



**THE GREEN  
TRANSFORMATION:**  
LABOUR'S  
ENVIRONMENT  
POLICY



# Foreword

The environment is the bedrock of our economy, our security and our wellbeing. It is not something separate from ourselves; it is the food we eat and the place we live.

But from forest fires in the Arctic Circle and rapidly declining insect and bird populations across Europe, to deadly heat waves and polluted air in British cities, it is clear that our current economic model is threatening the foundations on which human wellbeing depends.

In the words of UN Secretary General António Guterres, climate change is an “existential threat to humanity”.<sup>1</sup> People living in the Global South are already being hit from decreasing rainfall and increase in extreme weather events linked to climate change.<sup>2</sup> The UK is predicted to face a trebling of heat deaths by 2050, disruptive flooding and food insecurity if the government does not act.<sup>3</sup> With the six warmest years on global record occurring in the last seven years, climate change is already here.<sup>4</sup> It is now imperative that earth does not cross certain tipping points beyond which abrupt and irreversible impacts occur, like large sea level rise from ice sheet loss.<sup>5</sup>

Addressing the environmental crisis requires a transformational effort from government, and that this is not a task for tomorrow’s leaders, but one that requires urgent interventions today.

The Labour movement has a long tradition of environmental protection, from the establishment of the national parks after the Second World War, through to the pioneering Climate Change Act. We understand that it is working people that benefit most when our common spaces flourish and that our natural resources belong to all of us, not just a privileged few. It is also working people that are hit first when the air in our inner cities is filthy, or when unpredictable weather pushes up the price of food. Strong environmental policy is a matter of justice, and ensuring that communities can breathe clean air, drink clean water, afford a

good diet and enjoy our countryside, must be a priority for our Party and our movement.

The environmental challenges of today are of a different order to those faced in the past, and require a more comprehensive package of measures. As this pamphlet shows, only Labour are committed to action on the scale that is needed. This document sets out Labour’s policies to tackle climate change, improve our environment, and build a sustainable economy, along with the principles and priorities that underpin them.

This pamphlet is not the last word on Labour’s offer on the environment. We commit to revising this document as new science, new technologies and new thinking emerges, and as Labour prepares for government.



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# Section 1:

## Principles and priorities

### THREE LABOUR PRINCIPLES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

#### 1. Ambition is **based on science**

The scientific evidence is now overwhelming: manmade climate change is the biggest challenge facing our planet. There is still time to avoid the worst impacts, but only if we take strong action now.

That is why the scale and scope of Labour's environmental policies will be defined, not by political compromise, but by what is necessary to keep temperatures within safe levels. This underlines our commitment to meet the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global temperature rises to no more than 1.5 °C.

Of course, how we address environmental challenges is a political question. But the scale of those challenges and the required level of response are questions for science. We can negotiate with one another, but not with physics and chemistry. As things stand, the existing pledges of all countries within the Paris Agreement, taken together, would lead to a temperature rise between 2.7°C and 3.7°C.<sup>6</sup> As one commentator has put it, winning slowly on climate change is the same as losing.<sup>7</sup>

#### 2. Interventions are **transformational**, bringing about the structural change needed to address drivers of environmental degradation

For too long, approaches to sustainability have focussed on the choices made by individuals, and levels of voluntary corporate social responsibility in the private sector. The role of government has largely been limited to adjusting price signals in the belief that the market will take care of the rest. It is now clear that a dogmatic faith in market mechanisms has failed to reverse or even slow the pace of environmental loss.

We are past the point where piecemeal actions will do. Addressing environmental challenges will require great levels of planning, coordination and deployment of resources. The market left alone can simply not deliver this.

Building a sustainable economy for the long run, requires nothing short of societal transformation. Tackling the underlying drivers of environmental degradation will require a fundamental rebalancing of economic power, so that economic decisions are made by the many who will suffer the consequences of climate change rather than the few who have benefited from it.

That is why a Labour government – and only a Labour government – would deliver the transformational and structural changes needed.

#### 3. Interventions will advance our Labour values – **justice, equality, solidarity, and democracy** – both at home and abroad

We are clear that an unstable climate is a threat to Labour values, and it is only through collective action based on justice and solidarity that dangerous climate change can be averted.

We must tackle environmental challenges in ways that enable us to deliver good jobs and productive industries across the whole country, while maintaining and increasing access to affordable, high quality housing, transport, energy, and food. If phasing out carbon is seen to come at the expense of any of these, we will not only be failing to fulfil our responsibilities as the party of the many - we will also undermine support for environmental protection and set back our efforts.

The potential benefits of transitioning to a sustainable economy are significant – whether in cheaper energy, growing global markets for green tech, or new high quality jobs in renewables industries – but it will take concerted action by government to ensure



that these potential benefits are both realised and widely shared. We can go further still. Ending our reliance on finite resources, which lend themselves to monopolistic control, by replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy sources, creates an opportunity to fundamentally redistribute power and control over resources in the economy.

We must also acknowledge that climate change is the outcome of decades of unsustainable development from the world's richer countries. It is the least polluting countries, more often than not the developing nations, at the sharp end of climate change chaos - fuelling food insecurity and social dislocation.

## THREE LABOUR PRIORITIES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

### 1. Preventing dangerous **climate change** and adapting to existing climate change

Labour acknowledges that the UK is among those countries particularly responsible for climate change on a historic, per capita emissions basis,<sup>8</sup> and that the UK has the wealth and resources to lead efforts to tackle climate change. That is why we are committed to doing our fair share to meet the Paris Agreement goal of limiting the global temperature increase to 1.5 °C, and we will base our efforts on what the scientific advice from the IPCC determines is necessary.

Because Labour accepts that the climate is already changing, we commit to investing in social and infrastructural measures necessary to adapt to climate change that cannot be avoided, in a way that prioritises the most vulnerable in our society.

But we know that the climate does not acknowledge borders. That's why Labour also properly commits to supporting climate mitigation and adaptation efforts led by the countries in the Global South, and to supporting countries severely affected to cope with associated loss and damage.

### 2. Achieving high **air and water quality**

Air pollution in the UK is a national scandal, affecting millions of people all across the country. Studies by the Royal College of Physicians and the Lancet have found that between 40,000<sup>9</sup> and 50,000<sup>10</sup> deaths in the UK each year are attributable to air pollution. The health impacts of tiny particles and pollutants like nitrogen oxides are worse in our cities,<sup>11</sup> though ozone pollution is also a problem for our suburbs and countryside.<sup>12</sup>

Studies show that exposure to air pollution is linked to harmful changes in the structure of the heart,<sup>13</sup> reduced lung function in both children and adults,<sup>14</sup> and increased risk of dementia and reduced cognitive function.<sup>15</sup> Due to government inaction, asthma deaths in England and Wales have risen by a quarter over the last decade.<sup>16</sup>

Whereas the Conservative Government has faced legal challenge after legal challenge for its failure to get to grips with the problem, Labour would make tackling air pollution a priority.

As for water quality, most rivers, lakes, coastal and ground waters in England are off track to meet EU water pollution targets.<sup>17</sup> According to a 2018 assessment, England had among the highest percentage of water bodies in Europe that are not in good ecological status, with rivers, lakes and coastal waters with low biological quality and nutrient and organic pollution.<sup>18</sup>

### 3. Reversing the decline of **biodiversity** and protecting natural habitats

According to the 2016 State of Nature report by leading conservation organisations, the UK is now "among the most nature-depleted countries in the world," having lost significantly more nature over the long term than the global average.<sup>19</sup> Between 1970 and 2013, 56% of species declined, with intensive management of agricultural land the main factor, and this trend is continuing. The Joint Nature Conservation Committee Biodiversity Indicators 2018 measured deterioration in almost all bird species and pollinating insects<sup>20</sup> while a study from Germany has found that insect populations have plummeted 75% in just three decades.<sup>21</sup>

This is not just bad news for wildlife, but also indicates serious problems with the most fundamental elements of a food system on which we all depend. That is why Labour takes the issue of biodiversity decline seriously.





# Section 2:

## Labour policies

### ACTION ON ENERGY

In the UK, the combustion of fossil fuels for electricity and use of gas for household heating and cooking, was responsible for almost 40% of greenhouse gas emissions in 2016.<sup>22</sup> There are also negative air quality and health impacts of coal and gas-fired power stations from nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide and ground level ozone.<sup>23</sup> That is why Labour will:

- Ensure that 60 per cent of the UK's energy comes from low-carbon or renewable sources within twelve years of coming to power
- Support the development of tidal lagoons, starting with approval of the Swansea Tidal Lagoon
- Upgrade and invest in flexible energy networks capable of supporting a transition to decentralised renewable energy, by bringing the UK's energy transmission and distribution networks back into public ownership. This means making more use of local, micro grids and of batteries to store and balance fluctuating renewable energy, and providing the necessary investment to connect renewable energy sources to the grid
- Remove the barriers to onshore wind put in place by the Conservative government, and stop the Conservatives' chopping and changing of energy policy, investing in wind, solar and other renewable projects to support the creation of a thriving renewables industry with good, long term jobs across the UK
- Work closely with energy unions to support energy workers and communities through transition

Fracking would lock the UK into high carbon energy infrastructure, would increase local air pollution, create large volumes of waste water, do little for the UK's energy security, and is unpopular with affected communities. That is why Labour will:

- Join France, Germany and other countries around the world in banning fracking

### ACTION ON HOUSING

Home is at the heart of our lives. But many low-income households hit by austerity face a real choice between heating and eating.<sup>24</sup> The UK's poorly insulated housing stock, among Europe's most costly to heat,<sup>25</sup> is failing them badly. UK households are also responsible for about 14% of the UK's greenhouse emissions. That is why Labour will:

- Upgrade 4 million homes to Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) band C in our first term, investing £2.3bn per year to provide financial support for households to insulate their homes
- The take up and delivery of insulation schemes will be driven by local authorities working street to street – addressing one of the main reasons for the UK's poor record on insulation to date: over-reliance on energy companies and market mechanisms to encourage households to insulate their properties. In addition to cutting greenhouse gas emissions, this would save at least £275 per year for affected households, improve the health and wellbeing of families, reduce costs to the NHS and create new skilled jobs



- Introduce a zero carbon homes standard for new-build homes as soon as possible – an important long-term programme previously in place until it was abandoned by the Conservatives
- Prioritise affordable homes in a new zero carbon homes programme, ensure all council and housing associations reach EPC band C, and provide funding to support councils and housing associations to build new homes to Passivhaus standards
- Tighten regulation of privately rented homes, blocking poorly insulated homes from being rented out
- Introduce new legal minimum standards to ensure properties are fit for human habitation and empower tenants to take action if their rented homes are sub-standard

## ACTION ON TRANSPORT

Transport contributes to over one quarter of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions, and unlike most other sectors, emissions from transport are still rising.<sup>26</sup> Transport is also the largest source of air pollution, with petrol and diesel-engine motor vehicles emitting a variety of pollutants including carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds and particulate matter.<sup>27</sup> That is why Labour will:

- Introduce a new Clean Air Act to deal with the Conservative legacy of illegal air quality
- Enable the expansion of public transport by bringing our railways back into public ownership, capping fares, and supporting the creation of municipal bus companies that are publicly run for passengers not profit

- Deliver more rail electrification and expansion of the railway network across the whole country, including in Wales and the South West
- Complete the HS2 high-speed rail line from London through Birmingham to Leeds and Manchester and then into Scotland, consulting with communities affected about the optimal route. We will link HS2 with other rail investments, such as Crossrail of the North, tying together our great Northern cities. We will upgrade the rail network in the South West, following the recommendations of the Peninsula Rail Task Force.
- Encourage greater use of public transport by introducing free bus travel for under 25s where local authorities regulate or take ownership of their local bus services, paid for using money ring-fenced from Vehicle Excise Duty
- Encourage expansion of public freight services in a publicly owned railway leaving our roads freer of traffic
- Invite the National Infrastructure Commission to recommend the next stages for developing and upgrading the National Cycle Network and reaffirm the commitments in the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy
- Position the UK at the forefront of the development, manufacture and use of ultra-low emission vehicles, supporting the creation of clean modes of transport through investment in low emission vehicles
- Retrofit thousands of diesel buses in areas with the most severe air quality problems to Euro 6 standards
- Guarantee that any airport expansion adheres to our tests that require noise issues to be addressed, air quality to be protected, the UK's climate change obligations met and growth across the country supported

## ACTION ON FRESH WATER

There are already pressures on UK freshwater resources, and these are set to increase with a growing population and a changing climate.<sup>28</sup> Projections show that if no action is taken, most areas will not meet water demand by 2050, with significant water shortages in the south-east of England.<sup>29</sup> Adapting to climate means that we cannot continue with a situation where water companies are losing 20 percent of water to leaks – 2.9 billion litres every day.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, it is imperative that we improve the quality of our freshwater resources as well as tackling drought and unsustainable abstraction. That is why Labour will:

- Bring water back into democratic public ownership, lowering bills and providing levels of investment needed to drastically reduce leakage and tackle major sewage pollution incidents, which are still rising<sup>31</sup>
- Establish new democratic public water companies which will be mandated by DEFRA to meet environmental and social objectives

## ACTION ON FARMING, FISHING, HABITATS AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Parts of the UK are among the most densely populated areas in Europe, and there are many competing claims on land which have to be balanced responsibly. At the same time, the UK and even parts of England are home to some of the least populated areas of Europe, and these should be managed in a way that enables rich and complex ecosystems to thrive. Healthy soils, oceans and woodland are vital for our food security, for mitigating and preventing flooding, supporting pollinators and biodiversity more broadly, and storing carbon. They are also important in their own right. That is why Labour will:

- Reconfigure funds for farming and fishing to support sustainable practices, smaller traders, local economies and community benefits
- Embed and enhance in policy the responsibility for farmers to conserve, enhance and create safe habitats for birds, insects and other wild animals, and encourage the growth of wildflowers

- Issue new guidance to end the use of antibiotics for routine, preventative purposes with farm animals. Anti-microbial resistance is becoming an increasing problem leading to antibiotics being less effective
- Establish a science innovation fund to promote the most sustainable forms of farming and fishing, with support earmarked for our small-scale fishing fleet
- Review the allocation of UK fishing quota to promote the most sustainable fishing practices, in a way that benefits coastal communities and the small-scale fishing fleet
- Protect habitats and species in the 'blue belts' of the seas and oceans surrounding the United Kingdom and its overseas territories, and consult on the creation of National Marine Parks around the UK
- Set guiding targets for plastic bottle deposit schemes, working with food manufacturers and retailers to reduce waste
- Enhance and strengthen the Hunting Act, end the badger cull, make illegal hunting and all wildlife crime a reportable offence, and improve enforcement and prosecution rates for the persecution of birds of prey
- Tackle the trade in fur by requiring shops to prominently label items containing real fur and phase in a ban on all fur imports, and introduce and enforce a total ban on ivory trading
- Initiate a large tree planting programme, working with farmers and foresters to promote biodiversity and better flood prevention
- End rotational heather burning and launch an independent review into the economic, environmental and wildlife impacts of driven grouse shooting
- Ban wild animals in circuses

## ACTION INTERNATIONALLY

Labour has a proud history of international leadership on the environment, and a Labour government took a lead role in pushing through the Kyoto Protocol in 1997. Unfortunately, at a time when international cooperation to address common environmental challenges is needed like never before, the multilateral institutions and processes through which international agreements are reached are being undermined. Labour stands firmly behind the Paris Agreement on climate change, and would be committed to consolidating and enhancing the whole body of international environmental law. That is why Labour will:

- Put the environment and human rights at the heart of our foreign policy, dedicating diplomatic resources to consolidating existing and driving forward new multilateral environmental agreements, and directing our armed forces to devote more resources to tackling humanitarian emergencies
- Negotiate a future relationship with the EU that maintains and extends all environmental rights, standards and protections as a baseline, while introducing more ambitious domestic environmental policy than that guaranteed at the European level
- Develop a cross-government strategy for ensuring the UN Sustainable Development Goals are implemented and report annually to Parliament on our performance
- Properly commit to supporting climate mitigation and adaptation efforts led by the countries in the Global South, and to supporting countries severely affected to cope with associated loss and damage
- Oppose investor-state dispute systems in international trade and investment agreements, and other trade rules that can be used to undermine domestic or international environmental protections
- Use trade negotiations to boost market access for British environmental goods and services, including pressing for an Environmental Goods Agreement at the WTO

- ▶ Tackle the illegal wildlife trade and clamp down on trophy hunting. We will end the import of wild animal trophies from species that are classified by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature as critically endangered, and expand this ban to species listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
- ▶ Ensure UK aid does not support fossil fuel projects, divesting DFID away from fossil fuels towards renewable energy sources
- ▶ Promote UK Export Finance support for the energy sector towards low-carbon projects in place of its overwhelming support for fossil fuel projects in previous years
- ▶ Prioritise maintaining access to the EU Internal Energy Market

## ACTION ACROSS GOVERNMENT

Labour understands that the environment is not the responsibility of any one government department or even a subset of departments, but that environmental considerations need to be integrated within all major policy and spending decisions. That is why Labour will:

- ▶ Mandate the Office for Budget Responsibility to model for the potential long-term impacts on the economy and public finances of climate change. With climate-related economic costs already growing, Labour will make sure the costs of environmental changes, such as water usage and flood risks, are always at the heart of government decision-making. Just as it currently forecasts the effects of demographic change, the OBR will be given the task of modelling the economic and fiscal impacts of different climate and environmental change scenarios
- ▶ Create a National Transformation Fund that will invest £250 billion over ten years to help place our economy on a low carbon, sustainable footing

# Conclusion

Tackling climate change will be one of Labour's most important tasks in government. Implementing our policies will extend beyond the remit of any single government department's brief. Achieving them will require not just extensive cross-departmental cooperation and alignment, but for our environmental and climate aims to filter through into every department, entrenching sustainability into the work of all parts of government.

Our environment also faces a number of challenges in addition to climate change, and Labour is committed to developing a comprehensive package of measures to secure what the UN's Brundtland Commission referred to as "Our Common Future" over thirty years ago.

Delivering on these commitments, the next Labour Government will be by far the greenest ever. More importantly, by laying the groundwork for a genuinely different kind of economy, for a sustainable future, we will enable future governments to be greener still.

# Endnotes

## Endnotes

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- 2 See [https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file\\_attachments/mb-climate-crisis-east-africa-drought-270417-en.pdf](https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/mb-climate-crisis-east-africa-drought-270417-en.pdf) Table 1
- 3 <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/environmental-audit-committee/news-parliament-2017/heatwaves-report-publication-17-19/>
- 4 <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/01/180118174307.htm>
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- 6 <http://www.wri.org/blog/2015/11/latest-climate-commitments-how-much-will-world-warm-its-complicated> and <https://climateactiontracker.org/global/temperatures/>
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- 18 EEA report on European Waters, page 26 Map 2.1, available at <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/state-of-water>
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the  $\mathbb{R}^n$  is a linear space over  $\mathbb{R}$  and  $\mathbb{C}$  and a vector space over  $\mathbb{R}$  and  $\mathbb{C}$ .

Let  $V$  be a vector space over  $\mathbb{R}$  or  $\mathbb{C}$ . Let  $\mathcal{B}$  be a basis for  $V$ . Let  $\mathcal{B} = \{b_1, b_2, \dots, b_n\}$ . Let  $v \in V$ . Then  $v$  can be written as a linear combination of the basis vectors:

$$v = \alpha_1 b_1 + \alpha_2 b_2 + \dots + \alpha_n b_n$$

where  $\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \dots, \alpha_n$  are scalars in  $\mathbb{R}$  or  $\mathbb{C}$ .

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