

Green Party calls on Government to ring fence funding for women's refuges



4 March 2018

*** Amelia Womack, Green deputy leader, makes after first speaking out about her own experience of domestic abuse last year**

*** Womack: "The Government is removing women's final safety net in their hour of greatest need"**

The Green Party has criticised the Government for "placing women's lives in danger" with its plans to change funding for refuges [1].

Amelia Womack, deputy leader of the Green Party, will call on the Government to ring-fence funding for refuges and other forms of short-term supported housing in the welfare system.

Womack will make the call in her speech to Green Party Spring Conference in Bournemouth today [2], after first speaking out about her own experiences of domestic abuse in June last year [3].

Amelia Womack, deputy leader of the Green Party, is expected to say:

"This Government claims to care about women – yet it's placing their lives in danger with plans to remove refuges from the welfare system. Removing women's final safety net when they are in their hour of greatest need.

"This is a matter of life and death. The Government must prove it is serious about women's safety and ring-fence funding for refuges."

At Autumn Conference in October last year Womack launched the Green Party's campaign to make misogyny a hate crime, which has since gathered cross-party support [4].

Womack is expected to say:

"When I shared my experience of domestic violence for the first time last year, I never imagined I'd be part of starting what quickly became such a defining and extraordinary moment in the story of women.

"From MeToo to TimesUp, it feels like we're hitting a tipping point that none of us saw coming this time last year. I'm so proud to have played a small part in giving other women the confidence to come forward and speak out about their experiences of misogyny.

"From the sweeping red walkways of Hollywood premieres to the corridors of the House of Commons, the carpets things have been swept under are now well and truly being shaken out."

Notes:

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/nov/26/womens-lives-at-risk-funding-changes-refuges-charities>
2. Green Party Spring Conference
The Green Party Spring Conference will see members from across the country come together to hear from the party's leaders, vote on policy and take part in discussion and debate on topics from Brexit to climate change.
* Leaders' speech by Jonathan Bartley and Caroline Lucas: Saturday 3 March, 2pm
* Deputy Leaders speech by Amelia Womack: Sunday 4th March, 3pm, via Facebook Live from March4Women in London
* Location: Bournemouth International Centre, Exeter Rd, Bournemouth, BH2 5BH
3. <https://www.stylist.co.uk/people/amelia-womack-green-party-manifesto-domestic-violence-abuse-interview/34153>
4. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/amber-rudd-misogyny-hate-crime-change-law-prejudice-women-home-secretary-greens-mps-charities-a8196786.html>

[Tweet](#)

[Back to main news page](#)

[Let's block ads! \(Why?\)](#)

Amelia Womack speech to Spring Conference



4 March 2018

Hello Conference!

Well, we made it. From the Arctic blizzards we battled through to get here, to what looks like the Costa Del Bournemouth today, it's great to be with you all.

When I shared my experience of domestic violence for the first time last year, I never imagined I'd be part of what quickly became such a defining and extraordinary moment in the story of women.

The months since I last addressed Green Party conference have been incredible.

Since my last speech, misogyny has been dragged into the open like never before. More and more women are speaking up about their own experiences of abuse, harassment and discrimination.

From #MeToo to #TimesUp, it feels like we're hitting a tipping point that none of us saw coming this time last year. Least of all the men that have been getting away with their various crimes for far too long.

Open secrets have been exposed.

Silences have been shattered.

From the sweeping red walkways of Hollywood premieres, to the corridors of the House of Commons, the carpets things have been swept under are now well and truly being shaken out.

I'm so proud to have played a small part in giving other women the confidence to come forward and speak out about their experiences of misogyny.

This has been an inspirational moment for women. Now it's up to us to turn this into a transformational one.

It's not enough to just speak out. We need to create real and lasting change.

This Government claims to care about women – yet it's placing their lives in danger with plans to remove refugees from the welfare system.

Removing women's final safety net when they are in their hour of greatest need.

Friends, this is a matter of life and death.

The Government must prove it is serious about women's safety and ring-fence funding for refugees.

It's time for real change.

Since we last met, I've been calling for misogyny to be treated as a hate crime. And it's been amazing to have thousands of extraordinary women around the country join my call.

I was inspired by women's groups in Nottingham, who successfully lobbied their local police commissioner to treat acts like street harassment and upskirting as a hate crime.

And it has really made a difference to women's lives. 94% of women asked said they were reassured after dealing with the police, and 82% said they were

satisfied by the action the police took.

It shows that when women speak out, organise, and fight back, we can take real action against the misogyny which permeates our society.

And so today, I'm making a promise to women of the Green Party.

This campaign started at the grassroots, and we can win at the grassroots.

So if you want to campaign to make misogyny a hate crime, I'll be by your side.

If you want to bring together women's groups in your community to make it happen, I'll be right there with you.

If you can get a meeting with your local police commissioner, I'll join you to help make the case.

Together, we'll make misogyny a hate crime in your community.

And as more and more places across Britain take this step, the harder it will be for Amber Rudd to look the other way.

I gave Amber Rudd a petition signed by thousands of people from across the country. She shut us out. I wrote her a letter, signed by an array of amazing women, including MPs from a range of political parties. She still shut us out.

But she can't ignore us forever.

The demand for change is growing along with a rising tide of women's voices. Misogyny is a hate crime and we demand the law recognises it as such.

A year ago, this would have been unthinkable. But today, we are unstoppable.

Speaking out is only the beginning. Together, we'll create lasting, structural change.

Change which makes this a safer and fairer country for all women.

Change which pushes misogyny to the margins of our society.

Change which is long, long overdue. But change which is coming.

And let me make one thing clear. When I talk about women – I am talking about all women.

Cis Women, trans women, women of all genders and none.

We are women, we are powerful. We are fierce and together we are dangerous. We have been fighting for far too long and we know one thing for sure – the patriarchy is going to fall.

But this isn't just about changing laws which help women here at home.

No campaign for women's equality can ignore the fact that globally [60 percent of chronically hungry people are women and girls](#).

That in no country have women achieved economic equality with men.

Or that women are still [more likely than men to live in poverty](#).

When we live in the 6th biggest economy in the world we have a moral duty to tackle global inequality.

A duty that's all the stronger because our colonial exploitation of people and resources has created a legacy which wreaks ongoing damage.

We must not reinforce the wrongs in which we continue to be complicit.

So in the face of recent revelations about the aid sector, we say that aid and development agencies must unequivocally uphold the rights of those they work with and the communities in which they are based.

And when aid workers fail in their moral duties, we must hold them to account.

But we also say this: aid organisations do incredibly important work. We must protect – and increase – the UK's aid budget. These revelations can not be used as a justification for throwing our duties to the global South on a bonfire.

As Greens, we will not let this happen. And as Greens, we want to go further still.

It's time to throw out the old centralised "we know best" charity-based models of aid.

It's time to show we understand that people know what they need best.

It's time to show we understand what empowerment really looks like.

Friends, we must move away from the colonial construct of givers and takers. We can truly start to end the power imbalance between even the most well-intentioned Western aid workers and those they are trying to help.

That's why we want to see more aid money given directly to people with the knowledge, the skills and the connections to drive real change.

Friends, those people are women.

We want gender targeted cash transfers, distributed with the help of local women's organisations; underpinned by business skills training; support networks of business women, and mentoring – to name but a few.

Enabling women to take part fully in their economies.

This is the best tool for aid. And we'd be putting it in the hands of those

best equipped to use it.

Because across the world, women living their daily lives are already acting as agents of transformational change through the decisions they make.

[Evidence shows](#) that when women are empowered and given more control of household resources, they spend it on food for their families, on their homes, their children, and on education.

And as they do this, whole communities are transformed.

Women are experts in their own lives, and are the backbones of their communities.

So let's transform our aid budget, so that it directly empowers women and girls around the world.

Let's put the future of development in their hands.

Hands to create an equal economy.

Hands to build an equal society.

Of course, as well as looking to the future, this is a moment to remember the women who have come before us.

This year is the centenary of partial suffrage for women.

One hundred years since the first women in the UK could vote.

Was that a right easily won? Like hell it was.

It took two groups of people to bring about this change.

The suffragists, the law-abiding citizens who wanted votes for women.

But was it enough?

The suffragettes on the other hand, were the radicals who turned the heat up on the movement.

Women across the UK took their protest to the streets, the churches, the railway stations and the post offices.

They weren't afraid to break the law. They weren't afraid to take direct action. They weren't afraid to put their bodies on the line.

I sometimes think about myself and which path I would choose.

What women in the Green Party would choose.

Of course, we're committed to nonviolent direct action, but I know too that we're ready to say when the law is wrong.

In the Green Party it's women who are on the front line.

Women like Alison Teal in Sheffield, standing up for the thousands of trees the Labour council are chopping down. 5,000 trees already lost.

Women like Cleo Lake who campaigned to change the name of Colston Hall – which was originally named after a slave-trader.

Women like Aimee Challenor who successfully took on TfL over the gender messaging of their announcements.

Environmental activism is led by women globally, and today I want to take a minute for us to think about Berta Casaires.

Berta was an award winning human rights and environmental activist in Honduras. She led the protest against the construction of a hydroelectric dam which if built would have destroyed huge swathes of pristine rainforest.

Two years ago yesterday, she was assassinated. Assassinated for protecting what she valued most, her people and the land in which they lived.

Here in the UK today, it's hard to imagine activism as a question of life or death. But make no mistake, our right to protest is being chipped away.

From the injunctions issued against HS2 protestors by the Secretary of State himself, to police spying on environmental activists, to the frackers taking campaigners to court – our right to resist is being attacked on all fronts.

Now is the time to stand up for our right to protest. Now is the time to fight for the rights of the local communities who are under threat from HS2, from fracking, from climate change.

It's said that well behaved women seldom make history. And this is true. But when I think about Tina and Cleo and Aimee and Sarah and Alison, I think there should be a second part of that phrase:

Well behaved women seldom define the future.

And I'm so glad to be in a party of women taking direct action for the world they want to win.

I am constantly inspired by movements that have come before me, from the Chartists and the Suffragettes, to the campaigners at Greenham Common to the Ford sewing machinists.

And those still campaigning today from steelworkers in Port Talbot, to the UCU lecturers.

And the 120 women on hunger strike in Yarl's Wood detention centre – striking and campaigning to ensure their rights are met.

Our solidarity is with them as they fight for their futures despite the threat of intimidation and deportation.

Women making change every day – in their work places, in their communities and on the streets.

We need women like this in our council chambers too. And that's why I now want to bring it back to the local elections which are just two months away.

I travel the country and constantly see the difference Greens make when they get elected. And let's be clear about something. When we get elected, it's not because we are parachute into safe seats or get washed in on a wave of populism.

We get elected through hard work and by representing our communities.

This is my 8th Conference speech, and I appreciate that nearly every time I have talked about the power of our councillors and canvassing. But I do it because every vote really does count.

The number of councillors I've met who have won or lost seats by a handful of votes means that every person we talk to could be the difference that wins us a seat.

If your local party doesn't canvass, then go to a regional action day and learn the techniques. Bring them back to your community. Talk to people.

One of my favourite parts of my job is listening to people on the doorsteps across England and Wales. So many people feel like they've been ignored for decades.

We show people that politics can be done differently. We help people see that the Green Party has consistently led the way. And we transform people's lives, especially the lives of women.

Today the March4Women took place and I celebrate with my sisters in spirit.

Women who came before us, and fought for rights we now take for granted.

Women who brick by brick are slowly but surely dismantling the patriarchy.

And women of generations to come. The backbones of communities around the world. The farmers, the teachers, the mothers, the peacemakers and the wealth creators.

Sisters and friends, women have the future in their hands. And that future begins now.

Thank you.

[Tweet](#)

[Back to main news page](#)

[Let's block ads! \(Why?\)](#)

Greens call for 'developers' duty' to replace council tax



3 March 2018

* Greens call for immediate review into radical overhaul of tax with a view to implement a 'developers' duty' within five years

* Green Party co-leaders to make call in speech to Spring Conference in Bournemouth at 2pm on Saturday 3 March 2018

* Jonathan Bartley: "Council tax is regressive and it's the past"

The Green Party has called for a radical overhaul of tax which would see council tax and business rates scrapped and replaced instead with a new land value tax or 'developers' duty', to ensure the richest in society pay their fair share.

Jonathan Bartley, co-leader of the Green Party, will make the call in his speech [1] to Spring Conference today (2pm, Saturday 3 March) [2], when he will call on the Government to start an immediate review into a developers' duty, with the view to start implementing a new tax system in five years' time.

In his speech Bartley will point out how the current system rewards wealthy land and home owner.

Bartley is expected to say:

"Last year the most expensive house in the country sold for just shy of a massive £16 million. The cheapest went for £18,500. Yet the difference between what those two new homeowner's pay in council tax is just £250." [3]

The current out of date council tax system is based on the value properties had in 1991, with many costs bypassing owners of rented properties to be paid by tenants.

Instead, the developers' duty would tax the value of land. Under this scheme rocketing land value due to changes in the area, such as new transport links, would be captured and put back into the local community.

Different types of land value capture have been explored across the world, including in Denmark where landowners pay 1% tax of the value of their property for the first DKK3.04m (£343,000) of its value, and 3% after that [4].

Bartley is expected to say:

"Council tax is regressive and it's the past. Together with business rates and stamp duty, it needs scrapping, in favour of a developers' duty that captures the value of land not property.

"It's time to create an economy that serves us and not the other way round. A chance to determine whether the economy liberates or enslaves us."

Notes:

1. Full speech available at 2pm: <https://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/>

2. Green Party Spring Conference

The Green Party Spring Conference will see members from across the country come together to hear from the party's leaders, vote on policy and take part in discussion and debate on topics from Brexit to climate change.

Leaders' speech by Jonathan Bartley and Caroline Lucas: Saturday 3 March, 2pm

3.

<https://www.citymetric.com/politics/uk-needs-rethink-its-local-taxes-it-s-time-land-value-tax-3604>

4. <https://www.ft.com/content/392c33a6-211f-11e3-8aff-00144feab7de>

Greens call for 'developers' duty' to replace council tax

*** Greens call for immediate review into radical overhaul of tax with a view to implement a 'developers' duty' within five years**

*** Green Party co-leaders to make call in speech to Spring Conference in Bournemouth at 2pm on Saturday 3 March 2018**

*** Jonathan Bartley: "Council tax is regressive and it's the past"**

The Green Party has called for a radical overhaul of tax which would see council tax and business rates scrapped and replaced instead with a new land value tax or 'developers' duty', to ensure the richest in society pay their fair share.

Jonathan Bartley, co-leader of the Green Party, will make the call in his speech [1] to Spring Conference today (2pm, Saturday 3 March) [2], when he will call on the Government to start an immediate review into a developers' duty, with the view to start implementing a new tax system in five years' time.

In his speech Bartley will point out how the current system rewards wealthy land and home owner.

Bartley is expected to say:

“Last year the most expensive house in the country sold for just shy of a massive £16 million. The cheapest went for £18,500. Yet

the difference between what those two new homeowner’s pay in council tax is just £250.” [3]

The current out of date council tax system is based on the value properties had in 1991, with many costs bypassing owners of rented properties to be paid by tenants.

Instead, the developers’ duty would tax the value of land. Under this scheme rocketing land value due to changes in the area, such as new transport links, would be captured and put back into the local community.

Different types of land value capture have been explored across the world, including in Denmark where landowners pay 1% tax of the value of their property for the first DKK3.04m (£343,000) of its value, and 3% after that [4].

Bartley is expected to say:

“Council tax is regressive and it’s the past. Together with business rates and stamp duty, it needs scrapping, in favour of a developers’ duty that captures the value of land not property.

“It’s time to create an economy that serves us and not the other way round. A chance to determine whether the economy liberates or enslaves us.”

ENDS.

For more information contact: press@greenparty.org.uk / 0203 691 9401

Notes:

1. Full speech available at 2pm: <https://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/>

2. Green Party Spring Conference

The Green Party Spring Conference will see members from across the country come together to hear from the party's leaders, vote on policy and take part in discussion and debate on topics from Brexit to climate change.

3. <https://www.citymetric.com/politics/uk-needs-rethink-its-local-taxes-it-s-time-land-value-tax-3604>

4. <https://www.ft.com/content/392c33a6-211f-11e3-8aff-00144feab7de>

[Tweet](#)

[Back to main news page](#)

[Let's block ads! \(Why?\)](#)

Green Party calls for People's Poll to reverse 'calamitous Brexit'



3 March 2018

The Green Party has called for a people's poll on the final Brexit deal to stop the Government "marching us towards a national calamity".

At his party's Spring Conference on Saturday 3 March [1], co-leader Jonathan Bartley will criticise Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn for pursuing a Brexit that will "hit poorest communities hardest", and call on Labour to stand with Greens for a People's Poll on the final deal.

In the speech, co-leader Caroline Lucas MP will accuse the Government of

“playing politics with peace in Northern Ireland”, and urge Theresa May not to “sacrifice the Good Friday Agreement on the altar of an extreme Brexit”.

The leaders will also respond to Theresa May’s speech on Brexit.

Jonathan Bartley, co-leader of the Green Party, is expected to say:

“The Green Party will not give up on staying close to Europe. We are proud to be campaigning for a People’s Poll on the final deal, that explicitly includes an option to remain part of the European Union. Because as we march towards the national calamity of Brexit, we know there is an alternative.

“But, far from acting like an official opposition, Labour risks being complicit in an unfolding disaster, and one felt first and foremost in those very communities it seeks to represent. Both Jeremy Corbyn and Theresa May are committed to a Brexit that will hit poorest communities hardest.

“And that’s why today I want to make a direct plea to the Labour frontbench. Show some leadership, put the national interest above your party interest, stand up for free movement, stand up for young people. And stand with all of us campaigning for a People’s Poll on the final deal.”

Caroline Lucas MP, co-leader of the Green Party, is expected to say:

“Conference, we win when we stand up for what we believe in – from the smallest issues in a local ward, to the biggest issue of the day – Brexit. Let’s not forget that the EU was originally a peace project, forged in the wake of the destruction and devastation of the Second World War. Rising from the rubble left by bombs and armies. The principle that nations who share resources will value peace above war. And the cause of peace is at stake again today.

“The way this Government is playing politics with peace in Northern Ireland is reckless and indefensible. So our message to Theresa May is very clear: Sacrificing the Good Friday Agreement on the altar of an extreme Brexit is nothing short of criminal, and it must not be allowed to happen.”

Notes:

1. Green Party Spring Conference

The Green Party Spring Conference will see members from across the country come together to hear from the party’s leaders, vote on policy and take part in discussion and debate on topics from Brexit to climate change.

- Leaders’ speech by Jonathan Bartley and Caroline Lucas: Saturday 3 March, 2pm
- Location: Bournemouth International Centre, Exeter Rd, Bournemouth, BH2 5BH
- Press accreditation: <https://www.greenparty.org.uk/conference/press.html>

[Tweet](#)

[Back to main news page](#)

[Let's block ads! \(Why?\)](#)

[Jonathan Bartley and Caroline Lucas speech to Spring Conference](#)



3 March 2018

2018 – a year that will change everything

Introduction

CL: Conference welcome to Bournemouth. To what was billed as 'spring conference' but feels more like a mid winter one.

Thanks you all for getting here – through snow drifts, freezing rain, train delays and road closures. And can i say a special thanks to the Green Party Staff who slept on cold trains and in a van overnight to get here early to set up. I think they deserve a round of applause.

It's good to be here again.

In a region that elected its first ever Green MEP in 2014.

In a town that elected its first Green councillor in 2015.

And where in the 2017 general election, every voter in South East Dorset had the chance to vote for a Green candidate.

A place where the Green Party is at the forefront of speaking truth to power.

Greens here are campaigning against plans to drill in Poole Bay for oil and gas.

Challenging a Tory council whose solution to the homelessness crisis is to install metal bars on benches to prevent people from sleeping on them.

Thank you to the local Greens, proud to stand with homeless people and defend their human rights.

And thank you for such a warm welcome to Bournemouth.

Conference, since we last met, there have been countless examples of brave Green voices speaking up for what matters, and making a real difference in their communities.

Voices like Pat Cleary's. As the only Green elected to Wirral Council, he recently won a 3 year battle to divest £400 million worth of pensions from fossil fuels and into clean energy instead.

Voices like those of David Gibson and Tom Druitt. Homeless people in Brighton and Hove now have a secure overnight shelter thanks to their courage and determination. Green councillors actively demonstrating our commitment to social justice.

And voices like Alison Teal's. She has come under relentless attack from Labour in Sheffield for taking non violent direct action.

Conference, Labour councillors demanded a custodial sentence to punish Alison for defending 6000 trees from being felled.

Trees earmarked for destruction, not because they were sick, but simply for profit.

Because the logic of a PFI contract dictates that cutting down mature trees is more cost effective than maintaining them.

One of my proudest moments as your co-Leader was being in Sheffield after Alison was acquitted and seeing her continue to do what Green councillors do best:

Standing up for our environment

Standing up for our democracy

Standing up for our values.

JB: It has been 100 years since some women first got the vote. An amazing landmark.

But how galling to see politicians pay lip service to the direct action of the suffragettes in one breath, and then in the next, distance themselves from the bravery of those making a stand today.

Like Sisters Uncut, who stormed the Baftas over Government cuts to domestic violence support services.

Like the 120 women in Yarl's Wood, hunger striking this week against the injustice of our barbaric detention centres.

And the the 15 people who stopped a deportation flight from leaving Stansted Airport last year.

Conference, these brave campaigners are facing up to a lifetime in prison under anti-terrorism legislation. Today we call on the Crown Prosecution Service to drop these trumped up charges. And on the Government to scrap laws that make criminals of human rights activists.

Conference, these are the new suffragettes. These are the new history-makers.

These last few months I have been privileged to stand alongside campaigners taking peaceful direct action against HS2, against the arms trade, against Fracking.

I have experienced what it's like to be dragged away by the police myself.

I've even had to buy a new pair of shoes as a result.

Standing with people like Sophia Lysaczenko, protesting against arms sales in London's docklands, and acquitted at Stratford magistrates court.

And i'll be with them this week protesting the state visit of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman – and demanding that the cosy relationship between Britain and Saudi Arabia comes to an end.

We applaud their bravery.

And we say their grit, their determination and their achievements are at the heart of how we will be remembered in the future.

Councillors and Council elections

Inside and outside the council chamber, Greens are making history.

Since we last met, new Green councillors have been elected in both Herefordshire and Lewes – a big well done to Ellie Chowns and Chelsea Renton.

Cllr Simon Grover has got St Albans council to offer sanctuary to refugees.

Greens have put forward a radical alternative to the council's budget in Newcastle.

Freed Southampton's residential streets from industrial traffic.

And stood with child abuse survivors in Lambeth..

We pay tribute to these pioneers and prospectors. The ones making change happen.

As we approach this year's local elections, it's that conviction, that record and that bravery that we will be asking voters to back.

So conference, on May 3rd, let's elect more Green councillors right across the county. Let's get out there, break records and make these our best ever local elections yet.

Brexit

CL: Conference, we win when we stand up for what we believe in – from the smallest issues in a local ward, to the biggest issue of the day – Brexit

Let's not forget that the EU was originally a peace project, forged in the wake of the destruction and devastation of the Second World War.

Rising from the rubble left by bombs and armies.

The principle that nations who share resources will value peace above war.

And the cause of peace is at stake again today.

The way this Government is playing politics with peace in Northern Ireland is reckless and indefensible.

So our message to Theresa May is very clear: Sacrificing the Good Friday Agreement on the altar of an extreme Brexit is nothing short of criminal, and it must not be allowed to happen.

And we have another message – one we have always proudly and uniquely championed.

That free movement is good for our country – and it runs in two directions.

The right to study and work and live and love in 27 other countries is a precious gift that we will do all we can to protect – and we will stand up to those who stoke racism and prejudice.

How else to defend the NHS, for example, than by also defending free movement?

Since the referendum, the number of nurses coming to work in the NHS from the EU has dropped by nearly 90%.

The BMA estimates that one fifth of EU doctors working in the NHS plan to leave as a direct result of the prospect of Brexit.

Friends, Brexit isn't just a political crisis unfolding in the corridors of Westminster.

It's happening in our hospital wards, in our university lecture theatres, in the fields where our food is grown and in all of our workplaces.

For young people in particular, who overwhelmingly supported Remain, Tory Brexit is an unforgivable act of intergenerational theft by a Conservative Government that has lost its moral compass – and we will oppose it every step of the way.

Brexit ratification referendum

JB: Yesterday Theresa May had a chance to change course – to begin the

process of healing this country.

But she refused. She acknowledged the pain that her brexit plans would cause – then said she's carry them out anyway. She promised no hard border for Northern Ireland – but didn't say how she'd achieve that.

At this most crucial of times the leaders of this country – a cabinet of extreme ideology and downright incompetence – has utterly failed. We deserve better than this, we deserve better than a half-baked speeches and permanent confusion.

That's why the Green Party is proud to be campaigning for a People's Poll on the final deal.

A vote that explicitly includes an option to remain part of the European Union.

Because as we march towards the national calamity of Brexit, we know there is an alternative.

But, far from acting like an official opposition, Labour risks being complicit in an unfolding disaster.

Both Jeremy Corbyn and Theresa May are committed to a Brexit that will hit poorest communities hardest.

Both are in a fantasy world where you can not only have your cake and eat it, but – like the Queen in Through the Looking Glass – you can think 6 impossible things before breakfast.

And today I want to make a direct plea to the Labour frontbench:

Show some leadership

Put the national interest above your party interest

Stand up for free movement

Stand up for young people

And stand with all of us campaigning for a People's Poll on the final deal.

JB: Conference, let's be clear: the struggles of those who voted Leave are very real.

The lack of opportunity, the absence of secure and rewarding work, the division of communities and hollowed out town centres, the worry over decent housing and health care, the stress over our children's education, the huge gap between the north and south. They all played their part in creating the howl of rage that was the referendum result.

And we are letting those same people down again if we fail to offer practical ways to address those concerns. Fail to offer hope for a future that is better than the past.

That's why today we are pledging to introduce a Programme for Community Renewal.

One that builds from the bottom up.

Planning laws that protect local economies from out of town development.

Public housing, built by local contractors training local people, and owned by community land trusts.

Residents given control over council budgets.

Public services where outsourcing is replaced by guerilla localism.

Not outrageously overpriced top down mega projects like Hinkley, HS2 and Heathrow expansion. Not the ones favoured by vain politicians who'd rather cut a ribbon than cut social exclusion.

But a programme that makes bold choices. Ones that are common sense. For the environment. For our wellbeing. For people.

And some of it might not appear too glamorous. Let's talk about buses.

Conference, Margaret Thatcher apparently once said: "A man who, beyond the age of 26, finds himself on a bus can count himself as a failure."

Well I'm a little over the age of 26 and I still take the bus every day. And I think we need a bus revolution.

Britain's bus network has shrunk to levels last seen 30 years ago – while bus fares have skyrocketed. Leaving people reliant on cars, abandoned with no other way of getting around.

Some communities have taken things into their own hands, including in Huddersfield where Greens have run a volunteer bus service on Boxing Day and New Years Day for 25 years.

It shouldn't have to be like this.

Our Programme for Renewal would aim for every community to have access to a decent, affordable bus service.

We need to cut bus fares and look to guarantee young people across Britain the same free bus travel currently enjoyed only by those in London.

Conference we're talking about real solutions. Small scale yes, but with big impact. From a compulsory bottle deposit return scheme to credit unions. Practical solutions that can happen now.

That's what community renewal is all about. The politics of good – not of grandstanding.

Climate and environment

CL: And, of course, the natural world is at the heart of our programme.

Because the destruction being wrought on our environment is the greatest betrayal of young people and their futures.

Scientists tell us that a sixth mass extinction is already under way.

And that the UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world.

That's why our agenda is so urgent.

And that's why the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan – finally published a few months ago – is so desperately disappointing.

A Plan to deliver little more than a wait of a quarter of a century to phase out avoidable plastics.

By which time, the politicians who wrote it will all be retired – or expired.

And then there's Michael Gove.

The man who thinks he has the right to anoint himself as the leader of a new green party, just because he's bought himself a keep cup.

The fact that he looks even vaguely passable as an Environment Secretary is testimony to just how desperate things have become.

This is the same Michael Gove who tried to get climate change taken off the school curriculum

Who was a leading light in a Government that committed to delivering a zero waste economy – and then went on to scrap local authority recycling targets

Not only that, but also – staggeringly – just weeks after the 25 Year Plan was released, Gove also blocked more ambitious EU recycling targets.

Conference you've got to hand it to him – this is turning hypocrisy into a new art form.

The same Michael Gove who claims Britain will go green after Brexit, when it's his own government that's been undermining EU environment policy for years.

The same Tories who went from hugging huskies to killing badgers in the blink of an eye.

Let's have an environment plan, yes. But let's be serious about what that must mean.

Protecting marine life from plastic isn't enough without also taking urgent action to address accelerating climate change which is warming our seas and destroying our coral reefs.

Our Programme for Community Renewal would take practical steps like rolling out an ambitious timetable of street by street home insulation.

It would set tough new targets, not just for recycling, but for re-use and reduction – real progress towards a circular economy.

But it would also take the bigger steps we need for a bigger future.

A ban on fracking.

An end to the fuel duty freeze.

No Hinkley. No Wylfa. No nuclear, fully stop.

All new car and van sales from 2030 will be electric or plug-in hybrid only

Breathable streets and green space for all.

Every home a power station.

The best public transport system in the world.

Wind and solar the backbone of British energy.

That's what an Environment Plan looks like.

Wealth and the Green economy

JB: Conference, a plan requires action too.

And it requires us to be brave and visionary enough to stop further climate breakdown.

The leaders who gather for the next round of climate talks at COP 24 in December will do so knowing that they literally hold the future in their hands.

Now, I know we like to complain about the weather in this country. But for once, it's fair enough.

This week, the temperatures here have been lower than those in the Arctic.

This is more than a temperature anomaly. It is an off-the-scale event.

The Arctic. 20 degrees warmer than usual. That should be front page news, but it gets barely a mention.

Conference, if our job is to speak truth to power, we must break the silence over climate change because complacency is a greater enemy than denial.

We must break the silence over the links between climate change, the economy and wealth too.

And then break the links themselves.

Conference, the obscene truth is that the wealthiest 10% of the country owns 44% of the nation's wealth. There are 5 billionaire families in the UK that hold the same wealth as the bottom 20% of the population.

Yet no other Party is truly confronting the issue of wealth, who controls it, and who owns it.

We support a Basic Income not just because it provides security and opportunity but because we believe that there is enough wealth. The problem is that it is in the wrong hands. And the longer that growth is seen as part of the solution rather than the problem, we won't deal with climate change and we won't address inequality.

Creating a sovereign wealth fund could help meet the costs of a universal basic income, transforming quality of life as we know it.

Dismantling privilege and replacing it with an economy that radically redistributes wealth to promote equality and social solidarity.

Tax is not a dirty word. It's how we fund the commons. It's how we demonstrate our collective responsibility for one another and the world we inhabit.

We need a wealth tax and a rise in income tax for the wealthiest. Which must mean more than just the top 5% if we're serious about recovering our public services.

And we badly need land value taxation too.

Last year the most expensive house in the country sold for just shy of a massive £16 million. The cheapest went for £18,500. Yet the difference between what those two new home owners pay in council tax is just £250.

Council tax is regressive and it's the past. Together with business rates and stamp duty, it needs scrapping, in favour of a developers' duty that captures the value of land not property.

Conference, it's time to turn everything on its head. To create an economy that serves us and not the other way round.

A chance to determine whether the economy liberates or enslaves us.

Lifestyle and Work

CL: Conference, we should be very clear about what the current economy delivers.

Over half of the children in parts of our cities growing up in poverty.

Wages stagnating for years.

Long hours at work – and many more hours spent working from home for those whose offices now travel with them.

Rough sleeping up. Affordable housing down. A country divided.

This system is not suffering a design flaw – it's programmed to fail and people are living the consequences.

From the changing world of work to the social contract that is our welfare support system, we are at a crossroads.

And conference it is only the Green Party that has the vision to make the right choices.

Automation could deliver more insecurity, zero hours contracts, low pay and exploitation.

Or it could signal an end to jobs that are monotonous and repetitive. Rich with time and the opportunity to live larger lives.

An economy that lets us make mistakes, take risks or time out when we need it.

And, crucially, gives everyone access to these choices, not just the privileged,

The challenge is not to make the economy bigger, it's to make it work differently and better.

Our Programme for Community Renewal is about being innovators and pioneers.

The Green Party will continue to be bold, and offer more than just a radical alternative to the Government.

We want to reprogramme an economics and politics that's now hit the buffers.

With the political sands shifting we can demand what was previously seen as impossible: a shorter working week, jobs that are secure and rewarding, and yes the opportunity to fulfill our ambitions and dreams.

This is no time for tinkering with a broken system – we have a new world to win.

Political Strategy & Holistic Review

JB: One of the many things that makes me so proud of our Party – this ability to face up to what's difficult and daunting, not turn away.

When we met last, in Harrogate, conference voted almost unanimously to undertake a holistic review of how we operate as a Party. A warts and all look at our strengths and our weaknesses.

We are delighted to announce that process is underway, has two excellent chairs in James Humphries and Julia Chantaray, and has begun the vital work of reaching out, listening and asking difficult questions of us all.

CL: Like where did you get that haircut?

JB: More important even than that.

When Greens are elected, people like what they get. So one of our commitments is to continue finding new ways to reach out, listen and be heard.

So today, I am pleased to announce that I am hitting the road with a brand new commitment: "Leader in the Room".

A pledge to visit and speak to any and every local party that can guarantee 40 people in a room together. Conversations to build a Green future.

Friends – we are a party of the Left. But the terms "Left" and "Right" are increasingly irrelevant when they refer to a system that is dying.

People want an alternative.

So we are pleased to announce today too, our political strategy, setting out the new space that we inhabit.

It reaffirms our full commitment to a life based on democracy and justice within the planet's limits.

It uniquely identifies us as the only Party for whom the promotion of dignity, equality, social justice and human rights for all, go hand in hand with environmentalism, with the need for urgent collective action on climate change.

Challenging us to be ambitious, fearless, positive and principled.

That's about policy yes.

Our overwhelming commitment to protecting the natural world.

About our honesty too, in speaking truth to power.

A party prepared to say what most people know is common sense – that we should change our drug laws so they are based on the evidence not on moralising, and radically reduce the prison population in the process. We should be very clear about this – our aim as a society should be to have fewer people locked up, not more.

A party that knows electoral reform is the key to unlocking the future of the many. That will give young people a meaningful voice.

And conference, a political strategy rooted in our values.

Courage, empathy, diversity, innovation and the common good.

I say to you today – we are the alternative.

Conclusion

CL: Conference, as your co-leaders, we pledged to deliver a Green voice in every community. The political strategy is how we realise that promise – to you and to the future.

It takes inspiration from what we've heard from you at meetings up and down the country, from our sister parties around the world, as well as from those closer to home, from the local parties winning, growing and standing up for what matters.

The work of renewal consists of many steps. Some we take together, some we take individually. But we are never alone.

We are part of a long and a proud tradition of levellers and diggers, dreamers and freedom fighters. We are making a new history. One that's positive, hopeful and secure, in which our children and our children's children can thrive.

We are part of a movement that spans the globe. Uniting trans activists with Zapatistas, #metoo survivors with Women in Black. We stand with subversives everywhere, prisoners of conscience, the resistance and the organisers. We stand with #blacklivesmatters, the Indignados and one million women rising.

We may not always know the impact of what we do, but we should always know this: real power comes from building bridges not walls.

We are strong from being united in our values, trustworthy in our principles. Stronger still from speaking truth to power. From our willingness to stand up time and again for what we believe in.

Conference, we are the Green Party and together we can make 2018 the year

that changes everything.

[Tweet](#)

[Back to main news page](#)

[Let's block ads! \(Why?\)](#)