



manifesto

2015

For the Common Good

www.greenpartyni.org



‘You can put the market-driven corporate sector first, or you can put a sustainable, equitable democracy first. It’s one or the other. But remember, the market-first mentality has crashed the economy, torn up the social contract, and is busy trashing the planet. So we’re calling for a nonviolent, green, grassroots revolution, for democracy, for sustainability, for equality – and for the **common good**’.

Steven Agnew, MLA
Leader of the Green Party in Northern Ireland

The Green Party in Northern Ireland stands for:

1. First class public services for all - #1stClass4All

- Investment, not austerity cuts, for our schools, healthcare, and other public services
- A Tax Dodging Bill to close unfair loopholes
- A renewal of the principles set out at the founding of the welfare state - including fair taxation.

2. Grassroots democracy - #EqualityasofRight

- Equality whatever your gender, ethnicity, disability, age, economic status, or sexual orientation
- Meaningful democracy in which we can all participate, and in which laws are not made behind our backs in exchange for cash.

3. Grassroots economic revolution - #GreenGrassroots

- Investment in the many small-scale, local producers who form the widespread grassroots of the economy, rather than in rootless, profit-extracting, tax-dodging multinationals
- Clean power, secure, living wage jobs, and a healthy environment for thriving, sustainable local businesses, trade and agriculture.

4. The common good - #CommonGood

- This election will be a decisive chance to move away from the politics of division, of impoverished public services and punitive welfare cuts, and toward a society in which we all flourish together.

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Choose the Green Party in Northern Ireland.
Choose the common good.

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Introduction

All elections involve decisions, but 2015 will be truly decisive.

Choose one way and you choose an economic model that increases inequality – as even its supporters admit. You return to power politicians who believe the market is more important than democracy. And above all, you choose to continue to roll out a programme of colossal cuts to public spending and the dismantling of the welfare state. **The damage could last for generations.**

The Green Party in Northern Ireland will fight to end the dogmatic drive to impose unnecessary and unwanted austerity cuts on the vulnerable – measures that hit women, children and the disabled hardest. We'll fight the drive to impose deregulated market solutions on every conceivable area of human life. We'll fight to keep the NHS in public hands. And we'll do everything in our power to bring in a Bill cracking down on tax dodging.

But this doesn't mean we're faced with a choice between outdated, old-school Left and Right. Neither, in Northern Ireland, do we simply have to choose between our own shades of grey: the traditional unionist and nationalist parties, locked in stalemate, routinely blaming each other, and claiming as much as they can for their own side. **In 2015 we have a new choice.** We have the chance to start transforming our democracy and economy from the **grassroots** up. We have the chance to vote for a party that stands for equality, for sustainability, and for the **common good**.

The choice in 2015 is between the old and the new – the grey and the Green.



“The Green Party must continue to provide an integrated, sustainable vision of what Northern Ireland can be for the new generation.”

**Deputy Leader
Clare Bailey**

More and more people in Northern Ireland are at the end of their patience with the traditional political parties. How can they continue to feather their own nests in office, and push through cuts, with the ever increasing number of food banks in 21st century Northern Ireland? Cutting tax for corporations or cutting spending on vital public services? **The choice is yours.**

Now, more than ever, we need a progressive **new political movement**, fighting for a transformation of society, creating real solutions to the urgent, interconnected problems of inequality, insecurity and unsustainability. We must end the cuts and defend our public services. We must draw up a new social contract to return power to the grassroots of our democracy. We must articulate a new civil rights agenda to create a sustainable society of equals.

01 First class public services for all

#1stClass4All

We believe in first class public services for all, not just for those who have the spare cash to pay for elite treatment.

The Conservative-led coalition has spent the last four years prioritising cuts above all other considerations. It has become ever clearer that their true goal is to reduce the public sector, regardless of the cost to the public and the least well-off, in a misconceived effort to boost the private sector. They act as though the public and private sectors are two opponents locked in a zero-sum game, where a loss for one is automatically a gain for the other. It is not so.

The traditional parties in Northern Ireland are following suit. The Green Party opposes their cosy consensus to reduce corporation tax as it will mean imposing an extra £330m per year of cuts to public services on top of those that have been imposed by the coalition government.

Public and private sectors should not be set against each other in a zero-sum game. Without public investment in health, education and infrastructure such as roads and communications, even the best private companies would shrivel and collapse.

Rather than see public and private as separate, opposed sectors, we recognise their **interdependence**.

Rather than impose still more colossal public cuts while giving away tax breaks to multinational corporations, the Green Party in Northern Ireland calls for **intelligent investment** in the social and physical infrastructure of our society. We also believe in directing government support towards small local businesses and co-operatives, rather than global corporations, to allow the grassroots of our economy to flourish. Well-funded, first class public services ought to be seen as a democratic right in themselves, as they underpin our health and well-being, our education and training, and the infrastructure we rely on as we go about our daily business – public and private – throughout our lives.

An investment in these vital services is an investment in the common good.

The Green Party supports the social economy and the community and voluntary sector. Sitting between the public and private sectors the social economy provides vital services for many people and should be viewed as equally important as the public and private sectors. Northern Ireland has a vibrant community and voluntary sector threatened by the politics of austerity.

To vote Green is to vote for a progressive rebalancing of the economy in Northern Ireland. The traditional parties view 'rebalancing' as a code word for reducing public services and replacing the public with the private sector.

The Green Party sees rebalancing the regional economy as an opportunity for public sector reform, growing the small to medium enterprise sector and strengthening the social economy. It's not a choice between public and private sector, but getting the right balance between both, while ensuring a vibrant and strong social economy.

1.1 Well-being for your whole life

The Green Party would

- Promote community healthcare, illness prevention and health promotion, to combat the rising problems of obesity and its related diseases
- Closely integrate primary health and social care across the UK, following the best elements of the Northern Irish model
- Promote the vision for mental health and learning disability services outlined in the Bamford Review
- Promote health education to children in schools, so that our kids learn to eat well and keep active
- Encourage and empower individuals to take more responsibility for their own well-being by promoting exercise and reducing smoking and drinking
- Promote health and well-being for the whole life – starting with pre-natal care



Health is not just about hospitals: it's about your whole life.

The Green Party in Northern Ireland is proud to support the principle that the NHS is a national service, free at the point of entry and fully funded by taxation. The enjoyment of first class health and social care is one of the fundamental rights of all our citizens and neighbours without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition.

Yet healthcare is about more than just patching people up when something goes wrong.

Health is a social issue as much as a medical one. Our well-being depends as much on a healthy environment as on our hospitals. It depends as much on our relationships with our friends and families, and our wider communities, as on what happens in our GP surgeries.

All Green Party policies are designed to promote the health of individuals, communities and society.

A healthy society is one which guarantees a safe and clean environment; economic security for all its citizens; good work; adequate housing; a balanced and healthy diet, clean water and clean air; appropriate education; a safe transport system; accessible and sensitive public services; equality of opportunity; and a secure present and hope for the future. We recognise that a more equitable economy creates more widespread well-being.

That's why we promote public health through policies designed to secure a healthy urban and rural environment, healthy work, healthy agriculture and food, healthy education, a healthy transport system and healthy local economic development. In other words, we need to focus on some of the root causes of illness as well treat illness itself.

The Green Party supports the continued development of national minimum standards of care across the entire range of health services, with greater involvement of local people to ensure the services provided reflect their needs.

A healthy life starts with healthy mothers and healthy babies. Parents should be given all the support and information they need to make appropriate choices about how they wish to give birth and raise a healthy family. We would work, for example, to ensure that breastfeeding, which

has many short and long-term health benefits, is recognised as natural and socially acceptable.

The Green Party believes much more can be done to prevent illness by **educating children about health**. Specially trained nurses should be attached to every primary and secondary school to give lessons in health awareness, including diet and exercise, as well as providing an on-site primary healthcare service to all pupils and students.

We would also push for sufficient resources to be allocated to the promotion of positive mental health and suicide prevention within our community.

Providing opportunities for people to join in creative community activities, as well as outdoor activities such as park runs, would help foster a culture of all-round HEALTH, physical and mental, that could have greatly beneficial effects on our health as a society.

In the election of 2015 we must decide: do we continue to turn healthcare into just another commodity in a competitive market, or do we reclaim the principle that health and well-being belong to us all in common, as of right, from cradle to grave?

Choose a vision of health and well-being for your whole life, and for your whole community. Choose the Green Party.

1.2 A Green New Deal for housing

The Green Party would

- Abolish the 'priority need' category for homeless applicants (as has been done in Scotland), so that almost everyone who does not have their own secure accommodation is entitled to apply
- Invest in energy efficient social housing to combat homelessness and fuel poverty whilst also creating jobs in construction
- Freeze the Housing Sales Scheme until such a time as there is surplus social housing relative to need
- Protect the Supporting People budget, to ensure that vulnerable people can receive housing-related support
- Ensure that homeless households are not housed in the private rented sector without their consent
- Work to ensure higher standards for private sector tenants
- Provide vulnerable owner-occupiers, including those in negative equity, with access to housing support and advice

We need a 'green new deal' for housing.

It is unacceptable that anyone should be homeless in the UK. Surely we are a rich enough society to be able to provide this most basic of requirements. And yet, in Northern Ireland alone, almost 10,000 households were accepted as homeless in 2013-14. Indeed nearly double that number applied. Many others are inadequately housed, with nearly 40,000 households on the waiting list for social housing, of which 21,500 are in severe need. Some require housing-related support to allow them to live independently: over 17,000 people receive help through the Supporting People programme.

The Housing Executive estimates that 2,000 new units of social housing a year are needed to deal with recorded housing need. In the last few years the new housing provided has fallen short of this figure by around 700 units. In addition, there has been loss of stock from the House Sales Scheme (known as the Right to Buy in the rest of the UK). As owner occupation falls due to problems with access to mortgages after the credit crunch, more and more people are forced into the often substandard and insecure private rented sector. For those who own their own homes, it is estimated that up to 40% may be in negative equity.

A green new deal for housing would not only meet this need, but also help provide employment, tackle fuel poverty, reduce respiratory and other illnesses, and reduce our carbon emissions through a programme of retrofitting our hard-to-heat housing stock.

1.3 Children and education #IntegratedNI

The Green Party would

- Promote the principles of integrated education here and throughout the UK
- Fight to reverse the closures of Sure Start programmes throughout the UK
- Progressively remove barriers to education for those from marginalised communities

Nothing is more important than the well-being of our children.

Education is vital to personal, community, social and economic development. The Green Party promotes a flexible and transparent education system aiming to value diversity, meet individual needs, cherish the environment, prepare our young people for the world of work and life, and achieve the highest standards of international performance.

The Green Party believes in education for the whole community, for the whole of life.

Education should not be market-driven, geared only towards whatever sells, but should equip us to fulfil our human needs – practical, creative, spiritual, intellectual, physical – as well as the needs of the broader community. Far from endangering educational standards, such an approach would raise them. Indeed, schools should be at the centre of local communities and play a range of functions within those communities.

Education structures should operate in a culture of transparency and openness, embracing the Department of Education, school management, staff, parents and students alike.

All schools should provide education about different cultures and religions to help children to understand the way that other people live and to respect those people's rights and lifestyle choices.

The Green Party in Northern Ireland believes that there should be a single publicly funded, secular education system for Northern Ireland and that we should investigate formal transfer and transition arrangements for denominational schools in the move towards such a system.

The Green Party is opposed to representation by right of faith sectors on the Education and Skills Authority. This is not an attack on religion, but a recognition that Northern Ireland is a pluralist society and that state-supported and funded education should not privilege one or indeed any religious or faith position.

#ChildrensBill

Steven Agnew, Leader of the Green Party in Northern Ireland, has introduced a Private Member's Bill in the Stormont Assembly, on children's services in Northern Ireland.

The Bill will place a statutory duty on all Executive Departments to collaborate and work together in the planning, commissioning and delivery of children's services.

Getting children's service delivery right is essential for the flourishing of our society if we want to ensure every child gets an equal opportunity to reach their full potential. Northern Ireland is the only region that does not have a form of this statutory duty of collaboration when it comes to children's services. We believe more needs to be done to ensure children get the best start and are served properly by our devolved system. Although such a statutory duty already exists in the rest of the UK, there is still too much regional variation, particularly between better off and more deprived areas.

Establishing and expanding the principles in the Children's Bill – arguing for a joined up and equitable approach to our children's welfare across the UK as a whole – is a priority. As the gap between the rich and the rest widens, we must ensure that the provision of children's services does not become a matter of a postcode lottery.

Integrated policy in all government departments is important, but of course in Northern Ireland we still have a long way to go to achieve integrated education for our children.

All too often the very structure of our schools teaches social division and this could be entrenched under the so-called shared system currently being proposed by the traditional parties.

Genuinely integrated education, in contrast, is actively inclusive, not divisive. It is about children growing up together, in all their rich variety.

The Green Party in Northern Ireland will fight for an expansion of integrated education. We also stand for an expansion of the principles of integrated education across the country. The UK enjoys rich cultural diversity, but economic inequalities, and social factors such as ethnicity and disability, too often operate to set people apart in a de facto form of segregated education.

We will work towards an inclusive education system in which barriers to participation are progressively removed. We will work to foster a system in which students of all faiths or none, and of all ethnicities, are treated as equals; a system in which disabled students are enabled to play as full a role in their schools and colleges as their able-bodied peers; a system in which all students, whatever their gender or sexual orientation, can study proudly together.

In the election of 2015 we can choose to continue to educate our children for division, or we can choose another way.

Choose education for a diverse society of equals. Vote Green in 2015



02 Grassroots democracy

#EqualityasofRight

It is time we began to build a society of equals – whatever your gender, ethnicity, disability, age or sexual orientation - from the grassroots up.

2.1. A new civil rights movement

The Green Party would

- Work to remove barriers to participation in decision making
- Promote decision making at the lowest effective level, encouraging participatory democracy by the people as well as for the people
- Promote more democratic decision making at an effective international level on matters such as climate change and cross-border issues
- Combat the corruption of democracy by big money, whether donated by the corporate sector or used to buy up the media

Democracy is about more than elections. It is about more than selecting a set of managers to run the country on our behalf. If democracy is not participatory, inclusive and founded on equality, if it does not belong to the people it is not fully democratic.

We must empower those marginalised by the dominance of traditional political elites. We do not yet have democracy if the needs of those in less well-off regions are shunted aside in order to win the approval of a London-centric corporate sector. We do not yet have democracy if women are kept from positions of power by male dominance, or where, because of political and media rhetoric, people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds are regarded as 'objects of suspicion'. We need to move beyond a view of our political representatives being 'male, pale and stale'. We do not yet have democracy where those who have inherited economic and social advantages use them to retain and exploit power.

Such exclusions and exploitations undermine democracy.

In Northern Ireland the Green Party is not satisfied with being non-sectarian. That is good, but not good enough. We as a society need to be anti-sectarian and challenge sectarian division and stereotyping. This goal would be much easier to achieve in the context of a broad culture of **tolerance for others**, cultivating a culture of **generosity**, where the celebration of one culture does not have to mean denigrating another, and in which difference, of whatever kind, is not automatically read as a pretext for hostility.

We would put measures in place to ensure that the underrepresentation of women in positions of political and economic power is addressed. We would work to bring down the barriers holding back those from lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ), or black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, disabled people, the old and the young, and any other marginalised groups. No one should be barred from full participation in our society on such a basis.

We must end the culture of demonisation of the least well-off in society, including those dependent on welfare payments, a culture all too readily indulged by some conservative political figures and their supporters. Talk of distinguishing the 'strivers and the skivers' or pitting the public sector worker against the private sector worker only serves to divide those who should be united given their common interests.

Together we must build an enlarged sense of community, open to others and comfortable with rich diversity, without just watering down already existing cultural identities. We must aim to dismantle the conditions that foster xenophobia in all its forms. The Green Party in Northern Ireland believes in active, participatory democracy. Our political processes must be transparent. Sources of funding should be open to scrutiny and decisions must be made as close as possible to the level of those they affect.

We want to see you treated as informed, active citizens, not just as ‘consumers’ or ‘rate-payers’ who must abide by whatever government decides. Given the global problems we face, such as climate change, we want to see effective international decision making too; we should remain in Europe, but we want to see it growing ever more democratic.

In the election of 2015 we choose to build a society of equals. Choose Green

2.2 Women in power

#WomenInPower

The Green Party would

- Work to ensure there are more women in positions of power in all areas of public life
- Inaugurate or expand existing initiatives for increasing women’s involvement in politics

As a socially progressive party, the Green Party in Northern Ireland recognises that women are under-represented in political decision-making structures and in party politics more generally. This has to change.

Gender injustice is not simply about overt sexism. There are deeply ingrained cultural habits and structures that tend to favour men above women, whether consciously or unconsciously. We will push for a far-reaching examination of power structures, networks and relationships across the political and economic spheres to identify and address those which favour men above women.

One of the legacies of our historic structures is that, in Northern Ireland, we have not yet come into line with the rest of the UK in relation to the law on abortion. We recognise that this is a very sensitive issue for every woman who faces the prospect and understand why people have very different, but equally strongly held views. A woman faced with this choice is almost certainly already in a very difficult, even traumatic situation. That’s why, in the end, we don’t think it is for the state, the church, the majority in society, or politicians to impose their decisions on women. We support extending the Abortion Act, 1967 to Northern Ireland. We see this as the best solution for all by allowing a choice when a choice is needed.

As part of a broad campaign to empower women to overcome economic and social barriers in a positive way, we would initiate mentoring, training and support schemes in our communities, as well as in politics, law and business. Currently only 22% of MPs are women and the proportion of executive officers at leading corporations is even smaller. Only 19 of our 108 MLAs are women; not a single senior judge in Northern Ireland is a woman. That there is still so much to do to achieve women’s equality this far into the twenty first century is itself a sign that too many of those in power do not yet take it seriously enough.

We must build a society in which gender discrimination, sexual harassment and negative gender stereotyping are no more acceptable than overt racism or sectarianism.

2.3 Ending racism and homophobia

The Green Party would

- Call for the rapid rolling out of a robust racial equality strategy through the Northern Ireland Assembly
- Extend equal marriage to Northern Ireland

On the issue of **racism** there is still much work to be done. We seem to have moved backwards in recent years, as sections of the media, along with some of those in public life, appear all too willing to repeat negative messages about immigrants and members of minority ethnic, national or religious groups.

That is why the Green Party would push for the development of an updated **racial equality strategy** in Northern Ireland, reinforcing efforts across the UK to challenge myths and hostile rhetoric, as well as addressing the underlying causes of anxiety about immigration and multiculturalism. This strategy must be designed, delivered and monitored, at all levels and across all elements, in close and equal partnership with, and calling upon the experience and expertise of, members of black and minority ethnic communities.

There is much to be done, too, in relation to equality for all whatever our **sexual orientation**. We will not stand by and watch the basic principle of equality compromised on this.

We will not relax our vigilance, assuming the battle against homophobia to be won.

We call in particular for the equal right to marry for all people here in Northern Ireland. This is a right that already applies across the rest of the UK, regardless of sexual orientation.

The Green Party in Northern Ireland wants to build a new, **grassroots, progressive democratic movement**, to bring about a nonviolent **transformation** in Northern Ireland and beyond, starting at the coming election. If we are ever to move beyond the tired stalemate of traditional oppositions, beyond the powerlessness, poverty and pollution that are handed down as our meagre lot we have to take our courage in both hands.

Green politics is founded on the principle of nonviolence; it is harder, and takes far more courage than a politics of violence. But it is the only principle powerful enough to bring the politics of violence to an end. We want to end the politics of hostility, and dismantle the dynamics that breed and feed violence – against ‘others’, the other ‘sort’, the ‘opposite’ kind, here and across the globe.

After all in a democracy it is we the people, not politicians, parties or churches that are sovereign.

2.4 Global neighbourhood

The Green Party would

- Open up trade deals to democratic oversight, and campaign to halt undemocratic deals such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership
- Promote a financial transaction tax, modelled on the Tobin tax, to curb reckless speculation

- Support the creation of a tax dodging Bill that would close existing loopholes that enable corporations and high wealth individuals to legally avoid tax, and initiate automatic exchange of information between tax authorities in various jurisdictions
- Instead of raising ever-higher fences to prevent migration, address the factors such as poverty and human rights abuses that drive our global neighbours to flee or seek work overseas
- Scrap Trident, and replace our outdated nuclear-era defence policy with a comprehensive policy of addressing and dismantling the conditions of instability and violence at source

Our current economy works by finding the cheapest way to produce goods as quickly as possible, and by selling as many of them as possible. But ‘cheap’ goods often come at a high but hidden cost, not only in terms of resource depletion, climate change, islands of plastic in the oceans and toxins in the air, but also in terms of the lives of those who produce them. Indeed the economic model that works by pushing down costs at the bottom costs lives. The clothes sold on the high street, for instance, are often made by women and men, and even children, labouring in unsafe conditions, in insecure employment conditions and paid a pittance. When Bangladesh’s Rana Plaza factory collapsed in 2013, over 1,100 people, producing clothes for our shops, were killed.

It is time we shouldered our share of responsibility for the effects our system is having on our global neighbours.

The Green Party in Northern Ireland calls for a **transparent and responsible foreign and trade policy, aimed not primarily at boosting profits at any cost, but at justice and sustainability.**

We oppose the Transatlantic Trade and Investment partnership (TTIP) because it is designed to restrict the power of democratically elected governments in favour of corporations. Such secretively negotiated deals downgrade our democracies, and set in motion a race to the bottom in terms of protections for workers and the environment.

Regarding relations with other states and with non-state actors, the Green Party recognises that we cannot weaponise our way to security. Only by addressing the forces that increase inequality and instability, and that, like climate change, exacerbate conflicts over scarce resources, can we hope to build a safer world in the era of globalisation.

The Green Party is asking you to join us in building a grassroots, progressive democratic movement capable of transforming our politics, defending the public realm we hold in common, reclaiming power from the traditional and out of touch political elite, as well as faceless markets, and returning to a democracy committed to the common good – both here and in our global neighbourhood.

If you want to move beyond sectarianism, misogyny, racism and homophobia, if you want to signal your support for a new progressive politics, a sustainable, grassroots democracy, and a nonviolent Northern Ireland, then vote for Green Party candidates this May.

03

Grassroots economic revolution

#GreenGrassroots

We believe in a thriving green grassroots economy, where local and environmentally sustainable businesses work, together with the public and third sectors, for the common good.

The Green Party would

- Oppose the austerity cuts
- Call for a bail out for the people on similar lines to the bail out received by the banks
- End in-work poverty by making the minimum wage a living wage
- Ensure fair trade with our global neighbours
- Combat climate change and promote sustainability across our society, our industries and our agriculture

No one should waste public money, abusing the system. We believe in transparency in political funds and expenses. The Green Party calls for a crackdown on tax dodging and welfare-cheating.

Given that tax-dodging is currently estimated at £34 billion, while welfare-cheating amounting to £1.2 billion, the Green Party supports the campaign for tax justice spearheaded by NGOs under the banner of the 'Tax Dodging Bill'.

The Green Party sees this election as an opportunity to reject the

zero-sum implication that public cuts are necessary for the private sector to thrive, and as a chance to reverse the neglect of the social economy.

If we want to see an ethically and fiscally more responsible approach to the economy, spreading wealth more equitably and eroding the deficit without inflicting so much pain on the least well off, we must **feed the grassroots** of the economy.

We want to put money in the pockets of ordinary people, support local economies and local enterprises, as opposed to a 'race to the bottom' of lowering corporation tax to lure foreign corporations to Northern Ireland. This means public investment underpinning fair trade and a well-regulated market, supporting our town centre economies and locally owned small to medium sized and independent businesses where most of our employment is based.

A sustainable economic future will be underpinned by a judicious use of the earth's resources, a well-educated, enterprising workforce, an economy where biodiversity is protected and we hand our environment to the next generation in a healthier condition than when we received it. A clean green economy where we find employee-owned cooperatives as supported and encouraged by Invest NI as individual entrepreneurs, where the social economy is viewed as being on the same level as the public and private sector.

3.1 Poverty and welfare reform

The Green Party would

- Continue to oppose current welfare cuts
- Work for a revised benefits system which meets the needs of people in poverty
- Take firmer action against child poverty, pensioner poverty and hidden poverty in rural areas

Our unequal society leaves too many people unable to meet their basic requirements through no fault of their own. The Government's response in Britain has been to introduce a vicious system of welfare 'reform' which has already had a colossal impact on vulnerable households. The Green Party has consistently opposed the introduction of benefits cuts in Northern Ireland, including the notorious 'bedroom tax' which has led to evictions and further poverty in Britain.

In Northern Ireland, the number of people living in poverty (below 60% of median income) has increased from 18 per cent in 2002 to 22 per cent in 2013. One in four people are earning a salary that fails to support a basic standard of living. There is considerable evidence of multiple disadvantage and deprivation compared to the rest of the UK, including higher child poverty, lower average wages, higher fuel costs, lack of childcare provision, greater incidence of mental health,

higher levels of disability, higher economic inactivity and long-term unemployment. It has been estimated that welfare 'reform' will remove £650 per working age adult from an already weak economy.

3.2 Bailout for the people

When irresponsible financial speculation caused the economy to crash in 2008, public money was created through quantitative easing (QE) to bail out private banks. Then the Conservatives, who managed to form a coalition government in 2010, told us the problem was too much public spending. They went on to stall the recovery and make the most vulnerable in our society bear the pain by trying to cut their way out of the recession. But you cannot cut your way to excellence, with the vulnerable continuing to bear the most pain. Austerity, which was always a political project aimed at dismantling the welfare state, has failed.

Yet there appears to be no technical reason why the government could not also provide **quantitative easing for the people** (QEP), rather than the banks, to inject funds into our local economies where the need is greatest.

This possibility has not been examined because the current government is committed to the claim that higher public expenditure is by definition irresponsible. It is by no means necessarily so. Financing a carefully calibrated bailout for the people by means of QEP (technically a money-financed fiscal stimulus) could stimulate a demand driven recovery, spreading wealth more equitably, and eroding the deficit without inflicting so much pain on the least well off.

On the basis of the 1844 Banking Act, private banks currently have the right to create money in order to lend it at a profit (in the form of interest).

For the Green Party in Northern Ireland this function should be subject to democratic oversight. It should be within the remit of the Bank of England to create and inject money as a way to fund local public spending initiatives that would provide a widespread stimulus for the economy at the grassroots, local level.

With food bank need rising almost as fast as executive bonuses, we desperately need a more equitable and, especially, a more responsible approach to managing the economy. The Green Party in Northern Ireland would **call for a comprehensive, rigorous and evidence-based enquiry into options for a money-financed fiscal stimulus**, such as quantitative easing for the people, with a view to injecting funds into our local neighbourhood economies and public services.

#LivingWage

The government, taking credit for a recovery that would have come anyway, tells us not to rock the boat. But far too many jobs at the base of the economic pyramid are poorly paid, short-term posts, or come with zero-hour contracts. We will campaign for a **living wage** to help combat this race to the bottom, to lift working people out of poverty and to help reduce absenteeism and staff turnover. Paying the living wage (currently £7.85 per hour) injects money back into local economies, is good for

business, good for the individual and good for society. The Green Party will work to see the living wage adopted as a matter of policy across the public sector, and will encourage employers in the private sector to adopt it too.

Research by Oxford Economics on behalf of the NICVA's Centre for Economic Empowerment estimated that 173,000 employees in Northern Ireland earned below the then living wage in 2012, some 23% of all employees in the region. These workers were disproportionately young, part-time workers with low skill levels working in the private sector. In addition, female workers are more likely than males to be earning below the living wage. Paying a living wage increases worker productivity, which means it can pay for itself.



3.3 Sustainable society

#GreenNewDeal

The Green Party Would

- Remove subsidies from fossil fuel and nuclear industries
- Support clean and sustainable energy solutions, with an emphasis on small-scale, local and co-operative schemes that benefit communities, while ensuring that large-scale renewable projects engage with, and benefit, local communities
- Build on Northern Ireland's natural resources and expertise to create a world-class renewable energy industry, bringing training, skilled jobs and valuable exports
- Create an integrated and community-led planning system to encourage energy-efficiency in all new-build projects
- Provide insulation and clean power systems for existing buildings in both public and private sectors
- End inefficiency and profiteering that lead to fuel poverty, so no one need choose between heating their home and feeding and clothing their family
- Promote clean, efficient public transport networks
- Ban all types of dangerous 'unconventional' fossil fuel extraction, including fracking
- Support divestment from fossil fuel industries

Climate change and poverty are the two most urgent needs facing the world in the twenty first century; they are intimately interlinked. The UK needs energy supplies that are affordable, clean, sustainable and secure. For too long we have been dependent upon imported fossil fuels and dangerous nuclear power, which are expensive for the consumer, based on hidden subsidies, unhealthy for us and for our environment and which place us at the mercy of multinational corporations and oppressive regimes. Together we can change that.

In Northern Ireland we have abundant sources of natural energy from tides to waves, wind to sun. Properly harnessed, these could provide virtually all our own electricity needs, affordably and safely, with a valuable surplus for export. With these renewable sources of energy the fuel is free; all we have to do is invest in technologies to harness and use that free, abundant and renewable fuel. With our established world-class engineering tradition and young skilled workforce we have all we need to build a world-class renewable energy industry, with pioneering research, apprenticeships, design, production and installation services. Northern Ireland could be at the **leading edge of the sustainable energy transformation that will define the coming decades.**

And it isn't just where we get our power that we can make better, but also how we use it. Simple and inexpensive energy saving measures can make our homes and workplaces more comfortable and healthy.

#CleanPower

Energy efficiency measures can save us all money, as well as cutting down on dangerous pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. With up-to-date building standards, new houses and other buildings could become so efficient that they would need little or no heating or air conditioning. Fuel poverty, with all the misery, anxiety, hunger and ill-health that go along with it, could be a thing of the past.

Clean, efficient public transport systems would not only help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but open up educational and employment opportunities for those living away from city centres.

New jobs and, indeed, whole new industries would be opened up, with new education and training opportunities for our young people, and the chance for local businesses to become leaders in their fields. We have the chance to get in now on the economy of the future. We have a comparative advantage in renewable energy. Lets use it! We must invest in these new forms of fuel efficiency and in renewables, and move away from fossil fuels. That's one reason we say no to fracking for shale gas. There is also evidence from North America and Australia that fracking brings along with it a host of serious problems, including water contamination and loss, air pollution and enormous strain on roads and emergency services. It can potentially damage human and animal health, as well as existing businesses, especially in agriculture and tourism.

Investment in clean power and energy efficiency would create a significant number of jobs, reduce the cost of energy and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, thus helping to tackle climate change.

3.4 Sustainable agriculture and animal welfare

The Green Party Would

- Encourage organic alternatives in order to minimise the use of harmful substances in the treatment of soil, crops and animals by farmers and growers
- Begin the transition to a sustainable agriculture by working to surpass a target of 5% of land in organic agriculture
- Develop local supply poly-culture and permaculture farming models, rather than export driven monoculture, through the support of agencies like DARD
- Increase the overall spread of trees across all regions, in the form of fruit orchards, nut orchards, copses, hedgerows, small farm woods, and shade trees, which will increase woodland verges as important ecosystems both for agro-forestry potential and general biodiversity
- Increase the amount of land used for food crops and horticulture
- Promote a sustainable, healthy diet including more fresh fruit and vegetables and less meat, as a basis for deciding what food crops to encourage
- Protect animals through a ban on the use of snares and wild animals in circuses.
- Uphold the ban on the hunting of wild animals with dogs
- Seek alternatives to breed specific legislation
- Create an animal cruelty register

The Green Party believes a strong, healthy and diverse agricultural sector is essential to an economically viable and environmentally sustainable United Kingdom.

Northern Ireland in particular owes much to its agricultural sector, accounting as it does for some 80% of land use, and employing over 60,000 full- and part-time farmers, to say nothing of those in related roles.

We recognise that farmers currently face enormous pressure from rising material and energy costs on the one hand and downward pressure on the prices they can command for their produce on the other. Yet agriculture is potentially a key part of the solution to a range of problems, such as biodiversity loss, mitigating the effects of climate change and creating a sustainable food system. There is no clearer illustration of the principles of sustainability than in agriculture: if you take out of the soil more than you put in, it can no longer support life.

Many aspects of the industrialised model of agriculture that emerged in Europe and North America comparatively recently are simply not sustainable. Relying on economies of scale, many farming practices reduce biodiversity and become reliant on ever-greater quantities of chemical fertiliser and pesticides. Globally, far too much land is given over to single cash crops; too much grain is grown to feed animals for the meat industry rather than for human consumption.

The welfare of animals, both wild and domesticated, is an indicator of our attitude to the natural world

as a whole and we should always endeavour to ensure that our **pets, farm animals and wildlife are treated with the utmost care and respect.** As such, we would provide adequate funding to ensure a robust inspection regime, and to enable the prosecution of perpetrators of animal cruelty and habitat destruction.

In the election of 2015 you can choose to pursue the old socially and environmentally unsustainable model, or you can choose to build our agriculture and economy **another, cleaner, healthier way.**





04

For the Common Good

#ForTheCommonGood

There is a clear choice to be made in this election. A vote for the Green Party in Northern Ireland is a vote for a new social contract that prioritises the **common good** through renewed investment in public services, a return to the principle of progressive taxation, an insistence on equality for all, and a demand for an economy that serves the people and the planet, not the other way round.

Take the opportunity to end the dominance of the profits-at-any-cost model that has increased inequality, reduced sustainability and set us against each other in competition and conflict. The traditional dominant parties appear set on introducing still more cuts to the services we all rely on, while handing out tax breaks to international corporations. This approach is divisive, unsustainable, and unfair. 'Business as usual' is no longer an option: **we urgently need a new model – and that's what the Greens offer.**

On 7 May choose the candidates of the Green Party in Northern Ireland.

05 The Candidates

These are your Green Party candidates in Northern Ireland for the General Election of 2015.



Steven Agnew
North Down

Steven is Leader of the Green Party in Northern Ireland and MLA for North Down. He recently presented a Children's Bill in the Assembly to ensure that government departments collaborate and work together in the planning, commissioning and delivery of children's services. Steven also serves on the Assembly's Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee and the Standards & Privileges Committee. He is currently Chair of the Assembly All Party Groups on Co-operatives and Mutuals and Renewable Energy, as well as Vice Chair of the All Party Group on Children. Steven is passionate about the protection of animals from cruelty.



Clare Bailey
Belfast South

Clare is Deputy Leader of the Green Party in Northern Ireland. She is a passionate feminist and equality campaigner, and has worked tirelessly for a new civil rights agenda in Northern Ireland for many years. Clare believes strongly in integrated education, having been part of the first intake of pupils at Lagan College, Northern Ireland's first integrated school. Clare works for Nexus NI and volunteers for Marie Stopes International.



Ross Brown
Belfast East

Ross is proud to serve as a Councillor on Belfast City Council. He is a trained economist and has worked for a time both in the Treasury in London and for the Committee for Finance and Personnel in the Northern Ireland Assembly. With a keen interest in economics, Ross wants to see an economy developed for the common good by ending austerity cuts and working for robust regulation of the banks, new laws to crack down on tax dodging and international fair trade.



Tanya Jones
Fermanagh & South Tyrone

Tanya, a writer and former solicitor, is chair of the Fermanagh and South Tyrone Green Party and lives with her family in Enniskillen. She was a founder and key member of the Fermanagh Fracking Awareness Network and is secretary of the cross-community Fermanagh Churches Forum and a governor of the Erne Integrated College.



Ciaran McClean
West Tyrone

Ciaran McClean is a mental health worker in West Tyrone with a strong track record as a local representative and campaigner. The Green Party aims to bring a new approach to politics in West Tyrone. It is vital that citizens have a credible alternative to the austerity agenda of the Executive parties.

Ciaran McClean will put social and environmental justice at the top of the agenda in West Tyrone, and bring much-needed representation to this neglected constituency.

Additional Information

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