

Greens back closer ties with Europe

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Green Party conference backed detailed policy that will see the party press the new government for much closer relations with the European Union.

Green MP Ellie Chowns said: “The conference has made it very clear that people and planet would benefit from much closer relationships between our country and the European Union.

“We will be pressing the new government to be braver and bolder in overcoming the negative impacts of Brexit.

“Full membership of the EU remains the best option for the UK, and we are in favour of pursuing a policy to re-join as soon as the political will is present.

“Of course, that means building the widespread public support we need before a decision to rejoin is made.

“There are win-win first steps that the new government should be taking today. For instance, working with the EU to tackle the twin crises of climate breakdown and biodiversity loss would deliver the change we need and create public confidence.

“We should also rejoin the Customs Union to begin to overcome the obstacles that small businesses have faced in trading with our closest partners since Brexit.

“While joining the Single Market would provide benefits in terms of free movement of people, goods, services and capital, membership of the Single Market without membership of the EU would not be an ideal long-term solution because the UK would not be a full partner in decision making processes.

“We’ve learned from the divisiveness of Brexit that binary choices push people apart rather than bring people together.

“So, we are proposing the use of citizens’ assemblies to support the wider public to make well-informed decisions about complicated political issues such as our future membership of the EU.”

7 September 2024 / 7 September 2024 by [Paul Corry](#)

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Co-leader Adrian Ramsay MP's conference speech

Thank you so much.

Wishing Carla well, it certainly does show yet again the benefits of having party co-leaders.

What an exciting conference this is for the Green Party, what an amazing year it's been so far.

I am so happy to be standing here not just as a co-leader of this party, but also as one of your new Green MPs. Along with Carla, Sian and Ellie I could not be more grateful to be representing our party in parliament.

Together we have achieved so much. We have broken records and made history. And we have done it by believing in a better politics. One that is positive, inspiring and ambitious.

And we were not afraid to put that belief into action.

With every leaflet delivered, every door knocked, every video on social media, every poster in a window.

Voters were left in no doubt of our commitment to a better future.

And friends that's down to you. This victory belongs to every single person in our party – volunteers, staff, party officers, our councillors and campaigners on the ground – for everything you have done.

Thank you for uniting behind our shared vision of what really matters, for pulling together and for showing what we can do when we honor our differences AND believe in our common purpose. Thank you.

We went into the general election in July clear that only the Green Party was offering the real hope and real change that people want to see.

And voters responded to that.

They desperately wanted to see the back of the Conservatives – didn't we all? And they were uninspired by the lacklustre offers and u-turns coming from the Labour party.

And so people up and down our country were looking for something different. And we're so happy to say that 2 million people found it with us.

With the party that shows there is a big, positive, inspiring alternative to business as usual – and that's how to create the better future we all

deserve.

The new Labour Government has won the opportunity to change our country – and we will work with them to do that.

We will collaborate with them – and with other parties – where we agree. So where they are heading in the right direction on lifting the onshore wind ban or renationalising the railways, we will support them.

That's the kind of politics we promised voters throughout our campaign.

But we promised more than that too. We promised to hold the new Government to account where we think they are off track. Where they could and should be doing more. Where we think greater ambition is needed to deliver the positive, inspiring change that people urgently want to see.

Because in so many areas, ones that matter deeply to so many of us, Labour is getting it wrong.

Like denying winter fuel payments to millions of pensioners, giving the green light to new climate destroying airport expansion, and to sticking with the cruelty of the two-child benefit cap.

Like the welcome, but still (CM still only partial suspension? Might be simpler ie lose half hearted) half hearted, partial suspension of arms sales to Israel, and continuing with the nonsensical ban on asylum seekers being allowed to work.

So conference, we will be using our voices in Parliament to raise up the voices of the 2 million Green voters who want so much better.

To raise up the voices of everyone across the country who wants a fairer, greener future.

The voices of all those who believe in our positive alternatives and who know we represent real hope and real change.

We know that our cherished NHS is in urgent need of that hope and that change.

It is nothing new to say that our health and social care system is at breaking point. It's more than eight years since any of the key waiting time targets for A&E, hospital or cancer care have been hit in England.

Eight years.

We know patients are being treated in hospital corridors.

We know getting to see a GP can routinely be a struggle.

We know that queues are round the block for NHS dentist places.

We know that surgeries are being performed in operating theatres with leaks in the ceiling.

We know this and so does Labour – and yet they are not prepared to do what's required to fix it.

In fact, Labour's answer to this problem is to welcome and rely even *more* heavily on the private sector.

They claim there is no other way – but that's just not true. They just lack the ambition and vision to do things differently.

Investing in our health service at the level needed to make it healthy again and join it up with a reasonable, fair offer on social care, is possible. We've listened to the experts – the numbers stack up.

Greens know there are positive alternatives. Real change, paid for through a fair tax system.

In a few weeks we will see the first budget from this new government and we expect to predictably hear that there is no money.

And in a few weeks' time I will stand up in the House of Commons, as the new Green MP for Waveney Valley, and tell the Chancellor that she's not looking in the right place.

We need to invest in defending public services and protecting our environment – and we can do so with some changes to the tax system to ask the wealthiest in society to pay a little more. These tax changes are modest by the standards of many other European countries who recognise that having high quality public services and a greener economy needs investment.

I proudly championed a wealth tax during the general election campaign, and I will do the same on Budget Day.

And I will do the same every single day I hear this Government claim we can't afford to pay for the necessary climate action, or to make sure everyone has a safe, warm affordable home, or to fund our much loved NHS.

We can tackle poverty and inequality, improve wellbeing and protect our environment. These are political choices.

What we choose is to push for people to have a safer, cleaner, better future.

We are determined that we will not let anyone in our country be made a scapegoat for the choices – by successive governments, over decades, to not invest properly in our NHS – or in our schools, our housing or in local government services.

Other politicians routinely peddle a narrative that pits people against one another in the queue for a council home, for a dentist and for a job. It's a dishonest narrative that's designed to distract from the failings of successive governments.

And it's a deeply dangerous one that has taken hold.

The rioting and disorder on our streets this summer was organised political violence fuelled by racism and Islamophobia.

There, we've named it, something we have to do to understand it clearly and work out how to defeat it.

Only by challenging the kind of inflammatory language which has given a green light to those racist views can we start to change the systems that enable and add fuel to the flames of racism.

So while we welcome the steps taken to bring those responsible for instigating the violence to justice, this won't be enough to defeat an ideology which is all about undermining our society.

Which seeks to divide communities and to compromise the state and its institutions.

And as Greens we resist being divided. We stand in solidarity with all those in our communities who have united peacefully against this hate and we will continue to do that and call, at every opportunity, on others to do the same.

The Government needs to be ambitious on the behalf of my constituents in Waveney Valley, and the millions of people right across this country.

Ambitious to meet their needs and give them the quality of life they deserve.

Ambitious to fix critical public services that are needed every day – like dentistry.

One man I spoke to makes a four-hour round trip to get to the dentist.

Over a quarter of the residents I surveyed last winter have given up on dentists all together because it's just too stressful and soul destroying to try and get access.

And then there's those people who tell me that they've had to resort to pulling out their own teeth.

The same horrors are repeated across our country, with many areas now classed as dental deserts.

So as a local MP and as your co-leader, I am determined to make this one of my priorities.

Nobody should be facing such dreadful choices over their teeth. Nobody should be suffering because of a broken dental contract and dentists leaving the sector in their droves. Everybody should have guaranteed access to an NHS dentist.

That's the kind of big Green ambition that's inspiring people and can help us deliver real change.

And there are more areas where we need more ambition. Labour's approach to the housing crisis just isn't cutting it.

Because let's face it – what we're really looking at is an affordability crisis.

We have over a million households on council waiting lists but what we also have across the country is a million empty homes and another million that planners have allowed but developers haven't built – why? Because they want to keep the price of homes high.

So Labour's decision to hand over more power and profits to private developers just doesn't make sense.

Where is the incentive to build affordable homes? There is none. Instead it's a gateway to more executive homes and luxury flats that price people out of their communities.

This isn't real change. It's another example of a focus on growth and profit that serves few and keeps the wheels of inequality turning.

And we see the same lack of ambition when it comes to sustainable farming

In Waveney Valley and other rural communities, our farmers want and need more support to transition to nature-friendly farming with all the benefits that brings.

And yet, just this week we heard from Labour that they intend to do the exact opposite of this – to cut the nature-friendly farming budget in England by 100 million pounds.

When we are one of the most nature-depleted countries on earth.

When the government has its own legally binding targets on improving nature.

And when leading nature charities are calling for the budget to be doubled.

It is a devastating move. A political choice which shows lack of ambition, a willingness to pull the rug from crucial green measures for rural areas, and a severe misunderstanding of the climate and nature crisis.

Nature is a priority for my constituents, they tell me so.

Real change would look like stopping our rivers and seas being pumped full of sewage.

The River Waveney gives its name to my constituency and is a source of pride and part of community identity. No wonder people are so angry that the water companies are allowed to pollute it with virtual impunity.

Labour hopes putting the industry into special measures will make a difference.

But they're not prepared to even countenance the one positive solution we know would end the sewage scandal once and for all – public ownership. So conference, this is the promise I made to Waveney Valley and it's a promise I make again to you today. I will not rest until our waterways are clean, until shareholders and corporate bosses aren't rewarded for their failures and until water is brought back into public hands, where it rightfully belongs.

I am passionate about delivering real change.

And all 4 of the Green MPs want to make sure ambitious, positive, inspiring climate action is at the top of the new Government's agenda.

Ambitious – because we're in a climate emergency. We're moving further into this critical decade where it's still possible to reverse the unprecedented decline of nature and prevent runaway climate breakdown.

And because while Labour is starting to grasp the scale of what's required when it comes to clean electricity, they haven't yet understood the need to transform every sector of our economy. Fast and fairly.

Positive because this is an opportunity to tackle other connected crises – like inequality.

Just last month we saw both the energy price cap lifted, putting £150 on the average household bill, and a Labour Chancellor deny winter fuel payments putting 2 million pensioners at risk of fuel poverty.

Insulating homes is a win win win for the climate, for our pockets and for our quality of life.

The same wins are possible across our economy – including through our right homes, right place, right price approach to the housing crisis.

And as Greens we must not let the positive story around climate action be left untold. Must not cede ground to those who falsely claim it will make life more expensive for the poorest or deny us our freedoms.

The work we do needs to be inspiring too, because the other political parties sure as hell aren't!

Yes we welcome the positive steps towards an energy transition we've seen from Labour and saying they will not issue new licenses for oil and gas.

But we need more.

We want them to stop the huge new Rosebank oil field going ahead.

There is no justification for this.

It will result in nearly 500 million barrels of oil being burnt. It's another example of Labour's obsession with growth at any cost. They really are becoming the party that knows the price of everything but the value of nothing.

The climate science is super clear – there MUST be NO NEW oil and gas. This is a non-negotiable and you can be sure that as a Green MP I will do everything I can to fight for a safe climate. Greens know that some things in life are not only priceless but irreplaceable.

Later this year the international climate conference COP29 will happen. We don't know yet whether the new Prime Minister will go in person, but he should. We have to press him to put this event on people's radars, and to have the courage to push for global action that reflects the climate science.

And tragically, the climate crisis has reached the point where it's not any more just about prevention and greenhouse gas reduction; it's crucially now also about being prepared for the impacts. And Labour is weak here: they don't seem to understand that the climate crisis is no longer something distant on the horizon. Climate breakdown is affecting people's lives right now. We all experienced those record-destroying 40 degree temperatures two summers ago. While last autumn, large parts of the country were badly impacted by the storms and floods that are becoming all too common.

That's why elected Greens across the country are working for real solutions and proper plans – including nature-based plans – to cope with the coming heatwaves and reduce the impact of flooding.

And when I talk about Greens at every level – it's an ever-growing number!

In May this year our councillor numbers rocketed up to over 800. We couldn't be prouder of this, our hard working Greens on the ground serving their communities and gaining more trust, more votes year on year because of that.

This time around we became the biggest party on more councils – in Bristol, Hastings and Stroud. We made breakthroughs in Newcastle, South Norfolk, Bolton, Sefton, Redditch, Hampshire county and made gains in many many more areas.

We ran inspiring mayoral campaigns in London, here in Greater Manchester and beyond.

And what do those results have in common with General Election success? They demonstrate that Greens can, and are, winning everywhere. In all kinds of communities. In places traditionally red or historically blue, people are choosing something different. It was clear in election week that so many people were voting Green for the first time and were doing so proudly, as a positive vote for real hope and real change. And it was clear that we were gaining support from people from all walks of life – a wider range of support than ever before.

And so in May next year, we intend to achieve more of the same. Gain more inspiring, hard working councillors, who will change their communities for the better. And then, in 2026, in Wales we have a fantastic opportunity to secure Green representation in the Senedd. Offering people the real hope and real change they are looking for.

We couldn't celebrate the party's success without offering our heartfelt thanks to the UK's first ever Green MP – Caroline Lucas. A trail blazer whose integrity, grace, passion, intelligence and courage is the embodiment of a better politics.

Caroline, we stand on your shoulders, and we have learned so much from you. What ambition looks like, how to inspire others, and how to articulate a positive vision that fills people with hope.

Your achievements are legendary and we will be paying tribute to them more fully a little later but for now, on behalf of all the new Green MPs, and everyone in our party – thank you.

So it just leaves me to say my biggest thank you – thank you to everyone who is on this journey with us – in this room today and right across the country.

Whether you were a first time Green voter or have voted Green every time you had the opportunity. Whether you knocked on hundreds of doors or chatted to your neighbours over the garden fence, or your family at Sunday lunch.

Whether this is your fiftieth conference, or your first – I'm told there are hundreds of you in the room joining us for the first time.

Whether you opened up your home and hosted an action day or just (just) opened up your hearts to our message of hope.

Thank you.

Together we can keep on making history, keep on doing politics better and keep on delivering a brighter, fairer future.

The ambitious, positive, inspiring future you have all helped demonstrate it's possible to choose.

This is what real change looks like – it looks like you.

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Greens counter Labour doomsayers with positive conference message

'Things can get better if we invest to build a fairer, greener economy'

- Manchester conference to greet four new Green MPs
- Party pledges to press new government to be braver and bolder

- **Green MPs counter Labour gloom and offer real hope with ambitious and positive proposals which increase taxes for the wealthiest**

The Green Party will celebrate historic electoral gains at its first conference since the General Election with a call for the new government to be more ambitious in offering real hope and real change.

Green Party co-leader and MP for Bristol Central, Carla Denyer, said:

“As Greens, we counter Labour’s message of doom and gloom. Things can get better – and fast – but only if the new government has the courage to invest.

“Green MPs are already working hard to press the new government to be braver and bolder.

“The Budget at the end of October will set the course for the rest of this parliament. Green MPs do not accept the need for public spending cuts. On 4th July people didn’t vote for things to get worse. They voted for change, and that’s what we are offering as Green MPs.

“Greens want a bold budget for investment in our broken public services and the green economy of the future. By making the tax system fairer and increasing taxes on the wealthiest we can avoid public spending cuts. We believe this fairer approach will also deliver something that is in short supply in Labour’s plans so far – real hope.”

The Green Party says that tax changes it is proposing will generate the funds needed to increase public health budgets to 2015/16 levels and boost GP funding; enable the government to restore social care charging reforms; restore and increase funding for nature friendly farming and embark on a major programme of home insulation.

Co-leader and MP for Waveney Valley, Adrian Ramsay, said:

“We need to invest in defending public services and protecting our environment – and we can do so with some changes to the tax system to ask the wealthiest in society to pay a little more. These tax changes are modest by the standards of many other European countries who recognise that having high quality public services and a greener economy needs investment.

“This government risks pushing more people into poverty. They have removed winter fuel payments for pensioners and won’t budge on the cruel two-child benefit cap. Meanwhile, our NHS is severely overstretched, and the government has reduced funding for nature-friendly farming, just as this crucial scheme was starting to take off.

“We can tackle poverty and inequality, improve wellbeing and protect our environment. These are political choices.”

Proposals the Green Party MPs are pressing Rachel Reeves for in her October budget, include:

- Introduce a wealth tax on billionaires and multi-millionaires
- Reform Capital Gains Tax so it aligns with income tax rates
- Align tax rates on investment income with National Insurance rates on employment income
- Remove the Upper Earnings Limit on National Insurance – to remove the tax break for higher earners.
- Reform inheritance tax, ensuring that intergenerational transfers of wealth are taxed more fairly
- Close the loopholes in the fossil windfall tax
- Raise fuel duty to speed up the move to electric vehicles and generate funds to invest in public transport, active travel and fixing our potholed roads.

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[Ellie Chowns MP responds to David Lammy's statement on UK arms export licences](#)

2. [Press Releases](#)

Responding to David Lammy's statement to the Commons in which he said that [the UK is to suspend 30 arms export licences to Israel](#) after a review found a "clear risk" that UK arms may be used in serious violation of humanitarian law, Ellie Chowns MP said:

"Green MPs have long called for a suspension of arms exports to Israel. The Foreign Secretary's announcement today is therefore a welcome and significant step, but leaves vital questions unanswered.

"Primarily, why are so many licences exempt from this suspension? I am very concerned that the Government is not consistently applying the principle that there is a clear risk of UK licensed weapons being used in breach of international humanitarian law. The justification for continuing to licence F-35s is no justification at all. There is an ongoing and clear risk and we urge the Foreign Secretary to look again and suspend these licenses.

"If, as he says, the Foreign Secretary takes seriously the risk of UK licensed weapons being used in breach of international humanitarian law, he must go further and suspend all export licences."

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[More economic pain and hardship isn't what people voted for, says Carla Denyer](#)

2. [Press Releases](#)

Responding to Keir Starmer's speech in which he said that the Labour government has inherited a £22bn black hole in the nation's finances, as well as a "societal black hole", **co-leader of the Green Party Carla Denyer MP said:**

"Enduring more economic pain and hardship isn't what people voted for. They were told they were voting for change. Not voting for things to get worse before they get better. Labour needs to be honest about the fact that they could choose to make things better for everyone if they were bolder and braver.

"What is being framed as tough choices is actually about political choices. People don't need a constant reminder that the Tories broke Britain. They need a new approach, not misguided fiscal rules that are set to make things worse.

"We must generate the funds needed for investment by shifting the burden away from the poorest onto the wealthiest. Labour's refusal to tax the super-rich shows that business as usual is very much still in business.

"Keir Starmer says the violent riots earlier this month exposed a deeply unhealthy society. But the health of a society can't be improved if it is forced to swallow the same failed medicine. The government can choose to provide the investment our communities are crying out for. This would help create hope and unleash the goodness of people to improve their communities."

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