

A Green Party Action Plan for London

Green Party 2010 general election policy briefing

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1. The economy: making it fair, making it work

1.1 London is by far the most unequal of all regions in England. Deeply divided, it has the highest proportion of people on a low income but also the highest proportion of people on a high income.

1.2 One of the Green Party's key pledges to Londoners is to tackle rampant inequality by building a more sustainable economy and a fairer society.

1.3 We think it's unfair that irresponsible City bankers go on earning obscene salaries while thousands of children in London live in poverty. We think it's unfair that the Government has failed to do anything about the growing gap between rich and poor.

1.4 We will fight for a fairer financial system, with community banks, credit unions and mutuals providing realistic loans to families and small businesses.

1.5 It's absurd that so many people are unemployed when there's vital work that needs doing. As part of a national £44bn programme to create a million jobs we are proposing a £6bn package that would create over 150,000 jobs across London - in workforce training, renewable energy, public transport, social housing and waste management.

1.6 Bringing London's housing up to green standards will create much-needed jobs for builders, plumbers, electricians and engineers. Green MPs will press for a free insulation scheme for every single home that would save a typical household around £150 per year on fuel bills.

1.7 We also believe that people should get paid enough to provide for themselves and their families. Green MPs will demand that all workers are paid at least the London Living Wage of £7.60 an hour.

"A more equal society really is a happier, more productive society. Unsurprisingly, research shows that people who are paid a reasonable wage are more motivated and thus work harder and are less likely to leave their jobs. Greens are campaigning throughout the capital to secure a London Living Wage for as many workers as possible."

Darren Johnson, parliamentary candidate for Lewisham Deptford

2. A fair deal for pensioners

It is shameful that thousands of pensioners in London still live in poverty, often because over-complicated means-testing is so off-putting that pensioners are leaving up to £2.9 billion of council tax benefits unclaimed.

2.1 Greens would get rid of complex means-testing and ensure a decent basic pension for everyone of £170 a week, which would once again be linked to national earnings.

2.2. We propose a free home insulation scheme for every home in Britain that would make older people less reliant on winter fuel payments.

2.3 We believe it's unfair to burden older people with huge fees to care for themselves or their loved ones and would introduce free personal and nursing care for all older people.

2.4 We would end the default retirement age and make sure that employment and skills support is in place, to allow older workers to cope with the recession and go on working if they wish to.

"After a lifetime of hard work and contributing to society, pensioners deserve better than having to scrape by on an inadequate state pension. It's only fair that the basic state pension should be enough to live on - that is why Greens would make sure that all pensioners receive a non-means-tested £170 per week, as well as free social care for all who need it, as is currently offered in Scotland."

Darren Johnson, parliamentary candidate for Lewisham Deptford

3. Housing: promoting affordability and sustainability

The Green Party will fight for a fair housing deal for all. We want to make it easier for people living in the capital to get on the property ladder, to protect home-owners and to cut waiting lists for social housing.

3.1 London has a shortage of affordable and good quality housing to buy or rent. As part of our £44bn national package of job creation measures we would build a new generation of high-quality, energy-efficient council homes.

3.2 Meanwhile, many home-owners are in danger of losing their properties in the recession: we would help people at risk of repossession keep their homes via a Right to Rent scheme.

3.3 The Green Party wants to eradicate homelessness for good. Bringing back into use London's 29,000 long-term empty private sector homes and renovating 9,000 empty council homes across the capital help to address the housing crisis that is making life a misery for thousands of people all over London.

“It’s time we eradicated the practice of declaring people ‘intentionally homeless’ and gave single people and childless couples the same rights we do to families.”

Darren Johnson, parliamentary candidate for Lewisham Deptford

4. Health: keeping the NHS public

4.1 For Greens a free and accessible NHS is a vital part of a civilised society and we are totally opposed to privatisation. The NHS must be available to all and we would abolish prescription charges, reintroduce free eye tests and free dental treatment for all.

4.2 South London has some of the worst health problems in the UK. Lambeth has the highest rate of HIV, for example. Health prevention is a vital policy for Greens and we would provide, accessible local community health centres providing a wide range of services, including out of hours care, which would be an additional level of healthcare and not a replacement for your GP.

4.3 We would end phony patient choice – getting good treatment at our local hospital is much more important, and for many of us is our only real choice. We would end mixed sex wards and use duty on tax and tobacco to fund an annual growth of 1.2% in the NHS budget. We would also provide free social care for the elderly.

“A major problem is that too many experienced health professionals are spending their time, and our money, on contract monitoring and assessment, on legal advisors and bureaucratic supervision, rather than on frontline services. What we need in London is an NHS that puts patients first - a truly public service, not a private business.”

Darren Johnson, parliamentary candidate for Lewisham Deptford

5. Reducing CO2 emissions and cutting air pollution

Only the Green Party understands that unprecedented climate change is a sign of the immense stress our economies and lifestyles are putting on the environment. To avoid warming exceeding 2 deg C, we would introduce a series of measures to reduce emissions in London.

5.1 All major development plans would have to show how they will contribute to carbon reduction targets. We would discourage car use by scrapping road tax and increase fuel duty in real terms by 8% per annum.

5.2 We don’t believe that new nuclear power stations are the answer to our energy problems. We aim to obtain about half our energy from renewable sources by 2020, and ensure that emissions from power generation are zero by 2030. This would be achieved by introducing a £20bn government investment programme in large scale wind and other renewable generation. Micro-renewables would be given ‘permitted development’ status, and the electricity network and gas mains would be brought back into the public sector.

5.3 London's air pollution is the worst in the country and among the worst in the EU. Since being elected to the London Assembly a decade ago, Darren Johnson has been warning about the prospect of massive EU fines if we did not get to grips with air pollution in the capital. Ten years on, the EU Commission is pursuing legal action because of London's failure to reach targets on air quality. It is not just a matter of a £300m fine. Leading health experts believe there are 3,000 premature deaths in London each year as a result of air pollution.

5.4 Darren was the first elected politician to support the cross-party Campaign for Clean Air in London and give it credibility. As Chair of the Assembly's Environment Committee Darren led the Assembly's opposition to a third runway at Heathrow as well as overseeing major investigations on flood risk in London, water shortages and the loss of London's street trees.

"Environmental concerns can no longer be seen as an abstract luxury for the good times that can easily be dispensed with once the going gets tough. Our [Green New Deal](#) puts together a raft of impressive measures that address the linked economic, environmental and social crises."

Darren Johnson, parliamentary candidate for Lewisham Deptford

6. Transport: re-nationalise rail, more walking & cycling

6.1 We would encourage more walking and cycling in London by reducing speed limits to 20mph in built up areas.

6.2 Road tax would be abolished and replaced with a purchase tax on new cars that reflects their emissions.

6.3 We will reallocate the £30 billion the Government has earmarked for road building over the next 10 years and invest it in public transport, including £1.5 billion subsidy to make rail fares up to 10% cheaper. We support in principle a new north-south high-speed rail line, as it would reduce the number of short-haul flights within the UK.

6.4 Rail privatisation and part-privatisation of the Tube have brought nothing but poor services, endless disruption from badly-managed engineering work and astronomical fares rises. We would bring the railways and the tube system, including both track and operations, back into public ownership.

6.5 The aviation industry currently enjoys tax breaks of around £10bn a year in the UK alone. We want taxation on aviation to reflect its full environmental costs.

6.6 Airport expansion plans, including a third runway at Heathrow, would be scrapped.

“If elected, I will fight for improvements in public transport to help the travelling public and to cut greenhouse gas emissions. One of my priorities will be an immediate investment package in both rail and bus services, totalling £10bn.”

Darren Johnson, parliamentary candidate for Lewisham Deptford

7. A pupil-centred education system

7.1 Greens believe that education in London’s schools should promote social and emotional well-being, equality, inclusion and responsibility. Schools should be given the freedom to tailor the curriculum around the needs and interests of the children attending the school. The SATS tests should be abolished and replaced with pupil-centred learning, catering for different learning styles, interests and needs.

7.1 We want to see more good local schools with admissions policies decided locally. We would encourage a move towards smaller class sizes by spending a further £500million on 15,000 more teachers to get classes down to an average of 20 pupils by the end of the Parliament.

7.2 We would end the need for private education by creating a programme of voluntary assimilation of private schools into the state sector. Schools which remain in the private sector would have charitable status removed and would pay all relevant taxes such as VAT.

7.3 We would provide free school meals for all – with locally-sourced or fair-trade and (where possible) organic food and with a vegetarian option.

“All children deserve an education that will provide them with the necessary basic skills to get on in life – whatever their background. Our education system has failed too many children in our inner city schools, and this has contributed to the growing unemployment and crime figures, the increasing gap between rich and poor.”

Darren Johnson, parliamentary candidate for Lewisham Deptford

8. Focus on crime prevention

8.1 We would focus on crime prevention, stopping crimes actually happening, including more community policing under local democratic control. We would restrict police use of random stop and search powers, which damages police and community relations.

8.2 To address the problem of youth crime, we would more than double the current investment in out-of-school services, to ensure universal access to quality facilities for music, art, drama, dance and sport.

8.3 However, once a crime has been committed, the victim must come first. Locking convicted people up is very expensive, known to be counter productive and should only be for the most violent or dangerous offenders. For young people in particular, prison often leads to nothing but a lifetime of reoffending and wasted potential.

8.4 We would introduce a tough system of restorative justice for certain crimes, where offenders actually have to put right what they've done wrong – return what they stole, repair what they damaged - and pay back for their crimes in a meaningful, practical way. This would offer victims a real sense that justice has been done, and means we can drastically reduce the numbers sent to prison, saving up to £8bn over the next Parliament.

“Gay-hate crime figures are up 15 per cent in Lewisham. Police often say this simply means gay people are now more comfortable approaching the police - but with this year's steep rises that wouldn't be credible. The attitudes that lead to such violence, harassment and verbal abuse are learned young, so we all have a responsibility to teach young people to respect others and celebrate difference.”

Darren Johnson, parliamentary candidate for Lewisham Deptford

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