10 YEARS OF THE CLIMATE CHANGE ACT: LABOUR LEADERSHIP AND FUTURE AMBITION

Barry Gardiner MP
Climate Change on the Global Stage

Lord Adonis
Brexit risks the Climate Change Act

Chi Onwurah MP
Delivering a Just Transition
Welcome to our 2018 Winter Edition

The 26th November 2018 will mark the 10th anniversary of the Climate Change Act; world leading legislation that committed the United Kingdom to legally binding targets to reduce UK greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, and with pathway to achieve that target.

As SERA - Labour’s environment campaign we believe it is important to recognise and celebrate Labour’s long and proud history on the environment. We rightly champion Labour’s setting up of the NHS but Labour also established the National Parks, opened up access to the countryside and passed the Climate Change Act – and at a time when the country was plunged into recession through an international financial crisis.

But, it is not enough to simply celebrate past successes but shape our future. Since 1973 SERA have been urging the Labour movement to recognise the environmental challenges we face, not as inconvenient truths that will hinder business, society and government as many Conservatives view things, but to deliver opportunities and fairness.

We see this approach in Labour’s recent ‘The Green Transformation’ policy document released at Labour Party conference in September. The cross-departmental document written by Rebecca Long-Bailey, Shadow Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, and Sue Hayman, Shadow Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs recognises that we need societal transformation to tackle the underlying drivers of environmental degradation. This transformation will be advanced by Labour principles of justice, equality, solidarity and democracy. Labour also recognises that this green transformation will bring cheaper energy, growing global markets for green tech and new high-tech jobs in renewable industries.

The theme of the SERA rally at this year’s Labour conference marked the decade of the Climate Change Act, with a series of powerful speeches including from Hilary Benn, who took the legislation through Parliament. On the anniversary of the Act we have organised an event with with Ed Miliband MP, former Labour leader and Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change. We have asked also Labour politicians and campaigners to renew their commitments to comprehensive climate action and champion Labour’s net-zero emissions 2050 target.

In this edition of New Ground we also focus on the Climate Change Act anniversary with many thought-provoking articles on how we achieve change ahead, from the grassroots, in different parts of the country and nationally and internationally.

Brexit continues to bring huge uncertainty for our environment and risks our battle against climate change. Lord Andrew Adonis has written on this and SERA supports a People’s Vote, for the sake of our planet and all of us - the environmental movement should unite behind a vote.

Labour must remain bold. We must also secure a Labour Government to achieve the change that is required to steer the country into a low carbon future that will benefit our planet, our communities and our natural environment. This edition of New Ground marks Labour’s leadership on climate change and how Labour can continue to lead, from council chambers to the global stage.

SERA rally/ Hilary Benn MP

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FEATURE

PERPECTIVE, the UK’s carbon footprint hasn’t fallen; they haven’t even flatlined. They are on the rise. In 2020 gas emissions haven’t fallen; they haven’t even flatlined. They are on the rise. In 2020 well, think again. It’s ten years on from the 2008 Climate Change Act, a commitment to stay within that more ambitious target. It was, and still is, a world-leading piece of policy making for the children of the 21st century. It was, and still is, a world-leading piece of policy making for the children of the 21st century. Well, think again. Labour is determined that Britain should be at the forefront of the new climate change will not matter unless the rest of the world joins us so there is no point doing anything until everyone else does. Certainly, the architects of the global consensus achieved in Paris have passed their legacy to a generation of newcomers that are not as convinced of the urgency with which this crisis must be averted. Obama is out. Merkel barely clings on. Next year’s UN climate conference takes place in a Brazil that just elected Jair Bolsonaro as president: another politician whom has threatened to withdraw from the Paris Agreement.

The inescapable fact is that we are now closer than ever before to catastrophic climate breakdown. With isolationism in the ascendancy, many in the environmental movement have invented their future; the mantra that “small is beautiful”. In the USA where Trump has abandoned the federal program and is restarting the international agreement there is much talk of the subnational and non-state actors – communities, towns, cities – picking up the pieces. But while grassroots and local-scale activity is necessary, it is not sufficient. No amount of tinkering around the edges could possibly deliver what is required. The IPCC report on 1.5°C called for “rapid and far-reaching” systemic changes to our global economic and political structures. So, whilst it is true that the UK going it alone is simply not enough and we need a global solution to a global problem, it is morally negligent of our government to simply hold its hands up and say we will wait. Politics is about leadership. And so is economics. It is called first mover advantage!

This leadership is precisely what the Labour Party offers: a green jobs revolution that will create 2-3 million new jobs, insulating 4 million homes to high energy efficiency standards in our first term, unleashing seven times as much offshore wind power, and creating more than 100,000 jobs in the manufacturing base towards the production can be interpreted another way. This means that more were not enough — at best they would still be investing their faith in the mantra that “small is beautiful”. It is called first mover advantage!

This embryoids Labour’s agenda: transformative, outward-looking and radical. Those values must also define our approach to climate change on the world stage. Ten years ago, Labour’s Climate Change Act was a ground-breaking moment in the history of environmentalism. It made us climate leaders. This Tory government has been resting on our laurels since. The IPCC report must give a new urgency to politics. With limited time to avoid the human catastrophe that we now dominate by moral pygmies, the world must step forward and lead the way through the darkness. Unfairly to confront allies that drag their feet. Bold in its opposition to countries whose very existence is threatened by rising seas.

We, the Labour Party. The party of internationalism and solidarity. The party that believes in the power of collective action across borders. Knowing that by the strength of our common endeavour we can achieve more than we could ever do alone. This is who we are. And this is why the next Labour government cannot come a moment too soon.
Climate change has arrived early and we need to go further and faster

Almost all of the UK’s emissions reductions have come from the coal/renewables switch in the energy sector, with few contributions from other major emitting areas.

The rise of renewable energy has seen an extraordinary acceleration outstrip the predictions of even the most bullish NGOs. At the start of this decade Britain had seven times more generating capacity from oil, gas and fossil fuels than from renewable energy.

RenewableUK reported that it took 19 years for the UK to build its first 5GW of wind capacity. Now we can build the same amount of wind in 2 years. We’re connecting 3.8GW of solar, onshore and offshore wind and biomass each year. Only this quarter we tipped the balance and now have more installed renewable capacity than fossil fuels. Throughout this transition the cost of building renewables has fallen precipitantly.

Ten years on, and through the Great Recession, the Climate Change Act and its Committee have stood the test of time. Despite a lack of enforcement we have, in a very British way, carried on with what is necessary to do our bit.

The Act has been surprisingly resilient to attacks from the final few superannuated climate sceptics like my very own MP Christopher ‘chopper’ Chope (who recently made headlines for opposing the upskirting ban). Having been one of only five MPs to vote against the passing of the Climate Change Act he has gone on to support private members bills which among a list of proclaimed ‘true-blue’ proposals, attempted in 2014 to dissolve the Department for Energy and Climate Change.

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Earlier this year, Jeremy Corbyn highlighted the ‘first shoots of the renaissance of local government for the many, not the few’. Perhaps nowhere are these shoots greener than in Bristol.

Bristol was one of the first local authorities to own a wind turbine, amongst the earliest to set up a council-owned energy company providing 100% green tariffs, and the only UK city to spend a year as European Green Capital. And, now, with a majority for the first time since 2003, we are building on Labour steps up to provide, including implementing the Kyoto Protocol through the Climate Change Act. With a Green Party in name only here – one which votes with Tory councillors against some £14 million of our capital investment in clean energy while supporting developments which would have worsened already illegal air quality for some of the poorest Bristolians – my all-Labour administration are at the forefront of action against climate change.

No more immediately do these causes of social and environmental justice intertwine than in the case of fuel poverty. My administration has installed district heating systems and is progressing plans for heat networks. We have placed new insulation in 20,000 council properties and are promoting fuel poverty projects across the city, which are saving Bristolians money and helping the environment. Solar power is being installed on 20,000 council properties and are promoting green energy. 180 investors from all around the country to clean up our public transport

And, after successful soft market testing, Labrador Bristol City Council has garnered almost £1 billion of interest in pioneering projects to transform how Bristol generates, stores, and utilises energy. 180 investors from all around the world, from the Japanese national bank to Warren Buffett’s Berkshire Hathaway investment vehicle, have expressed interest in expressing interest in the exciting City LEAP programme. As a council we met our carbon emissions reduction target early and have upped it and I am confident that, as a city, LEAP will enable the city of Bristol to be run entirely on clean energy by 2050, in line with our manifesto commitment. If Government steps up to provide the resources and powers we need – and only then – then we may well be able to bring this date forward by at least a decade.

I agreed with three-quarters of Bristolians that litter was a big issue for our city. Making our streets measurably cleaner was a key commitment of mine and has led to the Clean Streets campaign. This project has worked with scores of local primary schools and community groups to mobilise over 3,000 volunteers on litter picks. We have raised awareness, strengthened communities’ pride in where they live, and saved the council money all in one go. Campaigns on the city’s bus shelters have highlighted good work while also publicising increased enforcement efforts around littering, dog fouling (one of the cornerstone of local government work), and other environmental crimes. Offenders are now subject to new £100 fixed penalty spot fines, with 10,000 already issued since last year. Meanwhile, Council-owned Bristol Waste Company has installed covert CCTV cameras at fly-tipping hotspots – ‘spy bins’, and issued dozens of fly-tipping fines in the last month alone.

Bristol is also home to Kerry McCarthy, easily Parliament’s greenest MP. With her, we are working on a pollinators action plan for the city’s bees, pulling together an action plan around single-use plastics, and exploring alternatives with other councils so that we can be able to phase out the use of glyphosate. Kerry’s pioneering work in Westminster around food waste and plastic pollution was ahead of its time, and has been backed here in Bristol by our administration. Bristol Waste’s award-winning pilot project saw the amount of food waste collected for renewable energy generation in parts of south Bristol increase by 87%, and has since been rolled out across the city. Alongside this, the Feeding Bristol project has worked with scores of local primary schools and community groups to mobilise over 3,000 volunteers on litter picks. We have raised awareness, strengthened communities’ pride in where they live, and saved the council money all in one go. Campaigns on the city’s bus shelters have highlighted good work while also publicising increased enforcement efforts around littering, dog fouling (one of the cornerstone of local government work), and other environmental crimes. Offenders are now subject to new £100 fixed penalty spot fines, with 10,000 already issued since last year. Meanwhile, Council-owned Bristol Waste Company has installed covert CCTV cameras at fly-tipping hotspots – ‘spy bins’, and issued dozens of fly-tipping fines in the last month alone.

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Britain was once a global leader on climate change. The 2008 Climate Change Act was the world’s first legal framework that set binding carbon and emissions targets, and was explicitly emulated by countries ranging from Sweden to New Zealand. It helped drive change in European Union carbon targets, and was followed by the UK playing a leading role in the EU advancing action on climate change. Crucially, by leading the European Union on climate change, Britain also led the world. The EU has become the global environmental standard and regulation setter and has used its significant trade clout to tackle climate change. This year, it announced that it would refuse to sign trade deals with countries that did not ratify the Paris change agreement, an agreement Britain played a key role in negotiating not least due to the stature it announced that it would refuse to sign as a chance to ‘unshackle’ Britain from the ‘corps’ of EU regulation. Their real agenda, as Will Hutton and I argue throughout our new book ‘Saving Britain’, is the triumph of ‘Thatcherism in one country’. It is not for nothing that arch-Thatcherite Home Secretary Sajid Javid glibly outlined a “huge shopping list” of policies in the event of no deal that included deregulation on workers’ rights, scrapping automatic enrolment into pension schemes and ditching environmental regulations.

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Delivering a Just Transition

Chi Onwurah

The global market for sustainable business operations is expected to reach between US $1.5 trillion and $4.5 trillion by 2020. Greater energy and resource-efficiency are expressing their wish for action as well. A new law and many members of the public will need to be unity across Government backing for environmental improvements, it is hard to imagine where it could happen.

In order to achieve the breakthrough environment, there will need to be cross-party backing for the new law, as was the case for the Climate Change Act. And there will need to be greater across Government departments too, especially from the Treasury. Businesses are calling for the new law and many members of the public are expressing their wish for action as well.

As we approach key choices, we should do what we are literally the first generation to understand the full scale of human impacts on the world that sustains us, while at the same time the last to be in a position to take the actions needed to avoid the disastrous consequences of continuing environmental decline. The stakes are increasingly high and we have a clear choice: whether to act and lead, or to make excuses and bury our heads in the sand.

This is certainly true in Newcastle – the city I grew up in and now represent – where we are proud of our industrial heritage. Growing up in the shadow of Stephenson, Armstrong Parsons – that’s Rachel Parsons, by the way, the world’s first female naval engineer and the founder of the Women’s Engineering Society – and the idea that current methods of production need to work for everyone, not just those with the money to move to higher ground. The collectively and solidarity guarding the environment. The world needs to work for everyone, not just the people who can afford electric vehicles, and low-carbon chemical processing.

We want to use the power of Government to address our crumbling infrastructure and close the productivity gap at the same time so we can better use the resources we have. Our £250bn National Investment Tranformation Fund will do what it says on the tin, transform our railways, our broadband, our energy infrastructure, bringing our investment in infrastructure up to basic OECD levels.

In addition, we will set up our £250 Billion National Investment Bank made up of a network of Regional Development Banks, bringing investment decision making back to our regions, enabling decision to be taken locally, by the people who best know their local economy.

Our plan for a National Care Service will raise standards and job quality in the care sector, an industry in which 80 per cent of workers are women, properly valuing their contribution to our economy.

This is how Labour will transform the relationship between the economy and the environment. Labour will ensure a just transition to a carbon neutral economy that works for everyone – and cares for everyone!
It is incumbent on us to look for ways of reducing our emissions everywhere and across all sectors. The case is well proven that climate breakdown will threaten every aspect of daily life. Latest figures from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) illustrate that we can emit about 500 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide if we want a 66 percent chance of staying below a 1.5°C rise in global temperatures. Our current rate is about 1 gigatonne every nine days. This gives us globally and collectively twelve years. So the case is clear - we need to decarbonise all sectors rapidly. And in most sectors emissions are reducing. However transport stands out as a sector in which emissions are going up. Personal transport is responsible for the biggest portion of those emissions. What options do we have at our disposal, and what policies do we need to push?

Cycling and walking

This is the most obvious and most visual. Many - although not all - car trips today are single occupancy which are well within the walking and cycling distance. Reshaping our urban areas to better align to those such as The Netherlands has long been our urban areas to enable cycling and walking. And this type of mode shift requires real behaviour change which takes generations to succeed.

What about the cars

We have built our lives and an economy around them. We do not see a scenario where the car goes away. Rural areas do not land themselves to buses, those with mobility issues rely on the car and many people will simply not be willing to give up their cars and the enjoyment many do derive from the associated freedoms itself.

The challenge here is therefore ensuring that every car which is sold is electric within the next decade.

The challenge here is therefore ensuring that every car which is sold is electric within the next decade. This also presents opportunities for other renewable energy sources. A huge fleet of electric vehicles (EV) would give us the back-up energy storage and grid services to make renewable energy a more compelling offer. This is because they can store energy when it is being produced and release it when it is required by using vehicle to grid technology. Even without vehicle to grid, a huge fleet of EVs all charging at the same time provides opportunities to balance the grid simply by restricting charging to some vehicles during peak times. If hydrogen technology can make the break-throughs required to be a commercial success, a similar logic applies.

However the main barriers to EV take up are twofold. The most pressing problem is around production – globally we do not make enough. This is a huge opportunity for the UK to be at the centre of this revolution and take advantage of all of the green jobs which would come with it – from design to building the main components that go into an electric car such as electric motors, power electronics and batteries. It is also an opportunity to replace existing jobs in today’s internal combustion engine centric car industry.

Barrier number two relates to the perception that EVs are less seamless than a fossil fuelled car. The main issue here is convenient charging. Most of the time the vehicle will charge when it is sitting outside your house and this is easy if you have off-street parking. However about 40 percent of people park on the street and therefore will need to rely on charging being available on residential streets. There are solutions in the pipeline for this which need to be developed so that they are ready for rapid deployment in the early 2020s when supply catches up with demand. This means local councils working with central government and technology providers to develop rapid rollout plans for the early 2020s.

On the occasions that a journey is over 250 miles, which is likely to be the standard range of an EV by the early 2020s, there need to be a robust nationwide network of reliable rapid charging hubs on the strategic road network. The technology exists for this now and will be different for each hub depending on the expected demand and the grid capacity. Some will be off grid using batteries to store locally produced renewable energy whilst others will be grid connected solutions. Most will be somewhere in between.

Fundamentally we need to be reducing the amount of fossil fuels we use. The speed of change is the most important element of this.

Emitting more CO2 without being cognisant of the consequences as a society is a reckless and risky gamble. Every tonne we can avoid adding to our atmosphere will give us a better chance of avoiding climate breakdown. Many leading climate change scientist are presenting scenarios which show that we have already sealed our fate and have little control over the level of warming we will experience. I do not hold this same pessimism. There are two clear paths to take - significant investment in buses and a step change in support for electric vehicles. Fundamentally we need to be reducing the amount of fossil fuels we use. The speed of change is the most important element of this.

Furthermore driverless cars are coming, and the UK is well positioned both in developing the technology and for production and deployment. The transition of mobility from car ownership to transport demand will require redefining the relationship with the private car, and the type of charging infrastructure we build as a nation needs to be cognisant of that.
A decade ago the UK agreed a worldwide first, the Climate Change Act. With binding targets to reduce CO2 emissions and decarbonise the economy, the goal has been to help reduce global warming and the UK’s contribution to CO2 emissions - our country being one of the world’s significant contributors.

The report also outlines where change has taken place in different sectors. Since 1990, the energy sector has reduced emissions by over half largely arising from the growth in use of renewables and the reduction in use of coal. Other greenhouse contributors like oil and nitrous oxides in our air and outlining plans to reduce this including the use of diesels, a major cause of the particulates and nitrogen oxides that contribute to poor quality air. Diesel railways are a contributory factor and there is a particular concern regarding the level of emissions found at railway stations.

Research published earlier this year for the University of Birmingham and Network Rail Strategic Partnership found high level of nitrogen oxides and particulate matter at Birmingham New Street station, one of the UK’s busiest and in excess of EU limits, while the Rail Safety and Standards Board is studying the concentration of nitrogen oxides at London King’s Cross and Edinburgh Waverley stations.

These two environment challenges of greenhouse emissions and air quality are red flags for the rail sector, and with the decade anniversary of the Climate Change Act, a timely reminder for action. Lasting and transformative change is needed, and it is possible.

At Alstom, operational and environmental excellence is one of the five pillars of our 2020 strategy. We are investing in the transport of the future, bringing underexploited technologies to market, and are at the forefront of meeting these challenges. We think the rail sector can move quicker to a zero-carbon and clean air future, by utilising a tried and tested technology - hydrogen. It is a technology that enables trains to emit just high quality, pure water - putting an end to the carbon footprint of CO2 emissions as well as air pollution. This is not some distant prospect – it is a viable solution now.

Hydrogen trains could be operational in the UK within three to four years, just ahead of the fourth carbon budget period starting in 2023, where more rapid progress in carbon reductions is certainly required. We are pursuing multiple opportunities to deploy the trains, and the more that are adopted, the better the trajectory for the fourth budget would be.

Alstom builds trains and transport systems across the world - we see huge potential for these clean and environmentally beneficial services, and particularly here in the UK. The potential is as great as nearly one third of UK trains operate on diesel. Electrification and hydrogen are both solutions, with hydrogen particularly advantageous where wires for electrification are impractical or too costly to install. Hydrogen trains bring not just environmental benefits - the hydrogen fleet will be one of UK’s most advanced existing, polluting diesels. Hydrogen trains bring not just environmental benefits - the hydrogen fleet will be one of the UK’s most advanced. It will enable the smoother and quieter rides for passengers that hydrogen brings whilst also reducing noise and emissions for the neighbours of the railway.

We need a national debate on how the country can get on board as rapidly as possible. The government has laid a challenge to decarbonise the rail sector by 2040 and end use of diesels. Hydrogen has the opportunity to play a leading role and it is for rail operators and train building companies alike to step up and work with government to deliver this.

There are other areas too. Transport is largely devolved in Scotland. The Scottish Government has outlined the potential for hydrogen, including for ferries - there is opportunity for rail services too.

The voices of metro-mayors and council leaders in cities, counties, and regions can also be important to support and champion clean and environmentally friendly and clean air future, by utilising a tried and tested technology - hydrogen. It is a technology for action. Lasting and transformative change is needed, and it is possible.

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We need a national debate on how the country can get on board as rapidly as possible. The government has laid a challenge to decarbonise the rail sector by 2040 and end use of diesels. Hydrogen has the opportunity to play a leading role and it is for rail operators and train building companies alike to step up and work with government to deliver this.

There are other areas too. Transport is largely devolved in Scotland. The Scottish Government has outlined the potential for hydrogen, including for ferries - there is opportunity for rail services too.

The voices of metro-mayors and council leaders in cities, counties, and regions can also be important to support and champion clean and environmentally friendly and clean air future, by utilising a tried and tested technology - hydrogen. It is a technology for action. Lasting and transformative change is needed, and it is possible.

...the rail sector can move quicker to a zero-carbon and clean air future, by utilising a tried and tested technology - hydrogen

Our award-winning Coradia Lint has entered passenger service in Germany. It is the first operational hydrogen train in the world.

In the UK, we are working with Eversholt Rail to convert existing rolling stock (Class 321s) to hydrogen operation, re-engineering existing trains to replace...
In a recent NUS survey of 2500 students across the UK, 69 percent said they ‘would be likely to vote for a political party that increased action to protect the environment’. Whilst demanding this leadership from politicians for sustainability, students are already taking to advance sustainability on their own campuses, in their communities, and through their course curricula.

NUS is the representative body of over 600 students’ unions in further and higher education across the UK and the collective voice of over 7 million students. The mission of its sustainability work is to see all students, regardless of discipline, develop the knowledge, skills, attributes, and values to create a more just and sustainable world, both in the present and for future generations.

The student movement in the UK has been rapidly growing in influence and leading the way to create a better world. Whether through electing the first black president of any national organisation in the UK, electing the first paid trans president of any national organisation or representing half a million students in the UK, to earn the Responsible Futures accreditation, institutions and students’ unions must undergo an audit conducted by their own students. This audit, facilitated by NUS, allows students to hold their institutions and students’ unions to account on their sustainability commitments. It serves to showcase innovation and good practice across the sector to drive forward transformational change in education.

Students leading change in their community

In response to the finding that two thirds of students are seeking graduate roles with organisations who have positive environmental and social ethics, NUS has launched Placements for Good NUS and has consistently shown that 85 percent of students think sustainability should be a part of their college and university education. This research has shown that 85 percent of students think sustainability should be a priority for their college or university and 70 percent of students think it ‘should be embedded throughout all courses’.

This article outlines examples of students’ engagement in sustainability on campus, in the curriculum, and with their local communities alongside sharing further evidence of student interest in, and demand for, sustainability.

Changing behaviours on and off campus

Every year over 100,000 students engage in NUS’ Student Switch Off campaign. Focusing on simple sustainability actions in halls of residence, the campaign is an accessible and fun inter-hall competition providing incentives for students to change their behaviours and work collectively to reduce their energy consumption and improve their recycling rates.

Over the campaign’s 12-year history over 20,000 tonnes of carbon have been saved equating to over £2.5 million saved for the education sector through unnecessary energy consumption in their residential buildings. Over 7,000 students have been trained as campaign ambassadors, acting as an entry point to sustainability leadership amongst their peers on campus.

The successes and experiences of Student Switch Off in the UK is currently being shared with a European audience, with a further six countries currently running the competition on their university campuses through the ‘SAVES 2’ project supported through EU funding.

Through campaigns like Student Switch Off, students have the opportunity to take tangible actions to reduce their personal environmental impact and contribute to a significant collective achievement. Across the UK, 53 percent of students report having taken a personal action to protect the environment (which might include dietary changes, cutting down on single-use packaging, or adopting energy/water saving behaviours).

In addition to individual behaviour change, students report a wide range of other actions they have taken to create change;

- 58 percent of students say they have signed a petition
- 20 percent have joined an organisation linked to the environment
- 12 percent have spoken to someone they consider ‘influential’ so as to create change
- 11 percent have gone on a protest, and
- 9 percent have contacted their MP

Although individual behaviour change is important, these other types of engagement in ‘active citizenship’ are critical for creating a more sustainable future. The urgency of climate change, as the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report suggests, will require transformational changes across all parts of society.

Students understand the urgency of climate change. The latest findings in NUS’ tracking survey exploring students’ attitudes towards climate change found that:

- 84 percent say they are fairly or very concerned about climate change,
- 71 percent think that the UK is already feeling the effects of climate change,
- and 75 percent would vote for a government that increased action to tackle climate change.

This nationwide survey replicates the questions in the Energy and Climate Change Public Attitudes tracker - carried out by the UK’s UN Climate Change Energy and Industrial Strategy) since 2012. Creating change through curriculum reform

Sustainability does not only influence students’ behaviours and actions, but also their formal learning whilst in college or university. 60 percent of students consistently say they want to be learning more about sustainability and 66 percent of students say that, in considering graduate jobs, they would value the role that pays £1000 per year less to work for an organisation with a good ethical and environmental record.

Students have a desire to see sustainability in its broadest sense (encompassing environmental, social, and economic issues) embedded across all disciplines. In embedding this content, students do not want a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach nor do they want a single module on sustainability – instead, they wish to see sustainability woven into their studies in a way that is relevant and meaningful to their discipline and to their future career.

Because of this demand, NUS worked with partners across the sector to develop Responsible Futures – a framework and accreditation mark to embed sustainability across all parts of student learning. This framework now runs at over 30 institutions working in partnership with their students’ unions, acting to advance sustainability on their campuses through the ‘SAVES 2’ project supported through EU funding.

Further successes in community engagement around sustainability have been seen by the innovative My World My Home project run by Friend of the Earth in partnership with NUS. Using a community organising approach, groups of students have been trained and gained qualifications to develop local environmental campaigns of significance to their towns and regions. Hubs of students in colleges across South Wales, East Midlands and London have been engaging with their students, teachers, staff, community members and local decision makers to show the passion and strength of feeling of young people in further education about sustainability, and making proactive, positive changes to their colleges and local areas. My World My Home has directly engaged 150 students at 20 colleges and reached a further 7500 through associated campaigns.

Conclusion

Through programmes and campaigns like those discussed, it is clear that students are engaging deeply in sustainability on their campuses, through their curriculum, and within their communities.

Students engage in sustainability through a range of topics and NUS celebrates the breadth of sustainability across the student movement. As reflected by the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Development, sustainability is broader than simply recycling and energy saving. It must encompass social, environmental and economic issues and solutions to sustainability challenges must be inclusive of the most marginalized voices in society. The need for a participatory approach is demonstrated through the impact of climate change which is already being disproportionately felt by women and people of colour.

Worldwide, just 3 percent of people attend university and yet those who attend university make up 80 percent of leadership positions. It is therefore critical that education plays its role in equipping our future leaders with the knowledge and capabilities to transform society.

FOR MORE INFORMATION about NUS’ sustainability work, including copies of the research mentioned in this article, please visit www.sustainability.nus.org.uk
The oceans are heating up and our weather is becoming more erratic. The climate breakdown is revealing itself. Without doubt, climate change will seriously impact our environment, our food security in a variety of ways, impacting productivity, compromising global nutrition and farming livelihoods. But the very nature of those food systems is also severely undermining our ability to tackle the breakdown. New institutional and political interest needs to get the UK into a new era of low carbon food systems. The recent report by the Climate change Committee sheds useful light on the transformational changes needed to ensure land becomes a net המחית carbon store but also how water, healthy soils, wildlife, timber and food, are all at risk from a warming climate. But it is clear from this report that the conflicting demands on land to deliver multiple purposes – from carbon storage to food production and new homes – means a strong political steer is needed to avoid huge, unintended consequences. And that we need to change behaviour.

The CCC report starts to correct the neglect given to the significant greenhouse gas emissions from the land and from our food supply when compared to transport, energy and housing emissions. A business-as-usual approach for the food system would make it impossible to meet our Paris Agreement approach for the food system would make it impossible to meet our Paris Agreement

The fact that the Agriculture Bill does, actually, mention climate change is a start. Much of the farming community is on board with taking steps whilst climate change denial is increasingly isolated. The Bill provides powers to give financial support for “mitigating or adapting to climate change” as well as other related areas. The Bill could help deliver on a key ‘win win’ outcome: carbon storing nature. Restoring habitats – not only for the crucial wildlife they support and natural system they protect – but because they also secure carbon in the land will be key. Many farmers recognise enhancing soil carbon will benefit yields but they could go further, protect habitats and maybe reap rewards via the new Environmental Land Management Scheme. Peatlands and wetlands, semi-natural forests and woodlands and well managed permanent grasslands are all needed. Soils should be another core focus. We need a UK wide plan, with incentives, advice and training to ensure that all soils are in better condition, with growing levels of organic carbon and healthy soil biota as soon as possible. Other outcomes from new policy must be more farmers using organic farm techniques, which can enhance carbon sequestration, more agroforestry, cutting back on artificial nitrogen use – a key source of fossil fuel use and nitrous oxide emissions. We need to be phasing out any subsidies to the false solution of large scale biomass (which takes precious land and creates all sorts of environmental harm). We’ll also need to set the Environment Act, due after Christmas, to set baseline regulations and enforcement.

But it is not just about farming practice but about what grow or rear to eat. One final source of optimism is that we the majority of British adults believe public support can deliver all the transformations needed in an integrated way. It is about our food waste can only be a good thing – as long as we do not destroy the livelihoods of good livestock farmers maintaining good soils in a mixed system with high animal welfare. We need to eat less and better meat. Encouragingly, the majority of British adults agree that their behaviour changes the earth’s climate and also tend to agree that if we all made changes to our diets, we could significantly reduce the impact of climate change. But policies are needed to encourage a greater shift to more sustainable, lower carbon diets. Encouragingly, the mass popularity of the farming community is on board and taking steps whilst climate science denial is increasingly isolated.

Much of the farming community is on board and taking steps whilst climate change denial is increasingly isolated.
We have both a political and moral responsibility as a party and a movement to ensure we do pass on a safe secure sustainable world to the next generation.

I just want to say this, because we’ve heard from Rebecca Long-Bailey and Sue Hayman and others about what the next Labour government wants to achieve but we have both a political and moral responsibility as a party and a movement to ensure we do pass on a safe secure sustainable world to the next generation. Last month, our third grandson was born and by the time my three grandsons reach my advanced age, they will be sharing this planet with three times as many fellow citizens as I was sharing with when I was born. Now, what are the challenges we face as humankind at the beginning of the twenty first century? It is to ensure we have a safe and secure sustainable world; we have to tackle climate change. When I visited the flooded areas all over the country in the wake of the 2007 floods, people would come up to me and say “Mr Benn, do you think this is the result of our climate changing?” The truth is it is.

I have visited areas of famine, I have met people who have fled the village they were born and brought up in Kenya, and they pitched up outside of a town living in benders made of bent over twigs and scraps from the towns rubbish tip. One woman, babe in arms, five other children living in a small bender. Why had they come to the town? Because it had stopped raining where they were living, it stops raining where you’ve been living, you can’t grow your crops and you’re not going to stay to die of starvation.

And if the sea levels rise, think of Bangladesh. If the sea levels rise the way some scientists predict, believe me, Bangladesh is moving house. That is 140 million people moving house and they will probably try to move next door. So human beings have a great desire and urge to survive and that’s why we have a role and a responsibility to play our part.

The leadership which you as an organisation have given in flying the green flag in the Labour Party, it’s been a journey, has it not? And persuading everyone is, even in difficult economic times just as important as when times are good. And long may SERA’s success continue. Maybe some of us here will come back in twenty, thirty years’ time to celebrate fantastic achievements of the next Labour government! Keep it up.”
**CASTING NET ZERO:**
**WHY AMBITIOUS ENVIRONMENTALISM AND ‘GREENSILA ECONOMICS’ WILL BENEFIT US ALL

JAKE SUMNER

When the Labour Government passed the Climate Change Act it was ground-breaking because it legally committed successive governments to carbon reduction and set our path to the global 2015 Paris Agreement. It was also a demonstration of leadership. The Act responded to the Stern Report, which detailed the impact of climate change. Although the science was clear (and still is) the Act nevertheless required political leadership, building a consensus for action and influencing public opinion.

Since then progress has been achieved, but Britain is not on track. The targets won’t be met from 2023 onwards. This sharpens the need for renewed leadership and action today.

Time is running out. The Met Office says changes to our weather are unprecedented. We’ve seen unprecedented fires in California and the Arctic to flooding in India. In October the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change detailed the impact of climate change. Their report, released in 2022, forecasted that impacts are if anything underestimated.

It’s also a mistake to see climate actions as simply due to necessity and obligation. There is a compelling positive case for ambitious environmentalism.

Achieving ‘net zero’ - zero carbon energy, zero emission transport, zero carbon buildings and waste carbon rehabilitation, combined with advancing the natural environment and sustainability - means meeting carbon goals and bringing significant benefits. We should be confident in a comprehensive, rapid, green economic and social programme - let’s call it a ‘Greenensium’. The benefits.

So, what could we gain? Lower utility bills, affordable-to-run homes, cheaper and new possibilities for travel, improved health and wellbeing, saved lives, economic resilience and security, innovative new industries and export sectors, skilled, well-paid jobs and opportunities and investment for local communities.

Some say we can’t afford environmental change but increasingly we can’t afford not to. A credible and strong environmental programme is a credible and strong economic programme. Marrying social justice and green goals provides answers to social, political and economic challenges.

Labour’s programme is moving in this direction, with joined up policies including a commitment to net zero carbon by 2050, 60 per cent low carbon energy by 2030, community energy, retrofitting homes, a green growth industrial strategy and a Clean Air Act.

A green transformation can be secured.

When the Climate Change Act was passed, five per cent of electricity was from renewables. Despite, barriers established by the Coalition and Conservative Governments, renewables reached nearly 32 per cent of electricity output in Q2 2018. Conversely, coal was 36 per cent in Q4 2008 dropping to 1.6 per cent in Q2 2018, and for three days in a row no coal was used. Wind overtook nuclear for the first time in three months of 2018 and a windy day produced 37 per cent of electricity.

Costs are falling. Wind is Britain’s cheapest form of energy. Solar is just behind. Bloomberg New Energy Finance confirms costs will be cheaper still and a BVA study said that if the financial support for onshore wind was reintroduced capacity could grow to ase another £1.6bn off the collective electricity bill. This Government onshore wind is largely blocked, the growth of solar is falling and the Swansea tidal lagoon was axed.

Wind and solar can bring energy surpluses particularly on sunny and windy days, and enable hydrogen production. Hydrogen can be easily stored as well as heat homes and power transport, producing no emissions just pure water.

Hydrogen trains now run in Germany; they should in Britain. Scotland wants ferries to go hydrogen. Norway is building hydrogen ships. In November last year 25 per cent of global emissions. Why not maritime Britain? Hydrogen cars have been developed and tested profitably in London. It’s no wonder that the ‘hydrogen economy’ is gaining traction with Liverpool Region Mayor, Steve Rotheram, championing a major hydrogen plant in Liverpool.

There’s an electric vehicle revolution taking shape too, including bikes. Cheaper and clean transport and energy - combined with data and new manufacturing techniques such as 3D printing are changing how, what and where we produce, and goods and provide services. We’re just scratching the surface of the possibilities.

Clean energy and transport saves lives. Dirty air causes an estimated 40,000 premature deaths in England each year. The British Heart Foundation says it’s a major cause of heart attacks and strokes. We know that some of the poorest people are most affected and 2,000 schools are in poor air hotspots.

An energy transformation can change control of these resources. The growth of community energy with 300 projects across Britain, means communities own energy resources, reduce carbon, have lower bills and generate income for their areas. Producing our own renewables also means ending the fuelling of carbon regimes while our aid budget can assist communities to develop their own energy assets in some of the poorest countries.

Britain’s housing crisis needs 300,000 new homes annually. The government has built these homes will last decades. If they were net zero (insulation and renewable energy) they would use fewer resources and be cheaper to live in. Retrofitting existing housing can also bring similar benefits.

All these areas are engines of innovation, export potential and opportunities for skilled, well-paid jobs. The TUC has backed a ‘Just Transition’, ensuring people are not left behind in the low carbon future. Green can be embraced by unions. Yes, jobs will change, but it doesn’t necessarily mean fewer jobs. In the USA there are two to three times as many jobs in clean energy than fossil fuels and are among the fastest job growing sectors.

Ambitious environmentalism means a renewal for nature, biodiversity and public green space. Just as our campaigning forebears sought access to nature and the natural environment and sustainability, so we must now demand a sustainable, biodiverse countryside as quality, green spaces in towns and cities.

A boon for nature is for us too. As Mind champions, green space improves mental wellbeing, while the charity, Fields in Trust, found parks save the NHS £111m a year and generate £34bn of mental and physical wellbeing benefits.

Millions more trees should be planted, which clean the air, reduce carbon, preserve the soil and increase wellbeing benefits. We should be confident in a comprehensive, rapid, green economic and social programme.

Why aren’t we rewriting rules to reward activities that support our future not destroy it?

With a huge public response to harm from plastics, let’s seek zero waste manufacturing and urgently phase out single use plastics.

With a huge public response to harm from plastics, let’s seek zero waste manufacturing and urgently phase out single use plastics. MEPs voted to do this in EU by 2021 yet Britain simply consults. As the BBC reports, an Indonesian inventor has created biodegradable seaweed packaging. If they were net zero (insulation and renewable energy) they would use fewer resources and be cheaper to live in. Retrofitting existing housing can also bring similar benefits.

This should be the left’s ‘big idea’. A radical green economy - zero carbon energy, transport, housing, zero waste and ambitious environmentalism - offers Britain the chance for a more resourceful, wealthier, more resilient, cooperative, mobile, dynamic, innovative, contented, respected and generous. Zero can be our hero.

JAKE SUMNER Co-Chair SERA and former Labour adviser

Why aren’t we rewriting rules to reward activities that support our future not destroy it?

Why aren’t we rewriting rules to reward activities that support our future not destroy it?
The UK Climate Change Act - which is about to celebrate its 10th anniversary - was notable in many respects, not least as it was the first such legislation passed by a nation-state anywhere in the world. What was perhaps the biggest game-changer was the then Labour Government’s confident narrative that a clean economy is a strong economy.

The infectious positivity of the message has been borne out by hard facts. Even in the post-crash recession, the UK’s green economy sector quietly grew 5% a year. Stock markets may have been flat or falling, but the portfolios of green tech and related companies outperformed their peers by 3.2. Renewables were creating more jobs per joule than any other sector in the energy market.

In recent years, over 150 Fortune 500 and FTSE companies have committed themselves to operating on 100% renewable power. More than 1 million businesses swung into the green camp, and FTSE companies have committed to radical sustainability goals. In recent years, over 150 Fortune 500 and FTSE companies have committed themselves to operating on 100% renewable power. More than 1 million businesses swung into the green camp, and FTSE companies have committed to radical sustainability goals.

The conventional discourse may promise constant economic growth. But the consequences of pursuing it as if nothing has changed are that we risk irreversibly altering the planet’s climate, driving one third of the world’s species to extinction, causing losses to every year from air pollution, and leaving us with just 60 harvests before our soils run out of fertility.

By the end of this century, as much as half of the world’s landmass could be covered by drylands. By 2050, there could be as many as 200 million climate refugees in the world, creating a humanitarian crisis of potentially biblical proportions - and political and economic turmoil the like of which has never been seen before. The Pentagon assessment reports list climate as a major threat multiplier, creating fertile breeding spots for terrorist ideologies to take root and recruit. Thus the current government’s myopia isn’t simply reckless - it is arguably irresponsible and unforgivable.

A clear strategy on climate action should embrace a vision of a clean industrial revolution as a counter-strategy to austerity, and a driver of prosperity and well-being. At home and with our international partners, we should also target major emitters in a focused manner. The landmark Carbon Majors report found that a staggering 71 percent of all global warming was down to the activities of just 100 companies.

Scientists are telling us that climate change is already reducing yields and stripping nutrients from vegetables, raising serious questions over the future of food security public health around the world.

The 10th anniversary of the Climate Change Act is a fitting moment for Labour to set out a positive vision for this revolution which can create the conditions for a strong and sustainable economy that protects all life on earth.
In 2009 SERA joined a group of environmental activists to lobby Manchester City Council on their lack of practical action on Climate Change. The Agenda 21 discussions had been aspirational but lacked citizen engagement. NGO activists and local environmental businesses contributed to the complex ideas for City-wide change. At that stage, the science was not clear about local metrics for carbon reduction. One SERA member had attended the UN Climate Conference and reported back on the massive scope and independent reliability of this worldwide scientific evidence. I had designed a plan of action and called it “Manchester a Certain Future!”. Meetings took place in the Town Hall. The Leader of the Council attended every meeting, arriving on his bike. He still does. We worked in Theme Groups, chatted up promises and stressed the urgency of each measure. The Council was already facing huge cuts from central government and so became increasingly difficult to service these meetings.

The role of the NGO sector quickly became essential. Partnerships became an ALMO, housed in a local eco architect’s office. Manchester Climate Change Agency was an ALMO, housed in a local eco architect’s office. Manchester Climate Change Agency became an ALMO, housed in a local eco architect’s office. Partnerships became increasingly important. The Council updated its plans at yearly assemblies.

From this citizen’s initiative grew the Carbon Literacy project, a comprehensive way of training teachers and staff in a whole range of organisations. The project, now run by Cooler, grew to work beyond the City to all the 10 Greater Manchester Boroughs. One of Cooler’s aims was to get carbon reduction messages out to ordinary members of the public. They held ‘carbon classrooms’ in shopping centres, led by university students and by children. These young people aged between 8 and 14 came from local Eco Schools, devising games so that adults could ask questions and learn. This has grown into the extensive intergenerational learning project now run in other public spaces by Manchester’s Education Network www.meen.org.uk

In 2012 growing the local economy remained a Council priority. Ease of transport was seen as essential. Adult Education, including University, was central to that meeting. Many later trained in carbon literacy. Trades Unions such as Unison, UCU, FBfU and The Bakers and Allied Food Workers Union were keen, but had access only to on-line materials. New Universities came forward through the Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges (EAUC), the Greener Jobs Alliance and the National Union of Students. Prof Kevin Anderson from the Tyndall Centre, University of Manchester, took the message of the Carbon crisis to local Councillors and public forums.

In 2015 SERA Manchester members and other FOE activists rode into Paris for the Conference of the Peoples COP 21. We met thousands of other activists from all over the world in social gatherings and demonstrations around the Eiffel Tower and the Champs Elysee. A month later, in Jan 2016, after the Paris Agreement was signed, Manchester committed to become a ZERO Carbon City before 2050. It all felt heroic. But it was far from public knowledge. We were a small band of mostly white middle class activists who lived in a bubble. Then Michael Gove MP, then Secretary of State for Education, shrank the Secondary Curriculum, editing climate change except from all but Geography, a specialist choice of study, and fragmented across Science curricula. Primary Eco Clubs were being cut for lack of funding. In 2009 Labour had funded a Sustainable Schools strategy and introduced a national Inspection Framework for Sustainability across the whole school. This was scrapped (except in Scotland, where it still flourishes) We now lacked any public education strategy.

Adult Education, including University, was central to that meeting. Many later trained in carbon literacy. Trades Unions such as Unison, UCU, FBfU and The Bakers and Allied Food Workers Union were keen, but had access only to on-line materials. New Universities came forward through the Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges (EAUC), the Greener Jobs Alliance and the National Union of Students. Prof Kevin Anderson from the Tyndall Centre, University of Manchester, took the message of the Carbon crisis to local Councillors and public forums.

In 2016 we discovered we had a new City Region structure and elections for Greater Manchester Mayor. ManchesterSERA hosted a Green Gathering inviting candidates to meet environmental activists from the proposed expanded Greater Manchester Constituency. Andy Burnham came to that meeting. There were passionate and very well informed contributions, round tables and discussions. When he won that election, he appointed an experienced civil servant to lead on green issues and called up help from the partners who had met him at that event. He also called upon the Tyndall Centre’s expert advice. We all contributed to his first Green Summit in March 2018. SERA was invited on to the Steering Group to support change through the Labour Movement, Trades Unions and through CLP Environmental Officers and Ward and Constituency mechanisms. Green Summit II will take place in March 2019.

In 2018 Cllr Angeliki Stogia, Manchester City Council Executive Member for Environment Planning and Transport, faces the challenge head on. Her policy paper “Playing our Full Part: How Manchester’s residents and businesses can benefit from ambitious action on Climate Change.” The aim: to become Carbon neutral by 2038. She convinced Councillors to adopt a plan to change the city’s behaviour in relation to food waste, energy efficiency, transport, and new green investment strategies. “This goes right at the heart of what we are in politics for: to improve social equality, to promote social justice, to protect those on low incomes, to lift people out of poverty; people that live in disadvantaged areas, and live on lower incomes usually have to bear the brunt of pollution, food and fuel poverty. Our plan has to highlight how it underpins existing Council strategies, it’s not just about how we run our economy. It is why about how we deliver our social policies.”

Some sceptical local politicians associate environmental activism with language which excludes a large proportion of the community. What are ‘fossil fuels, carbon budgets?’ Plain language and local relevance was essential. People had already grasped the urgency of the poor air quality and see the impact on the health of older people and children, so that was a good place to start, calling for Clean Air Zones. She pointed out that we had been able to change smoking habits by using health evidence, so it will be possible to show how the Tyndall Centre’s work can only be stopped if everybody takes responsibility.” While Manchester City Council and its Combined Authorities are looking at the scale of the problem and potential solutions, we all need to play our part. We need to know what support that the government will give; vehicle scrappage; upgrade measures; What is Highways England going to do? We need to show ordinary citizens how we can all breathe cleaner air!

The complex science of Carbon Budgets has to be connected to other more immediate issues, single use plastic waste, air quality outside schools.
SERO makes the case for social justice and environmental progress.

For New Ground’s special ten years of the Climate Change Act edition with Barry Gardiner MP, Mayor of Bristol Marvin Rees, Lord Andrew Adonis, Hilary Benn MP & many more.

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