

Green party responses on key environmental questions

1. How and when would you achieve net zero carbon emissions and avert an irreversible climate change tipping point?

How:

- Our manifesto is designed to deliver a net zero by 2030 target. The Green New Deal (GND) encapsulates the Green Party's approach to the climate emergency – it is a 10 year economy-wide decarbonisation programme, in line with the science, based on fairness and equality, and recognising the role of nature.
- On energy we are committed to leaving fossil fuels in the ground and a transition to 100% renewables - plus cutting back energy waste and improving efficiency to reduce the overall amount of energy we need to use as a country and as citizens.
- On transport, currently the biggest source of carbon emissions, the GND is designed to shift investment into healthy environmentally friendly transport eg walking cycling public transport, and not new roads or runways.
- We have also set out how we will take action on food and farming – over 10 years we want to make the transition to agroecology, putting farmers and citizens at the heart of how we do that.
- Natural climate solutions are part of Green New Deal too, although they are no substitute for leaving fossil fuels in the ground. Our manifesto contains commitments on planting more trees (in the right places), healthy soils and peatlands, more wetlands and wild spaces. It includes a commitment to a Sustainable Economy Act, for example, that would include new targets on biodiversity, soil fertility and air quality and how to meet them, so that we live within natural limits.
- Our manifesto also recognises that we cannot achieve either climate or nature goals unless we repurpose the economy – in other words that we can't have infinite economic growth on finite planet, already breaching planetary boundaries. It commits to replacing the pursuit of GDP growth as main objective of policy making and reorienting the Treasury towards wellbeing economics – prioritising the wellbeing of both people and natural world, an economy within environmental limits

When:

- By 2030 is the Green Party's timeline for net zero – but we also know that the action taken over the coming months and next few years is critical. That's why this is truly a climate election – at unprecedented moment in history where unprecedented change is the only path towards a habitable planet, for people and for nature.

2. By 2050 our oceans could contain more plastic than fish, with plastic production set to quadruple, accounting for 13% of our global carbon budget. How will you solve our plastic pollution problem?

Our approach includes the following:

- Reducing the amount of plastic produced in the first place as the top priority. We think this requires leadership from Government, rather than relying on voluntary industry action which has demonstrably failed.
- Targets to end plastic pollution, regulation to drive rapid change in packaging, enforcement action on companies who break the rules, and a ban on most single use plastics.
- Looking beyond plastic packaging to other sources of plastic pollution too eg car tyres, clothing, discarded fishing gear. We need a comprehensive economy-wide approach
- Ending fossil fuel subsidies -which incentivise the plastic market, allowing the cost of production to be less than production of alternatives.
- Ending the export of plastic waste
- Tackling plastic pollution as part of a wider strategy to entirely shift towards a circular economy that operates within environmental limits.

3. What steps would you take to ensure agriculture, infrastructure developments and industry contribute to nature's recovery?

- On agriculture, the GND sets out how we would embark on a 10 year transition to agroecology, making nature friendly farming the norm. We want to work with farmers as well as conservation experts on for example:
 - more organic, more agroforestry, more regenerative systems - and much less pesticide and fertiliser use
 - 'less but better' meat and dairy production & consumption – taking into account the overseas impacts of animal feed
 - retention of CAP subsidies at the current £3.2billion a year level and redirection towards environmentally friendly farming and land management and 'public money for public goods'
 - legislative action on eg targets for soil health
- Greens would implement far-reaching cross government reforms on infrastructure policy and planning so that environmentally destructive schemes like the Ox Cams Express Way or the third runway at Heathrow aren't even seriously being proposed. These are the polar opposite of the infrastructure we need if we are serious about tackling the climate and ecological crises.
- We also want to put nature recovery in context and move beyond GDP growth as the main driver of industrial and economic policy. Instead we will prioritise rapid decarbonisation and the wellbeing of people and nature, creating millions of new purposeful jobs and improving quality of life in the process.
- Our manifesto goes beyond the proposed Environment Bill with proposals such as a Sustainable Economy Act to ensure we live within natural limits, and fundamental reforms to the Treasury.

4. How would you ensure that any change in regulation is beneficial to the environment and animal welfare?

- We need stronger not weaker regulation on animal protection and the environment – and we continue to make the case that working with our closest neighbours in EU to achieve that is vital. Deregulation is one of the biggest environmental threats of leaving the EU, which is why the Green Party’s position of remaining in the EU is not something separate from climate action and nature protection, but inextricably linked. EU regulations provide an incredibly valuable baseline and they don’t stop the UK going further if we want. The alternative is risk of a deregulatory race to the bottom in any Brexit scenario under a Conservative government - all of which would be catastrophic backwards step on nature climate when we must urgently make much faster progress. So campaigning for a People’s Vote and to Remain are key to our plans to deliver the best possible environmental and animal protection going forward.
- We are also committed to legislating for binding targets whether as part of an Environment Bill or through a more ambitious and far reaching Sustainable Economy Act.
- We also see challenging the obsession with deregulation as important and want to see the removal of the ‘deregulation duty’ introduced into UK law a few years ago to cut so called red tape. We would replace with a Green Tape Challenge – so any changes to regulation must be shown to have a positive impact on the environment before they proceed.

5. How would you improve animal welfare protections in law and in new trade deals?

- Greens will legislate for animal sentience and work with EU partners to raise animal welfare standards across the whole of the continent as well as taking action in the UK.
- We will also keep pressing for more democratic control and parliamentary influence over future trade deals - at the same time as continuing to robustly make the case that there’s no scenario for trade deals outside the EU that offers better hope for animal welfare protection.
- We will fundamentally reshape the objectives of trade policy overall to align with Sustainable Development goals at present, and so that animal protection is a major consideration.

6. What would you do to enhance opportunities for all people to access wild, green and blue places?

- Our manifesto includes reform of the planning system and infrastructure policy to better protect green space and wildlife habitats, especially close to where people live .
- The GND includes investment in the creation of new wild spaces for people and nature – and connecting them up too.

- The proposed new Natural History GCSE is one way to help reverse how disconnected we have become from with nature and from a young age. It will create a mandatory number of outdoor learning hours per week, provide support for schools to deliver and create a new generation of naturalists and nature lovers.

Caroline Lucas, Green Party candidate for Brighton Pavilion