

Greens respond to Labour manifesto



16 May 2017

***Manifesto is a 'step in the right direction' but 'fails to address some of the biggest issues of the day'**

***Co-leader Jonathan Bartley: 'Labour is trying to be all things to all people and failing'**

The Green Party has responded to the Labour Party's manifesto, which was launched in Bradford this morning [1], calling on the party to go further and commit to a full vision for a fair and sustainable future.

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

"This has been called the boldest Labour manifesto in a generation, and that's no surprise since much of it appears to be based on the Green Party's 2015 manifesto. Where the Greens have led, Labour has followed – but they still have a long way to travel on the road to a truly sustainable future and a fair, open society. It's said that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, but they have to be consistent.

"Labour is trying to be all things to all people and failing. You can't pour money into Hinkley and create a renewable energy revolution. You can't solve the air pollution crisis while expanding airports and roads. You can't be a peacebuilder while renewing Trident. You can't transition to a new economic model while hanging onto 20th century ideas where growth is the only answer. It's time Labour embraced our full vision for the future instead of cherry picking a few good Green policies, then contradicting them.

"To see the Labour Party give up on freedom of movement and fail to offer a ratification referendum on a final deal with the EU is disappointing. Only the Green Party is committed to keeping Britain close to our European neighbours, building a truly fair economy and protecting our environment. Labour's economics have shifted in a positive way – but they still don't offer a complete package to transform this country for the better."

Notes:

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2017-39930865>

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Green Party accuses Tories of 'empty promises' on workers' rights



15 May 2017

The Greens have responded to the Conservative Party's announcements on workers' rights today [1].

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

"The Conservative credibility gap on workers' rights couldn't be wider. It is almost laughable that the Tories are trying to pitch themselves as a party that stands up for workers' rights. The Conservative Government tried to bring in anti-strike laws [2], oversaw a huge increase in zero hours contracts [3] and attempted to shut down trade unions [4].

"Leaving workers in a precarious position, unsure if they're going to have enough money to pay their rent or food bills, and trying to silence their collective voice is no way to create a happy, healthy workforce. Today's empty promises will not make us forget how the Tories have treated workers with total disdain during their time in Government.

"Theresa May repeatedly says one thing and does another. But the Green Party will always stick up for workers' rights, not just during an election campaign. We're the only party with a positive vision for the future world of work, exploring bold ideas like a shorter working week and universal basic income."

Notes:

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2017-39917472>
2. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/01/24/120-tory-mps-back-calls-tougher-anti-strike-laws-end-rail-misery/>
3. Statistics published in March revealed 905,000 people were employed on zero hours contracts, an increase of about 101,000 in a year: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/people-in-employment-on-a-zero-hours-contract-mar-2017>
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/jul/15/trade-unions-conservative-offensive-decades-strikes-labour>

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Green Party pledges to scrap SATs and ditch academies



15 May 2017

***Green Party promises to plug £7billion funding gap facing education**

***Vix Lowthion: "We need to put the enjoyment, creativity, and inspiration back into school"**

The Green Party has promised to abolish SATs tests and end the academies programme as it announced its plans for an inspiring education system [1].

Vix Lowthion, Green Party education spokesperson and secondary school teacher, has pledged to end the practice of testing children from the age of seven through SATs, freeing teacher and pupils from "pointless, pressured testing".

The Green Party believes parents and teachers should control children's education – not businesses – and Ms Lowthion has put forward plans to end the academies programme and bring existing academies back under local authority control.

Ms Lowthion also promised to invest £7billion in the education system to fill the funding gap created by years of underinvestment and cuts. Figures show that by 2020, 99% of schools will have been hit by a funding cut – the average primary school will have lost £103,000, and the average secondary school will have lost £470,000 [2].

Vix Lowthion, Green Party education spokesperson and secondary school teacher, said:

"We want to create an inspiring education system that transforms lives and transforms Britain – but that can't happen without the very basic foundations being in place and this Government has been removing them brick by brick. How are schools meant to prepare children for life when 99% will suffer from funding cuts and children and teachers are subjected to pointless, pressurised testing?

"We need to make up for the enormous shortfall, the massive neglect, in our education system by plugging the £7billion spending deficit. At the same time as schools are getting less resources, more is being asked of teachers and pupils. Getting rid of SATs tests would be one big step towards putting the enjoyment, creativity, and inspiration back into school and ensure teachers are free to teach."

The launch of the Green Party's education policy was held at Sandown Bay

Academy in the Isle of Wight, which is facing closure after claims the school is not bringing in enough money [3].

Lowthion added:

"The academies programme has taken schools out of the hands of local authorities and parents and given them over to private businesses. That means that if a school isn't performing a commercial interest, it can be shut down at will by the owners, leaving pupils without a school to go to. We would bring existing academies back under local authority control so that our children's education is in the hands of teachers and parents, not businesses."

Notes:

1. Details of launch: 10am, Monday 15 May 2017, Sandown Bay Academy, The Fairway, Sandown, PO39 9JH.
2. <http://schoolcuts.org.uk/#!/>
3. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hampshire-3987584>

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Green Party pledges to end immigration detention at women's manifesto launch at Yarl's Wood



13 May 2017

***Greens launch manifesto for gender equality at Yarl's Wood detention centre ahead of major demonstration [1]**

***Pledges to shut down detention centres, protect sex workers through decriminalisation, and save women's healthcare**

***Deputy leader Amelia Womack: "The detention of asylum seekers in centres such as Yarl's Wood is inhumane, costly and totally unnecessary"**

The Green Party will launch its women's manifesto at 11am today (May 13) outside Yarl's Wood detention centre in Bedfordshire. The manifesto's three key policies all relate to providing safety for all, regardless of gender.

The party is calling for an end to immigration detention, leading to the closing of Yarl's Wood where the majority of female asylum seekers are held while their claims are being processed. In the short term, the Green Party are calling for the release of women who have experienced sexual violence so that their claim can be processed in the community, and would ban male staff from coming into contact with female detainees, who currently supervise detainees while showering, dressing and using the toilet. Hundreds of complaints about sexual abuse and mistreatment have been raised by Yarl's Wood detainees over the last decade [2].

The Greens are also promising to provide safety for sex workers through decriminalisation of both the sale and purchase of sex. This comes after UN [3] and Amnesty International [4] recommendations over the last year, showing that making sex work illegal only reduces safety.

The Green Party has also pledged to reverse the cuts to health care that have disproportionately affected women and other marginalised groups [5] [6].

The full pledges are to:

End immigration detention

- Immediately act to protect the most vulnerable asylum seekers who have experienced rape, sexual abuse or torture, by allowing their claims to be processed in the community
- Implement a three month maximum processing time for asylum applications
- Funding for integrated support for asylum seekers
- In the long term work to abolish immigration detention centres to enable all claims to be processed in the community

Keep sex workers safe

- Decriminalise sex work, in line with research from Amnesty International and the UN
- Amend existing criminal records held by sex workers
- Zero tolerance of coercion, violence or sexual abuse

Save women's healthcare

- End pay freezes for public sector workers
- Introduce safe levels of staffing across the NHS
- Reinstate sexual health services

The Green Party's other pledges to stand up for safety also include the role of roll out a UK-wide strategy to tackle domestic violence, scrapping the "rape clause" for those wishing to claim child benefit, and restoring legal aid to prevent victims being forced to represent themselves against their abusers in court.

The women's manifesto goes on to announce measures to improve mental health services, close the gender pay gap and support unpaid carers, those who are disabled and older women, and policies to increase gender parity in government.

Amelia Womack, Green Party deputy leader, said:

"Detaining asylum seekers is inhumane, costly and totally unnecessary. Women who are coming to the UK seeking refuge are being detained in appalling conditions in centres like Yarl's Wood, often for years with no end to their incarceration in sight. We can be so much better than this, a confident and caring country that welcomes people in need instead of closing our borders, building walls and locking up vulnerable people who need help. The bold policies we're announcing today show that the Green Party is committed to standing up for everyone, and we are not afraid to speak out about issues other parties would rather shy away from. From asylum seekers to sex workers, as well as all of us who use the NHS, these policies set us on the path to building a tolerant, inclusive society."

Notes:

1. Amelia Womack, Green Party deputy leader, will launch the women's manifesto at 11am on May 13 at the entrance of Twinwoods Business Park, Thurleigh Rd, Milton Ernest MK44 1FD. Movement for Justice is organising a demonstration at Yarl's Wood on the same day from 1pm to 4pm. More information is available here:
<https://www.facebook.com/events/1397760473581688/>
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/jun/15/yarls-wood-report-calling-for-closure-decade-abuse-complaints>
3. <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/hiv-aids/sex-work-and-the-law-in-asia-and-the-pacific.html>
4. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/05/amnesty-international-publishes-policy-and-research-on-protection-of-sex-workers-rights/>
5. <https://www.unison.org.uk/about/what-we-do/fairness-equality/women/key-issues/women-and-public-spending-cuts/>
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/nov/19/austerity-women-men-low-income>
7. Green Party Women is a subgroup of the Green Party of England and Wales and welcomes both women, including trans women, as well as gender variant members.
8. The full women's manifesto will be available after the launch.

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Green Party uses election broadcast to insist it's 'time to change the game'



12 May 2017

***Spoof ad offers another boundary-pushing film from Green Party**

The Green Party is using its party election broadcast [1], which will be broadcast for the first time today (12 May), to take a satirical swipe at the broken nature of British politics.

The film uses humour to highlight the fact that politicians don't tell the truth, votes don't count and young people aren't listened to. 'The Race to Number 10' is a spoof advertisement for an imagined board game, rewarding cuts to public spending, lies on battle buses and reshuffles to get rid of Cabinet dissenters.

The film was the work of the independent creative company Creature of London, whose award-winning [2] film for the Greens for last year's local elections, 'The not so secret life of five-year-old politicians', was the most shared broadcast of all the political parties, receiving millions of views online [3].

Green Party head of communications said: "This is the party election broadcast that's worth watching. Creature have again proved that politics doesn't have to be dull, bringing biting satire to the broken state of British politics and helping the Green Party to make its powerful, and serious, case for changing the game."

Stu Outhwaite, Chief Creative Officer of Creature said: "You'd have to have been a raging sadist to be excited when the election was called. Well, either that or the creative agency that gets to make the Green Party's broadcast. The process (all two weeks of it) was a dream: we hope the finished spot might prove to be a bit of a nightmare for the other parties. Let's change the game."

This was Creature's fourth film for the Green Party. 'Change the Tune', a boy band spoof, also went viral [4].

Notes:

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPXtN1QW9uY&feature=youtu.be>
2. <http://smugglersite.com/4656/campaign-big-awards-brings-big-wins-for-smuggler-directors/>
3. <https://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/2016/04/15/the-greens-partys-%E2%80%98the-not-so-secret-life-of-5-year-old-politicians%E2%80%99-takes-the-internet-by-storm/>
4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PPgS7p40ERg>

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