

# Zack Polanski and Rachel Millward make affordability pledge on visit to volunteer foodbank

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Green Party Leader Zack Polanski and Deputy Leader Rachel Millward visited a Sussex foodbank this week to meet volunteers, call for an end to the normalisation of food bank use, and announce measures to tackle the affordability crisis.

### **'Normalised' foodbanks: a symbol of the affordability crisis**

Life in the UK has become unaffordable.

For a sign of just how bad things have got, look no further than the normalisation of food banks.

Barely a feature of life in this country 20 years ago, foodbanks and the emergency food parcels they provide have become an essential support for many households.

On their visit to the volunteer-led Community Fridge in Forest Row – which provides a vital service to the local community – Zack and Rachel highlighted the scale of the problem of food insecurity, and stressed that even those who are comfortable and in work can quickly find themselves affected.



Green Party Leader Zack Polanski and Deputy Leader Rachel Millward talk with Forest Row Community Fridge directors Jo and Gina (Photo: Aldo Ciarrocchi).

The numbers speak for themselves: around 6.5 million people a year turn to charitable food providers, and one in five people doing so are from a working household.

Zack said “The affordability crisis is something affecting nearly everyone, from the most vulnerable to people in work and comfortable, where any change in circumstance can push people over the edge into requiring a foodbank.”

Rachel meanwhile put the issue in the context of severe inequality in this country:

“The UK is the sixth largest economy in the world where the 50 richest families hold more wealth than the poorest 50% of the population. Yet millions face food insecurity, food poverty and turn to foodbanks to prevent them going hungry. A high proportion of these are people from working households.”

### **A “totally avoidable” crisis**

Make no mistake, the affordability crisis is not inevitable. As Zack made clear, it is a matter of political choice:

“This crisis is totally avoidable and down to choices made by this Labour government and previous Tory governments. The Greens have a plan which would make different choices, taking on corporate power and vested interests to give ordinary people a way out of this crisis”

During their visit to Forest Row, Zack and Rachel spoke about those different choices and how they could make life just that little bit more affordable – starting with energy bills.

When the current energy price cap ends in July, our bills are set to go up. At a time when all other costs are only going one way (not down...) an energy bill hike is the last thing anyone needs.

That's why the Greens are calling on the Government to stop energy bills rising in July by guaranteeing universal support with energy bills.



Green Party Leader Deputy Leader Rachel Millward speaks to media outside Forest Row Community Fridge (Photo: Aldo Ciarrocchi)

### **Affordability, affordability, affordability**

Of course, energy bills aren't the only pressure households face.

Housing costs are one of the biggest drivers of household poverty in the UK. So it will be no surprise that rent controls were the next step in the affordability plan Zack and Rachel laid out.

This call doubled down on the housing affordability pledges Zack made when launching the Green Party's campaign for the local elections last week ([read more on that here](#)).

Alongside local Greens' impressive record on providing affordable social homes in their communities, the Green Party has long campaigned for local authorities to have the power to control overheated rental markets in their

area – an obvious measure to protect households, but one that Labour simply refuses to consider.

The final affordability measure Zack and Rachel put forward may be less obvious, but no less important: rejoining the customs union.

Leaving the EU has been a disaster that has made us all poorer, with Brexit adding hundreds of pounds to the average family's grocery bill in the years since. Easing trade with our closest neighbours would be a significant step towards bringing down food prices for good.

Wherever you live, Greens know times are tough. The basics of having a nice life shouldn't feel unaffordable or out of reach – but for too many, they do.

It's time, as Rachel said, "to end the normalisation of food bank use and the scourge of food and energy poverty affecting so many families. Greens are bringing policies to the table to do just that."



Green Party Leader Zack Polanski and Deputy Leader Rachel Millward with Green Party supporters in Forest Row (Photo: Aldo Ciarrocchi)

### **Elect councillors with just two vested interests: people and planet**

Zack and Rachel weren't the only Greens in Forest Row. With hardly any notice, a crowd of over 200 Green Party supporters and campaigners turned out to welcome the party's leader and deputy leader.

After meeting volunteers at the foodbank and giving media interviews, Zack spoke to the assembled Greens about the "huge set of elections" in just three

weeks' time.

'Huge' not only because "we need to stop Nigel Farage", but also because local people "deserve better representation", and on 7<sup>th</sup> May they can vote Green to get it.

And what exactly does a Green vote get you?

In Zack's words: "People and councillors who are not in hock to vested interests – well I tell a lie. They have two vested interests: to protect people in the community and to protect the planet and the environment."

### **We deserve better: support people power vs billionaire backers**

Hannah Spencer's trailblazing win in Gorton and Denton and last week's stunning by-election win in Margate has shown that Green Party can indeed take on Nigel Farage's Reform party and win.

And we can do it again in May – but we'll need your help.

Labour and Reform are both backed by billionaires and take money from oil and gas, private healthcare, gambling and arms companies. Which means two things: 1) They work for them – not you. And 2) they have a lot of money.

We deserve better – and that's where you come in.

Donate to the Green Party to help us take on the vested interests and win big on 7th May.



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17 April 2026 by [Green Party](#)

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“The Prime Minister’s denials simply do not ring true, and the outrageous moral failings of this entire appointment mean he must resign.

“Keir Starmer told us he would be the Prime Minister who restored trust in politics, not the one to leave ministerial ethics in tatters. It grows ever clearer that he has misled Parliament on the question of vetting, and possibly also the King, whose sign-off is required for ambassadorial appointments.

“It is also very clear in Yvette Cooper’s letter to the foreign affairs select committee that she knew the vetting had failed. No more buck passing and scapegoating. If the Prime Minister has any integrity at all, he must go.”

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Embargo: 22:30 16th April 2026.

The Young Greens of England and Wales have today announced that their membership of the Young Greens (under 29-year-olds and students) has surpassed 50,000. This announcement makes them one of the largest youth political movements in Europe.

The milestone reflects an extraordinary surge of young people entering politics through the Green movement. This growth comes at a time when polling shows the Greens are increasingly the party of choice for younger voters. Recent polling conducted by YouGov indicates that the Greens are the most popular party among younger people, with particularly strong support among voters aged 18–24.

Young Greens Co-Chairs, Callum Clafferty and Ciara Alleyne, said the milestone demonstrates a generational shift in British politics.

"Fifty thousand young and motivated members is a huge milestone. But the real game changer is when we get them all hitting the streets ahead of these Senedd and local elections in May. Our generation refuses to accept a

politics that ignores the climate crisis, the housing crisis, and growing inequality. To coin a phrase, we're taking back control."

The Young Greens bring together members of the Green Party who are under the age of 29 or students, and organise campaigns on issues including climate action, renters' rights, education, and economic justice.

The rapid growth of the organisation mirrors the wider expansion of the Green Party itself, which has seen its membership surge dramatically in recent months, reflecting rising public appetite for a new political direction. The Green Party currently has over 226,000 members.

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