking a lead on. Sarah Boyack and I worked on strengthening the bill for communities as it went through the last session up to the wire.

She is really missed for her experience and acumen after 17 years in the Scottish Parliament.

The developing Brexit picture is a nightmare, from my perspective. SERA Scotland held an event prior to the vote. The identification of how to protect Scotland and her waters is now the imperative. How robust will the Scottish Government be in continuing to implement those bold EU initiatives where infraction has been a risk - such as air pollution, or where the challenges have been great such as Marine Protected Areas, and biodiversity targets?

I am clear that once we arrive at a Brexit deal, it is only right that there is a chance to endorse it or otherwise in a General election or second Referendum. With Remain winning in Scotland I will be strongly arguing this case.

Finally, Local Authority elections are a chance to ensure we commit to robust action in our Manifestos, so that Labour running local councils lead action to develop energy models that bring district heating, and many more opportunities, to our communities.

Claudia Beamish MSP
Scottish Labour Climate Change Environment and Land Reform spokesperson

A return to a strong environmental platform was a key part of Labor’s recent election campaign in Australia – and it saw the ALP make some big gains across the country.

Labor’s environment policy was the strongest and most comprehensive ever offered by a major political party. Its headlines were about climate action, including the commitment to shift to 50 per cent renewable energy by 2030 and achieve credible carbon emission reductions over coming decades.

This is a once-in-a-generation reform

Labor outlined the pathway to these goals, including reform of the electricity sector, closure of coal fired power stations and federal intervention to halt land clearing.

But equally impressive was the commitment to revisit our entire federal environment legal framework and the institutions supporting it. With the business community complaining about the current laws and their bureaucratic demands, and the continuing plummeting of all Australia’s environmental indicators, it seems fair to conclude the regime is failing.
Most Australians would like assurance federal environment laws can stop kookaburras, magpies and other wild creatures disappearing from our experience. Labor promised to go back to first principles and consider a system that works better not only for developers but also for the natural assets which the laws are charged to protect.

Other highlights included a doubling of funding for Indigenous Rangers, the most successful indigenous employment program that not only provides culturally appropriate work but impressive biodiversity outcomes, and progressing World Heritage listing for Cape York, West Kimberley and the Aboriginal cultural connections in the Daintree. The $500 billion earmarked for the Great Barrier Reef will define and build a proper path for arresting the degradation of that system and greater regulation for unconventional gas will provide assurances to the public about this untested industry.

Consistently when asked what Labor represented, Bill Shorten would include “real climate action” and 50 per cent renewable energy by 2030 in his headline list of five key priorities, alongside jobs, Medicare and education. This was a great return to form.

Earlier this month, on the death of former French prime minister Michel Rocard, former PM Bob Hawke recounted to the Sydney Morning Herald how the two leaders jointly campaigned to convince the world to ban mining in Antarctica. In the 80s, fighting for environmental gains was the stuff on which Labor spent political capital not only at home but on the international stage. It required commitment, courage and sass. This is Labor at its best.

LABOR’S TASK OVER THE NEXT YEARS IS TO STICK WITH ITS RETURN TO FORM.

By reclaiming environmental heritage alongside the egalitarian frame, Labor stepped back into the realm of the party which created the great coalition of progressive forces that changed Australia under Whitlam and Hawke.

But there has been much territory lost. Polling shows the electorate sees very little difference between the two major parties in terms of trustworthiness to protect the environment. The uncertainty of Labor during the Rudd-Gillard years on climate policy marked it as a tactical issue, not a conviction issue for the party.

Labor’s task over the next years is to stick with its return to form. We have to continue to entrench this 21st century priority into the heart of our broader historic mission. The imperatives of climate action provide the perfect context for this.

Unlike the 80s when saving environmental icons like the Daintree or Antarctica were worthy but isolated pursuits, climate change reaches beyond environment into all aspects of government and the economy. As Labor more confidently imagines and articulates an agenda for a more equitable, less madly market-driven society, the climate imperative of retooling our energy sector provides the perfect opportunity for Labor to deliver a 21st century social democratic, nation-changing reform.

The decarbonisation of our energy sector has many of the key economic debates of the last 20 years at its heart. First, it is big: an economic and environmental imperative and a key driver of our economy. It is currently dominated by monopolistic corporations with many of its assets having been gifted to the private sector by successive governments, including Labor ones.

All of this must be delivered while protecting consumers from price hikes.

Reform also offers the possibility of reinvigorating high-end manufacturing, refocusing our international competitiveness, decentralising control and democratising ownership. All of this must be delivered while protecting consumers from price hikes.

What a great place to continue what Bill Shorten has begun and reimagine the Labor mission of a safe, exciting and fair Australia.

Felicity Wade of Labor’s Environment Action Network, SERA’s sister organisation in Australia.
GREEN HORIZONS
THE SERA RALLY

Join Labour’s environment campaign at our flagship event, to hear five minute visions for a brighter greener Britain

MONDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 18:00 TO 19:30
ROOM 11A, ACC LIVERPOOL, KINGS DOCK, LIVERPOOL WATERFRONT

SPEAKERS
(RALLY FORMAT WITH 5 MIN SPEECHES)

MARBIN REES,
elected Mayor of Bristol

SIWN SIMON MEP,
West Midlands Mayoral Candidate

MARY CREGAH MP,
Chair Environment Audit Committee

RACHAEL MASKELL MP,
Shadow DEFRA

DANIEL ZEICHNER MP,
Shadow Transport Minister

LISA NANDY MP,
former Shadow DECC Secretary

CAROLINE FLINT MP,
former Shadow DECC Secretary

KERRY MCCARTHY MP,
former Shadow DEFRA Secretary

SEB DANCE MEP,
Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee member

THERESA GRIFFIN MEP,
spokesperson on energy

CLAUDIA BEAMISH MSP,
Shadow Minister for Environment & Climate Change

CLLR TUDOR EVANS,
Opposition Leader Plymouth City Council

PAUL NOWAK,
Deputy TUC General Secretary

PAUL BLACKLOCK,
Head of Strategy and Corporate Affairs Calor Gas

CHAIRED BY JAKE SUMNER AND MELANIE SMALLMAN SERA CO-CHAIRS

GROWTH, HOMES AND GREENERY:
THE FIGHT FOR THE FLOODPLAINS

MONDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 12:30 TO 14:00
THE QUAKER MEETING HOUSE,
22 SCHOOL LANE, LIVERPOOL, L1 3BT
(NEAR LIVERPOOL CENTRAL STATION)

Kindly supported by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

Joint event with Labour: Coast & Country

SPEAKERS:

MARY CREGAH MP, Chair Environmental Audit Committee

CLLR LUCINDA YEADON,
Deputy Leader Leeds City Council and Exec Member for Environment & Sustainability

LIZ HUTCHINS, Senior Campaigner Friends of the Earth

RICHARD BENWELL,
Head of Government Affairs Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust

CHAIR BY POLLY BILLINGTON, SERA Executive Member

SUSTAINABILITY HUB
RECEPTION WITH SERA

MONDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 20:00 TO 21:30
ROOM 11A, ACC LIVERPOOL, KINGS DOCK, LIVERPOOL WATERFRONT

Kindly sponsored by the Environmental Services Association

SPEAKERS:

BARRY GARDINER MP, Shadow Minister for Energy & Climate Change

JACOB HAYLER,
Executive Director, Environmental Services Association

INTRODUCTORY WORDS:
LEONIE COOPER AM,
Chair London Assembly Environment Committee & SERA Executive Member and MELANIE SMALLMAN, SERA Co-Chair

Kindly supported by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

Joint event with Labour: Coast & Country