



Green Party in Northern Ireland Manifesto

For the May 2011 Elections

**ECONOMY
FOR
PEOPLE
AND
PLANET**



**green
party**

northern ireland



The Green Party recognises that in these harsh financial times what we need is Economy for People and Planet.

Resources are stretched and we have to prioritise spending on areas that meet a number of policy objectives. There is no sense in squandering money on projects that may be good economically but environmentally damaging or pushing environmental policies that are not good for people. The Green Party benchmarks all its policies on whether they are good for the economy, good for people and good for the environment. We believe government should be doing the same.

In the last Assembly with one MLA the Green Party was able to get cross party support for the ambitious Green New Deal programme.

If fully implemented the Green New Deal will provide thousands of jobs while helping to tackle fuel poverty and combat climate change.

It is essential that there is a Green Party presence in the next Assembly to ensure the vision of the Green New Deal is realised.

The Green Party opposed the cuts budget that will see our public sector decimated and result in massive job losses across the public sector. The Green Party will continue to defend vital public services and oppose plans to increase fees for students that would see our young people burdened with crippling debt – an unacceptable price for university education which benefits our whole society.

The other parties are blaming Westminster for the cuts they are introducing. We will not let them hide behind this smokescreen. In this manifesto we outline how we can minimise the impact of the cuts and target investment to drive job creation in Northern Ireland. We need to invest in Northern Ireland.

The Green Party enters these elections in better shape than ever. Our European election result showed our vote had trebled in the space of five years.

In these elections we are looking to translate that growth of support into seats in the Assembly and in local councils. We have young candidates that can bring a breath of fresh air to Northern Ireland politics and the experience and expertise of Green Parties across the globe to draw upon.

While others dwell in the past it is the Green Party that has the vision for a brighter future.



Steven Agnew
Leader
Green Party in Northern Ireland



YOUR NOTES



Executive Summary

Northern Ireland needs a new direction

The financial crisis and the credit crunch have brought the failings of current economic and social policies sharply into focus.

These global financial upheavals have exposed a wide and systemic failure in how we do business and organise our management of resources.

The world is facing a serious a crisis in terms of the depletion of our fundamental resources and going forward this will impact on every aspect of our lives - from the food we eat to the energy we use.

This situation can be seen as an opportunity to transform our economic and social system into one that will offer our society a future based on stability, self sufficiency and sustainability.

This is not an ideological stance – it is fact and we are already experiencing the effects of diminishing resources in the rising price of fuel and food.

In Northern Ireland we are well placed to be at the forefront of this change to take advantage of all the benefits offered by the need for skills, industry and services for a global and local low-carbon economy.

The Green Party will ensure that all policies are benchmarked on whether they are good for the economy, good for people **and** good for the environment. This type of management is the only option for future prosperity.

In the next Assembly the Green Party's priorities are:

• Full implementation of the Green New Deal

The Green Party is fully committed to delivering the Green New Deal insulation scheme. By insulating 500,000 homes across Northern Ireland we can create thousands of jobs, help tackle fuel poverty and combat climate change by reducing carbon emissions.

Further investment in renewable energy, improving public transport and sustainable agriculture will ensure that Northern Ireland is equipped to meet the challenges presented by rising food and oil prices.

• **Protecting Jobs and Vital Public Services**

The Green Party will defend our public sector against the proposed cuts that could lead to thousands of people losing their jobs. Through changes to the governance of NI Water and a moratorium on new road building projects the Green Party would free up an extra £1.5billion for vital public services such as health and education and investment in the Green New Deal.

This will mean a more secure future for those working in the public sector as well as for the many people in the private sector whose jobs are reliant on public spending.

• **Opposition to Increase in University Fees**

A well educated society is a prosperous society. The Green Party will oppose any rise in university fees and put forward proposals to fund higher education that will mean we can scrap fees altogether. Access to university education should be based on ability, not ability to pay.

• **Mutualisation of Northern Ireland Water**

Northern Ireland Water should be reconstituted as a Customer's Company. This will save £200million per year which can be used to fund other vital public services. By issuing low yield bonds £1.5billion could be raised to fund the necessary improvements to our infrastructure to ensure we don't have a repeat of the water shortages that we faced over the winter. The Green Party believes that water is a right but we have no right to waste it. We would introduce a metering system so that each household would receive 90 litres per person per day free, with charges introduced for water wastage.

• **Invest in Northern Ireland**

The Green Party is supportive of plans to give Stormont the power to vary corporation tax. However we think it would be unfair and wholly irresponsible to give a huge subsidy to banks and multinational supermarkets while ordinary families struggle to pay the bills. The Green Party believes there should be no reduction in the top rate of corporation tax which applies to big business but instead we would seek to reduce the Small Profits Rate to help local small businesses and help grow a strong, resilient Northern Ireland economy from the ground up.

- **Political Reform**

The Green Party recognises that we are over governed and that this is a drain on the public purse. We would reduce the number of MLAs to 80 and reduce the number of government departments to nine. However we believe that we should retain our 26 councils to maintain true local government while looking to make efficiency savings through more cooperative working across councils. Significant savings can be made without the huge sums required for the reform of local government proposed by the other parties.

- **Green politics is clean politics**

The Green Party wants a ban on corporate donations to political parties with full transparency on party donations.

- **Northern Ireland Climate Bill**

Northern Ireland needs to play its part in international efforts prevent the worst consequences of climate change. Introducing legislation to limit our greenhouse gas emissions will provide a clear framework within which we can set future policy. It will also send a signal to investors that we are committed to the technologies required to take Northern Ireland forward towards a low carbon economy, giving them confidence to invest in the green tech sector.

These measures will create jobs, lead to a fairer society and help Northern Ireland play its part in the global fight against climate change. It's Economy, for People and Planet.



**ECONOMY
FOR
PEOPLE
AND
PLANET**

YOUR NOTES



INDEX

- 1 The Economy
- 2 Energy
- 3 Health
- 4 Education
- 5 Environment
- 6 Agriculture & Food
- 7 Transport
- 8 Culture, Arts and Leisure
- 9 Political Reform
- 10 Rights and Responsibilities
- 11 Animal Welfare



YOUR NOTES



1 The Economy

“The Green Party will continue to champion the Green New Deal which has the potential to bring the Northern Ireland economy out of recession. Through investment in energy efficiency measures, public transport and the green tech sector we can create a low carbon economy which rising oil prices have made a necessity.”



Cadogan Enright – Green Party Assembly Candidate for South Down



insulated over four years. This will provide employment for up to 15,000 people, reduce average home heating bills by over £100 per year and lead to a reduction in carbon emissions.

A total of 50,000 jobs could be created by investing in home insulation, renewable energy, sustainable transport, local food and green tourism.

Invest in NI

The Green Party supports plans to give Stormont the power to vary corporation tax as this will enable us to achieve a fiscally balanced economy. However we think it would be unfair and wholly irresponsible to give a huge subsidy to banks and multinational supermarkets while ordinary families struggle to pay the bills.

We should Invest in Northern Ireland by encouraging growth in new and existing indigenous businesses. This will engender a culture of enterprise rather than a culture of dependence on state funding or foreign direct

The Green Party would:

Invest in the Green New Deal

Northern Ireland spends approximately £2billion per year on imported fuel such as oil and gas. That’s literally £2billion up in smoke! The Green Party would reduce the amount we spend on energy through investment in energy efficiency measures and generate our own energy through greater use of renewables. The Green New Deal insulation scheme would see 500,000 homes

investment. The Green Party believes there should be no reduction in the top rate of corporation tax which applies to big business but instead we would seek to reduce the Small Profits Rate to help local small businesses and help grow a strong, resilient Northern Ireland economy from the ground up.

The Green Party will seek to rejuvenate our town centres and support independent traders. We recognise that small businesses are the backbone of our economy and that town centres are vital to maintain a sense of community, as well as providing genuine choice. Having shops on our doorstep also makes us less reliant on the car which will become increasingly important with oil prices continuing to rise.

Reform Planning

The Green Party sees it as imperative that we publish Public Planning Statement 5 (PPS5) which would restrict out of town retail development. These developments often destroy nearby town centres, putting local retailers out of business and wiping out the unique identity of our towns.

We would also remove hurdles to Green Enterprise by addressing technical, regulatory and planning barriers that are delaying the development of renewable energy projects.

Promote Tourism

The Green Party believes that tourism

remains one of our most important sources of local employment and wealth creation. Our relatively undiscovered and under utilised natural resources put us in prime position to establish Northern Ireland as a world-leading green holiday destination, in particular through the establishment of a National Park for the Mourne area.

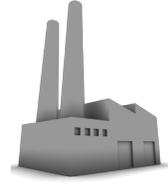
Build for the Future

The Green Party would create a framework for a sustainable construction sector. We would develop centres of excellence in sustainable building research, establishing a construction industry strategy to ensure that standards and practice in Northern Ireland are at the cutting edge. We would invest in social housing to meet the increasing demand for affordable homes and introduce a 20% developer contribution for social and affordable housing in all developments of 20 houses or more.

We would also; provide supports for manufacturers to develop construction products from suitable waste streams and to develop products that can be reused or recycled beyond their intended use, implement a sustainable public procurement action plan to ensure that all public capital works meet high sustainability standards that are set to tighten over the coming years and ensure that building regulations and building construction are ecologically and sustainably based.

2 Energy

“The Green Party wants to achieve an energy independent, carbon neutral Northern Ireland. Our new economy must acknowledge the fact that we will reach a peak in oil production in the near future. An important step is for us to reduce our consumption of energy and in the long run reorganise our economy and built environment. Importing oil means exporting money – we simply can’t afford to do that anymore.”



Martin Gregg – Green Party Assembly Candidate for East Belfast



SUMMARY

The Green Party would:

- Develop local renewable energy sources to reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels.
- Ensure new buildings are constructed to the highest possible energy efficiency standards and that

existing buildings are retrofitted to improve their performance.

- Introduce a feed-in tariff to speed the development of small scale renewable energy production at the same time as developing large scale wind, wave and tidal projects.
- Expand vocational training courses to develop the skills required for the emerging energy industries.
- Strengthening planning guidance with a presumption in favour of renewable energy projects to ensure better consistency in local decision making. Comprehensive training and support will be provided for planning officers to better assess renewable energy projects.

- Keep Northern Ireland nuclear free.

The Green Party would make a difference by:

- Taking immediate action to reduce our dependence on oil and natural gas, through reducing our energy consumption, improved energy efficiency and development of renewable sources of energy.
- Developing and delivering a roadmap which allows for the development of ocean and tidal energy of which Northern Ireland has some of the best in the world, and ensure that Northern Ireland participates in the North Seas Offshore Grid Plan.
- Encouraging the teaching of energy conservation in schools.
- Providing incentives for running vehicles on fuels producing little or no harmful emissions.
- Developing an ambitious programme of Government and District Council investment in publicly-owned renewable energy projects to be introduced immediately, with an initial focus on onshore and offshore wind projects.
- Expanding vocational training courses aimed at creating a work force for the emerging energy-related industries.
- Ensuring that research and development funding will be made available for the development of renewable energy technologies.
- Introducing a Feed-In Tariff and Renewable Heat Incentive to reward homeowners, businesses and farmers for producing electricity and heat from renewable sources.
- Opposing nuclear power. The environmental and economic case for nuclear power cannot be justified as the risks are too great and the rewards too small for nuclear to be a viable energy option and the cost of insurance, security and storage is an untenable burden when compared with renewable energy.

3 Health

“Compared to other UK regions, our Assembly is not giving the same priority to health funding. Northern Ireland has a 10% greater need for health care and 35% greater need for social care. We are opposed to the privatisation of the NHS and Community Care and the proposed cuts to frontline services. We need to shift the emphasis to a health system rather than a sickness system and enshrine preventative strategies in areas such as obesity and addiction where early intervention and a framework of support have proved to pay dividends in the long term.”



Danny Donnelly – Green Party Assembly Candidate for East Antrim



and health promotion, including promotion of good mental health.

- Integrate primary and hospital care more closely, supporting a network of community and district hospitals.
- Seek to involve staff and patients in decision making processes.
- Implement the recommendations of the Bamford Review of mental health and learning disability services.
- Retain the Health Promotion Agency to promote healthy living and reduce the impact of lifestyles on the health service.

The Green Party would:

- Oppose privatisation of community care services and transfer of resources out of the public health system.
- Increase emphasis on preventing illness through improved education

The Green Party would make a difference by:

- Diverting funding away from centralised facilities towards community healthcare, illness prevention and health promotion.
- Ensuring that women are given the information they need to make appropriate choices about how they wish to give birth, and that a full range of options, including home birth and a range of styles of hospital delivery, are made available to all women.
- Working towards increasing the number of mothers choosing to breastfeed their babies as we recognise that breastfeeding has multiple short and long-term health benefits.
- Supporting the vision for mental health and learning disability services outlined in the Bamford Review and will work to implement its recommendations in full.
- Closely integrating primary and hospital care. Staffing structures will be reviewed with the aim of integrating hospital-based specialists into primary care and community health workers into hospital practice. The hospital programme will emphasise the development of appropriately sized district and community hospitals with a reduced role for larger regional centres. However, some specialised services will

continue to be provided on a regional or sub-regional basis.

- Ensuring that there are sufficient resources allocated to the promotion of positive mental health and suicide prevention within our community.
- Educating children about health in schools. The Green Party believes much more can be done to prevent illness by educating children about health. Specially trained nurses will be attached to every primary and secondary school to give lessons in health awareness, including diet, as well as providing an on-site primary healthcare service to all pupils and students.
- Informing those suffering mental ill health at the point of diagnosis about complementary treatments. They should be able to access these via the health service as appropriate.
- Developing practices that involve staff and patients within the decision making processes within the health service as we recognise that staff are the most important asset in the health service.
- Opposing the transfer of resources away from the public health system which is available to all.

4 Education

“Through educational reforms, Northern Ireland can have a world class education system that delivers for all pupils. Our secondary sector should be characterised by schools accessing a range of shared specialist teaching services in languages, sports, technology, music and arts. Pupils should receive continuous assessment to ensure they receive appropriate support and are provided with appropriate choices. Schools should operate within clear sustainability criteria and be part of their community. Students should be educated at the school closest to them with courses being shared between different schools in the area for efficiency and choice.”



Rebecca Volley – Green Party Council Candidate for Castlereagh



SUMMARY

The Green Party would:

- Support a properly funded, accessible Higher Education system. We will resist any increase in tuition fees.
- Maintain the Education Maintenance Allowance.
- Ensure people of all ages should have access to the knowledge and skills required to participate fully in society where they live.
- End selection of pupils by schools based on a transfer test with the aim that most children will attend their local school, with cooperation between schools to ensure the widest range of subject availability.
- Develop an early childhood education strategy with focus on maternal health, the home learning environment and universal pre-school provision.
- Develop schools as ‘community campuses’ hosting a range of services.
- Promote equality, inclusivity, social and emotional well-being and responsibility.
- Working towards class sizes of 20 at both secondary and primary level.

The Green Party would make a difference by:

- Supporting a properly funded, accessible Higher Education system. We will resist any increase in tuition fees.
- Maintaining the Education Maintenance Allowance.
- Ensuring that schools do not select pupils based on an academic transfer test.
- Developing an integrated early childhood education and childcare strategy that includes a focus on maternal health, the home learning environment and family support.
- Ensuring that admissions structures will continue to be determined at a local level, which will encourage placing young people at their local school as often as possible.
- Making sure that every disabled learner will have an entitlement to an assessment of his/her learning needs. This will identify equipment and facilities required, curriculum differentiation and learning styles, and any educational professional and personal assistance that is needed.
- Promoting the idea that teachers are the key resource within the education system. They need first class initial preparation, continuing professional development and appropriate salaries.
- Delivering 100% pre-school provision.
- Promoting a cooperative education system through the sharing of resources between schools in all sectors, such as teachers, teaching materials, etc.
- Improving investment in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) utilising modern broadband services and cloud computing technology to deliver greater access to all students in a more cost effective manner.
- Reforming and streamlining the assessment procedure in Special Needs Education to address the needs of the child.
- Developing energy efficient, multi-use school buildings as 'community campuses' providing a range of services that can adapt flexibly as a community develops.
- Developing and introducing a 'healthy schools' meals policy, building on existing pilot projects and implement it gradually across the country.

5 Environment

“We can no longer escape the fact that the economy and the environment are inextricably linked. We have to move away from the failed policy of prioritising the economy at the expense of people and the environment. We need a new way of doing things where we base all decision making on whether it is good for the economy, good for people and good for the environment.”



Steven Agnew – Green Party Leader and Assembly Candidate for North Down



The Green Party would:

- Ensure policy recognises the interdependence of environment and economy, particularly through the Green New Deal.
- Establish an independent Environmental Protection Agency and ensure coordination between environmental regulators in the UK

and Ireland.

- Introduce a local Climate Change Bill with a legally binding commitment to annual cuts of 3% in greenhouse gas emissions.
- Set a target of recycling 70% of all wastes by 2020, to be delivered through development of appropriate infrastructure, changing public behaviour and establishing necessary regulations.
- Oppose the incineration of household waste.
- Reconstitute Northern Ireland Water as a ‘customers’ company’ and raise revenue to bring our water infrastructure up to modern standard by the issuing of low yield, low risk bonds. We believe access to clean water is a right but that we have no right to waste it. We would introduce water metering with a free allowance of 90 litres per person per day.
- Reinstate the Sustainable Development Commission.

The Green Party would make a difference by:

- Introducing a Northern Ireland Climate Bill in 2012 with a legally binding target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 3% per annum accompanied by a budget to deliver the targets.
- Producing a White Paper on the Environment by 2012 identifying Government's major objectives in the fields of waste management, climate change, biodiversity, water, landscape and built heritage.
- Investing through the Green New Deal in an ambitious programme of measures to simultaneously cut carbon emissions, create thousands of new jobs, and help secure our energy supply, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build a competitive low-carbon economy.
- Developing a landscape-scale approach that ensures sustainable land and sea ecosystem management for the long-term benefit of Northern Ireland's people and environment.
- Setting a target of recycling 70% of all waste by 2020 to be delivered through development of appropriate infrastructure, changing public behaviour and establishing necessary regulations.
- Providing resources for the full implementation of the Water Framework Directive to support

a sustainable approach to water management.

- Setting a target of 85% of Northern Ireland schools to be actively engaged in the Eco-Schools process by 2015 and ensure adequate funding for its achievement.
- Supporting the promotion of coordinated activities between environmental monitoring bodies on the islands of Ireland and Great Britain in recognition that environmental issues do not start or stop at territorial borders. We believe that much greater emphasis needs to be placed on coordinating the activities of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and between local authorities on both sides of the border.
- Creating an independent Environmental Protection Agency to protect and improve the environment, and reinstate the Sustainable Development Commission.
- Opposing the incineration of waste as a solution to dealing with landfill waste, as the mass burning of household waste reduces the need to recycle and requires local authorities to sign contracts to provide waste at the expense of waste reduction in society.
- Having a sensible, equitable form of funding for water. The Green Party believes that the question is not whether we pay for water but how. The supply and treatment of water in

Northern Ireland has been severely underfunded over the past two decades and, as result, we propose the mutualisation of NI Water so that the people of Northern Ireland would become stakeholders in the organisation and greater investment could then be made in infrastructure through finance raised from the assets.

The Green Party would also support the introduction of water-metering to ensure a fairer system of water use and payment, with minimum free allowances of 90litre per person per day for each household and special allowance for low-income households.



YOUR NOTES



6 Agriculture & Food

“The Green Party’s aim is to create an ecologically sustainable and fair society in Northern Ireland. We acknowledge that the soil is the basis of wealth upon which all land-based life depends. We recognise the fundamental importance of those who work on the land. We want to put power back with the primary producer to the benefit of the consumer.”



John Hardy – Green Party Council Candidate for Newcastle



The Green Party would:

- Reduce the use of harmful substances and chemicals in our food chain.
- Develop local supply poly-culture farming models
- Introduce a Rural Renewable Energy scheme to allow rural communities and farmers to be paid for the renewable energy they can produce from wind, biomass, anaerobic digestion, etc.

- Increase indigenous tree cover to six per cent and assist farmers seeking to diversify into other rural enterprises, particularly green tourism and renewable energy.
- Introduce a food ombudsman to stand up for producers and ensure they get a fair price for their product.
- Set a target of 5% for organic agriculture and meet the growing demand for domestically produced organic food by providing adequate resources and support for the achievement of the target with a focus on import substitution.
- Provide additional allotment sites to help people produce their own food with the added health and social benefits associated with gardening and grow your own schemes.
- Promoting and financially rewarding practices that protect and ideally, enhance the environment, biodiversity, habitats, landscape and animal welfare.
- Promote a less wasteful approach to food through education.

The Green Party would make a difference by:

- Minimising the use of harmful substances in the treatment of soil, crops and animals by farmers and growers; to protect farmers, rural dwellers and consumers from the use of these substances. Continue the enforcement of Nitrates and Phosphorous regulations.
- Ensuring the achievement of a target of 5% of land in organic agriculture and meet the growing demand for domestically produced organic produce by providing adequate resources and support for the achievement of the target with a focus on import substitution.
- Developing local supply poly-culture farming models rather than export driven monoculture through the support of agencies like DARD.
- Increasing the overall spread of trees across all regions, in the form of fruit orchards, nut orchards, copses, hedgerows, small farm woods, shade trees, which will increase woodland verges as important ecosystems both for agro-forestry potential and general biodiversity, to reach a target of 6% tree cover.
- Increasing the amount of land used for food crops and horticulture. Promote a sustainable, healthy diet as a basis for deciding what food crops to encourage.
- Giving financial help and advice to farmers looking to diversify into other rural based enterprises such as eco-tourism, renewable energy, textiles, etc.
- Facilitating farm box schemes and direct links between growers and local consumers including local farmers' markets and Community Supported Agriculture.
- Encouraging and supporting educational links between schools and farms respecting the principles of sustainability.
- Working to establish GM-free zone on the island of Ireland, free from the cultivation of all GM plants.
- Recognising the vital role that allotments have to play, particularly in maximising the potential for urban food growing. Local authorities need to provide more proactive support for allotments and to work to cut waiting lists where demand for allotment plots is high. New allotment sites need to be created on brown-field land. Where housing estates are being redeveloped or newly built, allotment site provision should also be included.
- Promoting and financially reward practices that protect and ideally enhance the environment, biodiversity, habitats, landscape and animal welfare.
- Introducing a Rural Renewable Energy scheme to allow rural

communities and farmers to be paid for the renewable energy they can produce from wind, biomass, anaerobic digestion, etc.

- Introducing a Food Ombudsman to stand up for the farmers in their business relations with the supermarkets.
- Promoting a less wasteful approach to food.



YOUR NOTES



7 Transport

“Decades of under-investment in sustainable transport have resulted in commuting patterns now more reliant on car journeys. We aim to reverse these patterns back to ones where public transport can readily provide for most journeys. The Green Party is committed to working towards a fully integrated transport system under public ownership. Public transport should be the predominant mode in urban areas. Rural areas also need to be well serviced by public transport links for both commercial and domestic requirements.”



Dr John Barry – Green Party Council Candidate for Holywood



SUMMARY

The Green Party would:

- Develop an integrated public transport system so that bus or rail services become the norm in urban areas and improve services in rural areas, including post buses and community taxis where there is insufficient demand to support a regular bus service.

- Introduce a moratorium on road building, saving £790 million for investment in Green New Deal projects and public transport, including an expanded rail network.

- Introduce measures to give pedestrians priority in residential streets, including a 20mph speed limit in built-up areas.

- Ensure most children are able to walk or cycle to school and support employers who promote cycling to work.

- Oppose extension of the runway at Belfast City Airport and introduce a Regional Aviation Strategy so that development of our air travel infrastructure is done in a way that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.

The Green Party would make a difference by:

- Introducing a moratorium on the building of new roads, rebalancing the transport budget towards public transport.
- Opposing plans to extend the runway George Best Belfast City Airport. Where an airport is near to a residential area, the concerns of the local residents must be paramount.
- We would develop an economically and environmentally sustainable regional aviation strategy.
- Providing and implementing a comprehensive plan for fully accessible transport so that public transport will be usable by all members of the public. In addition, necessary arrangements will be made to meet any extra reasonable transportation needs of disabled people beyond that which can be provided through general services.
- Proposing a rail link from Belfast International Airport to Belfast to reduce road travel on this busy route.
- Giving the highest priority to safe routes to so that most children are able to walk or cycle to school.
- Introducing a 20mph speed limit throughout built up areas, including villages.
- Giving priority to residents in residential streets, particularly in its use as part of their outdoor living space. Residents would be involved from the outset in the redesigning of these and a far greater percentage of the funding of roads will be diverted to

these works.

- Encouraging all other initiatives to incentivise a change of travel mode to cycling - including alterations to allowances paid by employers to their employees for their necessary travel and government tax relief for work related cycling on a scale no less generous than car allowances.
- Recognising that one of the major barriers to people using public transport, particularly women and the elderly is a concern for personal safety. For safety in and around bus stops, rail stations and other public transport termini, the Green Party would invest in general structural improvements. These could include better lighting, enclosed waiting points, provision of local emergency numbers and electronic information on services, and other security measures such as CCTV.
- Designing public transport in rural areas to meet the needs of those living in those areas. These will include various forms of trip sharing and community transport provision, including post buses and taxis, especially in the more remote areas where a reliance on the provision of frequent bus services may be environmentally damaging and too expensive. In rural areas, planning requirements for new housing and settlements will need to ensure they are close to a range of services and are well served by public transport.
- Increasing rail investment to expand and improve the network and services.

8 Culture, Arts & Leisure



“For our society to flourish in all aspects, vibrant culture, arts and leisure sectors are vital. The Green Party promotes diversity of culture and celebrates the creative talents of all members of our community. We must encourage greater involvement in the arts as well as sport for the promotion of both physical and mental health. Culture is where dialogue can take place and connections are forged and greater empathy and understanding can develop.”

Clare Bailey – Green Party Assembly Candidate for South Belfast



- Encourage ties between schools and sports clubs.
- Work to increase participation in sport and the arts among people with disabilities.
- Protect minority languages.
- Support the development of an indigenous Northern Irish film industry
- Ensure all of Northern Ireland has access to 2mbps broadband.

The Green Party would make a difference by:

SUMMARY

The Green Party would:

- Protect libraries, but ensure they move with the times and develop as community hubs.
- Encourage variety in the arts by increasing the number of small grants available, at local rather than regional level where feasible.

- Protecting libraries from closure and developing them as knowledge, access and IT community hubs.
- Amending the current arts funding process by encouraging a greater variety of art through an increased number of small grants rather than a small number of large grants.

- Encouraging the growth of local arts associations made up of practising artists.
- Shifting responsibility and resources for arts funding, where appropriate, from regional to local levels.
- Developing programmes to combat discrimination in sport should be introduced wherever necessary, with a particular focus on young people.
- Helping schools form ties with local sporting clubs (either amateur or professional) in order to share facilities, gain coaching assistance and provide pupils with an easier route to taking up these sports outside school.
- Developing regional planning to encourage the provision of sustainable leisure facilities, so that more people do not feel a need to travel abroad for their holidays.
- Empowering local authorities to give grants to small and medium sized tourism enterprises to improve significantly their facilities for cyclists or links with public transport provision.
- Promoting protection of minority languages in Northern Ireland, in particular the Irish language and Ulster-Scots as languages are an important cultural resource.
- Supporting the development of an indigenous Northern Irish film industry by providing incentives to encourage investment in native talent.
- Establishing a Capital Grant scheme to enable arts organisations and venues to improve access for people with disabilities.
- Rolling out 2MB broadband to the whole of Northern Ireland to increase the benefits for home-working, access to knowledge and development in multimedia arts.

9 Political Reform

“Our goal for the future of Northern Ireland politics is a system defined by ideas not identity. We need an active Assembly with an official opposition - not one forced to try to work through ‘community’ designation. This will give us stronger government with a more solid devolved administration. We also want to work towards a Northern Ireland Government which is broadly fiscally balanced.”

Conor Quinn – Green Party Assembly Candidate for Lagan Valley



- Remove the cap on rates for properties valued at more than £400,000.
- Reduce the total number of Assembly members to 80 and the number of government departments to nine.
- End community designation within the Assembly, replacing cross-community votes with a 66% weighted majority for certain matters.
- End corporate donations to political parties and require transparency in party funding.
- End dual mandates for elected representatives.
- The Green Party wants to see a truly proportional form of representation in all parliaments – including Westminster.

SUMMARY

The Green Party would:

- Retain the 26 existing district councils with enhanced powers and oversight of services provided by other public authorities.

The Green Party would make a difference in local government by:

- Retaining existing 26 councils while extending shared services (waste, IT, purchasing) across the current structures to achieve efficiency savings.
- Supporting new responsibilities for councils in roads, planning.
- Introducing a system of Community Planning whereby local people have an input into the development and implementation of planning, infrastructure and services in their area.
- Defending the representation of councillors on the proposed Education and Skills Authority
- Ensuring that councillors make up a majority of members on Local Commissioning Groups with Local Commissioning Groups being reconstituted on the basis of district and borough councils grouped for the most effective input into the five Health Trusts.
- Introducing a citizen's initiative system to allow voting on local issues. Receipt by councils of a petition from 10% of all electors in a district will cause council to consider and act on the petition or otherwise conduct a plebiscite on the issue.
- Removing the cap on rateable value on properties over £400,000.

The Green Party would make a difference in the Assembly by:

- Putting an end to the requirement for community designation within the Assembly, to be replaced by weighted majority decisions of 66% for key Assembly votes.
- Reducing the number of government departments to nine; Health, Education (including current functions of Dept for Employment and Learning), DETI, Agriculture, DoE (including Regional Development and Rural Development), DCAL, DSD, Justice and Finance and Personnel.
- Selecting the Justice Minister in the same manner as all other Ministers.
- Reducing the number of MLAs to five per constituency elected by the Additional Member System with 4 MLAs elected by STV on a constituency basis and the remainder from a regional "top-up" list. Any party receiving more than 2% of the regional vote would qualify for regional members to be allocated to achieve proportionality. The Assembly would have 80 MLAs in total.
- Electing ministers by PR-STV by assembly members. Elected ministers choose portfolio in order of ranking.
- Creating Junior Ministers within OFMDFM for Energy, Food, Equality and Children and Young People.

The Green Party would make North/South institutions work by:

- Creating of a cross-border Sustainable Energy Authority.
- Creating of a cross border Environmental Protection and Enforcement Agency.
- Promoting of sub-regional co-operation in areas of health, education and emergency services.

The Green Party would clean up politics by:

- Banning corporate donations to political parties with full transparency on party donations.
- Opposing dual-mandates at all levels of representation.
- Reducing the voting age to 16 for Assembly and Council elections.
- Separating election timetables so Council and Assembly election are not held in the same year.



YOUR NOTES



10 Rights and Responsibilities

“The Green Party wants a shared fair and equal society in Northern Ireland where all people can play their part for the enrichment of our common community. Issues surrounding equality need to be enshrined in law and developed through social structures such as education, culture and the arts and through public awareness.”

Paul Roberts – Green Party Council Candidate for Ballyholme



SUMMARY

The Green Party would:

- Support a Northern Ireland Bill of Rights.
- Reduce waiting times for housing adaptations for people with a disability and increase awareness of the support available.
- Publish a sexual orientation strategy

and action plan and develop a new racial equality strategy.

- Merge the Equality and Human Rights Commissions and appoint a single Victims' Commissioner.

The Green Party would make a difference by:

- Supporting a Northern Ireland Bill of Rights.
- Reducing waiting lists for adaptations to housing for those with disability, ensuring that housing adaptation funding is ring-fenced.
- Implementing a review of the points systems so that disabled people, with a requirement for accessible housing, are fast tracked through the system.
- Re-establishing the Sexual Orientation Working Group.
- Immediately publishing a Sexual Orientation Strategy and Action Plan in partnership with the LGBT community
- Broadening the scope of Section

75 (2) of the NI Act 1998 (Good Relations) to cover sexual orientation and gender identity.

- Extending the scope of Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 to cover discrimination in schools.
- Undertaking more public awareness campaigns to ensure that people with disabilities are aware of support that they can access.
- Committing to a new Racial Equality Strategy and reform to strengthen the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997.
- Merging the Equality and Human Rights Commissions and reducing the number of Victims Commissioners to one.



11 Animal Welfare

“The Green Party believes that we should judge a society on how it treats its most vulnerable members and in this spirit aims to tackle the mistreatment and exploitation of animals wherever it exists including in our homes, on farms, and in the entertainment industry. The Green Party is unique in Northern Ireland politics in seeing the inherent value of animals. We believe that animals, as sentient beings with the ability to feel pain, suffering and anxiety, must be seen as having an inherent value.”

Mark McCormick – Green Party Council Candidate for Ballynahinch



SUMMARY

The Green Party would:

- Set up an Animal Welfare Agency to investigate incidents of animal cruelty and see that perpetrators of animal cruelty are brought to the courts.
- Extend the UK Hunting Act (which
- bans the hunting of animals with hounds) to Northern Ireland.
- Put a total ban on the use of snares.
- Call for an end to the sale of foie gras in Northern Ireland.
- Ban the use of animals in circuses.
- Restrict the number of dog breeding licences and introduce licences for cat breeding in order to tackle the number of stray animals.
- Recognise that anglers combine their interest with a desire to protect the environment and advocates responsible fishing which conserves our fish stocks and the environment which they inhabit.
- Call for a public enquiry into animal experimentation, focusing on the suffering caused to animals and on the number of drugs that have passed animal tests but have still proved damaging to humans.

- Strengthen and enhance Legal protection for biodiversity and our local wildlife.

The Green Party would make a difference by:

- Setting up an Animal Welfare Agency to investigate incidents of animal cruelty and see that perpetrators of animal cruelty are brought to the courts. The agency would carry out audits of all businesses which commonly use animals to ensure that animal welfare legislation is being adhered to. The agency would also ensure that animals used for sports such as horse and greyhound racing are not mistreated.
- Extending the UK Hunting Act to Northern Ireland which banning the hunting of animals with dogs. We would encourage the use of drag hunting as alternative to the hunting of live animals.
- Banning snares as the Green Party is totally opposed to their use as they are indiscriminate, cruel, and unnecessary.
- Advising local council and restaurateurs to end the sale of foie gras due the cruelty involved in its production.
- Encourage local councils and private land owners not to permit circuses which use animals in their acts to use their land to stage performances as we are opposed to the use and abuse of

animals for entertainment purposes.

- Restrict the number of dog breeding licences and introduce licences for the breeding of cats to tackle the number of stray animals which need to be put down in Northern Ireland. We also advocate the adoption of pets from shelters. We would discourage the keeping of large and/or exotic species which are not suited to the local climate and indeed may be unsafe to keep as pets.
- Recognising that anglers combine their interest with a desire to protect the environment and advocates responsible fishing which conserves our fish stocks and the environment which they inhabit. The Party accepts the finding of the Medway report that fish do feel pain and notes the declining use of barbed hooks and double and triple hooks because of the damage caused to fish and would make the use of these illegal.
- Calling for a public enquiry into animal experimentation focusing on the suffering caused to animals and on the number of drugs that have passed animal tests but have still proved damaging to humans.
- Calling for alternatives to animal testing as different species react differently to drugs and toxic substances so many drugs that cause damaging side effects in people have passed animal testing. There are viable alternative to animal testing

including epidemiology, the use of cell cultures and human tissue computer simulation. We would direct resources to funding such alternatives. We would also promote preventative health care so that illnesses such as heart disease and cancer could be prevented in a more effective way reducing the overall reliance on drugs. Whilst the testing of cosmetics on animals has been outlawed in EU countries, the Party would embark on an awareness campaign to inform consumers that many of the products they buy contain ingredients which are tested on animals.

- Introducing specialist bio-diversity officer post on all local councils.





Green Party MLA Candidates Cadogan Enright (South Down), Clare Bailey (South Belfast), Conor Quinn (Lagan Valley), Steven Agnew (North Down), Martin Gregg (East Belfast) and Danny Donnelly (East Antrim)

Contact Details

The Green Party in Northern
Ireland,
76 Abbey St, Bangor,
County Down, BT20 4JB

Tel 028 9145 9110

Press contact: Joanna Braniff
0780 8862141

www.greenparty.org



green
party

northern ireland

Produced by The Green Party in Northern Ireland. Printed by Impro Printing, 41 Dargan Road, Belfast, BT3 9JU on 100% recycled paper.