

# A Green Manifesto for Northern Ireland

The Green Party Manifesto for the Northern Ireland Assembly Election 2017

## Introduction

In 2016 the Green Party said that we hated waste, wherever it was found, and pledged to bring about an end to the waste of money, time and opportunities at Stormont.

Less than a year since the last Assembly election, this message has become even more important. The Renewable Heat Incentive scheme has wasted almost half a billion pounds.

The failed consultation process for the Programme for Government has wasted the best part of a year. This is time which could have been spent tackling the urgent problems facing Northern Ireland.

Over the past ten years since the St. Andrews Agreement, Stormont has been a byword for dysfunction, punctuated by crisis after crisis. Each of these crises has been a wasted opportunity to build more sustainable foundations for a stable and effective government, with the traditional parties preferring to kick issues into the long grass to suit their own needs. The Good Friday Agreement has been repeatedly chopped and changed without public consultation to suit the needs of the traditional parties over the past two decades. In any post-election negotiations this time, we want the public to have a say on the outcome. We cannot waste this potential opportunity with another short-term fix that leads to more crises in the future.

#### The Green Party wants to stop this waste.

We raised issues with the design of the Renewable Heat Incentive when it was first introduced in 2013. We have repeatedly proposed measures which will promote openness and transparency in government. We do not participate in futile sectarian arguments. We are focused on creating a better Northern Ireland, for people of both communities and none.

By tackling waste wherever we see it in our economy, society and environment, we can make Northern Ireland a better place for us all to live.



Green Party candidates for the 2017 Northern Ireland Assembly Elections

## Why We Need Your #1 Vote on March 2<sup>nd</sup>

The best way for you to help the Green Party is by giving us your number 1 vote on March 2nd. We need as many first preference votes as we can get, especially with the number of seats in each constituency falling from six to five.

Whilst second and third preferences are always welcomed, if we don't get enough first preferences, they don't help us.

Giving your number 1 to a Green Party candidate is never a wasted vote. Even if we do not get elected, your vote will transfer in full to whichever candidate you put second.

So, if you would like to see a Green voice for your constituency, the best way to do this is to put a number one next to your Green Party candidate.

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## Foreword

This is the second manifesto that the Green Party have produced in under a year.

In this time, the Green Party have doubled our representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly. As Green MLAs, we have brought forward proposals to allow equal marriage for the LGBTQ community.

We have led the way on ensuring that prosecution rates for domestic and sexual violence are improved.

We have passed a motion requiring that all Executive departments must ensure that they meet minimum human rights standards.

Sadly, despite this progress, the vast majority of this manifesto is no different from the document that we stood on – and were elected on – in May last year.

This is because, whilst we have been putting forward progressive policies to improve the lives of people in Northern Ireland, other parties have wasted the best part of a year arguing with each other and making Stormont is more dysfunctional than ever.

In the months since the election in May 2016, we have had no Programme for Government, no budget and no primary legislation passed in the Assembly.

All we have had from the current Executive is waste and failure.

The Green Party's demands have not changed. The Green Party's values have not changed. The Green Party's message has not changed.

In May last year, the Green Party stood on a platform of Zero Waste. It is in that spirit that we stand again. The Green Party wants to see an end to the waste of time, money and opportunities that Stormont has become a byword for.

The Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) may be the most visible symptom of this waste. It is far from the only symptom.

However, in the light of the unmitigated shambles around the RHI, this message of tackling waste is more important than ever.

This is a totally avoidable, unwanted and costly election. However, it is also an opportunity.

It is an opportunity to send a message to the stale politicians and parties who have mismanaged and held Northern Ireland back over the past two decades.

It is an opportunity to cast your vote for fresh Green faces.

Every vote for your local Green Party candidate is a vote for open, transparent and accountable governance. Unlike any other party we publish all donations that we receive over 500.

Unlike any other party we were asking questions about the Renewable Heat Incentive as far back as 2013. Unlike any other party, we treat marriage equality and access to abortion as human rights issues.

Where the Green Party leads, others follow.

This is an opportunity for you to say to those who have caused the current crisis that you are fed up of division, scandal and incompetence.

This election is an opportunity to put more Green MLAs into Stormont. We urge you to take this opportunity.



Clare Bailey Green Party Deputy Leader

Steven Agnew Green Party Leader

## A Green Strategy for the Future

- ✓ We will shine a light into the dark corners of our government. We were the only party to raise the problems with the RHI scheme as far back as 2013. With more MLAs, we can provide even greater scrutiny.
- ✓ We want other parties to follow our lead on openness and transparency. We voluntarily publish all donations that we receive over £500, and other parties need to do so as well. This will enable us to see where the power really lies in Northern Irish politics.
- ✓ We will protect Northern Ireland from Brexit. The people of Northern Ireland didn't vote for Brexit, and the impact of Brexit on our society, economy and environment could be devastating. We want to see a referendum on the terms of any negotiation between the UK and the EU.

- We will safeguard environmental and other EU protections. This means writing all existing EU laws into domestic law, and defending the Human Rights Act.
- ✓ We will promote the use of renewable energy sources. The problems with RHI do not mean that the technology was bad, simply that the scheme was mishandled and mismanaged. We do not want one scandal to tarnish the reputation of renewables, and will continue to promote their use through welldesigned, evidence-based schemes.
- ✓ We will introduce a Windfall Tax on RHI payments. This will ensure that there is no financial incentive to "burn to earn", and will return the scheme to its original intention of encouraging the replacement of fossil fuels with renewable sources.
- ✓ We want to see grassroots democracy take hold in Northern Ireland. For too long the traditional political parties have made the rules to suit their own agendas, at the expense of the people of Northern Ireland. The Good Friday Agreement was the people's agreement. Subsequent amendments have moved us away from that position. In any talks after this election, we want to see ordinary citizens have their say in any negotiations.
- ✓ We will ensure that Northern Ireland meets its human rights requirements. We will introduce marriage equality and decriminalise abortion, so that it is rightly considered solely a health issue, and the police and courts should not be involved.

Steven Agnew, Assembly candidate for North Down

## A Green 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 tackling waste, the Green Party will ensure that public money is spent effectively.

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; and investment in housing, education and transport are an essential part of job creation.

### Jobs

Just like in 2016, Northern Ireland still 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, whilst others continue to experience in-work poverty.

This two-tier society is neither fair, nor sustainable in the long-run, and the Green Party will work to redress this imbalance.

- ✓ Implement fully the Green New Deal insulation scheme, creating up to 15,000 high-quality jobs
- ✓ Introduce a properly calculated living wage, as outlined by the Living Wage Foundation
- ✓ Require parity of pay for women and men and seek publication of pay rates by gender in the public sector and large private organisations
- $\checkmark$  Continue to oppose the reduction in Corporation Tax
- ✓ Include social clauses in all government contracts, to include proper skills training and apprenticeships
- ✓ Create targets for apprenticeships to ensure a gender balance

- Promote and encourage employers to implement family-friendly working policies such as childcare and parental leave
- ✓ Develop a childcare strategy that delivers highquality, 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
- Promote carer-friendly employer policies across all sectors
- $\checkmark$  Promote co-operatives and community ownership
- ✓ Support trade unions and the right to collective bargaining



### Energy

Just like in 2016, Northern Ireland still 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 valuable surplus for export.

#### The Green Party will:

- ✓ Bring forward a Northern Ireland-specific Climate Change bill
- ✓ Support clean and sustainable energy solutions, with an emphasis on small-scale, local and cooperative schemes, especially community-owned schemes
- ✓ Ensure that large-scale renewable projects engage with, and benefit, local communities, including 'community benefit' payments for onshore wind
- ✓ Create a world-class renewable energy industry, using Northern Ireland's natural resources and expertise
- ✓ Support clean power systems for existing buildings in both public and private sectors
- ✓ Ban all types of 'unconventional' fossil fuel extraction, including fracking
- ✓ Campaign for 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

   based on the successful model used in Great
   Britain, with proper cost and demand management
   controls after costs of the current scheme are
   brought under control

## Housing

Just like in 2016, it is still unacceptable that almost half of all households in Northern Ireland are in fuel poverty, and that people are dying on our streets due to homelessness. It is disappointing that the Executive has wasted many opportunities to ensure that everyone has decent living conditions.

- Draw together the many diverse funding streams for energy efficiency measures under a one-stop Green New Deal model
- ✓ Incentivise the building of at least 2,000 energy efficient social housing units per 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 after 2020, when current mitigation measures will end
- 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 homeowners
- Support resident participation structures in social and private housing sectors
- ✓ Support measures to bring empty homes back into use

### Transport

Just like in 2016, accessible public transport is still important, not only in terms of sustainability, but also for social and economic equality. Poor quality transport increases congestion, pollution, stress and the risk of accidents. Northern Ireland's public transport network is woefully underfunded.

- ✓ Rebalance transport spending towards public transport and active travel, such as cycling and walking
- ✓ Retain free public transport for people over 60 and seek to extend it to other users
- ✓ Encourage cycling by supporting moves to expand greenways
- ✓ Increase spending on cycle infrastructure throughout Northern Ireland to the value of £25 per person
- ✓ Introduce a module on awareness of cyclists and pedestrians as 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
- ✓ Explore reopening railway connections
- ✓ Encourage the use of smaller electric or hybrid vehicles and invest in the electric charging network
- ✓ Introduce a default 20mph speed limit in residential areas and around schools
- ✓ Change the law to 'presumed liability' to protect the most vulnerable road users
- ✓ Introduce a suspension on new road build projects with a focus on better maintenance of existing road infrastructure







Georgina Milne, Assembly candidate for East Belfast

## **A Green Strategy for People**

Whilst the Green Party has been putting forward progressive and positive solutions to Northern Ireland's problems, including promoting marriage equality and reform of our archaic abortion laws, we have been frustrated at the lack of progress, wasted opportunities and the seemingly endless squabbling of the traditional parties.

We will continue to put forward positive plans for the future.

### **Education**

Just like in 2016, the Green Party would still 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 remains unacceptable that we segregate our children at age four whilst opportunities for integration have been wasted by those who seek to continue the status quo.

It is also important to recognise that education does not always mean schools. The early pre-school years of a child's life have been shown to be among the most important in determining outcomes in later life.



- ✓ Ensure that all children have access to integrated education throughout their academic careers
- Commission 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, and introduce a universal provision of Sure Start
- ✓ Introduce a flexible school starting age in primary schools
- Ensure pupils receive appropriate support through assessment and that learning is child-centred rather than system centred
- ✓ Support an education system based on communitycentred campuses, with local schools and colleges serving the whole community
- ✓ Fight for resources for special education needs to ensure that there is increased service provision to match improved diagnosis rates
- Require a statutory post-18 plan to be put in place for all young people with special education needs before they leave the education system
- ✓ Revalue our Colleges of Further and Higher Education and the skills, crafts and trades that they teach
- ✓ Oppose plans to raise undergraduate fees further, and continue to oppose the extension of the worst elements of the Teaching Excellence Framework to Northern Ireland
- ✓ Introduce legislation to grant Student Unions legal and financial protections similar to those in Great Britain
- ✓ Encourage the development of GCSE and A-Levels in sign language
- ✓ Require Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) in all schools

### Health

Just like in 2016, we must still defend our National Health Service and ensure that it remains free at the point of use. We are opposed to health service provision 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 people do become ill, we need to provide world-class, patient-focused treatments, instead of leaving people languishing on waiting lists.

- ✓ Oppose privatisation of healthcare and cuts to frontline services on the NHS
- ✓ Ensure that health service staff have fair pay and conditions
- ✓ Oppose any imposition of contractual change for doctors without prior negotiation and agreement
- ✓ Place the quality of patient care, especially patient safety, at the heart of the system
- ✓ 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 and cycling routes, public parks, playgrounds, pitches, swimming pools and leisure centres
- ✓ Support co-operative working between the Departments of Communities and Health given the contribution of sports to health promotion
- ✓ Promote community healthcare, illness prevention and health promotion to combat the obesity epidemic and its associated diseases
- ✓ 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 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 national 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
- ✓ Seek an independent review of the provision of support for older people at home
- ✓ Work in partnership with charities and voluntary organisations that are championing patient care
- ✓ Support legislation to support mothers who wish to breastfeed
- ✓ Treat drug addiction as the health problem that it is, rather than as a crime
- ✓ Support dignity in dying
- ✓ Ensure equality of healthcare services for women, including the full decriminalisation of abortion, in line with calls from the British Pregnancy Advice Service, ensuring that abortion is always and only a decision for a woman after consultation with medical professionals
- Ensure 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 LGBTQ community by promoting evidence-based and accessible healthcare



### **Justice**

Just like in 2016, justice is still 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 re-offending. Cost-effective early intervention and joined-up working across government departments are crucial to tackle the causes of crime.

Meanwhile domestic and sexual violence is underreported, and prosecution rates remain low. This is not good enough. Everyone needs equal access to justice.

#### The Green Party will:

- ✓ Introduce evidence-based early intervention initiatives to tackle the root causes of crime
- ✓ Defend the Human Rights Act against attacks from Westminster
- ✓ End labour exploitation by ensuring that all migrant workers can access support agencies
- ✓ Ensure a greater focus on tackling domestic and sexual violence and abuse and supporting victims of these crimes
- $\checkmark$  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 agreed to victims of 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 and Culture**

Just like in 2016, theatres and other arts organisations are still struggling under the funding cuts, which still undermine jobs and arts programming.

There need to be better connections between investment in the arts and the contribution that it makes to the economy through job creation and leisure.

Communities thrive on their historic cultural links. These should not be eroded by a focus on profiteering and vanity projects.

- ✓ Develop 'art contract clauses' similar to 'community benefit clauses' for multi-million pound film and screen projects in Northern Ireland, to ensure that money finds its way to the grassroots arts scene
- ✓ Support core investment in the arts at both local and Executive-level in order to further realise the value and potential of the arts in Northern Ireland
- ✓ Bring forward an Irish Language Act





Clare Bailey, Assembly candidate for South Belfast

## Equality

Just like in 2016, inequality is still commonplace throughout our society, with many opportunities wasted by the Executive to redress the balance.

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

#### The Green Party will:

- ✓ Introduce legislation for equal marriage
- ✓ 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 and age-appropriate relationship and sexuality education for all school pupils
- ✓ Introduce measures to encourage more men to take parental leave

### Democracy

Just like in 2016, Stormont still needs to become truly representative of the population that it serves, instead of wasting time and money on political point scoring, usually along sectarian lines.

This waste has become even more evident in light of the Renewable Heat Incentive fiasco. People deserve to know who funds their politicians, and what other interests their elected representatives may have.

The Green Party hates this waste, and stands by its core principles of openness and transparency in politics.

The Green Party has taken proactive steps to empower its members to come forward and stand for election. Just like in 2016, this has resulted in an equal number of men and women candidates, as well as LGBTQ and young candidates.

- ✓ Establish a Constitutional Convention, based on those held in the Irish Republic to review the constitution and including ordinary citizens, to review, reform and revitalise the Good Friday Agreement and end the waste and gridlock in Stormont
- ✓ Work for the removal of community designation in the Assembly, which entrenches sectarianism, to be replaced by 2/3 majority decision making
- ✓ Continue to lead by example with transparency in political donations by publishing all donations received above £500, and seek to ensure all political parties follow our lead by publishing large donations backdated to 2011
- ✓ 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
- ✓ Lower the legal voting age to 16
- Introduce a legal duty to co-operate to apply to all government departments and bodies in all functions
- ✓ Oppose withdrawal from the European Convention on Human Rights
- ✓ Support a judge-led, independent inquiry into the Renewable Heat Incentive scandal, including the influence any party donors may have had in the design and implementation of the scheme
- ✓ Allow the Assembly Commissioner for Standards to investigate alleged breaches of the Ministerial Code of Conduct, and report the outcome of any investigation and recommendations to the Assembly and the public
- ✓ Support a referendum on any proposed Brexit deal, once we know the outcome of any negotiation between the UK and the EU.
- ✓ Ensure that Northern Ireland's voice is heard in any Brexit negotiations by the UK Government.
- ✓ Ensure that all existing environmental, workers' and human rights protections we currently enjoy under EU law are written into domestic law, where devolution allows

## A Green Strategy for the Environment

The environment is where we live. It is our home and community, in Northern Ireland and beyond.

The Green Party has consistently exposed serious failings in our planning process, such as highlighting the systemic failures that led to largest illegal dump in the UK, and forcing the issuing of an enforcement notice to the unauthorised sand traders in Lough Neagh. We were also the first party to raise concerns with the design of the Renewable Heat Incentive scheme in Northern Ireland, and the potential for perverse incentives of it, as far back as 2013.

## Planning

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

#### 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
- ✓ Stop the development of further out of town retail parks in favour of town centres
- ✓ Support a minimum Level 4 Building Standards Code for Sustainable Homes and BREEAM 'very good' building design.
- ✓ Incentivise energy conservation, insulation and use of renewable energy sources in domestic and commercial planning policy
- Promote an integrated flood prevention and mitigation strategy
- ✓ Support urban density planning and oppose the development of isolated rural 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

## Agriculture

Just like in 2016, Northern Ireland still owes much to its agricultural sector. The sector represents 80% of land use in Northern Ireland and employs over 60,000 people.

We recognise that farmers currently face pressure from rising material and energy costs, and downward pressure on the process for their produce. Brexit will only add to these problems, as farmers will face punitive import tariffs on their produce and suffer from the resulting reduced demand.

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

- Support single farm payment criteria which incentivises small farmers, environmental protection and animal welfare
- Encourage organic alternatives to minimise the use of harmful substances in the treatment of crops and animals by farmers and growers
- Develop local supply polyculture, permaculture and community-controlled, nature-based social farming models
- Require supermarkets to offer surplus food to food banks
- ✓ Enhance legal protection for biodiversity and our local wildlife and ensure that these protections are better enforced
- ✓ Increase the overall planting of trees

### **Natural Resources**

Just like in 2016, our current dominant economic model is one which promotes waste, whether financial or physical.

The pollution resulting from this contributes to resource depletion, ill health and climate change, with significant financial resources needed to clear up waste. This is money that cannot go to schools and hospitals.

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

#### The Green Party will:

- ✓ Introduce an independent Environmental Protection Agency
- ✓ Set a 70% household recycling and composting target by 2025
- ✓ Establish a charter for consistent recycling across Northern Ireland
- ✓ Require recycling targets for commercial waste
- ✓ Introduce deposit schemes for plastic bottles, cans, glass bottles and tyres
- ✓ Reduce wasteful packaging, for example by 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
- ✓ 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
- $\checkmark$  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

## Animals

Just like in 2016, the Green Party still leads the way in campaigning against animal cruelty.

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





Steven Agnew, Assembly candidate for North Down

## **Green Party Candidates for the Assembly Election on 2 March 2017**



**Daniel Barrios-O'Neill** Lagan Valley

Ricky Bamford Strangford

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**Ellen Murray** West Belfast

## **Green Party Candidates for the Assembly Election on 2 March 2017**



**Dawn Patterson** East Antrim





**Rowan Tunnicliffe** Newry and Armagh



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