



NEW GROUND SPRING 2015
Campaigning For Environmental Change & Social Justice

IS THIS OUR LAST CHANCE *TO SAVE THE PLANET?*

ELECTION
SPECIAL
2015

MARIA EAGLE MP
*on Labour's plans for the
natural environment*

CAROLINE FLINT MP
*on why this is the most important
election for the environment*

**THE NEXT
GENERATION**
*Labour's Greenest
Candidates*

Welcome to this election special edition of New Ground.

Many are saying that this election is the last chance to safeguard our environment. We are witnessing record losses to our nation and planet's biodiversity. The Climate negotiations in Paris in 2015 – and the actions that follow – are being seen as the last hope of keeping global climate change within 2 degrees.

Voters are facing a stark choice between a Tory Government that has been strong on green rhetoric but slow on green action, and a Labour Government with a strong record and passionate commitment to the environment.

SERA members can be proud of Labour's manifesto, which we helped influence through our role

at the National Policy Forum. In this edition of New Ground we highlight many of these, with articles from Caroline Flint, soon to be our Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change and Maria Eagle, the next Secretary of State for the Environment. We've also featured some SERA members who are standing as candidates – including details of how you can help their campaigns to become Labour MPs.

I look forward to hearing about your experiences on the campaign trail, which we will highlight in the next edition of New Ground.

Best wishes
Melanie Smallman
Co-Chair, SERA
April 2015

ELECTION
SPECIAL
2015

ABOUT

New Ground is published by SERA, Labour's environment campaign www.sera.org.uk
Email: enquiries@sera.org.uk

If you would like to contribute to future editions or join our mailing list, please contact Melanie Smallman, Co-Chair at melanie.smallman@sera.org.uk

The views expressed in New Ground are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the editor, SERA its executive or its members.

CONTENTS

WELCOME	2
NEWS News in Brief	3
NEWS Big Six Pamphlet	3
NEWS East Coast	4
NEWS Parliamentary Candidate Pack 2015	5
FEATURE Most Important Election Ever - Caroline Flint MP	6
FEATURE Labour Will Bring Nature Closer to People - Maria Eagle MP	8
FEATURE The Next Generation, Labour's Greenest Candidates	10
FEATURE Decarbonising The Power Sector - Alan Whitehead	12
FEATURE History of SERA - Andy Roberts	14
FEATURE Our Better Environmental Plan - Alex Mayer	15
FEATURE 2015 Quick Election Environment Facts	16

MARCH 2015

SERA members marched at the People's Climate March" in London in solidarity with over 400,000 people across the globe.

FEBRUARY 2015

SERA organised a special event in partnership with the Labour Campaign for International Development to discuss the next Labour Government's internationalist vision.

Douglas Alexander, Mary Creagh, Caroline Flint and Ian Lucas spoke about how internationalism is in Labour's DNA. As well as being election year, 2015 will also see a new set of Sustainable Development Goals agreed, and

a global climate deal negotiated, panellists agreed we wanted Labour ministers at the negotiating table at these crucial events.

SEPTEMBER 2015

SERA's annual rally took place at the Labour Party Conference in Manchester. Titled 'The New Generation: Energising the Future' the packed audience heard five-minute future visions for a brighter, greener Britain, from a new generation of MPs, PPCs, Councillors, Trade Union and Business Leaders. Speakers included Shadow Secretary of State for Business Chuka Umunna MP, Shadow Secretary of state for Energy and Climate Change Caroline Flint MP and many more.

JULY 2014

At Labour's National Policy Forum, SERA took forward a number of amendments to the policy documents including a commitment to reduce air pollution, stronger promises on how we will support community energy, a clear duty on transport authorities to involve passengers in decision-making and a commitment that the new homes built by the Labour Government will be built to be as energy and water efficient and accessible as possible. We secured some good successes.

The final document can be read HERE: http://www.yourbritain.org.uk/uploads/editor/files/NPF_Annual_Report_2014.pdf

SERA & THE CO-OP PARTY SET OUT PLAN TO *Turn 'Big Six' into 'Big Six Thousand'*

SERA have set out plans to develop a 'Big Six Thousand' of community-owned energy suppliers to challenge the dominance of the 'Big Six' in the energy market – providing a fairer deal for consumers and reducing their carbon footprint.

Our pamphlet 'The Next Generation,' sets out a vision for community energy, drawing on lessons and examples from community owned renewable energy projects across the country

and makes recommendations on how policymakers can facilitate a community energy revolution, unlocking the sector's huge potential.

We set out plans for the creation of a national community-owned renewable energy fund, community feed-in tariffs and renewable heat incentives as well as allowing community-owned energy groups to be able to supply energy direct to residents for the very first time.



Download HERE: <http://party.coop/wp-content/blogs.dir/5/files/2014/12/next-gen-final-web.pdf?8b5145&892eac>



WAVING GOODBYE *to East Coast*

SERA HAS CONDEMNED THE COALITION GOVERNMENT'S PRIVATISATION OF THE EAST COAST MAINLINE TRAIN FRANCHISE.

"The publicly run East Coast Mainline has returned £800 million to the public purse since it was brought back into public ownership. Instead of being the victim of a pre-election fire-sale, it should have been the model for running other railways in the UK." SERA co-chair Melanie Smallman said.

For the past two years, SERA has been campaigning for

public sector operators, as well as cooperatively owned not-for profits organisations, to be allowed to bid for franchises when they expire.

Michael Dugher, Shadow Transport Secretary reconfirmed Labour's commitment to this position saying:

"Labour is committed to legislating to allow a not-for-profit public sector operator to take on and challenge train operators on a level playing field, safeguarding taxpayer and passenger interests and putting in place a system that is fit for purpose."

Richard Howitt MEP who was there to wave goodbye to the final train said:

"East Coast was successful as a publically owned and run rail franchise, consistently delivering profits for the Treasury that could be used to fund nurses and schools. "That money will now be lost to the UK taxpayer and instead to go into the hands of the private sector. "It's clear we need Labour to get our railways back on track."

Richard Howitt MEP
with Cllr Sharon Taylor

IT'S CLEAR WE
NEED LABOUR
TO GET OUR
RAILWAYS BACK
ON TRACK



PARLIAMENTARY *Candidate Pack*

Daniel Zeichner

NEWS



SERA HAS PRODUCED A "PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATE PACK" full of useful facts and figures about the environment, Labour's plans for Government, why you can't trust the Tories, LibDems, Greens or UKIP on the environment and a handy A-Z for hustings.

I'm Executive member of SERA, a Labour Parliamentary candidate, and a life-long environmental campaigner. I used to run my own business, the "Red and Green" plant nursery. When people visited they thought the name had something to do with the colour of the front door and looked astonished when I told them it was because my politics were both Red and Green. I remain committed to that view today. I understand that climate change is real, man-made and happening and I know that only a Labour Government will show the leadership and take the necessary action to safeguard the future of our planet.

David Cameron promised to lead "the greenest government ever", he said "vote blue, go green", he hugged a husky and changed the Tory logo from a fossil fuel burning torch to a lovely oak tree. But it was all PR. This Government has overseen chaotic cuts to solar power delays to the Green Investment Bank, a rush to fracking and ministers questioning the value of laws which give us better air quality, cleaner beaches and wildlife protection.

They even tried to sell off the nation's forests – backed as usual by the LibDem MP for Cambridge on one of the 782 occasions he voted with the Tories. Don't let the LibDems greenwash you!

This government are also mistaken in the belief that there is a trade-off between protecting British jobs and tackling climate change. I recently hosted a summit in Cambridge with representatives of the cleantech sector who know this is simply not the case. Supporting our low-carbon industries, creating new high skilled, well paid jobs while transforming our environment, is an essential part of a strategy to earn our way out of the cost-of-living crisis. It's a win-win approach, but will need a Labour Government, the right leadership and right regulatory framework to make it happen.

In 2015, the year of the UN Paris Climate Change Conference, ensuring we have a Labour Government really is vital for our environment. I'll be using my SERA Parliamentary pack at hustings meetings coming up, to spread Labour's positive message and I hope you will too. If you are a Labour candidate and would like to request a pack please email melanie.smallman@sera.org.uk

Daniel Zeichner is a member of SERA's National Executive and the Labour Parliamentary Candidate for Cambridge.

MOST IMPORTANT ELECTION EVER *for our environment?*

CAROLINE FLINT MP

THIS ELECTION PROMISES TO BE ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT EVER for our environment – and it couldn't come at a more significant time. Within months of Britain voting, the UN is holding a summit in Paris to agree a binding global agreement to tackle climate change. The choice couldn't be clearer either. On one side we have the Tories, who have long abandoned any pretence of caring about the environment, who have cut and delayed investment in green technology and openly flirted with climate change denial. On the other is Labour – the only party with a plan to protect our environment, tackle climate change and build an economy in which working families succeed.

Our plan starts with making sure people pay a fair price for their energy. Energy bills today are £300 a year more than they were when David Cameron became Prime Minister. Since 2010, Britain's energy bills have risen twice as fast as inflation, four times faster than wages and faster than almost any

other country in the developed world. Britain's hardworking families cannot afford another five years of this - and with Labour's plan they won't have to.

Within days of taking office, one of the first steps of our Labour Government will be to freeze energy prices until 2017, so that bills can fall but not rise. During our freeze we will change the energy market for good, with reforms to make it more competitive and transparent, and a tough new regulator with new powers to protect consumers, including: new powers to protect off-grid households and small businesses, new powers to force energy companies to cut their prices when wholesale costs fall, if they don't do it first and, ultimately, new powers to strip energy companies of their licences if they repeatedly mistreat customers.

In truth, of course, the most sustainable way to reduce energy bills for the long-term and cut our carbon emissions, is to reduce the

amount of energy we use in the first place. Britain has among the least energy efficient and worst insulated homes anywhere in Europe. So we will declare war on cold homes, with a comprehensive, long-term plan to upgrade Britain's housing stock and help households insulate themselves from rising energy prices, including: free personalised home energy reports for half a million homes a year – because two thirds of households have never had one, help for at least 200,000 households a year to upgrade their homes, saving them, on average, over £270 each and every year from their energy bills, up to a million interest-free loans for home improvements to households that are able to help make a contribution, in the next Parliament, and new standards for landlords to get cold and leaky properties up to a decent standard. Together, this package will upgrade 5 million homes over 10 years, and because we know this is a long-term task, we will designate energy efficiency as a national infrastructure priority.

OUR PLAN STARTS WITH MAKING SURE PEOPLE PAY A FAIR PRICE FOR THEIR ENERGY

Crucially, what Labour understands is that climate change has never been just an environmental issue. It affects the economy and living standards too. There is no trade-off between tackling climate change and building an economy in which working families succeed. Indeed, success on one will help us achieve the other.

As the world faces up to the challenge of climate change, the race to create and sell solutions to make our economy cleaner and leaner will intensify. Across energy generation, energy efficiency, housing, infrastructure and transport, the right framework and direction will increase the chance of British firms succeeding and British workers gaining new opportunities.

Government cannot create these jobs. Businesses must. But government is critical to set the policy to support the sectors, and types of businesses to underpin our future success as a country. That's why the next Labour Government is committed to setting

a target to decarbonise our power supply by 2030, giving firms the certainty to invest in our future energy supply, and strengthening the Green Investment Bank, with proper borrowing powers.

A Labour ambition for Britain not as an assembly point for other nation's products and inventions, but a hub for manufacturing and innovation – with the turbines, engines and reactors that will power our country, stamped "Made in Britain". We cannot miss this opportunity and repeat the mistakes of the 1980s. Countries like Germany and Denmark saw the potential of wind power and created world-beating firms. Britain missed out.

If we get it right - the prize is real. Hundreds of thousands of jobs. Productive. Skilled. Secure. Well-paid jobs at every level, and opportunities for all, across our nation, and a generation of young British people gaining apprenticeships for the 21st century, changing the fabric and skyline of our great country.

Leadership at home will help secure influence abroad. So when we come to those crucial climate negotiations in Paris in December, we will have the credibility to push for an ambitious agreement, which includes ambitious emissions targets for all countries, reviewed every five years, based on a scientific assessment of the progress towards the 2C goal, a goal of net zero global emissions in the second half of this century, transparent, universal rules for measuring, verifying and reporting emissions with all countries adopting climate change adaptation plans, and an equitable deal in which richer countries provide support to poorer nations in their efforts to combat climate change.

The general election means 2015 is a critical year for Britain. It is also a critical year for the world on climate change. Only Labour has the right plan for Britain's future.

**Caroline Flint MP is Labour's
Shadow Energy and Climate
Change Secretary**

LABOUR WILL *Bring Nature Closer to People*

MARIA EAGLE MP

THE NEXT ELECTION IS THE MOST IMPORTANT IN A GENERATION. A choice not just between parties but between two competing visions of how our country can succeed. On the one hand a Tory plan that says we can succeed with just a few at the top doing well, where your ability to pay dictates access to almost everything in society, including the benefits of our natural environment. Or Labour's plan for Britain's future – where the many can succeed and everyone has access to clean air, clean water and protection from flood risk- regardless of wealth.

We've had five years of failure on the natural environment. David Cameron said that he would lead the 'greenest Government ever' but like so much else with this Government all we've had are broken promises. The Environmental Audit Committee published an environmental scorecard report at the end of last year, using a traffic light system to rate performance in each area. For its record on air pollution, biodiversity, and flooding and coastal protection, the Government received a red rating, meaning that these areas have deteriorated. In fact, in none of the ten areas assessed did the

Government receive a green rating. The record of this Government is bad enough but another five years doesn't bear thinking about. It would be a disaster for our natural environment. The Tories' spending plans will mean extreme cuts in the next Parliament. This would have a crushing impact on non-protected areas of spending, including the Defra budget. The truth is that you can't protect our natural environment and preserve our green spaces on Tory spending plans.

If things are going to change, we need a Labour Government. There is a huge difference between our common sense approach to bringing public spending under control and the extreme and risky plans set out by the Tories. Labour will cancel the ineffective and inhumane badger culls saving over £100 million in the next parliament. We will also ensure the money that we spend goes much further. That's why the next Labour Government will put an end to the perverse approach where in some cases we spend public money twice: once to pay for damage to ecosystems and then again to pay for their repair. Our upland peatlands are a perfect example. They store carbon, reduce flood risk and help

provide clean water but despite large amounts of public money going into the conservation of the English uplands only ten per cent are in good condition.

Labour will take a new approach to environmental protection focused on preventative spending and securing better value for money. We will redirect public spending towards interventions that can save future public spending on environmental protection. Labour will make better use of existing funds to reform land management with the aim of freeing up over £150 million of extra spending via the Common Agricultural Policy on environmental protection and rural development in the last two years of the next parliament. This switch spending will enable local partnerships to reduce flood risk, protect habitats for wildlife and improve water quality. We will also give the water industry regulator a new primary duty for sustainability so that water companies can play a bigger role in protecting our natural environment. This approach – big reforms and not big spending, will ensure the next Labour Government meets our fiscal goals, and our environmental priorities.

OUR LABOUR VALUES TELL US THAT EVERYONE SHOULD HAVE ACCESS TO THE BENEFITS OF NATURE



Labour has a proud record of achievement on the natural environment. It was a Labour Government in 1949 – tough times with economic challenges far greater than we’re seeing now – that took the action to create our national parks. It was a Labour Government that brought forward the landmark Countryside and Rights of Way Act in 2000 which opened up new land for public access. We did this because our Labour values tell us that everyone should have access to nature whoever they are and wherever they live.

The economic and social case for extending public access to nature has never been stronger than it is. The third report of the Natural Capital Committee showed that there is a strong correlation between the quality of the natural environment where people live and their health and wellbeing. The problem is that in this country we have deep inequality of access to nature. The most deprived communities are ten times less likely to live in the greenest areas. So the next Labour Government will make extending access to nature a priority.

A Tory Government will never prioritise extending the benefits of nature to all. They think we can preserve nature just for a privileged few. It was after all this Tory-led Government that tried to privatise our public forests until they were stopped by half a million people signing the petition against the sell-off plans. The next Labour Government has pledged to protect our forests, keeping them in public ownership. Labour will also secure ready access to trees and woodlands by planting them closer to the places where most people live.

Our Labour values tell us that everyone should have access to the benefits of nature whoever they are and wherever they live. Nature and the power it has to sustain economies and nourish all life should not be preserved just for a privileged few. Our economic success cannot be built by eroding our natural environment any more than it can by eroding wages or living standards. These Labour values led the post-war Labour Government to rebuild the nation in tough times whilst understanding the importance of the natural environment. Those values will lead us again in 2015.



Maria Eagle MP is the Shadow Environment Secretary

THE NEXT GENERATION

IN MAY, IN AN ELECTION THAT MANY ARE SAYING IS OUR LAST CHANCE TO SAFEGUARD OUR ENVIRONMENT, SERA MEMBERS ARE STANDING AS LABOUR CANDIDATES IN MARGINAL CONSTITUENCIES ACROSS THE UK. FIVE OF THESE CANDIDATES TELL US WHY THEY WILL PUT THE ENVIRONMENT AT THE HEART OF A LABOUR GOVERNMENT IN 2015.

POLLY BILLINGTON *Labour Candidate for Thurrock*



TO HELP IN POLLY'S CAMPAIGN

Call: 01375 844108

Email: lola@thurrocklabour.co.uk

Tweet: @thurrockpolly

POLLY BILLINGTON, Labour's candidate in Thurrock, Essex, needs to overturn a Tory majority of 92 votes. A former BBC journalist, Polly also worked as an adviser to Ed Miliband when he was Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change. She has lived in Grays in Essex for years and now spends her time campaigning for a better deal for communities across Thurrock – including on the environment:

"It's our responsibility to the next

generation and those to come that we protect and sustain an environment we can all enjoy and cherish. It's why we will tackle climate change by investing in new modern energy sources and technology that will help us to reduce our impact on the environment through carbon emissions. If we get it right we not only protect the environment but also create quality jobs in our communities, growing a modern low carbon economy.'

ANDREW PAKES *Labour Candidate for Milton Keynes South*

ANDREW PAKES, Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Milton Keynes South and former SERA Chair has highlighted Labour's pledge to make at least five million homes more energy efficient.

He says: "In Milton Keynes there are currently more than 5,000 households living in cold homes facing fuel poverty – this scandal has to stop." Under

a Labour Government, at least five million homes will be made more energy efficient over the next 10 years – cutting heat loss and bills for low income families. Labour will also provide half a million personalised home energy reports a year as well as offering up to one million interest-free loans to cover the costs of energy efficiency during the next Parliament.



TO HELP IN ANDREW'S CAMPAIGN

Call: 01908 314 974

Email: info@andrewpakes.org.uk

Tweet: @andrew4mk

WILL STRAW *Labour Candidate for Rossendale and Darwen*



TO HELP IN WILL'S CAMPAIGN
 Call: 01706 212 940 or
 01254 865 485.
 Email: willstraw4rossendale.
 darwen@gmail.com
 Tweet: @wdjstraw

WILL STRAW, Labour Candidate for Rossendale and Darwen, has a longstanding interest in environmental issues, having led the energy, transport and climate change team at the Institute for Public Policy Research, a charity with educational objectives. His team's work has led the debate on bringing down energy bills and rebuilding our public transport system after years of privatisation.

Will Straw says:
 "Like all Dads, I want to ensure that my son's future is secure and that he and his generation do not pay the price for our folly in leaving climate change unchecked. It's not too late to ensure that the planet keeps global temperature rises within a reasonable limit but we need to stay the course at home and lead global efforts for greater ambition abroad."

DANIEL ZEICHNER *Labour Candidate for Cambridge*

DANIEL ZEICHNER says:
 "This was meant to be 'the greenest government ever'. Instead we have seen chaotic cuts to solar power funding, delays to the Green Investment Bank, a rush to fracking and ministers questioning the value of laws which give us better air quality, cleaner beaches and wildlife protection. They even tried to sell off the nation's forests – backed as usual by the LibDem MP for Cambridge on one of the 782 occasions he voted with the Tories.

"I have long been an environmental campaigner. I understand that climate change is real, man-made and happening. But I completely disagree with this government's mistaken belief that there is a trade-off between protecting British jobs and tackling climate change. Rather, supporting our low-carbon industries, creating new high skilled, high paying jobs in green technology, should be an essential part of a strategy to earn our way out of the cost-of-living crisis."



TO HELP IN DANIEL'S CAMPAIGN
 Call: 01223 500515
 Email: Daniel@
 cambridgelabour.org.uk
 Tweet: @danielzeichner

MARI WILLIAMS *Labour Candidate for Cardiff North*



TO HELP IN MARI'S CAMPAIGN
 Call: 02921 158 656
 Email: mariforcardiffnorth@gmail.com
 Tweet: mari_williams

MARI WILLIAMS, Labour Candidate for Cardiff North, is a passionate cyclist and longstanding SERA member.

Mari Williams says:

"Environmental issues matter to me because it's about our country's future. I've been campaigning with groups across Cardiff to put

together Cardiff's first cycling manifesto. Cycling is good for our health - mental and physical and makes economic sense. From renewable energy and introducing 5p charges for plastic bags to the Active Travel Act, Wales is leading the way on acting now for a more sustainable future."

DECARBONISING THE POWER SECTOR

Labour's vital commitment

ALAN WHITEHEAD

DURING THE PASSAGE OF THE RECENT ENERGY ACT THROUGH PARLIAMENT, Labour pressed the government to include a statutory target to decarbonise the power supply by 2030. The government voted down amendments to the Act which would have enshrined the target in law. Instead they included a very weak statement that the Secretary of State could, if he felt like it, move towards such a target in 2016 after arguing that, since the government was still in some doubt about whether to support the fourth carbon budget, it would be premature to give such a commitment anyway.

Finally, the government agreed that it would support the budget (which among other things envisages a very low carbon power sector as

an essential contribution to the overall reduction in emissions between 2022 and 2027) but has done nothing since to set any target or commitment. Indeed, the government's gas strategy now seems to suggest that an option for gas would be to build large numbers of new gas fired power stations over the next fifteen years in such a way that a decarbonisation target could not be met. Put simply they – the Lib Dems as well as Tories – have shown by their actions that they are not serious about the detail of the real work that is needed to ensure that Britain can stick to and succeed in achieving its climate change goals – and to which both conservative and Lib Dem leaders have supposedly signed up to achieving.

Not serious because, with 70% or so of the country's carbon

dioxide emissions arising from the production and use of energy, failing to decarbonise our power systems over the next decade means that the pressure on other sectors to make up the carbon budget savings will be just undeliverable. The targets would inevitably be missed.

All of which makes Ed Miliband's pledge that the UK will decarbonise its power generation sector by 2030 so important. It is, without too much exaggeration, the difference between keeping Britain on track for its climate change commitments and blowing the country hopelessly and permanently off course.

It is a pledge that has received very little airtime or discussion, but really should because it is just crucial. But perhaps it is because too many people don't understand

LABOUR REALLY IS AT THE HEART OF THE CLIMATE CHANGE AGENDA

the significance of what is proposed. It means that, over the next few years, the present average emissions across the sector (about 480gms co2 per kilowatt hour of electricity generated) need to be reduced, over fifteen years, to less than a quarter - perhaps between 50-100 gms overall. And that emission level, at that point would be in line with what the Committee on Climate Change thinks would be needed to keep on track.

It means a lot of hard work in taking high carbon polluting plants off the system - all existing coal plants for example - by the early 2020s. It also means continuing a rapid further expansion of renewables - offshore and onshore wind, tidal lagoons, solar and biomass so that renewables can produce perhaps the majority of power, one way or

another by 2030. It means finding the way to ensure that a modest development of supporting gas plant comes on stream as support to predominantly low carbon power, instead of carrying out a central power function as now. And it means rapidly developing carbon capture and storage for any future new coal plants and, in the longer term, for gas plants too. It means, alongside that agenda, moving forward rapidly on demand side reduction measures so that the system will need to provide far less power anyway, and joining us up with other low carbon power sources in Europe through interconnectors.

It's a hefty commitment to make but one that demonstrates to anyone who doubts it that Labour really is at the heart of the climate change agenda, and

more importantly is preparing the tools to make it happen, rather than just talking about it.



Alan Whitehead, Conveyor of
SERA's parliamentary group

REVISITING NEW GROUND *Memories of SERA*

FEATURE

ANDY ROBERTS

SERA CELEBRATED ITS 40TH BIRTHDAY IN 2014. Former SERA Coordinator and New Ground Founder Andy Roberts shares some of his memories of SERA's bygone days.

I applied to be SERA "Co-ordinator" in February 1983 - and was interviewed in the basement of 9 Poland Street in Soho, a building then owned by the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust, which gave free office space to new and impecunious political and campaigning organisations, of which SERA was one.

http://www.powerbase.info/index.php/Poland_Street

To my surprise, but delight, I was offered the job - at £32 per week - theoretically a "part-time" job, but, well you know how it goes, in reality it occupied a huge part of my life (in a good way - I have no regrets) for the next 2 years.

In those days technology was "primitive" by today's standards - though we still functioned and communicated perfectly well, not so quickly of course, but quite adequately - something well worth remembering! In the office I used an old-fashioned manual type-writer, not even electric - using carbon paper to make copies. Members' Newsletters were reeled off on a Gestetner printer. There was a photo-copier which belonged to the building, which we could use - but this was expensive, and only used sparingly. This

was also pre-fax - so all written communication was by post or, if really urgent, physically delivered.

Membership - we used a card index system (membership cards were kept in a cardboard box and updated manually) and for membership mailings, to about 1,000 people, each envelope was written out by hand, although - thankfully - soon after I started, we began to computerise, and it was possible to generate blissful "address labels"!

Smoking - well I guess most people now would be shocked to know that there were then no restrictions whatsoever on this! I smoked occasionally, and one of our regular volunteers chain-smoked, which - quite rightly - led to complaints by those with whom we shared our office space.

One of the first things I was tasked with was setting up a magazine for SERA - and I worked on this with a small working-group - or "collective" as we said in those days! We originally proposed to call the magazine "Common Ground", but after a letter from an organisation that was also planning to use this name, we settled - after long (as you can imagine) discussions - on the title "New Ground". I must say that I am rather pleased to see that, 30 years on, New Ground still exists!

Articles for each issue of New Ground were typed on a "golf-ball" electric type-writer, then literally "cut" (with scissors) and "pasted" (with glue) onto

templates. Headlines were done with "Letraset" - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Letraset>

Among other things, New Ground's first issue included contributions from some of the candidates for the Labour leadership contest after the 1983 general election; in the second, the late Robin Cook, who was then our Honorary President, contributed a seminal article - still worth reading - Towards An Alternative Ecological Strategy.

Politics - in those days, although of course we lobbied the Labour Party on "environmental" issues, SERA was not actually affiliated to the Labour Party, although many Constituency Labour Parties were affiliated to SERA - and there were always vigorous debates on this particular issue. SERA was also perhaps more idealistic and utopian, describing itself as "the green wing of the labour movement, and the socialist wing of the green movement", and had a broad view of "green" politics. For instance SERA strongly supported such initiatives as the Lucas Aerospace Workers Plan - now largely forgotten, but, in my view, well worth re-visiting. <http://www.redpepper.org.uk/a-real-green-deal/>. And SERA organised two Red-Green conferences, in 1993 and 1994, bringing together a wide range of activists from the wider labour and green movements - which I believe were the first of their kind in the UK.

Andy Roberts

OUR BETTER ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN

Labour's manifesto launched

ALEX MAYER

LABOUR'S MANIFESTO spells out our better plan to protect and improve our environment. Here are SERA's highlights:

A MILLION GREEN JOBS

The next Labour Government will work to make Britain a world leader in low carbon technologies over the next decade, creating a million additional green jobs. This aim will be supported by ambitious domestic carbon reduction targets, including a legal target to remove the carbon from our electricity supply by 2030, and a major drive for energy efficiency.

WARM, ENERGY EFFICIENT HOMES

We will bring down energy bills by making homes more energy efficient, delivering a million interest free loans for energy

home improvements in the next Parliament. For those on low incomes, we will make 200,000 homes warm every year, delivered street-by-street by local authorities and community organisations.

LEADING GLOBAL ROLE IN TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

We want an ambitious agreement on climate change at the UN Climate Change conference in Paris, in December. We will make the case for ambitious emissions targets for all countries, strengthened every five years on the basis of a scientific assessment of the progress towards the below two degree goal. And we will push for a goal of net zero global emissions in the second half of this century, for transparent and universal rules for measuring, verifying and reporting emissions, and for an equitable

deal in which richer countries provide support to poorer nations in combatting climate change.

AIR POLLUTION

We will deal with the problems of air pollution by giving local authorities the powers they need, backed up by a national framework.

ANIMAL WELFARE

We will build on our strong record on animal welfare – starting with an end to the Government's ineffective and cruel badger cull. We will improve the protection of dogs and cats, ban wild animals in circuses, defend the hunting ban and deal with wildlife crime associated with shooting.

Alex Mayer

5 USEFUL FACTS

FROM OUR
PARLIAMENTARY PACK

1

AMBITIOUS ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE:

Labour will stick to ambitious, legally binding targets for carbon reduction. We will decarbonise our electricity supply by 2030. We'll create 1 million new green jobs.

CHEAPER, GREENER

ENERGY: Labour will reform the energy market to allow fairer access to renewables and to break the stranglehold of the 'Big Six' energy companies by separating their generation and supply businesses, and forcing them to buy and sell their electricity through an open exchange.

2

3

ANIMAL WELFARE

CHAMPIONS: starting with an end to the Government's inhumane and ineffective badger cull, banning wild animals in circuses and a commitment to maintain the ban on hunting with dogs.

4

RAILWAYS BACK

ON TRACK: Labour will introduce a strict cap on annual rail fare increases across all routes and legislate so the public sector can run our railways lines again.

5

FROM HUG A HUSKY, TO CUT THE GREEN

CRAP: The Tories talked the talk on environmental issues before they came to power, but then Cameron gave top environmental posts to known climate change deniers.

**ELECTION
SPECIAL
2015**