

Sian Berry and Jonathan Bartley speech to Green Party Autumn Conference



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JB

Thank you Cleo.

It's great to be back in Bristol. Where we are showing how Greens on a council can change everything.

The real opposition.

Leading when it comes to the big ideas. And less than 2 years away from taking City Hall.

SB

Conference, today we are putting the other parties on notice.

To the Lib Dem's – we are ready to take your place as England's third party.

To Labour – thanks for listening. Where Greens lead others follow. We're the first to congratulate you on your journey. From being 'intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich' to standing up to the utter nonsense that was "greed is good".

But Labour's leaders still have a lot to learn from the Green Party. They still have to drop that old 20th century notion that says 'growth is good'.

Greens put real prosperity at the heart of our policies. A real transition to a healthy economy that stays within the environment's limits because what else can it do?

Greens want an end to airport expansion. Not at City Airport, not at Heathrow, not at Gatwick or Bristol, Labour have failed on this.

Greens only support clean energy, but Labour won't give up on fossil fuels or nuclear.

Greens say shut down the bomb factories of BAE and build for the future – Labour would renew Trident, and put billions into military hardware, nuclear weapons, that we cannot ever use.

And so many times it's been the Greens alone standing up for freedom of movement in Europe, just as we stood up for refugees and migrants and said 'we welcome you'

Conference, time after time Greens are the real alternative. We go further, we do it better – and Labour should expect us to challenge them and to keep getting stronger.

JB

And then there's the Tories. Reckless and cruel.

From gambling with peace in Northern Ireland to the despicable treatment of the Windrush generation.

Cut after cut. From cradle to grave. Children's centres, schools, youth services, community centres, libraries, social care.

And then they have the audacity to say austerity is over when the majority of welfare cuts are still to come.

Conference we spoke up about austerity when everyone else stayed silent – and we say reverse the cuts which are destroying people's lives.

And scrap universal credit.

Their big new idea? A festival of Brexit Britain.

A festival of Brexit Britain!

Roll up to see the world's longest lorry queue, a parade of empty shops and pin the blame on the Remainder.

A festival where you can refuse to pay the entrance fee and then demand unlimited access to all the attractions.

Conference. We all know what is driving Brexit. This pitiful charade is being engineered so the Tories can say they ended Freedom of Movement.

Sacrificing people's lives and futures.

It's not just cruel, it's not just reckless, it's no way to govern a country.

And Conference, it is dangerous.

It has paved the way for the rise of the far right in our communities and on our streets.

And let's be clear. If Brexit does go ahead, deal or no deal, we will have to stand firmer than ever.

A new wave of attacks on the poor and the powerless. A war on human rights, civil liberties, workers and our environment.

Opening the floodgates to a new tide of racism and nationalism.

What's the point of beating the National Front, the EDL and the BNP – if you then bow your knee to UKIP?

SB

We have all watched in dismay as the right have rioted in Germany, taken Cabinet seats in Austria, and promoted 'Swexit' for Sweden.

But our sister parties in Europe are showing us the way. From the German Greens standing up to the extreme AFD, to the Dutch Greens running on a pro-migrant platform.

We stand up for migrants not only for their economic value. We stand firm in the belief that migration is a gift to us all, which enriches all our lives,

Greens reject the myth of 'skilled' and 'unskilled migrants'. Migrants are not just workers – they are our neighbours, friends, families.

Greens are best when we are internationalists – when we recognise that borders are created by people, and that they can be torn down, as well as put up.

Our country rejected and fought the hard right and Fascism 80 years ago and we will not allow their poisonous politics to take hold in Britain again.

Conference, there is a battle going on to defend the soul of our country and it's time to pick a side.

JB

Thank goodness for Caroline Lucas.

A shining light in Parliament – and a thorn in the side of the Government every single day.

Caroline, it has been a privilege to work alongside you. You have shown the importance of having a green on every council, on every assembly and in every Parliament. You've led the demand for a People's Vote. You've led this party, and this country.

Your voice rings louder and truer than any other. Thank you.

SB

And what about those who think a new party is the answer? That yet more vapid centrism is the solution to the problems we face?

We say – think again.

That's what got us into this mess. Stare hard into the so-called centre ground and all you can see is compromise, timidity and more of what has already failed.

It's not a vision.

And it's that muddled middle ground that allowed the bankers free rein. The planet to burn. And the Far Right to rise.

Well Conference it belongs in the past.

The future demands change. It demands politics with passion. Radical common sense, for the common good – what the Greens do best.

And far too many of the people pushing a new centrism are doing so as some kind of alternative to Brexit. This shows just how little they have learned from the vote to leave.

The politics of centrism. The blairite consensus is exactly what led to so many people and places feeling forgotten and blaming Europe.

Can't they see that people wanted real change?

The Green opposition to leaving the EU has the real revolution people are crying out for built in.

And when we get a People's vote we'll fight twice as hard to make sure we have that revolution when the Brexit hurricane has passed.

We were the first party to call clearly for a People's Vote and we've played a key part in building the campaign.

In the London Assembly the Greens proposed the motion that brought Labour members together with us and pushed the Mayor of London off his fence.

Green MEP Molly Scott Cato has dug forensically into the dirty money that bent our democracy to breaking point in 2016.

Just as for nearly 20 years Green MEPS have stood up so fiercely for our values, and for everyone's rights, showing the difference Greens make.

Thank you Keith, Jean and Molly for all you have done.

And it isn't over yet.

It's in our hands, and with our help, a People's Vote feels absolutely unstoppable.

JB

Conference Green politics will never be confined to parliamentary assemblies or council chambers.

It must also be outside banging on the doors.

To change everything we must be willing to put our bodies on the line.

That's why on Monday I stood outside Chelmsford Crown Court as fifteen of the bravest people in this country filed in to face a judge and jury who could send them to prison for life.

Their alleged crime? Stopping a deportation flight.

The Stansted 15 didn't just stop the flight taking off. They didn't just give people a chance to appeal and stay. They didn't just put their bodies on the line.

The Stansted 15 acted as our conscience. The conscience of every person in the country who believes that Britain is better than to shackle people and deport them into danger.

People from the very tip of our northern shores to the foot of Cornwall.

People who could but for the accident of birth be my mother, my father, my brother, my sister.

People who believe that no one should be torn from their families, stripped of their livelihoods and strapped to their seats on these brutal charter flights.

The Stansted 15 are not criminals. They are human rights defenders. They are heroes.

And today I call on the Crown Prosecution Service to see sense and drop the charges against them.

Conference the hypocrisy of those who celebrate the suffragettes and the anti-apartheid activists in one breath, but then turn their backs on those who fight for human rights today, is breathtaking.

We should be under no illusions that our civil liberties and our freedom to protest are under threat.

From those opposing the environmental vandalism of high speed rail to those fighting against new, dirty opencast mines.

Today we stand on the shoulders of so many giants. And we stand today on the shoulders of the three men who last week were jailed for their opposition to fracking.

Richard Roberts, Simon Blevins and Rich Loizou. You are on the right side of history and you have our thanks and deepest gratitude. You are environmental rights defenders and today we say that fracking must be banned and you must be set free.

Throwing people in prison is a dying industry's desperate death rattle.

But they can't arrest the whole of Lancashire.

It was a pleasure to see so many come for the green week of action at Preston New Road.

We are winning the fight against fossil fuels. And Our victory is inevitable.

Police may have dragged us away from Kirby Misperton but it was Third Energy that left with its tail between its legs.

We evicted Europa Oil and Gas from Leith Hill.

We booted Banks Group from Druridge Bay.

We are going to kick Cuadrilla out from Lancashire.

And I have a message for all the frackers. Your days are numbered. Fossil fuels must stay in the ground and we won't stop until your dirty industry is thrown in the dustbin of history.

SB

Conference, it's four months since the leadership elections began.

Thank you to everyone who stood and spoke so positively about their passion for our party.

More new members signed up in July than at any time since the last general election.

We are honoured to be your new co-leaders with the job of showing the country how Green politics can change everything.

And we extend a huge welcome to everyone who has joined!

Congratulations to Amelia too. Our members backing her for a third term as deputy leader is a real endorsement for her tireless work, the way she campaigns so fiercely for equality, leading our work on fighting cuts and fighting misogyny.

And come rain or shine Amelia is out working with local parties, inspiring activists and supporting election campaigns all across England and Wales.

Thank you Amelia.

JB

Conference, one thing that also became clear during the leadership elections is that we need to be better as a party in the way we relate to one another.

We need to be willing to listen to those we disagree with. And when we disagree, we should disagree well.

We are proud of our policies on free speech. On peacebuilding, conflict resolution and restorative justice.

But let us lead the way by our actions, not just point in the right direction.

Let's pledge today to be the good in any argument, not just the right. To be the change we want to see.

SB

Conference, our members code of conduct, tells us to assume the best of each other, in all our interactions.

So let's do our vital work together with the right generosity and integrity.

Let's work for the common good, with ethics.

Let's make decisions by seeking consensus

Let's always demand respect – for opponents as well as our allies.

Because conference, Greens stand against all hatred.

Against Transphobia, biphobia and homophobia. Against disablism, racism, islamophobia and antisemitism. And against misogyny, sexism and patriarchy. And we must do so together in solidarity.

JB

Since the last conference the Holistic Review Commission has been working day and night to review our parties structures and practices. It has been a huge, complex – and long overdue – task.

A huge thank you to each and every member of the commission today. You have our support.

Conference, let's keep the party moving forward in every way.

In June, at the Black Cultural Archives just off Windrush Square in Brixton, I was proud to launch a new fund in memory of Deyika Nzeribe, who was our candidate for Mayor of Manchester. The fund will support candidates from ethnicities that are under-represented.

Among those attending was Donald Trump's nemesis Magic Magid – our grand Lord Mayor of Sheffield – who is showing us exactly how to shake things up.

We need to invest in the next generation of Green leaders. We need more chances for new people to get the skills they need to develop and shine, with more access to Campaign School, In It To Win It and the Young Greens amazing 30under30 programme.

Let's build up a team for each region – ready to hit the ground running when by-elections are called.

Conference, when Greens get elected we change everything. That's why we are planning for a shadow cabinet with a wealth of strong, challenging green voices holding the Government to account.

Showing why the Department for Work and Pensions should be renamed the office for welfare and wellbeing. Why the Home Office should become the department of security and welcome. And why the Treasury should be transformed into the ministry for economic transformation.

SB

Conference, we are all ambitious for our party. And we are right to be.

This May saw our best local election results ever. We have a record number of councillors. We made stunning breakthroughs on 6 new councils. Trafford, Peterborough, Knowsley, Richmond, Birmingham and Burnley.

Taking seats from Conservatives and Labour in equal number.

And what a win in Lambeth! London Greens are now the official opposition on Lambeth council after Jonathan was elected with four new gains. Our wins broke open Labour's complacent, one party state in style.

Labour tried to wipe Greens out.

How they tried. They had MPs down to campaign. They had the Mayor of London down. But they could not keep the Greens down.

I am so pleased to see in the hall today Sandy Hore-Ruthven who has just launched his campaign to be next mayor of Bristol.

We need someone leading this city with the courage to invest in our future – well done and good luck Sandy!

Friends we have Greens elected to 68 local authorities holding them to account. We hold the balance of power in places like Stroud, the Forest of Dean and Worcester.

But the next local elections are just seven months away. We will be defending a record number of councillors, and we want to win a record number of new seats too.

We are on our way to becoming the country's third party.

So let's hit the streets, knock on doors, and start those conversations, that will get a Green voice on every council.

JB

Conference, every Green who stands for election. Every Green who campaigns. Every Green in the Town Hall, in the Assembly or Parliament brings about change.

And the Green Party changes lives.

Earlier this year I went to campaign for Rosamund Kissi-Debrah, our Lewisham by-election candidate.

Together we visited her daughter's memorial outside the children's ward at University Hospital.

The memorial is made up of a thousand paper cranes. Each individually decorated by her school friends. A Japanese legend says that anyone who folds a thousand origami cranes will be granted a wish.

Rosamund's wish is that the Government wakes up to the air pollution epidemic and takes action.

Her daughter Ella was nine when she died of breathing difficulties. She had visited hospital 27 times in the preceding three years. Her final admission happened during one of the worst air pollution episodes in London.

Conference, it is green voices that put air pollution on the agenda, when no one else was talking about it. It is Green voices that are pushing it up the agenda now.

And every Green Voice calling for a country wide car free day, a new Clean Air Act, clean air zones, an end to waste incineration, no more road building and investment in walking and cycling, is helping Rosamund's wish to come true.

SB

Conference, let me tell you about the ways our bright Green ideas shine through and win.

From 20mph speed limits to community renewable energy. Look out soon for rent controls, the end of immigration detention, and road pricing to clean up our air.

These ideas, radical now, will seem so normal in a few years, mark our words.

We are already winning the battle of ideas in London,

The Labour Mayor Sadiq Khan was not going to do anything to plug the huge gaps from cuts in council youth services – he said it wasn't his job.

That is until we got involved!

Thanks to our pressure we now have £45 million going back into youth workers, projects and youth centres in London.

It took even more pressure, at all levels, to get the Mayor to change his mind and back ballots for residents on estates facing redevelopment and demolition.

And having won democracy for estates, now we want to win more rights for private renters.

To end section 21 notices – the most simple change, removing a clause from

the Housing Act so that no-fault evictions cannot happen.

So that renters who pay the rent and want to stay can't just be turfed out.

It's always a fight but we will always stick up for the fact that Housing is a human right.

Like our Brighton and Hove councillors David Gibson and Tom Druitt. Homeless people there now have a secure overnight shelter thanks to their courage and determination.

Conference, when we get elected and when we work with campaigners and communities, we can always win these battles. It's what Green politics does best.

It's why so many of you joined, it's why I am stood here today, and it's why together we can win more arguments and change so much more.

JB

Conference, we need fundamental change and we need it right now.

This summer's heatwave must be a wake up call.

Climate change should be on the front page of every newspaper, every day.

And conference, we won't debate with climate deniers.

There isn't time.

The UN warned just last week that the biggest enemy is not denial – but complacency. We are nowhere near to doing enough.

And we won't succeed by thrashing around with the same economic settlement that has failed for so long.

The scale of this crisis demands nothing short of system overhaul.

The decisions we make today dictate our tomorrow.

That's why we must say a firm "no" to airport expansion and road building, and reject the vanity projects of HS2 and Hinkley. And say "yes" instead to a renewable energy revolution, a local transport revolution, and the economic transformation that we so desperately need.

And we also need to get real about wealth redistribution.

Conference did you know that there was just two percent difference in the tax and spending plans of the other major parties at the last election? Just two

percent!

Rather than shift wealth from top to bottom, both parties are entrenching inequality, and levels of consumption and growth that are unsustainable.

The problem is not that there isn't enough wealth. The problem is that the wealth is in the wrong hands.

And conference it requires boldness to say it. And then it requires the political will to make change happen.

So we're saying it now. It's time to shift away from the narrow obsession with Gross Domestic Product, it's time for real, effective wealth distribution and it's time to reprogramme our economy to put people and planet first.

SB

18 months ago, Caroline and Jonathan stood before you and floated the idea of a 4 day working week.

I have never seen a Green Party proposal capture the public imagination so quickly.

Since then, the momentum for this idea has grown and grown, with Frances O'Grady, the latest to support our call at the TUC conference.

Just this week the Communication Workers Union won a cut in hours for Royal Mail workers without any loss of pay.

Demonstrating how bright Green ideas can bring about real change, when we put them forward with passion.

Well now we want to go further.

JB

It's time to shift away from the culture which sees us work harder and harder for longer and longer, often without reward or satisfaction.

And to recognise that true freedom will only be found when people have more control of their time and how it is spent.

That is why we are announcing the idea of a new 'free time index'. Greens want the next Budget, and every future Budget, to include a new economic indicator that measures people's leisure time.

Time when they are not at work – or doing work on a long commute. Free time to have a family life, relax, and pursue the things they care about.

It should be an aim of Government to see a yearly increase in this Free Time Index, so that the quality of time which is truly our own becomes the real measure of wellbeing.

SB

And there's much more to do. People need to thrive and grow while they are at work. Lifelong learning should be available to everyone.

Yet current employment law only allows workers in companies with over 250 employees to ask for unpaid training leave.

It's pathetic

Greens would change all that, so no-one has to feel stuck in one job for life.

All workers should be able to grow and learn throughout their careers, get trained in the things they need to know for their next job, improve how they do the one they have, or learn a new skill or trade.

Today we are promising to fight for paid training leave for every worker.

Conference with the right political will we can transform employment into more than just work.

Spanish workers have a right to training leave. And we should have it too.

SB

Conference –

The Prime Minister insists there will be no election in the coming months. She's very clear on that.

But with her track record, that's exactly why we are getting the party ready right now for a general election.

We know that Green parties all over the country have been selecting candidates but we want to see more of these reports every day when we come into the office.

We want to see more of you – our brilliant, diverse, eloquent, talented members – selected and on those ballot papers.

We aim to stand a record number of candidates and we want to give voters in every constituency the chance to vote Green.

JB

Conference – our influence grows when we win.

A green vote is the most powerful vote anyone can cast. And change comes from winning every vote we can.

Every green vote amplifies our voice and our ideas and makes others sit up and listen.

Every green vote sends a message. So let's get out on our streets, knock on every door and fight for every last vote to win the change we need to see.

JB

Tell them there is only one party that believes everything must change.

That has the radical, common sense policies people are crying out for.

That there is a clear choice between the change that the Green Party is fighting for and the timid tinkering of the rest.

That only one party wants to scrap Trident and put the money into healthcare.

Only one party would scrap Ofsted, endless testing and league tables, and put children back at the centre of our education system.

Scrap Nuclear power, arms trade subsidies and fossil fuel subsidies. Bring in a frequent flier levy not bigger airports.

Only one party truly believes in localism and creating a zero waste economy.

And only one party will make Britain beautiful again, halt the destruction of the natural world, stop the badger cull and extend the hunting act.

SB

Only one party has committed to the full reinstatement of the NHS.

And to halving the prison population.

Only one party will clean up deadly air pollution with the right urgency, and make places fit to walk and cycle.

Only one party believes that every home should be a powerhouse.

That people with a right to secure housing are free people.

That a planning system fit for purpose puts people first not developer profits.

A party that is uncompromising on freedom of movement and welcomes refugees and migrants.

That believes our future lies in building bridges not walls

JB

Only one party rejects the love affair with growth, and puts a stable, resilient economy and the battle against climate breakdown first.

Only one party refuses to measure economic success with the blunt instrument of GDP but looks at real wellbeing.

We're the only ones who will truly shift the wealth from top to bottom with a wealth tax.

The only ones who believe we should scrap sanctions, and universal credit, and bring in a universal basic income.

And only one party is committed to transforming working life and cutting down our working week.

SB

We're clear what we stand for. And we know you're ready to stand for it too.

Greens pick a side.

We know that the world we need to build means changing everything, and we're not afraid to say that.

With Greens in the room the change we need has a voice and that world becomes possible.

And together conference – with you in this room – we can win.

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