

December 2019

Sussex Wildlife Trust

1. How will you and your party act decisively to tackle the crises in the natural environment?
2. What will you do to ensure we have farming policies that support land managers in contributing to nature's recovery?
3. What will you do to ensure we protect and revive our seas?
4. How will you and your party prioritise and fund nature-based solutions to the climate crisis?
5. What will you do to ensure that development is within environmental limits and truly sustainable in Sussex?

1. The Green Party will act to tackle the crises in our natural environment by implementing the Green New Deal.

(From National Woodland Trust Pledge 2019)

The Paris Climate Accord commits governments to restricting the increase in global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels, and to pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5 °C. If current pledges on carbon reduction are achieved we will still see an increase in global temperatures of 3 °C.

This is an emergency. Our politicians must understand that without action now, global temperatures will hit a tipping point with devastating effects for the planet and all life which depends on it.

The Green Party understands the need for action now.

The Green New Deal will implement a combined investment of £100 billion a year. It will deliver a fast and fair transformation of our economy and society, renewing almost every aspect of life in the UK: from the way we produce and consume energy, to who owns our railways, the way in which we grow the food we eat and how we work, travel, and heat our homes. We will insulate every home; we will retrofit a million homes per year for ten years and build 100,000 energy efficient council homes per year for the next ten years.

The Amazon is the world's largest rainforest and is home to one in ten of all known species. Since 1970 17% of it has been destroyed. The tipping point is estimated to lie between 20% and 40% deforestation.

The Green Party would seek to introduce a new ecocide law to prevent crimes against the natural environment. This legislation will place a legal duty on governments to

prevent agricultural and industrial practices which harm the environment. The new criminal offence would punish severe, widespread and long-term environmental damage, and impose individual liability on company directors. This would include companies which are responsible for polluting rivers and oceans, as well as companies involved in large scale deforestation of rainforests and polluting soils.

Additionally, the Greens would work across the United Nations to recognise ecocide as an International Crime Against Humanity.

Amelia Womack, Deputy Leader of the Green Party, said:

“Big companies cannot get away with destroying the forests, rivers and oceans which all of us depend on. These are crimes and should be punished in law.

“Introducing a new law on ecocide will be a clear signal that we are moving away from our old polluting ways and recognising that we need to protect the environment for generations to come.

“Green MPs will fight for the law to treat large-scale environmental damage with the seriousness it so clearly deserves.”

2. The Green Party will ensure we have farming policies that support land managers in contributing to nature's recovery.

(From 2019 Manifesto)

We want to increase the opportunities for food growing, for greening our landscape and improving our health. Through reforestation, rewilding and regenerative farming, we will reduce carbon emissions and realise the land's ability to absorb carbon.

The way we produce our food needs to support employment, the ecosystem and improve public health. A ten-year transition to agroecological farming will include the transfer of subsidies to farming methods and food systems that create jobs and restore ecosystem health, including the quality of our soils and rivers.

Our Green New Deal for food, farming & forestry will:

Work with farmers to refocus farm subsidies to help farmers transition to more sustainable, diverse and environmentally friendly forms of land use, including organic farming, agroforestry and mixed farming, and away from intensive livestock farming.

Provide farmers with grants to allow replacement of old high-emitting carbon farming machinery with low carbon machinery (including vehicles powered by biofuels rather than fossil fuels). Grants will also be available to enable further improvements to farm buildings and infrastructure, to help farmers in the transition to agroecological farming.

Legislate to give farmers greater security of tenure, so that they can invest in sustainable improvements to their land, whilst ending the use of land as a tax shelter and encouraging new entrants into farming.

Create thousands of new jobs in rural areas, through the shift away from intensive farming towards smaller-scale, more people-focussed food production and land management that respects nature. We will invest in training and skills to help people develop and apply the skills needed in these new jobs.

Better connect rural communities through reliable broadband and mobile internet, delivered through councils who understand local connection needs.

Establish a Land Commission to investigate the effects concentrated land ownership is having on food and farming systems, housing, local economies, cultures and livelihoods. This Commission will be introduced alongside a new Land Value Tax which will help ensure that all land is taxed fairly.

Reduce pesticide and fungicide use by at least 50% by overall weight by 2022, phase out all non-agricultural uses of pesticides, and immediately ban the most harmful substances. We will secure protection of rural residents and communities from exposure to pesticides sprayed on nearby crop fields and prohibit the use of pesticides in the locality of homes, schools and children's playgrounds. We will strengthen the role of independent scientific advice and the application of the precautionary principle in the pesticide regulation and monitoring process – only pesticides that pass strict tests, and demonstrably don't harm bees, butterflies and other wildlife, will be approved for use in the UK. We will also reduce the amount of nitrogen fertiliser used on UK farms.

Establish a Food and Agriculture Research Council to research sustainable and health-promoting methods of food production and distribution. We will also support research into the reduction of methane emissions from livestock and the conservation and development of high quality soils, as the foundation of all that we grow.

3. The Green party is committed to protecting and reviving our seas

(From 2019 Policy)

It is now recognised by most users of the marine environment that, if the ocean is to thrive and be sustainable into the future with respect to a range of competing activities, then it must be managed holistically in coordination between a range of authorities, interested groups and stakeholders, on the basis of sound science.

Good governance can only function on the basis of good information and sound science. Given past problems with regulating matters at sea, the Green Party will endeavour to optimise marine monitoring systems, and will put in place efficient data gathering systems, particularly with respect to the management of fisheries and to the climate emergency.

The Green Party would phase out all fish farms that involve overstocking, heavy use of feed, chemical or fossil fuel inputs, pollution or inhumane conditions.

The Green Party would seek large-scale reform of the Crown Estate (which currently has a monopoly on the sea bed around the UK, and is required to administer this on a purely commercial basis), devolving its powers to more locally-based levels of accountability within government and changing its remit to emphasise long-term environmental sustainability of our marine environment.

Only four other countries in the world are responsible for more of the ocean than the UK, and as a nation we claim control over three and a half times as much ocean as we do land. This is because the UK retains jurisdiction over 14 Overseas Territories, and holds exclusive sovereign rights within their waters. The UK therefore has a great opportunity to lead the way in the protection and management of the world's seas, over a range of latitudes and habitat types. The Green Party would ensure that conservation of the marine environment in the Overseas Territories is funded to a level equal to its global significance.

The establishment of highly protected marine reserves (in collaboration with the local community where one exists) would be a priority, with an aim to cover at least 30% of the ocean under UK jurisdiction. These reserves would be equipped with adequate enforcement and monitoring capabilities in order to deter illegal fishing, monitor biodiversity, and provide a base for scientific research.

As a greater percentage of our seas come under protection, it is important that those who have the most knowledge of our waters and coastline play a major role in the management of these areas. The Green Party would enable and encourage fishing communities to gain employment in the management, monitoring and enforcement of our marine environment, thereby utilising their experience and passion for the oceans and diversifying income streams so that they are not solely reliant on catches to make a living.

The Green Party will continue to work within existing legislation to fully implement a large-scale, ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas within the UK's seas as soon as possible.

Prior to the development of any marine energy structure an Environmental Impact Assessment must be carried out. This will include the evaluation of environmental risks of seabed subsidence and the traffic of vessels to and from the platforms, that may result in environmental degradation, and plans for dismantling and disposal of rigs and associated equipment.

4. The Green Party will prioritise and fund nature-based solutions to the climate crisis through the Green New Deal.

Caroline Lucas, MP, says:

'Here in the UK, 40 percent of species have declined in the last fifty years, and 15 percent are at risk of extinction.

That's why I asked a group of leading conservationists to write a report setting out bold, ambitious ideas to restore and reinvigorate our natural world.

The report is called A New Deal for Nature and I'll be launching it on Thursday [5 December 2019]. I'll also be talking about the brilliant policies on wildlife and the natural environment that are already contained in the Green Party's manifesto, and our plans to put nature at the very top of the agenda in the next Parliament.'

(From Manifesto 2019):

The Green New Deal, with a combined investment of £100 billion a year, will transform our relationship with the land. It will increase space for nature through the restoration of natural landscapes, habitats and species in urban, suburban and countryside environments.

The Green Party pledges to:

Plant 700 million new trees and aim for 50% of all farms to be engaged in agroforestry by 2030. We will encourage the planting of more trees in more towns and cities, including apple, nut and other crop trees than can produce food. The new woodland, when fully grown, will store carbon, provide home-grown timber and create new wildlife-rich environments. We will support farmers to diversify their incomes through new forest management.

Encourage, through changes to the planning system, the 'rewilding' of spaces to provide new habitats for wildlife. An ecological crisis is happening – we must tackle it by restoring, expanding and joining up the wild spaces nature needs to thrive.

Encourage the expansion and replanting of majority of hedgerows lost in the last 50 years through new subsidies, creating new environments for wildlife.

5. The Green Party will ensure that development is within environmental limits and truly sustainable in Sussex.

Green New Deal investment will rebalance industry, away from the carbon past and towards the renewable future.

New technologies, along with huge expansions in renewable energy, will create millions of new, good quality, well-paid, secure jobs in every corner of the country – with training for these new jobs funded by the Green New Deal. This unprecedented investment in training and skills will prioritise communities hit hard by economic changes over recent decades.

A circular economy will underpin this green industrial revolution, designing out waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use, and regenerating natural systems. Recycling and repairing will be made easier for all, reducing the need to buy new, expensive products on a regular basis.

Our Green New Deal for industry will:

Bring back the UK as an internationally recognised manufacturing powerhouse with proactive, wide-scale support for the UK-based manufacturing of renewable energy infrastructure.

Set new clean technology standards and invest in research and development to help industry to meet them and create new job opportunities through doing so. We will provide companies with grants to allow the replacement of old high-emitting carbon equipment with newly developed low carbon equipment. These incentives to replace equipment will avoid the long-term lock-in of high carbon technologies.

Apply a Carbon Tax as outlined above in the ‘Green New Deal for energy’ section. This will raise the price of processes that use fossil fuels and thus of the products they produce. This will incentivise industry to switch to low and zero carbon technology and equipment as well as encouraging consumers to choose low carbon products. Non-fossil-fuel greenhouse gas emissions from industrial installations will also be subject to the Carbon Tax.

Prepare for the rapid decommissioning of North Sea oil rigs and the phasing out of the UK’s remaining coal plants and coal mines, ensuring a just transition for workers affected.

Encourage the renovation of non-domestic buildings, through making planning consent harder to achieve for new commercial property.

Ban the production of single-use plastics for use in packaging and invest in research and development into alternatives to plastic. We will also extend the successful tax on plastic bags to cover plastic bottles, single-use plastics and micro-plastics, and extend plastic bottle deposit schemes.

Develop and implement a reformed waste strategy where manufacturers and retailers are required to pay the full cost of recycling and disposing of the packaging they produce.

Start deployment of a Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) system that can deal with CO₂ emissions from the manufacture of iron, steel and cement.

I hope you find these answers, taken from our Manifesto, policy documents (available online), and quotes from Green Party leaders, helpful in casting your vote on the 12th of December.