



NEW GROUND AUTUMN 2015
Campaigning For Environmental Change & Social Justice

CHALLENGING TIMES FOR *CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE NATURAL WORLD*

SARAH BOYACK MSP

*Labour Leading on Climate
Change in Scotland*

**CLLR ALAN CLARK,
NOTTINGHAM**

*A New Age of
Municipal Energy?*

DAVE PRENTIS, UNISON

Just Transition to a Low Carbon Economy

Welcome to our Autumn edition of New Ground.

It has been long summer for the environment since David Cameron was re-elected as head of the first majority Conservative government since 1992. Campaigners, business leaders, trade unions and community groups have all been up in arms about the speed in which the new Conservative ministerial team have dismantled much of what has delivered progress on carbon reduction, renewables and investment in the green economy.

As the world approaches the latest COP negotiations in Paris, we need a bolder voice for climate action. In September, the latest Ernst & Young report saw the UK drop out of the top 10 for places to invest in renewable energy for the first time. The report declared that the government's approach "sentences the UK renewables sector to death by a thousand cuts."

The case for environmental progress and social justice goes unanswered by this government. The Labour Party is still finding its feet after

a severe defeat in the General Election, although the signs are positive on the environment with the appointment of Lisa Nandy MP as Shadow Energy Secretary and Kerry McCarthy MP as Shadow Defra Secretary. SERA champions Barry Gardiner MP and Alan Whitehead are now both in the Shadow Energy team adding depth and knowledge for Labour's fight back.

This edition of New Ground looks at the big challenges facing the environment over the next five years. And there are reasons to be cheerful. Climate leadership comes in all forms – much of it covered in this issue – with local government, trade unionists and leaders in our devolved nations taking a lead on energy and climate issues.

Andrew

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ABOUT

New Ground is published by SERA, Labour's environment campaign www.sera.org.uk
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The views expressed in New Ground are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the editor, SERA its executive or its members.

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COMMUNITY NEWS AND ACTION

NEWS

LONDON FOCUS

CLIMATE ADAPTION

Groundwork London and Hammersmith and Fulham Council have been working with local residents to design and implement measures for climate change adaptation on three housing estates in west London. The design competition aims to encourage housing providers, designers and local communities to redesign their own green spaces so they can effectively respond to natural events such as flooding and heatwaves. There is a chance to win up to £1000 with a day of expert advice to help put ideas into action.



MAKE GROW DO IN EAST LONDON

A new urban food growing network will be taking place in the boroughs surrounding Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Newham and Waltham Forest. Groundwork London are working in conjunction with food community groups to facilitate the sharing of knowledge, skills, best practice, ideas and produce. There is a programme of free activities, events and workshops throughout 2015 for anyone wanting to get involved, ranging from foraging to growing.



WASTE PREVENTION PROJECT

EcoActive are offering a long term project to 14 schools across North London with programmes starting this September for KS1 and KS2 children. It has been funded by the North London Waste Authority and the programme will involve workshops with a focus on food waste reduction and other teaching resources.



MERTON COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

SUSTAINABLE MERTON

A new project supported by partners including Merton Council and the Institute of Sustainability will involve training recruited champions to provide their communities with advice on energy efficiency and water conservation as well as other sustainability issues.

The purpose is to allow people interested in caring for the environment to be actively involved in the borough and encourage others to do their bit.

MERTON'S MEGA RECYCLE

Labour-run Merton Council is taking forward a programme to encourage residents to increase their recycling rate to more than 42.5% by 2016. Many homes have received Mega Recycle packages which includes a registration form and a sticker to remind them what to recycle.

The scheme has incentives for participants such as prize draws and prizes for primary schools and communities who sign up.

In addition, the council has produced a leader board so participants can track their progress over time.



LONDON FOCUS

THE COMMUNITY BENCH PROJECT

Small Works, a social enterprise and community hub, are holding up-cycling workshops this August for the Priory Green Estate community in Kings Cross. These workshops are creative and skills based and run by experienced artists and community organisers.

ALBION PARADE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The project is a partnership between the London borough of Hackney and Groundwork London with the aim to create a new layout for the open space and a more contemporary planting scheme. There is a plan to open up the space to market stalls and other community events on a regular basis supported by local residents, schools and businesses.

GROUNDWORK ENERGY GARDEN

50 London overground stations will be transformed into community Energy Gardens. The gardens will incorporate food growing plots and solar panels providing on-site renewable energy. This will combine community gardens with sustainable energy generation to help to create greener and better neighbourhoods. The project will provide paid horticulture apprenticeships for young people and other training opportunities.



Groundwork Energy Gardens

PITFIELD STREET RECLAIMED

Part of Pitfield Street in Hoxton has been transformed into a parklet providing people with a place to sit, relax and securely park their bikes. It has bike stands, a decking area with benches and planters of grasses and herbs, adding a splash of nature to the bicycle route, as well as solar-powered lighting. This is thanks to a joint project by Sustrans, London Borough of Hackney and Cyclehoop.

It has recently been moved to a new location within Hackney to allow the street to be fully pedestrianised as part of the construction of the new Cycle Superhighway 1. It was designed to help change the way people think about public space and to create green sanctuaries in urban environments which will benefit the whole community and local businesses. Similar installations are expected more widely across London and the UK in the future.



LSX PROJECTS

LONDON
FOCUS

COP21 CAMPAIGN

LSx wants Londoners to **#pledge4ldn** on lifestyle changes which reduce carbon emissions and make an impact on climate change. In return LSx will call on the Mayor to commit to making positive changes to help London transition to a greener city.

LSx have compiled a list of pledges that people can choose from based on water, waste, energy, pollution and biodiversity. Alternatively people create their own pledge and add their own voice to the discussion to making London a more sustainable and greener city.



THE PLEDGES WILL BE TAKEN TO THE MAYOR DIRECTLY AT THE MAYOR'S QUESTION TIME ON NOVEMBER 18TH 2015. **HERE'S HOW TO GET INVOLVED:**



1. Create a #pledge4ldn asking @MayorofLondon to do something to make London more green
2. Tweet, Post & Share with friends and family
3. Meet us at City Hall to present pledges to @MayorofLondon ahead of his trip to Paris for #COP21
4. Tweet @MayorofLondon I've kept my pledge!
5. Follow #COP21

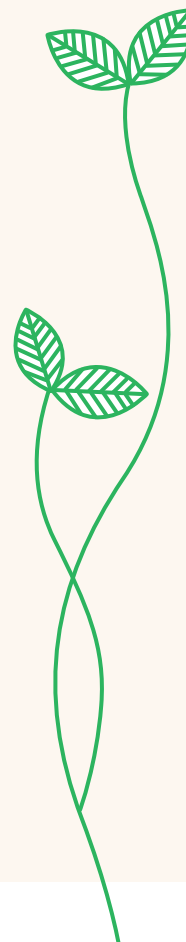
GREEN MOSQUES

A project working with the Muslim populations of Tower Hamlets, Newham, Waltham Forest, Greenwich and Enfield aims to tackle fuel poverty by promoting energy efficiency across these fuel poor and ethnically diverse boroughs. Through social action and volunteering, it uses Islamic values to engage people and their networks to create new, more sustainable living.

Overall successes include: increasing the confidence, awareness and ability of people to improve home energy efficiency; participants achieving a better understanding of sustainable living; contributing to reducing energy consumption, social isolation and fuel poverty; and

encouraging social action through volunteering in the community. The project involved training sessions, workshops, celebration events and meetings.

Fifty-seven homes benefited from retrofits with collective annual savings of £2,419 or £42 per household and anticipated CO₂e savings of 17 tonnes.





CHANGING BRISTOL'S STREETS

Sustrans is working with 14 Neighbourhood Partnership areas as well as Bristol city centre to transform the streets through the 'Our Street Pockets' project in conjunction with Bristol Green Capital. The aim is to convert a couple of car parking spaces into places to sit, socialise or play to make the street greener and more active. This will help to change the character of the street and encourage neighbours to communicate with one another. Sustrans will provide training and resources for applicants, help them to trial their street pocket and provide a starting contribution of approximately £800. The streets trials have already begun with the aim of securing permanent change later this year.

ONE TREE PER CHILD

A scheme launched in February in partnership with Bristol City Council to enable all 36,000 children attending primary school in Bristol to plant at least one tree, has reached 10,000 trees planted. A further 26,000 will be planted by March 2016. The costs of the trees and equipment are covered by the council so the scheme is free of charge for schools to participate in.

The council are also offering learning materials to supplement the national curriculum, deliver school assemblies and send a tree expert to the school to teach the children about trees.

WARM UP BRISTOL

Launched in October 2014 by the Energy Service a city-wide initiative is making homes warmer and healthier places to live across Bristol. It is part of the Green Deal scheme and will provide home improvement services such as solid wall insulation and draught proofing with grant funding available for some measures. Advisors from Climate Energy will be visiting every home in the city to talk to residents about what's on offer.

SOLAR PV PROGRAMME

A 4-year £47 million PV programme was launched in 2013 by the Energy Service to install solar panels on the council's own, public sector and commercial buildings. One successful installation was on the roof of St Michael's Hospital, Kingsdown which is a 50kW system including 166 panels.

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SERA ROUND-UP

JAKE SUMNER



SERA ROUND-UP AT LABOUR CONFERENCE

Two highlights at this year's Labour conference were the SERA rally and the Sustainability Hub/SERA reception.

The fourth SERA rally had its biggest line up ever with a series of powerful speeches championing action on climate change. Speakers included London Mayoral Candidate Sadiq Khan, new DEFRA Shadow Secretary, Kerry McCarthy and Environmental Audit Select Committee Chair, Huw Irranca Davies. His committee was set up by the last Labour government to audit performance and spending against sustainability policy

and action across government departments and public bodies.

DfT Shadow Ministers Jonny Reynolds and Daniel Zeichner, DECC Shadow Minister Barry Gardiner, SE England MEP Anneliese Dodds, former Deputy Leadership candidate Stella Creasy, Aslef General Secretary Mick Whelan, energy campaigner and CEO of Repowering London Agamemnon Otero and Plymouth councillor Chris Penberthy completed the line-up.

The contributions included Sadiq outlining his green vision for London with the announcement of his backing for the capital to be the first city National Park. Stella talked about people-centred

action, and Chris highlighted what Plymouth has been achieving including community energy and organic and local school meals delivered through a newly formed co-operative.

Several attendees wanted to get more involved following the rally and the executive team will be taking this forward.

The popular Sustainability/ SERA reception was held on the night of conference and attendees heard speeches from new DECC Shadow Secretary Lisa Nandy, DECC Shadow Minister, Alan Whitehead and SERA member and MP for Brentford & Isleworth, Ruth Cadbury.



London Mayoral Candidate
Sadiq Khan



Jonny Reynolds with rally Chair and
SERA Exec member Jake Sumner



Exec member Jake Sumner
Kerry McCarthy and Anneliese Dodds

THE GREEN VOTE IN 2015: *What Happened to the Green Surge?*

LEWIS BASTON

THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 2015 DID NOT EXACTLY SHOW 'GREEN SURGE'.

The rise in support for the Green Party was one of the second-tier stories of the election, lagging in importance behind the SNP landslide in Scotland, the collapse of the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives' strong results in the marginal seats where they were fighting Labour. The Greens had quite a good election, even if it did not match up to the 'surge' talk. Their UK vote share was **3.8 per cent** (their previous best results were around 1 per cent in 2005 and 2010); and they achieved 4.2 per cent in England. Despite fighting on a broader front than ever before, their average share of the vote was up and the number of constituencies with a Green Party vote worthy of some note was higher than ever before.

GREEN PARTY PERFORMANCE	2005	2010	2015
Seats uncontested (GB)	429	301	64
Seats contested (GB)	203	331	568
Share in contested seats (GB) %	3.3	1.8	4.3
Deposits lost (GB)	178	324	439
Seats won	0	1	1
Second places	1	0	4

There are two related phenomena going on. First, the base level of the Green vote has risen everywhere. In 2010, 258 Green candidates polled worse than 2 per cent of the vote, while only 34 suffered this fate in 2015 – of which 11 were in Scotland where the Greens were flattened by the SNP steamroller, just like everyone else. The bulk of these constituencies, in England, Scotland and Wales, were in white working-class areas. The Greens get 3-4 per cent of the vote in most constituencies just by standing. Their organisational capacity has improved in many areas to such an extent that standing a parliamentary candidate, and often a slate of local election candidates, was entirely possible for them.

The second facet of the Green performance is their ability to translate a broad but shallow pool of support into local successes by targeting. Although on a national level their 2010 vote was very poor, they achieved their principle

objective of getting Caroline Lucas elected in Brighton Pavilion. While they consolidated their hold on this constituency in 2015, only one other seat emerged as a contender for future victory – Bristol West, where they won 26.8 per cent of the vote. Their result in Norwich South, their best prospect on the 2010 figures, was disappointing, particularly as some of their best results elsewhere were in other constituencies where the Lib Dem vote was disintegrating, such as Bath and Isle of Wight.

They were a very long way behind Labour in the other three seats where they came second (Liverpool Riverside, Manchester Gorton, and Sheffield Central). While the Greens can potentially save deposits in many places, getting significantly above 10 per cent requires some quite extreme 'Latin Quarter' demographics, particularly large numbers of students and liberal professionals. Under current patterns, the number of seats

where they can break through and win under First Past the Post in a general election is very limited (just as it is for UKIP). They may, depending on how the politics of this parliament plays out, be viable in some by-elections.

The Green shoots, as we should perhaps call the 2015 vote instead of a surge, did not do much damage to Labour. There are two seats (Brighton Kemptown and Plymouth Sutton & Devonport) where above-average Green votes may have denied Labour the seat, and a handful – probably six - marginal Conservative-held seats where a run-of-the-mill Green vote may have made the difference. Particularly galling for green-minded Labour supporters would be Derby North, where a tiny sliver of Green support would have saved one of Labour's greenest MPs, Chris Williamson. Conversely, the absence of Greens in two target seats Labour won (City of Chester, Wirral West) probably put Labour in.

SEATS WHERE THE GREEN VOTE WAS LARGER THAN THE TORY MAJORITY OVER LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE MAJORITY	GREEN VOTE	NET % OF GREEN VOTE REQUIRED TO SWITCH SEAT TO LAB
Derby North	41	1,618	2.5%
Croydon Central	165	1,454	11.3%
Plymouth Sutton & Devonport	523	3,401	15.4%
Brighton Kemptown	690	3,187	21.7%
Bury North	378	1,141	33.1%
Morley & Outwood	422	1,264	33.4%
Weaver Vale	806	1,183	68.1%
Telford	730	930	78.5%

The Greens tend to perform better in local elections, benefitting (in off-years) from differential turnout and in all years from voters' greater willingness to consider them in local elections than for parliament. The differences in some constituencies were notable:

THE GREEN SHOOTS, AS WE SHOULD PERHAPS CALL THE 2015 VOTE INSTEAD OF A SURGE

GREEN PARTY VOTE IN SELECTED CONSTITUENCIES %	GENERAL ELECTION	LOCAL ELECTIONS
Bristol West	26.8	39.6
Brighton Pavilion	41.8	34.7
Sheffield Central	15.8	30.3
Norwich South	13.9	27.3
Bath	11.9	20.9
Meriden	4.1	18.0
Hove	6.8	17.7
Brighton Kemptown	7.0	16.9
Cambridge	7.9	16.8
Reading East	6.4	12.9

This suggests that the potential Green vote reaches considerably beyond the recorded General Election vote in many areas; there were clearly a significant group of electors who vote Green locally and tended to vote Labour (or sometimes Lib Dem) in the general election. Labour owes several seats to them, including Hove, Bristol West and probably Cambridge. It is worth noting that while Caroline Lucas ran considerably ahead of her council running mates, the Greens were still a nose ahead in Pavilion and polled reasonably in Hove and Kemptown, despite the poor performance of the Green-run Brighton & Hove council since 2011 and the defeat of most of the council group.

Labour clearly lost some red-greens in 2005 over Iraq, but many of them seemed to rally to the party in 2010. The 2015 result showed some weakening, but the local elections show the possible scale of the risk of further losses of support. Keeping red-green voters on-side for Labour in future elections depends on offering both the hope of a Labour victory (to make tactical considerations matter in their general election vote) and also policies that they find attractive enough to differentiate the party from the Conservatives, or indeed from a possible Lib Dem revival. The Green factor just adds to the complexity of assembling an electoral coalition of support that produces anything like a majority in the current political environment.



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IT'S THE ENVIRONMENT, *STUPID*

JAKE SUMNER

MOST LONDONERS FROM INNER TO OUTER LONDON NOW SAY ACTION IS URGENTLY NEEDED ON CLIMATE CHANGE ACCORDING TO A RECENT ICM SURVEY FOR THE HERE NOW CLIMATE CAMPAIGN.

It is a tipping point and supports what we in SERA have been saying. It's the environment, stupid - to update a line from a former US President. Action is not a nice to have but a necessity.

It was the central theme of our SERA rally at conference. One speaker, Barry Gardiner MP, a DECC team Shadow Minister, called the failures to act on climate change an 'injustice.' It is why SERA members will be on the Climate Change march in November ahead of the talks in Paris.

Labour's London Mayoral candidate, Sadiq Khan's recognises this too. His first announcements include a major extension of the ultra-low emissions zone, electric buses as standard, comprehensive cycle lanes and diverting London's pension fund from fossil fuel investments.

These policies aren't appealing to a radical fringe, they are the centre

ground. It is where Londoners are. It is Sadiq Khan not George Osborne and David Cameron staking out the new centre.

The Tories are seriously out of step. They've called low carbon measures 'green crap', absurdly ripping up support for green energy programmes and threatening schemes like Bannister House, a co-operative energy project in Hackney bringing benefits in the pocket and the environment. Their obsession with cuts is seeing funding axed for the world renowned Kew Gardens, a centre for horticultural and environmental practice. Tory MPs even deny the science on climate change. Their heads are in the sand.

Londoners want a liveable city now and in the years ahead.

They want action on air pollution which causes an estimated 10,000 premature deaths a year in the capital. They want good and affordable public transport. Why are parks so popular? Why is there a community gardening a growing rival across London? It is because nature is integral to our well-being. Greener energy not

only makes environmental sense it makes economic sense. As the Independent recently reported, on-shore wind is now the cheapest form of energy. And we all know we can't bury the problem of our waste.

When Labour ran City Hall bold decisions were taken. The world leading congestion charge was introduced. Public transport investment, supported by the Labour Government, shot up. Projects like Crossrail, which I worked on, got the green light. The cycle-hire scheme was in fact begun under Ken Livingstone.

London now needs a renewal of urgency, a renewal of mission to make our city liveable, harnessing new technologies and business innovation.

We know huge amounts of new housing are essential. The capital has cutting edge university research and is a centre for architectural practice. So why not make these homes the most sustainably designed and built, creating long term savings in utility bills? Let's make green roofs and walls standard, green spaces integral.

FEATURE

We need to back London as the first city National Park, but also support local growing communities in all areas, like the one I've helped develop where I live in Camden Town.

Let's commit to planting large urban fruit orchards - trees aren't just attractive they improve air quality.

Let's develop our public transport system. Instead of selling off Transport for London (TfL) as Tories suggest, use it to provide affordable rental housing and some of this income can be reinvested in transport. Let's have a gear change in cycling provision, not just superhighways but an interconnected web with parking facilities integrated into streetscape and building design.

We need to scale community energy networks - sustainable energy, saving carbon and pounds in the pocket. Why not enable TfL, London's largest energy user, to become a sustainable energy leader?

With London's population reaching 8.6 million, bigger than half of European countries and an economy nearly the same size as Poland's - the capital has scale to create a momentum of environmental change. It can be a global leader.

The green path can be one of rising living standards and attractive places to live. Londoners want this optimistic future. That's why we need to elect Sadiq Khan, a Labour Mayor who will share and champion this ambition.

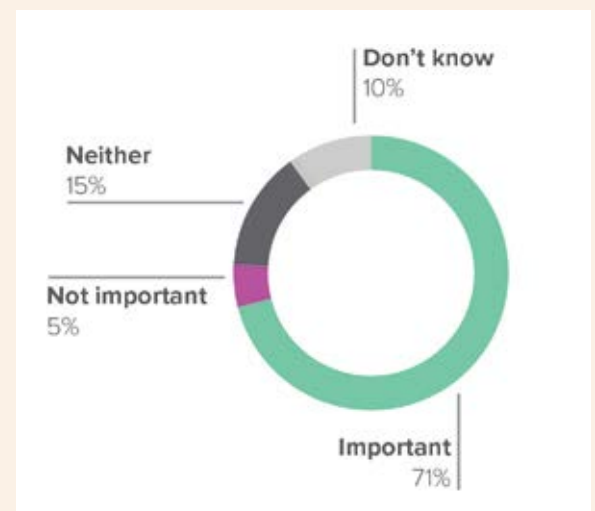


JAKE SUMNER, is a member of the SERA Executive, former Labour adviser and councillor and is a trustee of a community charity

ICM QUESTION TO LONDONERS

HOW IMPORTANT DO YOU THINK IT IS THAT THE NEXT MAYOR OF LONDON TAKES STEPS TO TACKLE AIR POLLUTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE BY REDUCING LONDON'S DEPENDENCY ON FOSSIL FUELS THROUGH GREATER USE OF CLEAN ENERGY?

Chart reproduced with permission from the Here Now campaign



INTRODUCING LABOUR'S NEW *Environment Team*



FOLLOWING THE ELECTION OF JEREMEY CORBYN AS LEADER OF THE LABOUR PARTY, THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF CHANGES TO LABOUR'S FRONTBENCH TEAMS IN THE KEY ENVIRONMENTAL BRIEFS.

Many have been long standing SERA members. SERA will be working with the team on climate change campaigning and supporting new policy thinking on the environment and low carbon economy.

ENERGY & CLIMATE CHANGE

Lisa Nandy MP (Shadow Secretary)
Barry Gardiner MP
Alan Whitehead MP
Clive Lewis MP
Bryony Worthington (Lords)
John Suenson-Taylor (Lords;
joint with DEFRA)

TRANSPORT

Lilian Greenwood MP
(Shadow Secretary)
Richard Burden MP
Jonathan Reynolds MP
Daniel Zeichner MP
Richard Rosser (Lords)

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD & RURAL AFFAIRS

Kerry McCarthy MP
(Shadow Secretary)
Alex Cunningham MP
Nick Smith MP
Maggie Jones (Lords)
John Suenson-Taylor (Lords)

Key environmental members in the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales

WELSH ASSEMBLY CABINET MEMBERS

Edwina Hart AM, Minister for
Economy, Science and Transport
Carl Sargeant AM, Minister
for Natural Resources

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

Environmental Justice Shadow team
Sarah Boyack MSP, spokesperson
Claudia Beamish MSP
David Stewart MSP



Lilian Greenwood MP



Lisa Nandy MP

CLIMATE CHANGE - BEHAVIOUR CHANGE:

Can we Learn from our Children?

LYDIA MERYLL

TWO TRADE UNIONS HAVE AGREED TO SUPPORT AN INTER-GENERATIONAL PROJECT IN GREATER MANCHESTER, WHERE THE ADULT LEARNING IS LED BY CHILDREN.

The National Union of Teachers has seen the wisdom of encouraging young people as young as 8 to work out ways of explaining what they know about dangerous carbon emissions and pollution to adults and challenging them to DO something about the behaviours and lifestyle choices which are threatening to push the global temperature up beyond 2°C.

Union Learn and Unison are working with members to get the facts across, but when small children approach you in the Arndale Centre and ask you to do a Climate Change Quiz, it is arresting, surprising, out of the normal context of power from on high in a Classroom. Adults who took part in the

Carbon Classroom in Manchester Arndale Centre included the new MP for Withington, Jeff Smith MP and Lucy Powell MP who now leads the Shadow Cabinet Team on Education. Jeff got several of the questions wrong! The young people were forgiving. They are looking for more effective ways of getting the message across.

Children know that world leaders, such as Pope Francis are convinced that "Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day," His encyclical letter on care for creation in June this year was in line with similar warnings by Barack Obama in ... and now in October, the Governor of the Bank of England is also warning Lloyds that this is an insurance risk too far...

The Pope insists that, "Every effort to protect and improve our world entails profound changes in lifestyles, models of production and consumption, and the established structures of power which today govern societies." He thinks this is the duty of politicians to achieve, but for the Eco Champions with whom this small NGO in Manchester have been working, it needs EVERYBODY to think about it NOW. "These people have been around for 50 years! Why don't they know about this?", one of them asked.

LYDIA MERYLL is a member of SERA's executive and involved in a number of environment campaigns in the North West & Manchester.

CLIMATE LEADERSHIP: *Rethinking our Energy Infrastructure*

MELANIE SMALLMAN & ANDREW PAKES

THE SOLAR INDUSTRY HAS BEEN HIT HARD BY THE GOVERNMENT'S CUTS TO FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO RENEWABLES – THE ONE INDUSTRY THAT BUCKED THE LAST RECESSION – HARMING JOBS, INVESTMENT PLANS, FUTURE ENERGY BILLS AND OUR CLIMATE.

Over 1,000 redundancy notices have been issued so far this autumn. The TUC estimates at 27,000 more jobs in the renewables sector are at risk.

In a short few years the UK has gone from a world leader on climate leadership to a country on the brink of squandering its early advantages. Despite the economic crash, the UK led the world with the first Climate Change Act (2008), an ambitious target to cut emissions by 80 per cent by 2050 and a measurable process to get there. And there are nearly 1 million people employed in green industries today.

Yet instead of realising this potential, the first months of the new Conservative government have been characterised by cuts to existing financial support, including a planned 82 per cent cut in the Feed-in-Tariff for renewables, coupled with clear support to oil-based industries like fracking. Ministers are dismantling the policy apparatus on renewables that has been in place since Ed Miliband became the first Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change in 2007. The durable mix of subsidy and financial support for new technologies

under Miliband, Huhne and Davey is over. The government is clear about the role of gas as a transition and on standing by new nuclear, but beyond that policy is absent.

As TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady commented on the launch of their recent Green Collar Nation report, jointly with Greenpeace, "The UK has the potential to be a world leader in low-carbon manufacturing. But this won't be achieved by slashing support for renewable energy... Ministers should be learning from the likes of Germany, and getting behind the green economy. This is the way to create the high-quality jobs and apprenticeships we need to boost productivity."

So what should be done? The TUC calls for a more ambitious plan for clean technology apprenticeships, to provide support for business and households to become more energy efficient and to develop a long-term investment strategy. It is an approach shared by business and unions. CBI Director General John Cridland described the green economy as "an emerging market in its own right, brimming with opportunity" but warned that the government "risks sending a worrying sign to businesses." And it's also a lesson that others around the world are quickly learning – many policy analysts believe that at least part of the recent and dramatic fall in oil prices is a result of China's

increased reliance on renewables.

But in order to have an energy policy that addresses the UK's long-term energy needs, to attract investment and achieve the global framework to manage carbon reductions, we also need to rethink our energy infrastructure. Big is not always better. Smarter technology, reforming our distribution networks and giving communities control over their energy has the potential to transform the energy market – to the benefit of the consumer and climate. In Germany, just 5 per cent of the renewables installed are owned by the big utilities. The new devolution agenda should incentivise more towns and cities to follow the Nottingham example where the city council has recently established its own energy company (Robin Hood Energy) as an alternative to the big six players. Lisa Nandy, Labour's new Shadow Energy Secretary, got it right in continuing Labour's commitment to community and cooperative energy, when she said at the Labour party conference in September that we need "secure, affordable energy, designed, built and owned by the people... drawing on inspiration from around the world."

MELANIE SMALLMAN is currently co-chair of SERA and ANDREW PAKES is a former chair.

A CHAMPION FOR *the Natural World*

KERRY MCCARTHY MP

AS THE SPEECH MADE BY THE ENVIRONMENT SECRETARY, LIZ TRUSS, AT THIS YEAR'S TORY CONFERENCE SHOWED, HER FOCUS REMAINS VERY MUCH ON THE BUSINESS SIDE OF FOOD AND FARMING, AND THE NEED TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY, INNOVATION AND EXPORTS.

This is all well and good, but there is much more to her brief, and other issues to which she should also be devoting her attention.

My first challenge to her would be to face up to the problem of air pollution and its impact on public health: heart attacks, strokes, lung cancer and respiratory disease, leading to an estimated 50,000 early deaths a year.

After being taken to court by Client Earth and ordered by the UK Supreme Court in April to bring forward plans to clean up our air 'as soon as possible', Defra did launch a half-hearted consultation on air quality. It proposes devolving

responsibility to local authorities, but with no new powers or money attached. And Liz Truss has had nothing to say about the Volkswagen scandal since it was first revealed.

We know that tackling air pollution is a matter of social justice, falling most heavily on the poorest, who live along the busiest roads, whose children are growing up with impaired lungs. It should be much higher up the Defra agenda.

The Government is due back in court next month to be forced to face up to its responsibilities again, this time over its failure to protect some of our most important rivers and lakes from agricultural pollution. Their preference for a voluntary approach won't meet our legal obligations, and has meant we're far from the "polluter-pays" principle for the cost of clean water.

The Government has also backtracked on the pre-election promise it made during the passage through parliament

of the Infrastructure Bill not to allow fracking in water protection zones, as well as some of our most important wildlife sites and even our national parks. Again, this is something on which Labour is determined to hold them to account.

And our seas also need protection, from over-fishing, environmental degradation and pollution. The last Government reneged on ambitious plans for an ecologically-coherent network of 127 marine protected areas around UK shores, and has so far designated only 27, with the next tranche expected early next year. It is clear that this will not be enough to restore dwindling fish stocks and to allow the marine environment to recover.

We know that Defra ministers are separately working on two 25 year plans, one on food and farming, and the other on biodiversity. But the two should be very much inter-connected. To take just one example: the decline in pollinators, and the use of neonicotinoid

WE ALSO NEED TO MOVE TOWARDS A MORE RESOURCE-EFFICIENT SOCIETY

pesticides in farming. The Government effectively gagged its independent advisory body in lifting the EU ban on neonicotinoids, despite clear evidence of their harm to bees, but not much evidence of their claimed benefits to crop yield.

And on food, the Government hasn't learnt the lessons from the horsemeat scandal to stop it from happening again. The changes the last Government instituted to the Food Standards Agency has fundamentally weakened its ability stop food fraud and improve safety.

We need a food and farming policy fit for the 21st century, which meets wider environmental and public health goods; this is something to focus on when it comes to the review in 2016-17 of EU farming subsidies.

We also need to move towards a more resource-efficient society, to address the challenge of natural resource depletion. As Labour's 2015 Manifesto recognised,

this also presents considerable economic opportunities. The EC publishes what I hope will be an ambitious circular economy package in December, which we can then build upon.

Finally, whether the referendum on our continued membership of the European Union comes in 2016 or 2017, we need to start making the pro-European case now. Much of the progress that has been made on environmental protection, clean air and water, animal welfare, food standards and much more within the Defra brief has been as a result of our membership of the EU. We need to ensure that these issues are very much at the forefront of the Labour Yes campaign.

KERRY MCCARTHY MP
Shadow Secretary of State
for the Environment,
Food & Rural Affairs.
@kerrympp



WHAT WOULD SUCCESS LOOK LIKE *at the Paris Climate Summit?*

JOSS GARMAN

DECEMBER'S PARIS SUMMIT WILL NOT SOLVE CLIMATE CHANGE. BUT THE RESULT OF THE PLEDGES COUNTRIES HAVE ALREADY MADE THROUGH THIS UN PROCESS MEANS THAT THE GLOBAL CARBON POLLUTION CURVE SHOULD AT LEAST BEGIN TO BEND IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. ESTABLISHING THE CONFIDENCE AND CONDITIONS REQUIRED TO ENABLE EACH COUNTRY TO DO MORE THAN IT WOULD DO OTHERWISE IS WHAT THESE TALKS ARE ALL ABOUT.

For the conclusions of the Paris conference to be seen as credible, at the very least leaders still need to clarify that their shared goal is to phase out unabated fossil fuel use entirely within the next century.

The gap between this extraordinarily challenging aim and what the world

is likely to agree to in the short to medium term means that it will also be crucial that leaders also decide upon a means by which collective ambition can be ramped up in future – until the job is done and climate safety is secured.

This will require new measures that will align international aid and private financial flows with these objectives, and stop investments into dirty energy infrastructure that could otherwise put these aspirations beyond reach.

The draft UN text for Paris contains the necessary clauses that, if agreed, could secure precisely this kind of package. G7 leaders recently supported a total phasing out of all unabated fossil fuel use over the course of this century. Some emerging economy leaders, such as President Rousseff of Brazil, have offered

their support to this goal too.

If in Paris other world leaders were to sign up to this ultimate objective it would provide a landmark in the talks.

The US and many African and Latin American countries are advocating a mechanism that would require each party to the agreement to revisit and resubmit its national plans to the UN every five years. This could draw regular and worldwide attention to the climate ambition deficit.

As the cost of clean technologies continues to fall, and as technology improvements make deeper carbon reductions increasingly feasible and affordable, this sort of approach would provide a regular opportunity to capture this increased potential and ratchet up the international effort over time.

Of course, everybody also wants the agreement to give confidence that countries will deliver what they promise. The US won't do anything without China taking verifiable steps, and vice versa; similarly, climate policy advocates here in Britain will be all too familiar with those critics who have long argued that our efforts are pointless unless we can know that more is happening in the 'G2'.

For these reasons, clinching agreement on a stronger set of common rules for how to account for different kinds of greenhouse gas pollution and how to check that emission reductions are actually happening will be essential for the deal to have real integrity.

Without rules like these it could prove very difficult, even impossible, to compare one country's climate commitments to another's, or to compare the world's collective effort against what is required.

Finally, if developing countries are to avoid the polluting growth pathway that industrialised countries have historically followed – a pathway based on deforestation and the burning of polluting fuels like oil coal and gas – then aid flows will need to support cleaner development opportunities, as well as adaptation activities such as the construction of sea walls and the hurricane-proofing of schools. The Paris summit must also send a sufficiently strong market signal to businesses that the private sector more widely begins to align its investments into the kind of profitable projects that will complement rather than undermine the wider climate effort.

Given that addressing the carbon problem requires wholesale transformation of the global energy economy to shift trillions of pounds into less polluting energy and transport infrastructure, and into more sustainable forestry and agricultural practices, it is hardly surprising that it should take more than a couple of UN summits to realise.

As President Obama described in a recent interview in the New York Times: 'It's not going to happen as fast or as smoothly or as elegantly as we like, but, if we are persistent, we will make progress.'

The Paris summit should mark a milestone in that progress, but only insofar as the discussions and agreements made there will lay the foundations for what happens next. It is the pace of the changes that are wrought in the real economy over the coming decades that will ultimately determine whether or not humanity manages to avoid the most dangerous impacts of our fossil fuel dependence.



JOSS GARMAN is Associate Director for energy, transport and climate change at IPPR. @jossgarman

THE NEED FOR A 'JUST TRANSITION AND DECENT WORK' *in the UN Climate Change Agreement Paris 2015*

DAVE PRENTIS

THE DECEMBER 2015 PARIS UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE TALKS, THE TWENTY FIRST CONFERENCES OF PARTIES (COP21), WILL MARK AN HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY FOR 196 COUNTRIES TO SIGN A NEW AGREEMENT AND CREATE A NEW GLOBAL MILESTONE IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE.

UNISON is promoting the global public service trade union demands agreed by the Public Services International (PSI). All Governments in Paris should sign a universal, ambitious, binding and enforceable carbon emission-reduction agreement that goes beyond 2020; acknowledges and fairly differentiates capacity and commitments between rich countries and poor; and includes effective monitoring and review measures to halt global temperature increase beyond 2°C.

The role of the public sector and public finance will be essential

ingredients to make the agreement successful. Specific funds are needed both to assist developing countries and to support Just Transition and Decent Work measures. As we move from fossil fuel dependent energy sectors to renewable and carbon free energy and industries the workforce will need to be consulted. The wider international trade union movement calls this the 'Just Transition and Decent Work'.

Workers and trade unions insist on Just Transition mechanisms, whereby workers directly affected by the move to low or zero-carbon economies are assisted with retraining, new jobs and salary support. In fact, Just Transition mechanisms will require systematic consultation and participation by workers and trade unions, both at the workplace and in overall policy directions.

Tough targets to cut CO₂ emissions, supported by new environmental regulations and carbon markets,

will transform economies over the next decade. These shifts will have major implications for working people in energy supply, industry and transport, public services and for everyone as consumers.

The shift towards a low-carbon, climate-resilient path of growth and development will not be easy as not all climate policies are win-win, and some trade-offs are inevitable, particularly in the short term. Although many new green jobs will be created, and there will be larger markets and profits for many businesses, some jobs will also be lost, particularly in high-carbon sectors. All governments need to commit to a just transition as the human and economic costs of the transition need to be managed whether its support for displaced workers, affected communities who suffer local plant closures and job losses or low-income households who need support for affordable fuel.

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) plays its

THE UK 'CLIMATE MOVEMENT' HAS UNITED AROUND 3 KEY SLOGANS – CLIMATE, JUSTICE AND JOBS

part in the UN climate change negotiations as a recognised Observer group for all global trade unions. The ITUC has campaigned to get references to Just Transition included in the Agreement. Up to now it has been a game of ping pong with the reference being put in the Agreement and then taken out again.

The trade union campaign for a Just Transition has been built with the recognition that alongside workers having a role in the Transition so too must civil society groups and individuals. To acknowledge this the wording states

"...participation in environmental decision-making by civil society and individuals and a just transition of the workforce and creation of decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined development priorities and strategies."

To make the campaign for Just Transition and Decent work a

reality UNISON has joined forces with a wide coalition with over 60 climate campaign organisations. The UK 'Climate Movement' is promoting and co-ordinating a joint civil and trade union response to what we would like to see in the final Paris agreement.

The UK 'Climate Movement' has united around 3 key slogans – Climate, Justice and Jobs - mirroring the same Public Service International demands. UNISON will be supporting the rallies and marches in the UK and Paris, and participating in discussion workshops organised by the ITUC and PSI in Paris in December.

Paris is just the beginning not the end. The current UK government is currently turning its back on renewables and has no coherent energy or low carbon strategy in place after 2020 which will secure long term affordable green energy for the public at home and businesses. After Paris, trade union and civil organisations

will have a lot of work to ensure that unions and civil society are consulted and involved in planning and implementing the UK national commitments, and that these include Just Transition mechanisms. UNISONs green reps in the workplace will play a vital role in the Just Transition.



DAVE PRENTIS,
General Secretary,
UNISON

SCOTTISH *Perspective*

SARAH BOYACK MSP

THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT'S GROUND BREAKING 2009 SCOTTISH CLIMATE CHANGE ACT WAS THE CULMINATION OF YEARS OF CAMPAIGNING TO PUT IN PLACE LEGISLATION THAT WOULD SET US ON A TRANSITION TO A LOW CARBON SOCIETY.

The Act was all the more radical because we had a minority SNP Government and because of the effectiveness and the unity of the Stop Climate Chaos Campaign.

Those circumstances gave Scottish Labour the chance to play a key part in strengthening the initial proposals and ensuring that the Act lived up to the billing it was given. As our Shadow Cabinet Member for Climate Change where I could get agreement with the Greens and either the Libs Dems or the Tories we had a majority both on the Parliamentary Committee scrutinising the Act and across the Parliament.

That meant the SNP Government made more of an effort to negotiate and engage with the

coalition of groups campaigning for strong legislation.

As a result of Labour pressure we ended up with a 42% carbon reduction target for 2020, annual targets, a requirement for public duty reporting, the requirement to involve and consult employers and Trade Unions on adaptation policies and a public engagement strategy. We also supported the requirement for an annual Report on Policies and Proposals to be presented to the Parliament, a Land Use strategy, an Energy Efficiency Plan, and Council Tax and Business Rates reductions where energy efficiency measures had been installed. We also required higher standards for new buildings to reduce energy consumption, increased use of renewables in new buildings and action on permitted development rights for existing domestic and business buildings.

So six years on how are we doing? We now have a majority SNP Government so there's nothing to hold them back on implementation. But in the years since the Act

none of the annual targets have been to the great embarrassment of the Scottish Government .

Although the SNP talk a good game on climate change and are very keen to set an example to the rest of the world, there's a clear failure to make the changes we need to transition to a low carbon society.

Partly that's because the last 2-3 years saw a focus on winning the Independence referendum rather than making the transformational change we need. Only this year are we seeing introduction of a mandatory Public Sector Reporting Duty.

What's missing is carbon reductions in the crucial areas of housing, business, transport and agriculture and forestry. The only area where there has been progress is in the energy sector. Cross party support for renewables has seen big growth. As Environment Minister in 2000 I set a radical target of 18% of our electricity to be delivered by renewables by 2010. In 2011 the SNP set a target set of 100%

WHAT'S MISSING IS REAL IMPACT ON CARBON REDUCTIONS IN THE CRUCIAL AREAS OF HOUSING, BUSINESS, TRANSPORT AND AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY.

by 2020. Renewables growth has largely been delivered by onshore wind with little offshore and marine renewables to date. While there have been some successful community renewables projects the lack of Scottish Government ambition on renewable heat is striking. There's also no sign the 2016 target to eradicate the fuel poverty that scars the lives of 1/3 of Scotland's households will be met. Energy efficiency initiatives have been too modest and have not delivered on hard to heat homes. With few exceptions cash strapped local authorities have not pushed for renewable heat or power schemes.

The SNP's big transport policy objectives have been the construction of the new Forth Road Bridge and progressive dualing of the A9 from the central belt to Inverness. The railway expansion projects set in place by the Scottish Labour-led government have now opened so there are significantly more services to more destinations. Much more needs to be done to tempt car users

onto rail both for short and longer commuting journeys and Scotland's predominantly private bus network fails to be sufficiently attractive or reliable. On active travel, the most significant progress is being made by Scottish Labour councils, with Edinburgh leading the way.

We're still waiting for progress on reducing climate emissions in agriculture. Although farmers have taken the opportunity to develop renewables, the chaos of the SFP system, price volatility for farm produce, the lack of control in supply chains and the poor design of agricultural support has meant that the greening agenda has made little headway in Scotland. Organic production is a long way from becoming mainstream.

As we move towards Paris the lesson from Scotland has been strong targets need to be matched by political ambition.

The breadth and effectiveness of the SCCCS campaign helped strengthen our climate legislation. Cross party support and a

minority government made it possible to deliver in the Scottish Parliament. But we've not seen progress across key sectors.

We need to use the imminence of the Paris climate talks to put pressure on the Scottish Government to deliver the just transition we need in infrastructure investment and use procurement to deliver low carbon services. Scottish Labour will be pushing for stronger action on climate change in our campaign for next year's Scottish Parliament elections.

SARAH BOYACK MSP is
Labour's Shadow Secretary
for Environmental Justice
in the Scotland

A THIRD RUNWAY AT HEATHROW WOULD BE *An Environmental Catastrophe*

RUTH CADBURY MP

UNDER THE LAST LABOUR GOVERNMENT, THE UK WAS A WORLD LEADER ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES. THIS IS AN AREA WHERE WE CANNOT SHRINK AWAY FROM THE WORLD – WE MUST PLAY OUR PART.

We must remain committed to meeting our climate change targets, and this core principle of sustainability must guide decisions that are made on investment. This is one of the key reasons why a third runway at Heathrow should not go ahead.

At the moment aviation makes up around 5% of the UK's emissions. Under the landmark 2008 Climate Change Act, the UK must reduce its carbon emissions by 80% by 2050 compared to 1990 levels. This

would mean a maximum level of emissions of 160 Mt of carbon in 2050. The independent Committee on Climate Change suggested that, in order to meet this target, aviation emissions should be no more than 37.5Mt per year – almost a quarter of the UK's carbon budget in 2050.

Addressing the environmental impact of Heathrow does not simply mean talking in 'parts per million' – it means talking honestly about the impact of the airport on the quality of life of hundreds of thousands of people – and some 362 schools – that are directly affected by the airport.

A new runway would mean planes flying overhead for thousands of residents in my constituency – in Osterley, Brentford and Chiswick, who had not previously

been directly underneath the flightpath. Other residents already underneath the flightpath for the existing runways would see their respite periods shortened from the current half a day.

Some 320,000 people – a population the size of Coventry – would be newly impacted by noise if a third runway was to go ahead.

The Government will have to address the legal challenge of the air quality levels that already breach EU Air Quality limits. The measures outlined in the Davies commission's report to bring airport pollution within the limits are simply unfeasible and unachievable. It would be careless to allow the construction of a third runway, on the condition that air quality targets were not breached. In reality,

HEATHROW BREACHED THOSE TARGETS – YOU CANNOT ‘UN-BUILD’ THE RUNWAY

there is no real penalty in place if Heathrow breached those targets – you cannot ‘un-build’ the runway.

If it is deemed that any extra capacity is needed in the south-east, it should come at Gatwick. The issues with carbon targets would remain, however in another key environmental factor, quality of life, Gatwick would be streets ahead, with far few residents impacted by a new runway.

In the local context there is no doubt that Heathrow is a major driver to the local economy, but here, between Central London and the Thames Valley/M4 silicon corridor the growing vibrant non-airport sectors struggle to compete for commercial floor-space, for staff at various skill levels and for space on our

increasingly congested roads.

Another runway at Heathrow will fuel pressures to expand even further, first with night flights, to be followed soon after by a fourth runway, whilst the UK’s other airports struggle to compete.

Heathrow is, and can continue to remain Britain’s premier airport providing jobs for tens of thousands of local people and the economic stimulus to West London without needing another runway and more flights.

RUTH CADBURY MP was elected as the Labour MP for Brentford & Isleworth in May 2015. She tweets at @ruthcadbury



RURAL *Challenges*

HYWEL LLOYD

BEYOND THE URBAN VIEWPOINT: ONE NOT SO URBAN VIEW OF THE BIG ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGES WE FACE...

I'm assuming that most of you accept the idea of a changing climate and that the evidence suggests increasingly wild and violent weather, then for me the big challenges are about how we are governed and how we do politics.

At one level then the task is to produce the economic evidence that shows that climate action is pro (the right sort of) economic activity. Some of the latest evidence for that can be found in "Seizing the Global Opportunity", the 2015 report from the New Climate Economy Commission (<http://newclimateeconomy.net>). It also highlights the importance of city-led action, given cities and mayors can act more quickly (whatever their formal powers) and with more substance than is often the case for nation states.

Yet cities only function in a wider ecosystem - of ocean, coast, estuary through to grassland, tundra, woodland and uplands; and also in a wider political 'eco'-system - of Parliaments, Assemblies, unitary and two-tier local authorities, and where they exist the community, town and parish councils beyond most city boundaries.

We need to think about the relationship between cities and the rest of the country. It is worth remembering that, regardless of the political representation of London (population circa 8.6 million), the rural parts of England and Wales alone have a population of 10.3 million. Over 25% of the population of the South West, the East Midlands, the East of England and of Wales live in rural areas. In Yorkshire, the South East and the North East about 20% of these populations live in rural areas (where the definition of rural is set as a place of less than 20Ha, or less than 10,000 population, which you might say is quite a low bar to being urban.)

As things stand, most of these voters either don't vote Labour or don't have much of a Labour offer to vote for. So they are mostly represented by mercantile Tories, those who have little regard for the environment of England and Wales, or the changing nature of the quality of life experienced by all who live in these non-urban areas. That does suggest a glimmer of an opportunity for Labour in future.

In order to take that opportunity, Labour needs to think through three things that should also be reflected in our view of what next for the environment. These are: devolution and localism, particularly in England; Labour's organisation and offer to non-urban Britain; and how to work with the green groups for the long-term.

DEVOLUTION AND LOCALISM
- Labour's new leadership must push for more powers to all tiers of government, to give each tier the power to act on their local environment and quality of life issues; and the power to mitigate and adapt as befits their tier.

...CITIES ONLY FUNCTION IN A WIDER ECOSYSTEM - OF OCEAN, COAST, ESTUARY THROUGH TO GRASSLAND, TUNDRA, WOODLAND AND UPLANDS

That must include more powers to community, parish & town councils, the only governance bodies close to most communities, to enable them to properly engage people in decisions and plans for their place. Yes, that will mean some places run by other parties will have more powers to act, or not act. However, helping people understand what climate change could actually mean for their particular community, with some of the powers to act, must be one way to re-engage people in politics and governance, and force some of the issues. Where we once had 'carbon & climate conversations' now people can be engaged in planning and acting on what's needed.

LABOUR'S ORGANISATION AND OFFER – we need to have an offer that comes from and engages with those who live beyond the cities of England. That means talking to these communities, of coast and country; recognising there are more self employed and micro-businesses, more retired, less unemployed, yet more low-waged people working

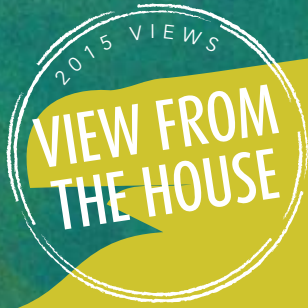
here – and that living outside our cities is more expensive, with much working poverty.

Organisationally, surely a five-year parliament would allow us to truly twin or group CLPs? You help me fight my county division in 2017 and I'll help you fight your marginal target constituency in 2020.

WORK WITH THE GREEN MOVEMENT – not so easy, even for those of us who are not the most tribal. That said, this leadership election may well have brought quite a few green/reds back into the movement. A re-invigorated SERA could and should work with these new members. Building on the commitment of our long serving members, SERA should be a force to be reckoned with in the 2020 election, ensuring Labour's manifesto is good for green growth, and that we are actively working with green groups and NGOs to present that positive agenda – of a stable climate, predictable weather and valued ecosystem services.



HYWEL LLOYD is co-Founder of Labour: Coast & Country and is a former Chair of SERA



ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT COMMITTEE *What's on the Agenda?*

HUW IRRANCA DAVIES MP

"I AM PUZZLED!" THESE WERE THE BEWILDERED WORDS OF AL GORE AS HE RECENTLY DELIVERED TO OUR GOVERNMENT ITS OWN INCONVENIENT TRUTH. FAR FROM BEING THE 'GREENEST GOVERNMENT EVER', AS DAVID CAMERON PROUDLY PROCLAIMED, THE EVIDENCE WOULD SUGGEST OTHERWISE.

Since May, the Government has acted decisively:

The Zero Carbon Homes 2016 commitment – scrapped;
Zero-Carbon-Buildings 2019 commitment – scrapped;
the flagship Green Deal programme – cancelled;
the Climate Change Levy exemption for zero-carbon energy (to promote renewable energy) – cancelled;
support for solar energy via Renewables Obligation (RO), and for onshore-wind via ROs and Contracts for Difference – scrapped;
Differential Vehicle Excise Duty (promoting lower-emission

vehicles and supply-chain development) – weakened;
a proposed reduction in the feed in tariff of 87% is out to consultation.

At the same time, unconventional gas extraction has had every conceivable policy assist from government, including the weakening of safeguards for protected areas.

In a year when climate change is so high on the agenda, the flurry of recent announcements is perplexing. Far from embracing the strong and ambitious international leadership the UK has proudly shown, we are now subject to strident international criticism. At home, leading British businesses have joined with green groups to condemn what they see as policy confusion and incoherence emanating from Whitehall.

So, despite the Prime Minister's rhetoric, the government has

got its work cut out persuading parliament and wider society that it is on the right road: not just to Paris in December, but also on the wider agenda of climate change and sustainable development, halting and reversing biodiversity loss, protecting and enhancing the environment and environmental services.

The Environmental Audit Committee, which I chair, is carrying out an initial enquiry that goes to the very heart of the government's approach to the environment and sustainable development. It probes questions of leadership and ambition, of joined-up government, whether fiscal and legislative measures are in alignment, and how government performance is best evaluated. It asks what key policies over the course of this parliament are necessary to deliver the stretching ambitions we need as a country, and as a planet.

LEADING BRITISH BUSINESSES HAVE JOINED WITH GREEN GROUPS TO CONDEMN WHAT THEY SEE AS POLICY CONFUSION AND INCOHERENCE EMANATING FROM WHITEHALL

The Prime Minister's bold rhetoric of being the "Greenest Government Ever", along with his manifesto commitment to "being the first generation to leave the natural environment of England in a better state than that in which we found it" are already being challenged and undermined by authoritative voices from industry, research, environmental organisations and others. The EAC will test the reality against the rhetoric.

Over the coming years, the role of the EAC will also be to proactively encourage government to deliver bold and ambitious environmental policies. The reward will be answering the moral question of our lifetime, the survival of mankind in the face of climate change. As a nation we stand at a defining crossroads on the way to Paris. Will we look back at our actions with regret? Or will we drive ahead and unleash the power

of business and industry, science and technology to ride the wave of change? As Chair of the EAC I stand ready to play my part.



HUW IRRANCA-DAVIES MP is the chair of the Environmental Audit Committee in the House of Commons.
[@irrancadaviesmp](#)





ROBIN HOOD ENERGY

A New Spirit of Energy Enterprise from Nottingham

CLLR ALAN CLARK

**COUNCILLOR ALAN CLARK,
LABOUR'S LEAD ON ENERGY
ON NOTTINGHAM CITY
COUNCIL WRITES ABOUT THE
FIRST MONTH OF THE NEW
ENERGY SUPPLY COMPANY,
ROBIN HOOD ENERGY.**

Robin Hood Energy, launched in September by Labour-controlled Nottingham City Council, is a fully licensed supplier of gas and electricity for England, Scotland and Wales. This is a first (since 1948 at least). Robin Hood Energy is a not-for-profit company. It is owned by Nottingham City Council, its directors don't receive pay or bonuses and it has few overheads which help maintain low tariffs for customers.

This fulfils a manifesto pledge to set up a not-for-profit Council energy company to sell energy at the lowest possible price to Nottingham residents, and now goes much beyond that as we can supply throughout England, Scotland and Wales.

Whilst we considered sourcing energy from green generators, Nottingham decided to seek the cheapest sources to keep the cost down particularly for those in fuel poverty.

Other councils have launched a franchise ("white label") through Ovo Energy to sell gas and electricity to residents within their own area. Whilst this proved a quicker route to market, this method clearly gives such councils less control over issues like tariffs whilst exposing the councils to almost no risk.

We have run a Switch and Save for over two years now with limited success. We may have launched at the wrong time. We also tried collective switching with little success. Robin Hood Energy is acquiring 40% of its customers through 'phone contact; this is a much higher proportion than we expected. It is probably because we are being contacted by customers who have never

switched. We believe that this is because Robin Hood Energy is associated with a trusted brand (Nottingham City Council) and our excellent customer services.

We have had to acquire a licensed supply company, set up nearly 50 contracts and recruit and train several dozen staff all before we had a single customer. So, it is a substantial investment that has to be recouped over the next three years of trading. This capital had to be borrowed from the city council.

We have had to employ some industry experts to get us through the set up phase, but all have relished this and several have made a positive decision to come to us and consider it a beneficial lifestyle change.

The company has chosen to use simple but effective marketing and is based in comfortable but modest premises in the city centre.

All our staff are employed on city

ROBIN HOOD ENERGY IS A NOT-FOR-PROFIT COMPANY... OWNED BY NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL, ITS DIRECTORS DON'T RECEIVE PAY OR BONUSES



council terms and conditions. Most staff have worked for the city council for some time in areas such as legal, finance and so on. They have found the work inspirational; it has helped them develop and we retain that expertise for this or other commercial projects that the city council is exploring.

In a few weeks' time, our prepayment tariff will be launched. We have found that the supply industry is not geared up to launching such products before the requirement to do so at 50,000 customers kicks in. Nor is supply data always accurate with gas and electricity often having conflicting address data for the same property.

Robin Hood Energy staff and Labour councillors promote the company at community events throughout the city, such as community fairs and consultation meetings (rather than separate events). Our initiative is very well received.

Many energy companies automatically put customers on a higher tariff when they renew. Customers renewing their contracts with Robin Hood Energy can be confident that this is not the approach that Robin Hood Energy will take. Renewal prices will be determined by usage, but all effort will be made to keep tariffs as low as possible at the renewal stage.

The lowest available tariff will always be printed in monthly statements and on the website. If customers wish to switch to a lower tariff they can do. Customers wishing to change tariffs or leave Robin Hood Energy are free to do so at any time without paying an exit fee.

Potential customers interested in finding out more about Robin Hood Energy or switching should visit www.robinhoodenergy.co.uk or call 0800 0304567 (free from landlines or mobiles). To get an instant quote, customers simply need a copy of their latest energy bill to hand.



CLLR ALAN CLARK is the portfolio holder for energy and sustainability on Nottingham City Council and the lead member behind Robin Hood Energy

THE PEOPLE'S MARCH FOR CLIMATE, JUSTICE & JOBS

LONDON
29
NOV



SERA WILL BE AT THE CLIMATE MARCH IN LONDON ON 29 NOVEMBER. IT WILL BE A HUGE EVENT IN LONDON ON THE EVE OF THE CRUCIAL PARIS CLIMATE TALKS, WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE FROM THE 30TH NOVEMBER TO THE 12TH DECEMBER.

We'll be part of thousands calling for action on climate change and showing international solidarity for the fight for climate justice.



Please check out www.sera.org.uk for details of where to meet.

Please encourage local Labour and trade union branches to join us too. Bring friends, facepaints, banners and anything else you think will make the day fun and meaningful.

JOIN US AND BE COUNTED.

JOIN SERA



LABOUR'S ENVIRONMENT CAMPAIGN

Full details at www.sera.org.uk/join-sera

SERA is a member-led campaigning organisation working towards environmental progress and social justice.

JOIN US AND HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

