

# Leeds Green Light

Autumn 2013

## No fate but what we make

We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children. What kind of home do we want for ourselves and our children? We have a choice. We can turn our Earth into a toxic, overheated rubbish dump or we can start to take proper care of it and cherish the forests, oceans and open spaces. We can easily transform our cities into decent places with green parks and fresh air or we can carry on the old ways: cities clogged with traffic, space taken for car parks, air full of poisonous fumes.

This leaflet sets out some of the ideas of the Green Party. It's not about doom and gloom. We have a vision of a hopeful future where prosperity is shared; a future Britain without the need for foodbanks and extortionate payday loans.

## Beyond tree-hugging

We're not just concerned for the environment. We are working hard to make a fairer society. Equality is important: we know now that more equal societies do better on a whole range of issues – people live longer, health is better, there is less violence and more trust.<sup>1</sup>

## Unequal Britain

Britain is very unequal – the rich continued to get richer at the expense of the poor even under Labour. Greens are committed to changing that. We want to end the scandal of a tax regime where multinational corporations like Amazon<sup>2</sup> and Starbucks<sup>3</sup> can record their profits in tax havens and pay nothing to the country where they trade. We want to increase minimum pay so that everyone gets a living wage.

## Back in public hands

The privatisation of essential industries has been a disaster for ordinary people in our country. Look at the privatized water companies. Almost

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.equalitytrust.org.uk](http://www.equalitytrust.org.uk)

<sup>2</sup> [.bbc.co.uk/news/business-22549434](http://bbc.co.uk/news/business-22549434)

<sup>3</sup> [www.ukuncut.org.uk](http://www.ukuncut.org.uk).

one third of the money spent we pay to water companies goes to banks and investors as interest and dividends.

People are paying £2 billion more a year – or around £80 per household - than they would be if the water and sewerage supply was publicly financed.

Six companies are avoiding millions in tax by routing profits through tax havens, using a regulatory loophole the Con-Dem government has chosen to keep open.

The CEOs of the 19 water companies were paid almost £10m in salaries and other bonuses in 2012.<sup>4</sup>

The Green Party wants to end this scandal and ensure that utility and railway companies are run for the benefit of everyone, not just for directors and shareholders.

Green Party MP Caroline Lucas is promoting a Private Member's Bill to bring the railways back into public ownership. This could save the public purse £1 billion each year.



## Addicted to growth

The western world is obsessed by economic growth. We cannot continue to live this way. Collectively we are living beyond the Earth's capacity to sustain us. Already we need one and a half Earths to give us what we are taking in terms of things like minerals, timber and even fish. Greens will continue to work for sustainable ways of living so that future generations can enjoy our living planet.

Of course growth is needed in developing countries to take people out of grinding poverty. But repeated studies have shown that, in developed

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<sup>4</sup> Leaking Away: The financial costs of water privatization. [www.corporatewatch.org](http://www.corporatewatch.org)

societies, endless growth doesn't make people happier.<sup>5</sup> We damage family life by working long hours and destroy the beauty of our countryside.



'RAT RACE'

By kind permission of Polyp. [www.polyp.org.uk](http://www.polyp.org.uk)

## End tuition fees

During the 2010 general election campaign the Libdems promised that they would not increase tuition fees. They broke that promise. They chose to join the Tory government and tripled fees. The three major parties all agree that students should pay for higher education. The Green Party disagrees: we think that society needs well educated people. We need doctors, teachers, scientists and people in hundreds of other professions. We would pay for that from a properly progressive income tax and robust action against tax avoidance.

Greens also want to move towards ending the need for private education by assimilating private schools into the state sector. The education system in Finland is one of the best in the world. The private sector is very small because well-funded state schools offer a world class education for everyone.

<sup>5</sup> See eg Growth Fetish: Clive Hamilton, Allen & Unwin 2003

# A Green New Deal

The present government has no plan to fix the UK economy. The Tories have cut entitlements for people with disabilities and handed that money to the richest in society by way of tax cuts. They have no plans except more cuts and more austerity.

We argue for a Green New Deal.<sup>6</sup> This is a sustained programme to invest in energy conservation and renewable energy sources. This is a win-win. First it would radically improve home energy conservation and build a renewable energy supply system. Secondly, it would create large numbers of new “green collar” construction jobs. It was this kind of large-scale public sector investment that took America out of the Depression in the 1930s.

## Give peace a chance

Global spending on weapons is estimated at \$1.7 *trillion*.<sup>7</sup> Britain’s share of that is around \$60 billion. This is money that could be spent in the health service or providing people with better education. But Tory and Labour politicians prefer to spend it on Trident submarines that we will never use or aircraft carriers for which there are no aircraft.

One of the reasons we spend so much is that mainstream British politicians are too weak to stand up to American presidents when they ask us to help with their endless military adventures. Greens want to have UK foreign policy made here, not in Washington, and put a stop to this waste of lives and money.

## You can help

- Get active: there are loads of groups you can join – Friends of the Earth, People & Planet, Conservation Volunteers. You’ll be doing useful work and improving your social life.
- Don’t buy stuff you don’t need. Try and think about what happens when you get rid of it.
- Support the Greens. All over the country Green Party councillors are making a real difference. We want to get more Green councillors elected in Leeds. You can help by making sure you are registered to vote here and voting Green. Having a poster in your window at election times is a big help.
- Be hopeful! Yes, the challenges are big. But they can be overcome.

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<sup>6</sup> See “A Green New Deal” at [www.neweconomics.org](http://www.neweconomics.org)

<sup>7</sup> <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS>