Ideas for a Radical Green Manifesto

Green House

Introduction: the big picture

Green politics starts from the realities we now find ourselves in. Human beings are changing the planet in fundamental ways – altering the atmosphere and climate, reducing biodiversity and trashing ecosystems. Geologists have come up with a word for this new period of Earth history – "the Anthropocene" – in which human impacts are going beyond the boundaries that have maintained the planet in a relatively stable state.

At the centre of human pressures on the planet are two forms of growth – economic growth and population growth. Both are powerful and complex forces.

Economic growth has lifted billions of people out of poverty and poor health conditions, but at the same time it is having devastating effects on the natural world, which ultimately we all depend on. There is an urgent need to find a new way of running economies which creates a better quality of life but without the ecological consequences we now suffer.

Population growth is driving worldwide changes in land use, converting wild land to agriculture and urbanisation. The greatest impacts come where population increase is combined with high levels of material consumption per person.

These are the central issues we need to address. Green politics is in practice about much more than politics – we need changes in economics, technology, attitudes, and cultures. That is why it is the most radical form of politics there is.

Land, Food and Farming

For many of us food is a daily delight. The quality of food culture in Britain has been transformed in recent years and many of us find pleasure both in growing our own food and in learning to cook delicious meals to share with family and friends.

But food also represents our closest and most frequent way of relating to our environment: we literally are what we eat! So when our environment is polluted our health is impacted and our enjoyment of food diminished. And what we choose to eat also has implications for our health and the health of our environment.

Our choices around food are not made freely because the way food is produced and distributed is dominated by an increasingly small number of massive, global corporations. There are now only four large agribusinesses that dominate the sale of seeds, fertilisers, and pesticides while four supermarkets control two-thirds of the UK food market.

The Green Party aims to build a food system that has farmers and consumers at its heart:

- <u>Farm subsidies</u> should be maintained but transferred to smaller farmers and used to reward environmentally friendly farming systems;

- We should maximise the potential of the <u>land to act as a carbon sink</u> by encouraging the restoration of wetlands, agroforestry at scale, and farming systems that build carbon-rich, organic soils;

- We should move towards a <u>plant-based diet</u> to protect the climate and to improve our health;

- We should encourage <u>local food chains</u>, reducing food miles, restoring local food cultures and challenging the power of the wasteful supermarket distribution system which leads to huge levels of food waste; and

- We should invest in <u>local food economies</u> to ensure people know where their food comes from, farmers can keep a larger share of the value of their crops, and rural communities are revitalised.

A Green Enough Transition Plan for the UK Economy

Our Economy is big enough already. We build, use and throw away too much in the UK. The UK's economy needs to be re-aligned – so that it becomes more equal, zero carbon and operates within our resource limits. This will change what we produce, what we consume, how far these goods travel and how much we build. The UK's infrastructure is already too big to operate safely within climate limits. We must change the direction of the UK away from increasing globalisation, London-centred growth and inequality.

There once was a big idea. The original Lucas Plan set out an inspiring plan for socially-useful production within one company. But in the towns where Lucas Aerospace operated when the plan was drafted in the late 1970s, these factories represented not just the livelihoods of the workers, but the life blood of whole communities. So what if this Lucas Plan inspired new strategies and plans today that set out how to deliver a 'Just Transition' (TUC, 2008) to green jobs, but not just in individual organisations but as a green industrial strategy for the wider economy? This would shift our "take, make, break" linear economic model, driven by infrastructure and growth to a truly circular economy, that is socially useful and environmentally sustainable. Putting this into practice would transform the politics and economics of today, into that needed to bring about a better tomorrow. We need:

 - A sustainable plan for the UK. Introduce <u>national and sub-regional planning</u> that links spatial planning to resource and energy constraints and to job creation across the UK. This must reduce our per capita energy use, resource use and pollution - quickly and equitably. Stop expanding our infrastructure – whether in the form of thermal power stations and incineration, fracking and runways, road building and housebuilding. We must power down our heavy energy intensive industries and arms manufacture and power-up *local* sharing economies. Instead reduce, reuse and recycle to cut our resource use per capita to less than a third of present (called One Planet Living) and focus on energy reduction and efficiency so all our energy needs are met by UK renewables;

- To create <u>more caring and climate jobs</u>. Introduce regulations to reduce speculation and profit from exploitation and to drive a circular economy as a new industrial strategy for the

UK that can be replicated worldwide. Support co-operatives and use of empty buildings and disused land to create these jobs in areas of high unemployment instead of building housing where the economy has full employment;

- To incentivise the circular economy. Increase tax on resource use, long-distance travel, energy use and carbon emissions (including new construction) and reduce VAT to incentivise the alternatives – reuse and repair, live-work sustainable communities, renewables, retrofit to improve the quality and resilience of our existing built environment. Internalise externalities – pollution, resource use, energy, land-use, equity and diversity in prioritising what we invest in;

- To include our global impacts to drive this re-localisation. Include our global impacts in our UK carbon budget and make that treat the 1.5C target agreed at Paris as an upper limit on long-term cumulative carbon emissions. Considering the impacts of global aviation, shipping and embodied carbon will drive a re-localisation of our economy, and enhance the character and distinctiveness of local areas and (bioregional) economies across the UK; and

- To make it happen needs a pro-active, co-operative approach that empowers workers, entrepreneurs and communities to creates green (including climate) jobs across the UK. This will provide an alternative vision than current trends that link globalisation to automation and robotisation, and to a decline in true participation and democracy.

Housing

Everyone should have a home. The ability of many in this country to provide themselves with a home is thwarted by the fact that housing has become the preferred long-term investment for people in Britain, and up to the crash in 2007, banks were more than willing to lend for the purchase of property. As a consequence the amount of money poured into housing drove up prices beyond the reach of large numbers of people. Meanwhile 'right to buy' has decimated social housing and private rented accommodation is, too often, of poor quality with no security of tenure.

The housing crisis cannot be solved simply by building more homes. The current building spree has huge environmental costs and does not tackle the root of the problem. What is needed instead are:

- Measures to control the amount of money going into housing through controls on lending;

- The provision of attractive, alternative investment opportunities where the money goes to support the transition we need to make to a zero-carbon economy, and the empowerment of local authorities to address the housing issues in their local area;

- Powers to enable local authorities to be able to regulate the private rented sector, build more affordable housing, limit second homes, tackle empty homes, or the purchase of property by overseas investors, depending on their situation;

- Regional planning to decide how many new homes should be built in particular areas, with this linked to regeneration priorities; and

- Finally, we should tax property wealth by reform of the council tax system, so that tax is paid by the owner of the property (rather than the occupant) as a percentage of the value of the property, rather than the highly regressive current system where the occupant of a multi-million pound mansion pays only three times the amount paid by that of the smallest bedsit.

Work

We work far too hard in the UK: average hours of 42.4 hours per week in the UK are 2 hours more than the EU average of 40.4 hours, and five hours more than the average Dane. One in five workers workers regularly works overtime without extra pay.

Unstable and exploitative employment is growing. Nearly a million people, 2.8% of those in work, are employed on zero hours contracts jobs, with no stability. This will get worse; this is more than five times the number of people employed on such contracts in 2010. Self-employment has almost doubled from 8% in 1980 to 15% in 2016, while the Parliamentary Work and Pensions Committee has called much of this growth 'bogus self-employment', much of it concentrated in the so called gig-economy.

Declining unionisation, exacerbated by fewer traditional workplaces, is undermining workers powers to resist. Even though the government has just been forced to abolish fees for tribunals, taking on employers remains very difficult for lone employees, and employment law needs to be publicly enforced, like the criminal law.

To deal with these three problems:

    - We should share out full time work by reducing working hours for full time jobs, initially to a normal 35 hour working week, with no loss of pay;

    - We should abolish bogus self-employment and zero-hours contracts, and part time workers should have contracts guaranteeing reasonable maximum and minimum hours to be worked; and

    - These should be matters of public not private law, with a new body like the Health and Safety Executive tasked to enforce working conditions and practices.

Social Security

In the long run we favour the introduction of a Citizen's Income (A Universal Basic Income) as the main way to achieve greater equality and universal security, disconnecting social security from the labour market, and working on an individual rather than a household basis. What we need is a way to win support and begin implementation of it. A big bang implementation would be unpredictable in its effects and would not meet the requirement that no one should lose out on the introduction of CI. We need another way.

We need to end the tyranny of a one size fits all retirement age, and also recognise that those in manual occupations associated with lower education need retirement support earlier.

The definition of poverty should depend on how far people's actual needs for food, health care, education and shelter are met, and not upon their relative monetary position. In particular, we should avoid the nonsense that the numbers in poverty can decline if money incomes overall go down. Therefore:

    - We would begin the introduction of a Citizen's Income scheme immediately, leaving the current means tested welfare system in place, and paying everyone an initial £20 per week;

- We would <u>integrate the Citizen's Income and pension system</u> with an eventual Citizen's Income that depends on the number of years since the person left full time education. It would begin to rise 42 years after this (that is age 60 for a person who leaves education at 18), and rise to a maximum pension after 62 years; and

- We would move to an <u>absolute</u> and partly non-monetary <u>definition of poverty</u>, not one that depends on median incomes.

Foreign Policy

Foreign policy is usually taken to mean a raft of political positions adopted by a given government with respect to other states, multi-national organizations and international actors, and to ongoing international disputes. A manifesto is not the place to develop or list specific policies of this kind, but rather an opportunity to set out an underlying conception of international relations, and a set of principles and/or long-term aims, derived from the ideology of the party and from which (in turn) detailed policies can be derived. In fact, it is our contention that the temptation to generate a comprehensive set of foreign policies towards every international actor and issue can serve to obscure the underlying conception and principles, and should be resisted – certainly in the UK, where the GP has next to no influence on detailed foreign policy, and where the establishment of a distinctive green conception of international relations and associated principles is more important.

The overarching principle behind green foreign policy should be a commitment to planetary ecology. The fundamental raison d'etre and ideology of the Green movement is <u>the preservation of the planetary eco-systems that enable peaceful and productive human survival</u>. This should be conceived of as planetary policy, a foreign policy for the Anthropocene.

Further, subsidiary principles which derive from this include:

- <u>Pacifism</u>. Even if it may be impossible or impractical to apply this principle in absolute terms and/or in every instance, if we start from the perspective of ecology, then there can be no justification for the damage done to the ecosphere by the use of modern weapons;

- A radical <u>reduction in migration and in all human mobility</u>. Again, although more immediate social and ethical concerns may often override this principle, the current level of hyper-mobility – both within and between countries - cannot be justified when measured against its ecological costs. In particular, in view of critical climate change, a radical green manifesto should require immediate steps for the radical reduction of air travel, and in the absence of effective world governance (see below) unilateral steps are needed now;

- A <u>radical reduction in international trade</u> in favour of a much greater focus on local supply of goods and services (the point on unilateral steps also applies here); and

- <u>World government</u>. Many of the most urgent problems of international relations cannot be solved without effective international governance. To achieve this, there should be a radical reform of the UN, including the immediate introduction of a parliamentary assembly, which should replace the Security Council in the short to medium term and eventually sit in parallel with or even supersede the General Assembly. Effective global governance would not mean the end of conflict. But it would be the end of "foreign" policy;

Media Reform

Britain's press is part of a wider mediascape which now includes a whole range of social media producers meaning that today's public sphere is both complex and fragmented. The mainstream media – press and broadcast media – may no longer be dominant as the experience of the 2017 General Election and the earlier Brexit referendum campaign suggests. Accompanying this is a marked decline in public trust of once authoritative media outlets and what appears to be a serious undermining the of the key principles of liberal democracy and freedom of speech by shady organisations whose intent is manipulate and misinform public opinion and voting intention. The run-up to the Brexit referendum in June 2016 saw a flurry of pro-Brexit social media traffic. Many of these messages, in both the US and the UK, were generated by 'bots' or software applications that regularly transmit simply scripted automated messages. The frequency and similarity of these digital missives can give the impression of mass support for a policy, a person or ideology, false support that in reality does not exist, but nonetheless encourages others (humans) to respond, to critique and in many cases to concur and follow.

There is also a serious concern about the lack of diversity in the ownership of mainstream media outlets epitomised by the growing power of the Murdoch empire and the growing number of research studies that confirm that the BBC's news values are unfairly skewed to support Conservatives and conservative groups.

The election campaign also saw the Conservative Party spending about £1million for its attack ads to appear on Facebook. Many of these plumbed new depths in terms of deceit, negativity and sheer malice unseen in previous elections. The overt affront to democracy in the use of such private, personalised, unscrutinised ads plays so important a role in politics that it will be very hard for small parties to be heard. Democracy needs informed and active participants and a genuine diversity of views, opinions and ideologies to ensure full and inclusive political engagement. Social media does have the capacity to broaden the democratic discourse for a number of new very effective and politically progressive sites have emerged in recent years but they all struggle financially. Democracy requires people to think and discuss, and not just to 'sound off'. It therefore needs a diverse news media and a public sphere, for without these democracy cannot function. Unless people think, talk and act democratically - that is, practise democracy - then democracy will succumb to robotic ignorance and fake news. A wide ranging package of media reforms need to be presented, discussed and enacted.

We suggest:

- The creation of a <u>public digital space or commons</u> subsuming that of the BBC and including those produced by libraries, museums and other institutions;

- A system of <u>public commissioning of independent investigative journalism</u> funded from tax revenues, industry levies and a reformed licence fee on established corporate media companies;

- Ownership and control of national and local print media should be <u>more tightly regulated by Ofcom</u>, and no company or individual should be allowed to own more than 20% of the commercial media market; and

- Reform of election rules governing political communications to encompass <u>digital social media</u> as well as conventional broadcast and print media.

Constitutional & Political Change

Radical change is needed in the UK political system so it can be in a fit state to cope with the major issues of our time and the policy choices which arise.

Much of the current failure in our politics could be dealt with by the election of more people committed to green ideas, and by stronger pressure from the green movement on politicians of all parties. But we need more than that, including institutional and system change.

We need:

- Proportional representation;

- Political and economic decentralisation, building up local communities and local government;

- More use of deliberative democracy to address difficult issues, both by elected politicians and by groups of citizens, so that policies don't just get formed by voting on prepackaged party lines;

- A real effort to combat short-termism by building in safeguards for the interests of members of future generations, e.g. through a UK parliamentary Committee for the Future (which they have in the Finnish parliament); and

- Developing a greater sense of citizen connection with institutions and issues at European and global levels.