



The Green Case For A Progressive Pact

Debating the next election

A Green House pamphlet with contributions from Molly Scott Cato MEP, Victor Anderson, Rupert Read, Jonathan Essex, and Sara Parkin.

Green House

Green House is a think tank founded in 2011. It aims to lead the development of green thinking in the UK.

Politics, they say, is the art of the possible. But the possible is not fixed. What we believe is possible depends on our knowledge and beliefs about the world. Ideas can change the world, and Green House is about challenging the ideas that have created the world we live in now, and offering positive alternatives.

The problems we face are systemic, and so the changes we need to make are complex and interconnected. Many of the critical analyses and policy prescriptions that will be part of the new paradigm are already out there. Our aim is to communicate them more clearly, and more widely.

We will publish a series of reports and briefings on different subjects. We do not intend to have a party line, but rather to stimulate debate and discussion.

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Context

This briefing was written before the EU referendum and the economic and political turmoil which has followed.

However we believe its analysis and conclusions still stand – and in fact have been made much more urgent by the possibility of an early general election, perhaps in November this year, and by the current state of the Labour Party.

We invite everyone who wants to see an alternative to continued Conservative government to join in the discussion about what that alternative can be.

Green House think-tank

July 2016

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Preface, by *Molly Scott Cato MEP* (co-founder of Green House)

Following the election of a majority Conservative government in 2015 many of us were despairing about the devastating impact this would have on our country. As we have seen them move rapidly to attack all routes of opposition, whether this is via the trade union bill, gerrymandering of constituencies, or cutting funding to political parties, it is clear that we have a government that is not committed to a genuinely healthy democracy. They are not working on behalf of the people of this country but on behalf of a narrow range of vested interests. Our democracy is broken and rather than trying to fix it this government is exploiting the opportunity for their own selfish ends.

So as 'progressives' in this country we ask ourselves how can we find a space for positive change? At a time when we are facing the triple crises in finance, environment, and security, how can we find a route to a more positive future that could offer hope to the majority of citizens when our electoral system enables one party to control so much power with a minority of the votes cast?

Our primary target is our archaic and unrepresentative electoral system. In the 2015 general election the Green Party received 1 million votes but only one parliamentary seat. By contrast the Scottish National Party received 1.5 million votes and 56 seats. This is the logic of first past the post. In an era of two dominant parties it could be justified but as voters move into a multi-party future the system entrenches political stasis and blocks progressive change.

I see this clearly from my seat in the European Parliament where colleagues in some European countries are able to take seats in their national parliament with 3% or 4% of the national poll while colleagues in other countries are playing an active role in the government of their societies on electoral shares of 10% or so. Knowing as I do the enormous contribution that green policies could make to a more sustainable and fairer future makes me determined to find a route to green power in the UK.

The most striking example of a country that has benefited from Greens in power is Germany. Its industries are successful because Greens in government encouraged them to move into the new era of low carbon energy production before other European countries. Germany has turned its back on the nuclear age and is rapidly phasing out fossil fuels. Germany is the economy in Europe that is benefiting most from the energy transition that dangerous climate change requires of us. It is Greens in government who enabled this process.

So how can we find our way to the Red-Green government that this country would benefit from? That is the question which guides this collection of essays.

Victor Anderson and Rupert Read both offer in-depth discussions of how an electoral pact might work. Both their pieces are of great use; my own sympathies are close to Rupert's piece, in terms of Rupert's detailed argument that any pact must non-negotiably offer some direct benefit to the Green Party. But the crucial thing is that we are having the discussion.

Jonathan Essex offers some succinct helpful thoughts on 'Progressive opposition' - i.e. on collaboration in the next few years before 2020. Such progressive opposition might help generate goodwill toward a progressive pact.

Finally, Sara Parkin contributes some brief historical reflections - on the failure of the Green Party adequately to consider the possibility of some kind of progressive pact in 1989-1990.

It seems to me that the Green Party must take the question guiding this collection of essays (of a possible 'progressive rainbow alliance') seriously. Not doing so would probably condemn us all to another Tory Government, and might condemn us Greens to irrelevance. What's more, and this is a crucial political point: taking this question seriously and (in due course) maybe putting the ball into Labour's court, will - *whether or not* we then succeed in the incredibly difficult task of actually cementing any pact - help to immunise us Greens against the charge of being wreckers. No-one, then, will be able to say that we didn't at least try.

The case for a progressive alliance: The new politics

Victor Anderson, Green House core team and former Green Party London Assembly Member.

Looking beyond the next election, we simply need proportional representation and then we wouldn't need electoral pacts. The question now, however, is how we get through the next 4 or 5 years. It surely has to be through some form of arrangement between the left-of-centre Opposition parties. This should have two purposes: (1) Not getting in each other's way more than is necessary (I'll get on to what that might mean); and (2) Establishing a PR system for the election after next. Like supporters of other parties with their own equivalent aims, I also have another objective: (3) A fair deal for the Green Party from any pact, and greater prominence for the issues Greens should be highlighting, which above all for me means ecological issues.

What I want to see is a pre-election national agreement between Labour, Liberal Democrats, SNP, Plaid Cymru, and the Green Party, to each put a commitment to proportional representation for the House of Commons into our election manifestos. We should then appeal to supporters to vote tactically in marginal seats to try to ensure a majority and mandate for this at the next general election. Parties would still run competing national campaigns and fight as now in non-marginal seats.

This would require some agreed definition of "marginal". It would not require agreement on the exact form of PR (STV, AMS, etc), which would be debated and decided on in the new House of Commons. This makes things easier, because the Labour Party is more likely to accept AMS (Additional Member System) whilst there is a long-standing Liberal preference for STV (Single Transferable Vote).

This is the solution which we should try to work towards. It builds broad-based and effective opposition to the current awful Tory Government and at the same time moves the democratisation of the House of Commons much closer. The Green Party being part of the pact would get it some of the recognition it deserves on the basis of its existing votes, and it would of course stand to gain considerably from a more representative electoral system.

Since all the parties involved except Labour are already committed to electoral reform, and all except the SNP would benefit from it, they each have a strong incentive to sacrifice the chances of their candidates winning in seats where they can't win anyway. It is a good deal for all of them.

The key then is Labour. The Labour Party essentially has three choices:

(1) It can split. This is a recipe (as it was when they did it last time) for further Tory victories.

(2) It can fight the next election on its own, without any pacts. This has the disadvantage for them that there is no sign that Labour can achieve enough votes to get a majority on that basis, especially given what the Tories are doing with voter registration, redrawing constituencies, and cutting Labour's funding. Labour also has to contend with the current half-heartedness of many of its own more right-wing MPs, and if Corbyn is overthrown, then the anger of many of its Left MPs and activists.

(3) Labour could accept that a much more attractive role for itself would be to champion and lead a very broad-based alliance of people, parties, and other organisations wanting a more democratic UK. Democratisation could also be a theme running through other parts of its policy programme, ensuring some consistency and making its commitment to constitutional reform not simply look opportunistic.

That requires some imagination, some breaking out of old patterns of thinking, and a willingness to engage with people beyond the Westminster bubble, the bubble's mainstream media, and the internal politics of the Labour Party. I think that's called "the new politics".

Can Greens benefit from a progressive alliance?

By Rupert Read, Chair of Green House.

Introduction

'Progressive' parties need to start to discuss privately and publicly— to at least *consider* the *possibility* of — some kind of informal electoral pact, a 'popular front' that would look to avoid fragmenting the vote among 'ourselves' in winnable seats, and that would look therefore toward electing a Parliament in 2020 that would have a progressive majority for democratic change. For mending our broken democracy.

Such a pact, to actually fly, would have to be done in such a way that it has real advantages – real possibilities of gains – for all parties involved in it. My contribution to this document addresses primarily Greens.

For: Political pluralism in this country is not going away. And: it is ludicrous of Labour to think that they can win on their own in 2020. Greens are going to have to be an ingredient of such a victory - as are the 'Nationalist' Parties.

The need for a regional / national element to any pact

There will be testing-grounds for building positively (on) the pluralism of contemporary British politics, and on the possibilities inherent in 'progressive opposition' (see Jonathan Essex's contribution to this briefing) in the coming years. The 2017 County Council elections are one obvious possible opportunity. These elections take place across most of the country. And they are elections in which the Conservatives standardly triumph. Many of these Conservative councillors cannot possibly be beaten - *unless* most of the other parties don't always compete against each other in most of these seats. In other words, the County Council elections are elections in which, *if* there are no pacts, radically distorted 'one-party-state' outcomes usually result. They would provide an interesting dry run for 2020.

My belief therefore is that the specific logic of the argument that Caroline has made for some kind of locally-fashioned progressive alliance (see http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2015/12/18/caroline-lucas-green-labour-alliance_n_8837520.html) needs to be extended a stage further, beyond the two key points that she makes in it, of (1) the need for the parties in question to *permit* local pacts and (2) the need to draw up some *basic* list of commitments, including probably serious and swift action on climate, that those 'pacting' could share. The third stage in the argument needs, I believe, to be this: **that the five parties who pose together a potential progressive alternative to (otherwise potentially endless) Tory rule should seek, regionally or nationally, to assist local parties**

to get 'quid pro quos' for any willingness on the part of some to stand down for others for the greater good.

In other words, as explained above: if what I am calling for here is to work, there simply has to be something in it for everyone. If, for example, Green candidates are willing to stand down in Labour's favour in some seats, *then the compliment needs to be repaid*, in a few others.

Historical precedents for a progressive pact

There *are* historical precedents, for this, of course, that were no doubt similarly disparaged as pipe-dreams when they were first floated. The most striking such precedent is the 1903 pact with the Liberals that in effect enabled Labour to get into Parliament in the first place in numbers, in 1906.

For this reason alone, there is a powerful historical argument for the consideration of such pacts. For the only way that a new party managed to break through in a significant way was through an electoral pact with an old party. Then it was Labour with Liberals. Now it would be Greens, with Labour and Liberals and nationalists. This isn't about enabling the Labour Party to remain the main alternative to the Tories. It's about enabling change, under the crazy FPTP system, and enabling growth for the Green Party, under the crazy FPTP system. Of course, as soon we get electoral reform, EVERYTHING will open up.

1903-6 was an electoral pact in some seats that enabled a good new small party to grow exponentially and that prevented what would otherwise have been a disastrous Tory hegemony under FPTP. Just what I am proposing now. But such a pact now could have even more exciting and long-lasting results, if it brings electoral reform in its wake!

A more recent precedent is the little-known 'non-aggression pact' between Labour and Lib Dems which in 1997 was responsible for the scale of the destruction of the Conservatives at the hands of both those parties, and in particular of the largely-successful 'decapitation strategy' that they jointly practised, that year. Here is a rare mention of that pact, which was unofficial and basically involved Labour and Lib Dems not doing work in each others' target seats:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/labour-dismisses-kennedy-as-a-nice-guy-not-a-serious-leader-6146956.html>.

Why a pact would make it more essential for the Green Party to differentiate itself from its progressive allies

I don't want the Green Party of England and Wales to become less 'pure' - I co-founded the think tank under whose auspices we are writing these documents,

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Green House, precisely to help *keep* it 'pure' (see my <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/elections/2015/09/if-corbyn-becomes-leader-whats-left-greens> , & also Green House's recent ebook on 'Green politics and the Left': http://www.greenhousethinktank.org/uploads/4/8/3/2/48324387/green_politics_and_the_left_1.12.pdf). In other words, to keep it *green*.

In fact, contemplation of any pact *requires* us as a Party to work even harder to keep our 'brand' intact. If we are doing any kind of deals with Labour or LibDems, it makes it all the more important that we insist at every juncture on what is distinctive about us. Otherwise, we'll go the way of the Irish Greens, the LibDems, etc.

My position might sound surprising, even paradoxical, to some. But it is actually highly logical. Seek to remain 'pure' as a Party - **don't** sell out on (y)our own values and beliefs and policies. But also seek simultaneously to make deals/compromises with other parties as much as possible, to achieve a better political system, provided that they are done in ways which do not cross absolute red-lines (and dealing with Ukip would for me be a red-line, as I suspect it would be for most of us). This is in my view the most logical stance to take in a time of *permanently plural politics* which yet has *an electoral system designed for only 2-party-politics*. In other words, it seems to me that the only reason for staying 'pure' on *both* fronts would be if one thought that a Green majority government were a realistic goal within the medium term (10 years). But it isn't.

So, it's time for our party to consider seeking to discuss with other parties an electoral pact of roughly the kind sketched here. One with candidates who have something in common; and one that would directly electorally benefit all parties that signed up for it. And this would *have to* mean e.g. **the Labour Party standing down in favour of the Greens in some places where Greens then have a shot at winning** (Because we don't need a pact to secure Brighton Pavillion: it is now 'safe', as far as such terms in British politics have any meaning. We need to raise our sights much higher.). As I've argued, above: **We should only be interested in an arrangement if it helps us to win more seats**, as part of a 'progressive' pact.

Conclusion

This is actually about enabling *more* people to vote for what they believe in *and to get it*:

By achieving PR, which will at last end tactical voting which was still our utter bane in 2015. Most voters did not vote for what they believed in. In Cambridge, where I stood, we reckon there were at least c.5-6k Greens who voted Labour, for example.

And even under the proposed pact itself: By seeking to 'trade' (vote-swap, if you will) Green votes in some marginals, votes that would otherwise mostly be tactically

squeezed into semi-non-existence anyway, for *enabling* Green votes en masse in seats where, under the pact, we will be able to *win*.

Above all, in 2020, this would enable people to vote for (and achieve!) what they believe in, in the sense of voting for an achievable alternative to endless Tory rule, and in voting for an end to FPTP. An end to our broken system.

It's time to take the bold step of considering such a pact, for the greater good. The prize is democracy itself, not to mention getting rid of the Tories. Any leader or leadership contender in any 'progressive' party unwilling to contemplate such a pact risks leading their party only into the dustbin of history.

A Progressive Alliance that works locally and starts with a Progressive Opposition now

By Cllr. Jonathan Essex, Green House core team.

The journey to a progressive government being elected needs to start in opposition (invariably). I would argue that the desired end goal is greens being elected as a part of a progressive government. For this we need:

- Firstly, for greens to join a progressive alliance, it needs not just to be progressive as defined by other political parties but progressive as defined by greens. This requires such an alliance to have a commitment to green principles, including **looking beyond growth, and rethinking economics**. This requires us, as the Green Party, to campaign on these particular green political and economic aspects to magnify the way that the Green Party supports and raises the impact of individual environmental, social and libertarian campaigns/actions. These aspects need to be recognised (at least in time) as key by others in the alliance – ideally so much so that there is a desire for the greens to be included in a progressive alliance formed to run the government post-election, even if the numbers don't magically require it (even if agreed to be on a confidence and supply basis).
- Secondly, this requires our actions to add significant weight to political opposition (political, inside the two Houses, research-based pro-active media, movement building through marches, and profile raising through direct actions and clever campaigning). And it need to make that opposition identifiably green. This means that we not only continue to increase our impact within the two Houses of Parliament (which means supporting and strengthening the role played by Jenny Jones as well as by Caroline Lucas) but ensure this is linked, through green activists and other elected greens, to a progressive movement for change that understands the need for a different world view, not just the sum total of a lot of campaign victories. This means our challenge should include providing part of the **greenest and most effective opposition ever** in the run-up to 2020. The value of these greens being elected cannot just be made through a progressive alliance that stands *in* the 2020 election, but through providing an increasingly effective contribution *up to 2020*, through a parliamentary opposition that increasingly self-identifies as united and progressive. This needs to involve target candidates as well as current MPs, at least in the 1-2 year run up to the general election.
- Thirdly, this must be recognised in sufficient greens being elected to have significant impact on such an elected government, and those greens to be elected in ways that reduce the total amount of Conservatives elected, thereby increasingly the likelihood of a progressive government being elected in the first place. For this **sub-regional PR clusters** could be considered (see section 1 below). This must be supported by an internal strategy that extends

aiming to breakthrough at the council level onto every council (key to establishing the need for a progressive alliance to other parties) to a plan to win parliamentary seats between local parties across all of the regions of the UK.

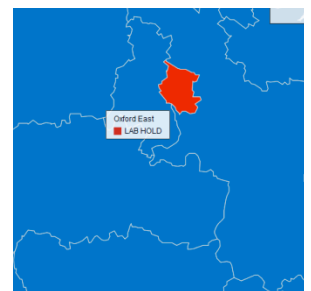
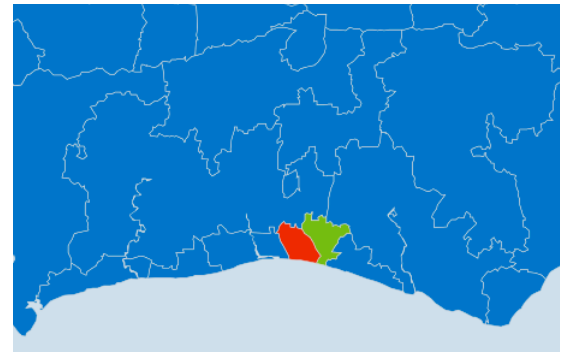
These three aspects are outlined further below.

1. A Progressive Alliance for 2020: Considering what this might look like at a sub-regional level.

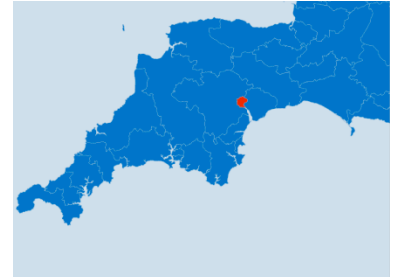
Rather than analysing the potential for greens to be elected nationally this should be considered sub-regionally. This is consistent with green party principles, and retains the potential for activists from all parties signed up to a progressive alliance to fight to win seats. This could be considered on the basis of the vote share (and other factors) of progressive parties in an alliance across a given area.

An example of how this could work might be taken by considering different areas:

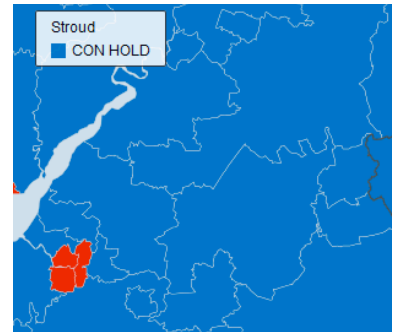
- 1) Our vote share across Brighton and Hove and Lewes district is significant. Considering an agreement between Greens and Labour, votes could be better maximised collectively across the three constituencies of Hove, Brighton Pavillion and Kemptown with all three constituencies won between the two parties. Boundary reviews and geography suggest that at least the Lewes seat is also considered in this mix. An agreement between Labour, LibDem and Green could potentially be wider, considering that apart from these two Brighton seats the Conservatives won every seat from Bognor Regis to Eastbourne along the coast, and up to the (Labour council run) Crawley seat to the north.
- 2) On first glance Oxford does not look like a good area for a progressive alliance with the Greens focusing the challenge on the sole Labour seat in a sea of blue. However, the counter to this is true: an alliance could help to win seats from the Conservatives *outside* Oxford East, in the knowledge that whatever campaigning happens here it is unlikely to fall to the Conservatives.



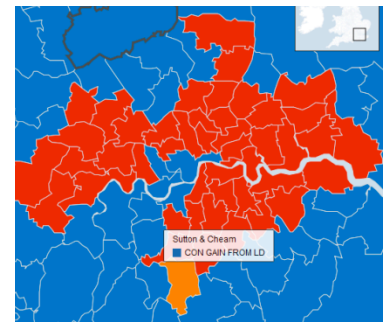
- 3) Similarly the lack of a progressive alliance was evident across Devon and Cornwall. Here there is an opportunity for LibDems and Greens to work together to beat the Conservatives: as neither were able to alone. Plymouth lost a seat from Labour to Conservative – and could be an area where Labour could benefit from a progressive alliance in the South West (as well as overall – the potential to win seats here could make the difference between a Conservative-led government, or not).



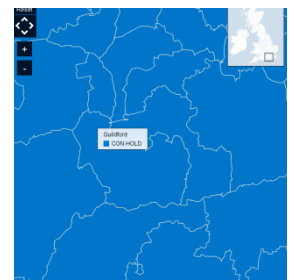
- 4) Bristol and the surrounding area in the South West could also be a good area to consider the impact a progressive alliance would make. It represents an area where a huge amount of campaigning was done, with Bristol West having a huge swing to the Greens which led to Labour taking it, while Stroud remained Conservative as well as Gloucester, while both Bath and Cheltenham were won by the Conservatives from the LibDems.



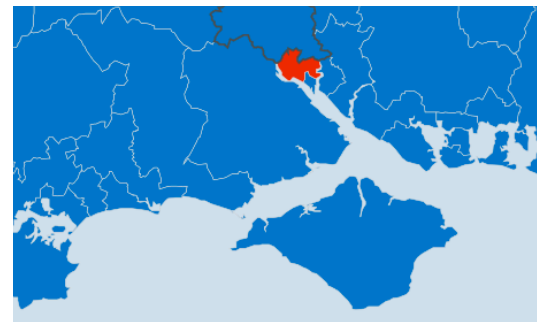
- 5) London could be considered as a city of two halves: inner London and outer London (plus its commuter surrounds). While inner London remains (generally) strongly Labour, outer London saw targeted campaigns to win by the Conservatives such as in Sutton and Cheam. For this to be reversed and some Conservative seats to be won, some progressive targeting across London might benefit a future progressive alliance government.



- An example of the solid blue area that sits around London is Surrey, which has remained generally blue for at least a century. The exception is Guildford which was won in 2000 by the LibDems for 4 years – the only non-Conservative MP in the county since 1910. This seat was a two member constituency until 1868 – a model that could give greater democracy across the UK – perhaps an interesting amendment that could be made to the boundary change review before 2020¹.



- 7) In contrast, the proposed devolution area of Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight is an area where a progressive alliance could yield a strong result in terms of net gains from the Conservatives. The Conservatives won three seats in this area from the LibDems and one from Labour in 2015. Meanwhile, the Green Party presented the strongest



¹ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guildford_%28UK_Parliament_constituency%29.

progressive challenge to the Conservatives (and UKIP) on the Isle of Wight and could stand a strong chance there in 2020.

- 8) In the West Midlands and further north the situation is different. For example, in Sheffield Hallam the Conservatives strategically voted for Nick Clegg to avoid this seat falling to Labour. For an alliance to be progressive it should be looking at perhaps keeping Sheffield Hallam without Conservative support (!), while gaining other seats such as Solihull (previously LibDem) and Dudley South (previously Labour). The latter highlights the challenge of a progressive alliance with the vote shifting away from Labour: first to LibDem and then not just Conservative but UKIP. The strength of vote for the 'leave' campaign in the

General Election 1997: Dudley South				
Party	Candidate	Votes	%	±%
Labour	Ian Pearson	27,124	56.6	N/A
Conservative	Mark Simpson	14,097	29.4	N/A
Liberal Democrat	Richard Burt	5,214	10.9	N/A
Referendum	C. Birch	1,467	3.1	N/A
Majority		13,027		N/A
Turnout		47,902	71.8	N/A

General Election 2015: Dudley South ^[3]				
Party	Candidate	Votes	%	±%
Conservative	Mike Wood ^[4]	16,723	43.8	+0.7
Labour	Natasha Millward ^[5]	12,453	32.6	-0.4
UKIP	Paul Brothwood ^[6]	7,236	18.9	+10.7
Green	Vicky Duckworth ^[3]	970	2.5	+2.5
Liberal Democrat	Martin Turner ^[7]	828	2.2	-13.5
Majority		4,270	11.2	+1.1
Turnout		38,210	63.3	+0.3
Conservative hold		Swing	+0.54	

General Election 2010: Dudley South				
Party	Candidate	Votes	%	±%
Conservative	Chris Kelly	16,450	43.1	+8.1
Labour	Rachel Harris	12,594	33.0	-11.0
Liberal Democrat	Jonathan Bramall	5,989	15.7	+3.0
UKIP	Philip Rowe	3,132	8.2	+5.0
Majority		3,856	10.1	
Turnout		38,165	63.0	+2.8
Conservative gain from Labour		Swing	+9.5	

EU referendum in 2016 suggests that many non-voters are not won over by the campaigning of the LibDems, Greens and Labour (who predominantly made the case to stay in the EU), and the higher turnout across the UK coinciding with a leave vote noting that it a progressive alliance cannot just be for an election – it must better listen to the interests of many who feel disenfranchised by politics, and do not feel that their interests are reflected in the policies of most parties, or indeed politicians at Westminster.

For a green progressive alliance to win in the South is one thing – but to reclaim these previous Labour heartlands these voters must once again feel that progressive parties represent *them*. This might require a broader set of policies that reaches beyond nationalism to consider global issues, and our relationship to the wider world differently - which could be both a challenge an opportunity for the Greens.

So, in summary, a progressive alliance might be agreed across England but would need to have support from local parties, so should provide opportunities for activists to campaign to help win seats locally. Another factor to consider is the impact of local elections occurring at the same time as the general election – noting that any party standing down will likely affect council election results, which could then impact upon who runs a council in some areas.

A sub-regional approach to working together under a progressive alliance could also then lead to stronger shared ownership of fighting for local issues across parties, making whips less strong in parliament and creating stronger incentives for not just parties but MPs to work together beyond party lines. This in turn would support efforts to fight for small sub-regional (bioregional) economies, rather than vying for control/creation of big northern/southern/regional powerhouses. Therefore, there could be a role for progressive alliances to develop positions on devolution deals.

Finally this should include the SNP and Plaid in Scotland and Wales (as well as parties working together in Northern Ireland) to build on the opportunities for a

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progressive alliance now *in opposition*, rather than just later *in the 2020 election*, as set out above.

The Wales 2015 general election result for the Conservatives in Wales is summarised in the table below.

Constituency Name	Winner in 2015	winner %	majority	second	UKIP +C	L+LD+G+PC
Gower	Conservative Gain	37.1	0.1	Labour	48.3	50.4
Vale of Clwyd	Conservative Gain	39	0.6	Labour	52	48.1
Preseli Pembrokeshire	Conservative	40.4	12.3	Labour	50.9	39.8
Brecon and Radnorshire	Conservative Gain	41.1	12.8	LibDem	49.4	50.5
Aberconwy	Conservative	41.5	13.3	Labour	53	46.9
Cardiff North	Conservative	42.4	4.1	Labour	50.1	49.1
Clwyd West	Conservative	43.3	17.7	Labour	56.4	41.4
Carmarthen W & Pemb S	Conservative	43.7	15	Labour	55.3	44.7
Montgomeryshire	Conservative	45	15.7	LibDem	56.2	43.8
Vale of Glamorgan	Conservative	46	13.4	Labour	56.7	42.9
Monmouth	Conservative	49.9	23.1	Labour	60.3	39.4
Conservative seats ave:		42.7	11.6			
Progressive seats ave:		43.4	19.1			

This shows where the Conservatives gained 3 seats in Wales in 2015 (highlighted) – two from Labour and one from LibDems. While the average vote share for the 11 Conservative held seats in 2015 at 43% was similar to the rest of seats, the margin of victory was generally less (11.6% versus 19%). This suggests that a progressive alliance in Wales could win seats by targeting these areas. However, the vote share of Conservatives plus UKIP combined is only lower than those of the potential progressive alliance in two of the Conservatives' eleven seats – which suggests the role of the progressive alliance must be one to reclaim support of voters from Conservative and UKIP, which must start *before* the election, not just during the election campaign. This supports the rationale for a loose progressive alliance that is effective and green, in opposition, now.

Therefore, electoral pacts should be viewed as just one part of an overall process. The first stage, as noted above, could be for different parties to provide a more effective opposition to the government. This would not just provide the basis for a progressive alliance for the 2020 election, but the inter-party working required to form an effective strategy for – and effective working together as – a progressive government afterwards, as outlined briefly below.

But crucially, by viewing any agreements at a sub-regional level, this would empower progressives from all parties, and none, to work together to bring about a movement for change (that is started and remains beyond the walls of Westminster). This should be a crucial part of any future progressive governance of the UK, to ensure that different regions and areas are better represented, together.

Realising the Greenest and Most Effective Opposition Ever

The Conservative majority in Parliament is huge if compared to the Labour Party (330 versus 230 seats) but the actual Parliamentary majority is much smaller than between 2010 and 2015, currently a working majority of around 17². It may be slightly higher in practice due to some parties (e.g. UKIP, unionists in Northern Ireland) choosing to align with the Conservatives. This leaves a majority of non-progressives over progressives of around 20 (see table below). This shows the need for a progressive alliance to operate across the UK (crucially, including Scotland). It also highlights the value in agreeing policy positions to form a more effective opposition to not just include a united Labour party, but effective co-working that includes Plaid in Wales and the SNP in Scotland. The difference between Labour working with the SNP or not is 59 seats, the potential benefit of extending this to include Green, LibDem and the Social Democratic & Labour Party MPs adds a further 15. A Progressive Alliance would be calling for Jeremy Corbyn (or whoever is then Labour leader) to serve not just as the leader of the Labour Party but of a wider opposition grouping in Parliament.

Party	Current numbers	End of 2010 Parliament
Conservative	330	302
UK Independence Party	1	2
Democratic Unionist Party	8	8
Ulster Unionist Party	2	0
	341	312

² See <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/current-state-of-the-parties/>.

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Labour	230	256
Scottish National Party	54	6
Alliance	0	1
Liberal Democrat	8	56
Plaid Cymru	3	3
Social Democratic & Labour Party	3	3
Green Party	1	1
Respect	0	1
	299	327

Independent	4	5
Sinn Fein (as not attending)	4	5
Speaker (as non voting)	1	1
Vacant	1	0
Total seats not counted	6	6

Total number of seats	650	650
Working Government Majority	17	73 (C+LibDem)

Note: Progressive Majority is around 20

What is a Green Progressive Alliance?

There has been much talk of a progressive alliance but if this includes the Green Party it should include a policy agreement and dialogue that considers the links between environmental sustainability and limits, and social diversity and equality. This means that the principal *economic* goal of government must change alongside its prime policy objectives. The current overarching goal of economic growth, measured in terms of GDP, is outdated. This is important if the Green priorities for a progressive government are to be integrated and not balanced or horse-traded as part of a coalition agreement.

A Green and Progressive Alliance will therefore not just include different policy positions, but *integrate them differently*. The whole will then be qualitatively different – the alliance will then not just be between a number of political parties in opposition, in taking power, and in maintaining power but through the political policies coming together too, and through doing so re-empowering the British public to play an active part not just in politics per se, but in the creation of a future where the Common Good

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of all – not just people within the UK but all of humanity and the environment from constituency to climate change - is not placed in jeopardy but in plans that we can all trust in, and hope for.

Preparing to succeed: Green Party electoral pacts: a reflection on 1989

Sara Parkin *

At its conference on 25th September 1989, the UK Green Party celebrated its success in the third ever elections to the European Parliament. It polled a historic 2,300,000 votes (15%) for no seats at all (though, in solidarity, the Green Group in the European Parliament gave an honorary seat in their group to a UK Green – Jean Lambert).

The same conference also voted down a motion to enable the Green Party to open negotiations with the Labour Party about an electoral pact of some sort for the next general election, due 2 years later.

1989 was a pretty pivotal year for the Green Party, so it is worth looking at the broader context of the election which took place on 15th June in the UK (a Thursday) and 18th June (a Sunday) in the rest of European Union

There was a steady build-up of events that would lead to the breach of the Berlin Wall in November, and secondly, closer to home – but not disconnected - the steady growth in the UK and other Green Party votes over recent elections, the implications of which were missed by both the media and the Green Party itself. That year also saw a huge growth in party membership to 18,000.

The 1989 Green Party Conference occurred at a time of historic change in Europe and beyond. It convened 2 weeks *after* Hungary opened its border to refugees from the German Democratic Republic (10 Sep 89) and two weeks *before* the GDR's 40th anniversary. (7th Oct 89) Visiting East Berlin on that day Mikhail Gorbachev famously escaped into the already agitated crowd, shaking hands and whispering "if you want democracy, take it now". Two days later the candlelight processions started (only 6 weeks later the Berlin wall was breached). In the end the processions were peaceful, although we were nervous, our minds full of the outcome of the democracy demonstration in Beijing shortly before Europe went to the polls that June; on the 4th June hundreds were massacred in Tiananmen Square.

Also, in March of that year, two environmentally significant events occurred. One welcome (the ban by the EU of CFCs) and one not (the oil spill in Alaska when the Exxon Valdez ran aground). Wide coverage of particularly the oil spill gave the run up to the May County Council elections a favourable background for the Green Party and an average of nearly 9% of the vote in the 646 seats contested. With the growth in membership and some helpful donations, the party was able to prepare for the European elections with a degree of confidence.

The point of this background is that the European Green Parties felt momentous change was afoot (we'd been supporting dissidents in East European countries for many years). That sense of historic change, the buzz in the media, the divinations from the pollsters and the steady growth in our UK vote, signalled green politics was on the rise. Nonetheless, in the UK Green Party organisation there was no serious

preparation for *success*. As so often before (and with some justification) the goal for our efforts was the election, with thoughts forward from that not really developed.

There were three official speakers for the election – me, Jean Lambert and Derek Wall. In the event, a lot of the media work came to me, largely because I was also, at that time, Co-secretary and Speaker of the Coordination of European Green Parties, as well as International Liaison Secretary for the UK Green Party and main author of the manifesto. This made me the dream interviewee for journalists caught on the hop by the ‘Green surge’ and seeking easy access to bit of colour and breadth to their reporting. I was given an early cell-phone to lug about; it was the size and weight of a hod of bricks.

Because of the lag until the rest of Europe voted on the Sunday, the UK count was delayed till then. However, going into a Newsnight studio on the night of the UK vote, I met Michael Howard coming out. You’ve done very well, he said, our (Conservative) exit polls are saying about 13%. This knowledge allowed us to browbeat the BBC into putting me onto the panel for the Europe-wide results programme on the Sunday night.

But the vacuum of having no strategy to handle success proved disastrous. The internal upheaval that brought the anti-leadership faction into power in the Green Party was well underway by the 25th September Party Conference. The party appointed 32 speakers, and over the coming year passed on to me only 2 media requests for silly TV shows. Pretty quickly the media ended up coming to me directly, and I was extremely grateful for the support from the NGOs for briefings and advice.

Over the summer of 1989, between the elections and the party conference, I met up with Robin Cook. His first wife studied medicine with my husband and we found ourselves together in Sandy Bell’s pub in Edinburgh. Robin raised the possibility of some sort of electoral pact with the Green Party for the 1992 general election. Labour had not won an election since 1974, and with the Social and Liberal Democrats (pre-LibDem) down to 6% in these European Elections, establishing a relationship with the ascendant Green Party was, to him, nothing more than sensible electoral tactics. It was not the setting for talking brass tacks, but I said there was no reason not to discuss if there were any, so we agreed to meet up again in the autumn.

Although the Green Party motion was only about agreeing to find out if there was any sort of deal over seats worth considering, by the time it was put at Conference, there was already a lot of agitation and accusations of ‘selling out’ and so on. It became the symbolic moment when the party divided into those who felt themselves to be defenders of the purity of Green ideas at all costs, and those who felt the whole point of being a political party was to get those ideas into power. It was a very British version of the German Green Party’s argument between ‘fundis’ and ‘realos’. ³

³ Now out of date and out of print (it was published in February 1989 so missed the historic drama of that year), I, along with many political scientists, explain the German Green’s infighting in *Green Parties: An international guide*, Heretic Books, London. A significant contribution to the German Green’s disruption by factional arguments was the party’s structure. The UK suffered similar organisational problems.

In the event, I resigned in 1992, at odds with the party's strategy and its failure to sanction the persistent personal attacks by the anti-leadership faction ⁴. By the time I left, membership was back down to 6,000.

I was much saddened by the lost opportunity the 1989 European Elections offered to green politics. Not about losing the vote on the motion about talking to the Labour Party – though I wish the Green Party had understood the significance of becoming a power to be reckoned with and used it to better advantage. But mostly I regret the internal disarray which meant that power dissipated so quickly. Imagine if we had really built upon it as the political landscape of Europe changed?

There is no doubt that getting green ideas into power demands significant organisation. A worthwhile lesson comes from the way the neo-conservatives operated during the 20th century, organised and subversive in their relentless transformation of the economic system. Friedrich Hayek pointed out that by using guerrilla warfare tactics '*we are like freedom fighters*'. ⁵ And, cheerfully, the very influential and inspiring Naomi Klein has come recently to the same conclusion: '*Despite endless griping, tweeting, flash mobbing, and occupying, we collectively lack many of the tools that built and sustained the transformative movements of the past.*' ⁶

So, the top line learning from how the Green Party handled its 15% vote in 1989? Organise and act as if you mean to succeed.

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⁴ Ignoring the democratic vote, the anti-leadership faction ran what was openly described as a campaign "to harry the (Green 2000) leadership at every opportunity until its members simply gave up in despair and quit." How Green Was My Party, Synthesis/Regeneration 13 (Spring 1997)
www.greens.org/s-r/13/13-07.html]

⁵ Richard Cockett (1994) Thinking the Unthinkable: Think-tanks and the economic counter-revolution 1945-1983, Harper Collins

⁶ Naomi Klein (2014) This Changes Everything: Capitalism v the climate, Penguin