



A Zero Waste Strategy for Northern Ireland

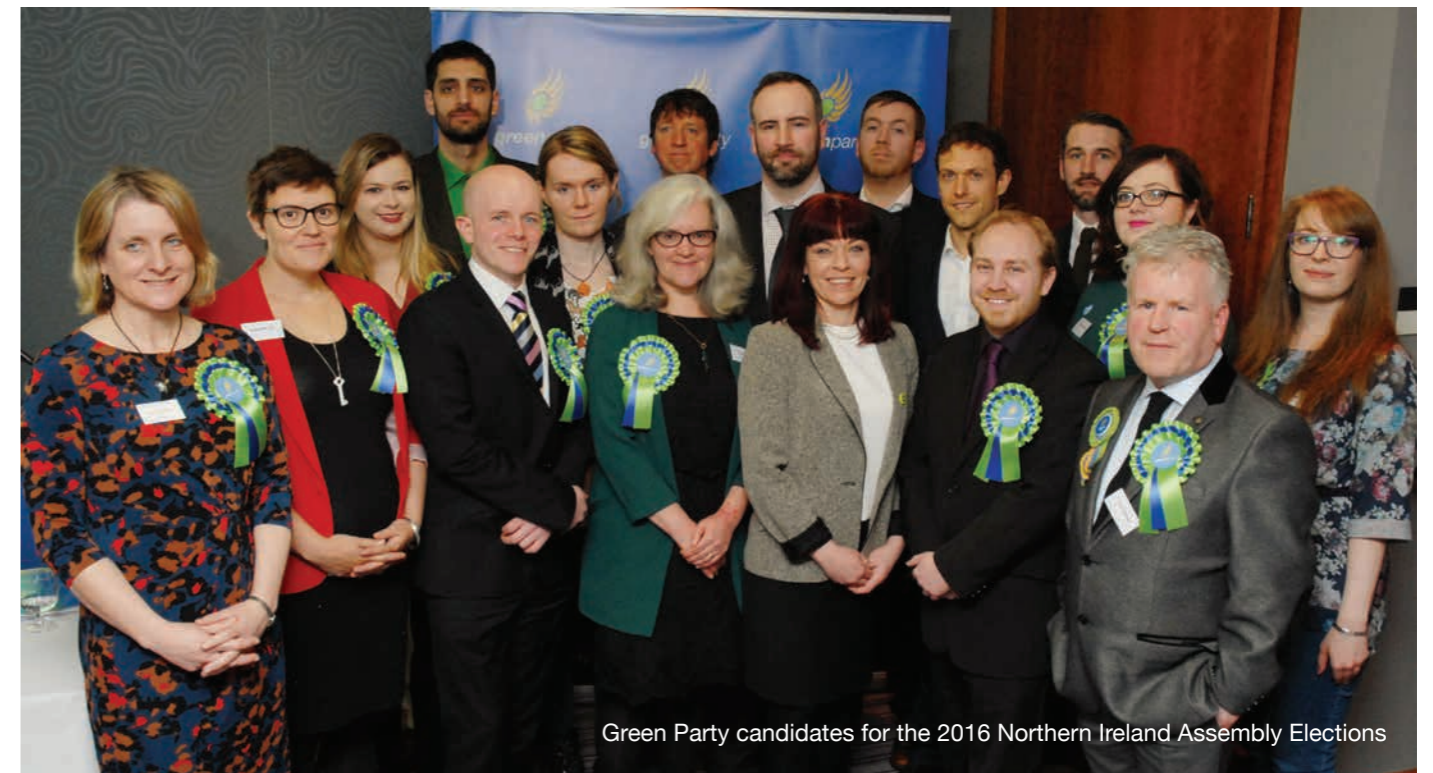
**The Green Party manifesto for the
Northern Ireland Assembly Election 2016**

Introduction

The Green Party is standing on a promise of Zero Waste.

We hate waste, wherever it is found, and pledge to bring about an end to the waste of money, time and opportunities at Stormont.

By taking a Zero Waste approach to our economy, society and environment, we can make Northern Ireland a better place for us all to live.



Contents

Foreword	7
A Zero Waste Strategy for People	8
Education	8
Health	9
Justice	10
Arts	10
Equality	10
Democracy	11
A Zero Waste Strategy for the Environment	12
Planning	12
Natural resources	12
Agriculture	13
Animals	13
A Zero Waste Strategy for the Economy	14
Energy	14
Jobs	15
Housing	16
Transport	16
Green Party candidates 2016	17

Foreword

In the past five years, the Green Party's membership has trebled, and continues to rise. Our share of the vote has doubled between Westminster elections and we had our best ever council election. Indeed, it was standing room only at the recent Green Party conference.

People have become tired of the wasteful gridlock of politics as usual and the Green Party offers an opportunity for change.

But it's not just about numbers.

The Green Party has also made things better.

The Children's Services Cooperation Act, which I introduced, makes things better for your children by ensuring cooperation to put your child at the centre.

The Green Party has exposed the systemic failure of our planning system that sees unauthorised sand dredging in Lough Neagh, illegal dumps such as Mobuoy flourishing and oil drilling in Woodburn.

The Green Party had led the way on equal marriage. We also stood up to the injustices of welfare reform, resulting in a better, although not good enough, deal.

Green Party representatives have been working in local communities to bring about positive change.

Deputy leader Clare Bailey has worked tirelessly with local residents as an advocate for better housing and education. She leads the way on campaigning for equality and the need to trust women.

Councillor Ross Brown has led change on Belfast City Council, securing council opposition to the oil drilling at Woodburn, support for an energy transition strategy and an animal cruelty register.

Our Green Party councillors in North Down brought about a ban on circuses using animals on council property. They have supported community workers speaking out against paramilitary intimidation and have been working towards giving the public a say in how money is spent.

Equality and social justice, inextricably linked with environmental sustainability, are the foundations of the Green Party.

This becomes apparent when you look at our 18 candidates for the Assembly elections. By working with and empowering members, we have achieved a 50/50 gender balance. We are standing LGBT candidates, including the first transgender candidate in Northern Ireland. We are standing young candidates as well as those with experience.

With your help, the Green Party will build on these successes.

We simply ask you to vote Green on Thursday 5 May 2016.



Steven Agnew
Green Party leader



A Zero Waste Strategy for People

The Green Party has been successful at Stormont, for example through Steven Agnew's Children's Services Cooperation Act, through leading the way on equal marriage and through highlighting the need to reform Northern Ireland's archaic abortion laws.

We have been frustrated at the lack of progress, wasted opportunities and the seemingly endless squabbling of the five main parties.

In contrast to this the Green Party pays tribute to the voluntary and community sector, especially those who facilitate the participation of volunteers. These unsung heroes often provided the glue that, more often than not, held together many of the political deals struck by political parties in the peace process.

“There have been many wasted opportunities at Stormont. As your Green MLA I will listen to you and deliver the open and transparent politics that we need.”

Clare Bailey, deputy leader and Green Party candidate for South Belfast



Education

The Green Party would like to see a fully integrated education system that enables all pupils to fulfil their potential. Our current system is costly both in terms of finance and societal impact.

It is unacceptable that we segregate our children at age four while opportunities for integration have been wasted by those who seek to continue the status quo. There is public demand for integration and it is time for Stormont to deliver. School should be about sharing experiences, not just buildings.

The Green Party will

- ✓ Ensure that all children have access to an integrated education throughout their academic careers
- ✓ Seek an independent review of the barriers to increasing integrated education
- ✓ Ensure that Steven Agnew's Children's Services Cooperation Act 2015 is fully implemented
- ✓ Increase investment in early years, for example through increased provision of Surestart
- ✓ Introduce a flexible starting age in primary schools
- ✓ Introduce free nutritious school meals for all children in P1-P3
- ✓ Ensure pupils receive appropriate support through assessment and that learning is child-centred rather than system-centred
- ✓ Support an education system based on community-centred campuses, with local schools and colleges serving the whole community
- ✓ Fight for resources for special education needs to ensure that there is increased services provision to match improved diagnosis rates
- ✓ Revalue our Colleges of Further and Higher Education and the skills, crafts and trades they teach
- ✓ Oppose plans to raise undergraduate tuition fees further

- ✓ Introduce legislation to grant Student Unions legal and financial protections similar to those enshrined in the Education Act 1994 in Great Britain
- ✓ Encourage the development of GSCE and A-Levels in sign-language
- ✓ Require personal social and health education (PSHE) in all schools

Health

We must defend our national health service and ensure that it remains free at the point of use. We are opposed to health service privatisation and cuts to frontline services.

Our health service should start with keeping people healthy, beginning with exercise, a good diet and a healthy lifestyle. When ill, we need to receive high quality, patient-focused treatment instead of languishing on waiting lists.

The Green Party will

- ✓ Oppose privatisation of the health service and cuts to frontline services
- ✓ Support health service staff to secure fair conditions
- ✓ Oppose any imposition of contractual change for doctors without negotiation and agreement
- ✓ Retain free prescriptions, but introduce a voluntary payment scheme for those who wish to contribute to the cost of their prescriptions
- ✓ Promote health through the provision of safe walking, cycling routes, public parks, playgrounds, pitches, swimming pools and leisure centres
- ✓ Support co-operative working between the Department for Communities and Department of Health given the contribution of sport to health promotion
- ✓ Promote community healthcare, illness prevention and health promotion to combat the rising problems of obesity and its related diseases

- ✓ Promote the vision for mental health and learning disability services outlined in the Bamford Review
- ✓ Back calls for a dedicated international mental health centre for Northern Ireland to reflect the fact that we have the world's highest rate of post-traumatic stress disorder directly linked to the conflict
- ✓ Promote health education to children in schools, so that our children learn to eat well and keep active, as well as promoting mental health and well-being
- ✓ Include information about mental health, chronic illness and disabilities in the school curriculum
- ✓ Promote health and well-being for the whole of life, starting with enhanced care for children up to two years old
- ✓ Support increased physical education at an early age in schools
- ✓ Call for an independent review of the provision of support for older people at home, including the need for high-quality domiciliary care
- ✓ Work in partnership with charities and voluntary organisations that are championing patient care
- ✓ Introduce legislation to support mothers who wish to breastfeed
- ✓ Treat drug addiction as a health problem rather than as a crime
- ✓ Support dignity in dying
- ✓ Ensure equality of healthcare services for women including the extension of the 1967 Abortion Act to Northern Ireland
- ✓ Push for the provision of accessible, respectful and inclusive healthcare for transgender individuals of all ages through Health and Social Care Northern Ireland
- ✓ Improve health outcomes for the LGBT community by promoting evidence-based and accessible healthcare

Justice

Justice is a fundamental part of our democratic society to which we are all entitled.

The Green Party supports an evidence based approach to justice which is focused on crime prevention and reducing reoffending. Cost effective early intervention and joined up working across government departments are crucial to tackle the causes of crime. Domestic and sexual violence is under-reported and prosecutions remain low.

This is not good enough. We need equal access to justice.

The Green party will

- ✓ Support the introduction of evidence-based early intervention initiatives to tackle the causes of crime
- ✓ Defend the UK Human Rights Act
- ✓ End labour exploitation by ensuring that all migrant workers are able to access support agencies
- ✓ Ensure a greater focus on tackling domestic and sexual violence and supporting victims of domestic and sexual violence
- ✓ Raise the age of criminal responsibility
- ✓ Update Prison Service policy to ensure transgender prisoners are housed in facilities correct for their gender, and not in solitary confinement
- ✓ Support payment of pensions to those seriously injured in the Troubles, with a review panel to deal with controversial cases
- ✓ Initiate reform of our libel laws
- ✓ Expand community policing as part of normalising society

Arts

Unprecedented cuts to theatres and other arts organisations came as a shock to many, undermining jobs and arts programming.

Ironically, this comes at a time when Northern Ireland is being used for multi-million pound films and TV series.

There needs to be a better connection between investment in the arts and the contribution it makes to the economy through job creation and leisure.

The Green Party will

- ✓ Develop 'art contract clauses' similar to 'community benefit clauses' for multi-million pound film and screen projects in Northern Ireland
- ✓ Support core investment for the arts at local and Executive level to further realise the value and positive impact of the arts

Equality

Inequality is commonplace throughout our society with many opportunities wasted by the Executive to redress the imbalance.

It has been clear for some time that public opinion is way ahead of our old political landscape on this issue, with many in Northern Ireland wanting to see the same progress towards equality that is now the norm elsewhere.

The Green Party will

- ✓ Bring forward legislation for equal marriage
- ✓ End the blood ban for men who have sex with men
- ✓ Update the Gender Recognition Act 2004 to provide transgender and non-binary people in Northern Ireland with gender recognition processes based on self-declaration
- ✓ Implement the measures set out in the Racial Equality Strategy
- ✓ Ensure comprehensive relationship and sexuality education for all pupils
- ✓ Encourage more men to avail of parental leave



Democracy

Stormont needs to change to become truly representative of the population it serves instead of wasting time and money on political point scoring.

The Green Party stands by its principles of openness and transparency. It has taken active steps to empower its members to come forward and stand for election, resulting in an equal number of men and women candidates, as well as LGBTQ and young candidates.

The Green Party will

- ✓ Increase the level of participative democracy
- ✓ Work for the removal of community designation in the Assembly, to be replaced by 2/3 majority decision making
- ✓ Continue to lead by example with transparency in political donations, seek the removal of the exemption for Northern Ireland from current legislation and move towards lowering the limit such that all donations over £500 will be made public
- ✓ Require political parties to stand a minimum of 1/3 female candidates in Assembly elections, with a reduction in the Financial Assistance to Political Parties for any party which fails to do so
- ✓ Campaign for the voting age to be lowered to 16
- ✓ Introduce a legal duty to co-operate to apply to all government departments in all functions
- ✓ Oppose withdrawal from the European Convention on Human Rights, and will campaign for the UK to remain within the European Union



A Zero Waste Strategy for the Environment

The environment is where we live, from our home and community, to Northern Ireland as a whole and beyond.

The Green Party has successfully uncovered serious failings in our planning process, such as exposing the largest illegal dump in the UK and forcing the issuing of an enforcement notice to the unauthorised sand dredgers in Lough Neagh.

The Green Party has consistently advocated the need to harness our natural resources to increase energy from renewables.



Planning

Planning powers should be used to ensure our towns and city centres are sustainable, attractive, thriving places for local businesses, customers and visitors alike.

Although Councils now have responsibility for planning, such planning should take place on the basis of clear principles. The Assembly ultimately has responsibility to ensure that these principles are taken seriously.

The Green Party will

- ✓ Support planning policy which puts the principles of sustainability at its core
- ✓ Pursue early and robust enforcement action against unauthorised activity
- ✓ Give citizens, currently regarded as 'third parties' in the planning process, a right to appeal decisions they believe adversely affect them
- ✓ Oppose the development of further out of town retail in favour of a town centre focus
- ✓ Support a minimum Level 4 Building Standards Code for Sustainable Homes and BREEAM 'very good' building design
- ✓ Encourage energy conservation and use of renewables in domestic and commercial planning policy
- ✓ Promote an integrated flood prevention and mitigation strategy
- ✓ Support urban density planning and oppose the development isolated dwellings
- ✓ Fully implement an ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas around the coast of Northern Ireland to act as 'no-take' reserves closed to commercial fishing and other extractive activities

Natural resources

Our currently dominant economic model is a destructive one, driving us to extract and consume resources at ever increasing rates. Waste is then dumped or burned in ever greater quantities.

The resulting pollution contributes to resource depletion, ill health and climate change, with financial consequences for mismanaging waste.

The Green Party believes our natural resources should be valued and enjoyed by all.

The Green Party will

- ✓ Introduce an independent Environmental Protection Agency
- ✓ Set at least a 70% household recycling and composting target by 2025
- ✓ Establish a charter for consistent recycling across Northern Ireland

- ✓ Introduce a new law to require recycling targets for commercial waste
- ✓ Introduce deposit schemes for plastic bottles, tin cans, glass bottles and tyres
- ✓ Investigate ways of reducing wasteful packaging, for example by encouraging the use of biodegradable packaging and extending the plastic bag levy to other packaging
- ✓ Support the retention of all commercial and recreational woodland owned by the Forest Service within public ownership
- ✓ Ensure that water resources stored and routed for public consumption are kept in public ownership
- ✓ Promote the retention of hedgerows and their enhancement with appropriate species
- ✓ Encourage the planting of protective forests bordering rivers and lakes to protect water quality and assist in managing flood risks
- ✓ Demand full prosecution of environmental crimes
- ✓ Advocate public rights of access to the countryside and coast of Northern Ireland
- ✓ Back the creation of national parks in Northern Ireland

Agriculture

Northern Ireland owes much to its agricultural sector, accounting as it does for some 80% of land use and employing over 60,000 full-time and part-time farmers.

We recognise that farmers currently face pressure from rising material and energy costs, and downward pressure on the prices for their produce.

Agriculture is potentially key to solving problems such as biodiversity loss, mitigating the effects of climate change and creating a sustainable food system.

The Green Party will

- ✓ Support single farm payments criteria which incentivises small farmers, environmental protection and animal welfare
- ✓ Encourage organic alternatives to minimise the use of harmful substances in the treatment of soil, crops and animals by farmers and growers

- ✓ Develop local supply poly-culture, permaculture, and community controlled, nature-based social farming models
- ✓ Reduce food waste by introducing regulations requiring surplus food from supermarkets to be offered to food banks
- ✓ Strengthen and enhance legal protection for biodiversity and our local wildlife
- ✓ Take action to address the alarming decline of bees by applying the precautionary principle to pesticide use
- ✓ Increase the overall planting of trees

Animals

The Green Party has led the way in campaigning against animal cruelty.

Despite other parties purporting to support animal welfare, none have supported the Green Party's Assembly motion to ban hunting with hounds, even though public opinion favours a ban.

There has also been a lack of action to improve welfare and end to puppy farming.

The Green Party will

- ✓ Extend the Hunting Act, which bans the hunting of animals with hounds or other dogs, to Northern Ireland
- ✓ Ban the sale, possession and use of snares
- ✓ Introduce mandatory CCTV in slaughterhouses
- ✓ Introduce tougher regulations on animal transport, including a maximum limit of eight hours before a mandatory rest of at least one hour
- ✓ Increase welfare standards for farmed animals
- ✓ Support a ban on the routine adding of antibiotics to animal feed
- ✓ See an end to use of animals in circuses

A Zero Waste Strategy for the Economy

We live in a world of finite resources. As demand for public services increases, the amount of money available is shrinking. By taking a zero tolerance approach to waste the Green Party will ensure that your money is spent wisely.

Our economy must be sustainable. This means planning for the long term and ensuring that the decisions we make today do not damage our future.

Work must be rewarded with a living wage. Investment in housing, education and transport are an essential part of job creation.

“As a trained economist, I have the knowledge and skills to achieve real and lasting changes to end the wasteful practices at Stormont.”

Ross Brown, Green Party candidate for East Belfast



Energy

Northern Ireland needs renewable energy supplies that are affordable, clean, sustainable and secure.

Properly harnessed, our tides, waves, wind and sun provide power affordably and safely, with a valuable surplus for export.

Northern Ireland needs to play its part to mitigate the effects of climate change, yet there is continued scepticism by political colleagues of the scientific fact of global warming.

The Green Party will

- ✓ Bring forward a Climate Change Bill
- ✓ Support clean and sustainable energy solutions, with an emphasis on small-scale, local and co-operative schemes, especially community-owned schemes
- ✓ Ensure that large-scale renewable projects engage with, and benefit, local communities, including ‘community benefit’ payments for onshore wind
- ✓ Build on Northern Ireland’s natural resources and expertise to create a world-class renewable energy industry, bringing training, skilled jobs and valuable exports
- ✓ Call for support for clean power systems for existing buildings in both public and private sectors
- ✓ Ban all types of dangerous ‘unconventional’ fossil fuel extraction, including fracking
- ✓ Support divestment from fossil fuel industries including all public sector pensions
- ✓ Remove the legal duty to promote the gas industry
- ✓ Support smart metering in domestic and business properties
- ✓ Reintroduce a renewable heat incentive scheme

Jobs

Northern Ireland needs long-term, sustainable jobs that pay a living wage and provide a sense of security and fulfilment.

It is unacceptable that the economic recovery is only being experienced by the privileged few while others continue to experience in-work poverty. This two-tier society is neither fair nor sustainable and the Green Party will work to redress this imbalance.

The Green Party will

- ✓ Campaign for the full implementation of the Green New Deal home energy efficiency scheme, which will create up to 15,000 jobs
- ✓ Call for a properly calculated living wage as outlined by the Living Wage Foundation
- ✓ Promote parity of pay for women and men and seek publication of rates of pay by gender in public sector and large corporations
- ✓ Oppose the reduction in corporation tax and continue to promote the development of a sustainable economy
- ✓ Push for social clauses in all government contracts to include proper training and apprenticeships
- ✓ Introduce a pay ratio policy for the public sector
- ✓ Promote and encourage employers to implement family friendly working policies such as childcare and parental leave
- ✓ Support the implementation of a childcare strategy to deliver adequate, accessible and affordable childcare which accommodates all working patterns
- ✓ Invest in skills such as customer service and catering to enhance the visitor experience in new economies such as tourism
- ✓ Modernise licensing laws to support the hospitality industry
- ✓ Reform Company Law to enhance social responsibility
- ✓ Push for carer-friendly employer policies across all sectors
- ✓ Promote cooperatives and community ownership
- ✓ Support unionisation and the right to collective bargaining
- ✓ Seek the implementation of the recommendations of the New Economics Foundation report ‘Good Jobs in Northern Ireland’



Housing

It is unacceptable that almost half of households in Northern Ireland are in fuel poverty and that people are dying on our streets due to being homeless. It is disappointing that the Executive has wasted many opportunities to ensure that everyone has decent living conditions.

This needs to be addressed.

The Green Party will

- ✓ Draw together the many diverse funding streams for energy efficiency measures under a one stop Green New Deal model
- ✓ Meet housing need and tackle homelessness through incentivising the building of 2,000 units of energy efficient social housing a year to meet lifelong living needs
- ✓ Abolish the priority need category for homeless applicants so that every homeless person can seek help
- ✓ Protect the Supporting People budget
- ✓ Continue to oppose the bedroom tax
- ✓ Support legislation for rent controls and longer tenancies
- ✓ Increase support for the SmartMove NI model for private rentals
- ✓ Work with mortgage lenders and other private sector sources to ensure advice and assistance is available for struggling home owners
- ✓ Support resident participation structures in social and private housing sectors
- ✓ Reform of the rating system including the lifting of the rates cap

Transport

We all need transport, whether for work, health, education or leisure. Accessible public transport is important not only in terms of sustainability but also for social and economic equality.

Northern Ireland's public transport network is woefully underfunded. The rise in traffic, congestion and pollution increases stress, the risk of accidents and ill health.

The Green Party will

- ✓ Rebalance transport spend towards public transport and active travel
- ✓ Support the retention of free public transport for people over 60 and seek to extend it to other users
- ✓ Encourage cycling by supporting moves to expand greenways
- ✓ Ensure that all road upgrades include provision for cycling
- ✓ Support increased spending on cycle infrastructure throughout Northern Ireland to the value of £25 per person
- ✓ Propose that a module on awareness of cyclists and pedestrians becomes part of the driving test
- ✓ Allow contra-flow cycling in specifically signed, one-way streets with low volumes of traffic, as is the norm in most European cities
- ✓ Expand public transport, especially in rural areas
- ✓ Simplify and integrate ticketing and fare structures across the public transport system
- ✓ Explore the reopening of railway connections
- ✓ Encourage the use of smaller, flexible electric or hybrid vehicles and investment in the electric charging network
- ✓ Introduce a default 20mph speed limit in residential areas and round schools
- ✓ Support a change in the law to 'presumed liability' to protect the most vulnerable road users
- ✓ Call for a moratorium on new road build projects with a focus on better maintenance of existing road infrastructure

Green Party candidates for the Assembly election on 5 May 2016



Steven Agnew
North Down



Clare Bailey
Belfast South



Ross Brown
Belfast East



Tanya Jones
Fermanagh & South Tyrone



Ciaran McClean
West Tyrone



Malachai O'Hara
North Belfast



Daniel Barrios-O'Neill
Lagan Valley



Georgia Grainger
Strangford



Ellen Murray
West Belfast

Green Party candidates for the Assembly election on 5 May 2016



Amber Hammill
East L Derry



Stefan Taylor
Mid Ulster



Helen Farley
South Antrim



John Hardy
South Down



Jennifer Breslin
North Antrim



Mary Hassan
Foyle



Dawn Patterson
East Antrim



Simon Lee
Upper Bann



Michael Watters
Newry and Armagh



The Queer Greens have produced a manifesto outlining what each and every Green Party candidate will strive to achieve for the LGBTQ community in Northern Ireland.

We are calling for better healthcare, education, justice and legal reform.

Read the Queer Greens manifesto online at: <http://bit.ly/1XCDQqz>



The Young Greens have produced a manifesto highlighting some of the Green Party policies which will help young people the most.

We are proud to promote and equal society, a good education, a clean environment, a people's democracy and a fair economy.

Read the Young Greens manifesto online at: <http://bit.ly/1XCDOlv>



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