

Green Party Manifesto 2019 Westminster Election



Key Points

The Green Party will:

- Secure a final say on any final Brexit deal and campaign to Remain.
- Provide guarantees for human rights, worker's rights and environmental protections
- Protect and properly fund vital public services and put an end to Tory austerity
- Oppose the privatisation of our NHS.
- Tackle women's, LGBTQ and economic inequality and promote minority rights
- Protect the environment and tackle climate breakdown, implementing a Green New Deal
- Reform the tax system to make it fairer, and ensure that public services are put on a sustainable footing
- Promote international peace and co-operation
- Reform the devolved institutions to make them more democratic and accountable and do everything possible to break the Stormont stalemate.
- Ban food waste being sent to landfill

Introduction

This is another snap general election brought about by the chaos of Brexit. These are extraordinary times and they demand an extraordinary response.

Westminster has been in turmoil in the three years since the referendum and there has no sign of consensus around a Brexit deal.

The Green Party NI campaigned to remain and we know that Brexit will bring no benefit. This has been the message from our business community, this is the message from our farmers and agri-food sector as well as from our border communities.

Prime Minister Johnson's deal will bring about a border on sea and another on land. This must be stopped. There is currently little trust in our political system and it is easy to see why. We have witnessed scandals and lies too long and with little consequences.

The infamous lie peddled on the side of the Brexit bus about Brexit leading to increased funding for our NHS; the RHI scandal which brought trust in local politics to a new low; MPs enjoying luxurious holidays at the expense of repressive regimes. People are rightly fed up. The Green Party NI believes that the only real democratic way forward is to put any agreed deal back to the people for consent. Democracy did not come to an end after June 2016. Vulnerable people are suffering the most during these turbulent times. Nurses and health-care workers are taking industrial action, child poverty is at a record high, foodbanks are in demand and there is a suicide and drug epidemic gripping our communities. Fuel poverty will again force people to choose between heat or eat.

Beyond Brexit, the global economic system is facing multiple, linked crises. Climate breakdown is here and is being driven by fossil fuel use, rampant inequality and debt fuelled over consumption. Despite the warnings we are doing little to address the issue either locally or at a global level.

The UK economic system as we know it cannot address these crises. It is time to ask serious questions around private wealth, over consumption and constant economic growth. The sustainable answer is a Green New Deal; a deal which delivers a fast and fair transformation of our economy and society. A deal which changes the way in which we produce



and consume energy, the way in which we grow the food we eat and how we work, travel and heat our homes. This manifesto sets out a vision for a new society and a blue print for tackling climate breakdown. The challenges can and must be met by working together – across this island, across these islands, across Europe and across the world.

Clare Bailey MLA
Green Party NI Leader

Brexit

A People's Vote on any Brexit Deal

This election was called because of the chaos caused by Brexit. There has been a parliamentary impasse since 2016 and Westminster reflects the deep divisions that have set in across society.

Democracy did not end on the day of the EU referendum in 2016. Successive governments have tried and failed to win parliamentary support for their version of Brexit. They have failed because Brexit is an abstract concept and the idea of the benefits of Brexit is a fallacy.

Climate emergency and Brexit

Brexit has brought chaos to Westminster and climate breakdown barely receives a mention in the Commons. Meanwhile we know that we have a mere ten years to address climate breakdown before the effects become irreversible. The UK has agreements with the EU around emissions targets and technology transfer and Brexit represents a significant threat to the UK's progress on cutting carbon emissions.

That's why it's imperative that to tackle climate breakdown we Remain in the EU and work with our European partners to address the biggest challenge of our time.

The Green Party NI will:

- Support a People's Vote on any final Brexit deal:
- Continue our campaign to Remain in the European Union in partnership with the Green movement across these islands.

Your Environment

Planning

Climate breakdown is the biggest challenge facing us today. Climate scientists are clear that we have a decade to address climate breakdown before it becomes irreversible.

The natural environment is defined by the impact that human decision-making has on it. The Green Party NI will ensure that all planning decisions take into account the impact on your natural environment.

The Green Party NI will:

- Aim to ensure that everyone lives within five minutes' walk of a green open space.
- Designate more areas as Marine Conservation Zones, and offer more areas protection from development through the European Union's Birds Directive and Habitat's Directive. We will also introduce National Parks to Northern Ireland.
- Transpose these Directives, and the EU's Water Directive, into UK law to maintain the same level of protection in the event of Brexit.
- Stop facilitating monster meat factories. Farm pollution finds its way into our rivers, lakes, and drinking water sources. 90% of protected sites in Northern Ireland have breached the ammonia pollution threshold.

Waste and Recycling

Our society throws away far more food than it needs to. At the same time, many people are going hungry and using food banks because of Tory austerity. The Green Party NI will ensure that all leftover resources are put to good use where possible.

The Green Party NI will:

- Legislate to ensure that edible food that supermarkets don't use is given to food banks.
- Ban food waste being sent to landfill.
- Extend the plastic bag levy to all non-recyclable packaging, essentially introducing a Plastic Tax.
- Act to hold the industries and corporations that have fuelled and continue to worsen the climate crisis liable, by making the big polluters pay.

Energy

The UK needs an energy revolution. Many nation states like Iceland and Sweden are powering themselves solely from renewable energy. The UK must get to this point and quickly.

The Green Party NI will:

- Ensure that all public buildings and new social houses have solar panels.
- Retrofit all public buildings and homes to make them energy efficient.
- Ban fracking and other unconventional fossil fuel extraction in the UK.
- Split up large energy companies, so that they cannot both produce energy and supply it to consumers, and ensure that energy tariffs are progressive, so that small scale users pay less and large energy users pay more per unit consumed.
- Recognise that the energy market in Northern Ireland operates on an all-island basis, and ensure that this market is protected in any Brexit negotiations.

Transport

We recognise that the world is more connected than ever before, and transport links need to keep up with that. However, growth in movement of people needs to be sustainable.

The Green Party will:

- Introduce free bus travel for young people and students, creating a life-long habit for using more environmentally friendly means of travel.
- Introduce a pay-per-mile road pricing scheme for HGVs, it is only right that businesses who require roads to generate profit pay their fair share for the upkeep of the road network.
- Subsidise ferry journeys between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, encouraging more people to switch from aeroplane to boat.
- End favourable tax treatment for aviation and support the frequent flier levy; the more you fly the more tax you pay.

Your Rights

Human Rights

Human rights are the foundation of a progressive, modern society. All citizens must be treated with dignity and respect. The Green Party NI will defend, promote and expand these rights.

The Green Party NI will:

- Defend the UK Human Rights Act.
- Ensure that the UK is a safe haven for refugees and asylum seekers.
- Ensure that treatment for refugees after arrival fulfils good human rights practice.
- Introduce a UK-wide strategy to tackle violence against women, including domestic and sexual violence and human trafficking. This will include consistent long-term funding for a nationwide network of Rape Crisis Centres.
- Immediately ratify and implement the Istanbul Convention on Women's Rights.
- Make human rights compliance a red line in any international trade deals.
- Ensure that a dedicated new law on domestic abuse is delivered along with sustainably funding for specialist services that survivors and their children need.

LGBTQ Rights

The Green Party NI has led the way on LGBTQ rights, from bringing marriage equality before the Northern Ireland Assembly for the first time, to fielding the first openly transgender candidate in any election on the island of Ireland. We will continue to put people first by promoting LGBTQ issues.

The Green Party NI will:

- Ensure that couples who already have civil partnerships will be able to convert to full married status.

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- Improve the asylum process for LGBTQ people who face persecution in other countries.
- Support proposed changes to the Gender Recognition Act which would recognise non-binary identities, free trans people from an overly medicalised and arbitrary system for recognising their gender, and allow 16-17 years olds to live their true gender.
- We would also support the introduction of legislation similar to Ireland's Gender Recognition Act 2015, with gender recognition available to people of all ages on a basis of self-declaration, similar to the deed poll process for name changes, with no requirement for medical intervention or support, and with provision for children, and for non-binary people through an addition of a legal gender category of "Other".

Workplace Rights

The Green Party NI is committed to protecting and enhancing your rights in the workplace.

The Green Party NI will:

- Ban exploitative zero-hour contracts. We will also end the exploitation of interns, placing a maximum limit on the period of time unpaid internships can last. This will also make the job market more accessible to those from low-income backgrounds.
- End workfare programmes, which act as a subsidy for unscrupulous companies who do not want to pay staff a fair wage.
- Reform Company Law to require board-level worker representation in larger companies- a feature in some of Europe's most successful economies, including Germany, France, Sweden and Denmark.
- Introduce anonymised CVs into the recruitment process for all public sector jobs, so that minority candidates are not excluded before the interview stage because of their identity, and will encourage private and third-sector organisations to take the same approach.
- Require at least 40% of all members of public company and public sector boards to be women.
- Promote carer-friendly employer practices, including flexible and home working where possible.
- Encourage both parents to share paid parental leave after the birth of a child, as this helps both the child's development, and tackles gender stereotyping in the labour market. We will also permit extended parental leave for the parents of premature babies.
- Repeal restrictive Trade Union laws.

Animal Rights

We share our planet with millions of other species. It is important that they get the rights they deserve too.

To this end, the Green Party NI will:

- Improve the welfare standards of farm animals by introducing mandatory CCTV in slaughterhouses, imposing tougher rules on animal transportation, and reform agricultural subsidies to encourage higher agri-environment and animal welfare standards.
- Support mandatory licensing of dog breeders, ban the sale of young puppies unless their mother is present, and tackle over-selective dog breeding that leads to breeds with severe health problems.
- Support an extension of the ban on hunting with dogs to Northern Ireland, and extend this ban to the hunting of all animals for sport or pleasure UK-wide.

Your World

International Relations

Brexit and the election of Donald Trump have made many of us question the direction of travel in politics. However, the Green Party NI is offering a fresh, progressive voice for the UK in the world to put people first.

The Green Party NI is part of a global movement. There are Green parties in almost every country. It's in our ethos to co-operate with others. The UK government must take a similar approach.

The Green Party NI will:

- Condemn hatred, human rights abuse and demagogism when we see it, not cosy up to it for economic gain.
- Ensure the UK to recognise climate refugees and supports a new legal agreement to guarantee their rights and their fair claim to our shared world. These populations currently have no support under existing legislation, such as the 1951 Geneva Convention to protect those fleeing war and persecution.
- Work to reform and strengthen the United Nations, and make it more representative of the whole world, including scrapping permanent seats on the Security Council.

International Trade

Brexit has brought the UK's international trade agreements into sharp focus.

The Green Party NI will:

- Refuse to enter any trade agreement that might lead to public services being eroded in the UK, including privatisation of the NHS.

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- Make human rights, worker rights and equality red lines in any trade negotiations. We will not enter into agreement with governments who harm their own, or other countries' citizens.
- Increase the international aid budget from 0.7% of GDP to 1% of GDP, and allocate resources based on need, not on potential financial gain for the UK.
- Promote fair trade in all trade negotiations.

Defence

The military and security services play an important role; however, this role has often been warped by previous governments.

The Green Party NI will:

- Scrap Trident and get rid of the UK's nuclear weapons, and other weapons of mass destruction.
- Limit potential future military involvement purely to humanitarian commitments.
- Ban the sale of arms from the UK and companies based in the UK to countries who do not meet international human rights standards.

Your Democracy

Democratic Reform

The democratic institutions of the UK have often been co-opted by powerful special interests, and with the emergence of new political forces, have not always kept up with changes in public opinion. The Green Party NI will put you first by promoting radical reform of these institutions.

The Green Party NI will:

- Move to a system of proportional representation for Westminster elections, and will make the House of Lords a fully elected body.
- Lower the voting age to allow 16 and 17 year olds to vote.
- Require all parties publish donations they receive, like the Green Party NI does.
- Create a level playing field for all parties and limit the undue influence that wealthy individuals and corporate backers can have on the democratic process by introducing state funding of political parties.
- Require all parties to field at least 1/3 female candidates in all elections, with a reduction in funding for those who fail to comply
- Repeal the Lobbying Act and replace it with a new act that actually tackles the issue of corporate lobbyists, whilst still allowing charitable and community organisations to campaign properly.
- Reform Libel Law in Northern Ireland, which can be used to stifle open debate and democracy, by bringing it in line with the law in England and Wales.

Devolution

This election comes at a perilous time for Northern Ireland's devolution settlement. The Green Party NI is fully supportive of the existing institutions, and are committed to devolution for Northern Ireland, which allows us to put you first at a local level.

However, we must also have stable government in Northern Ireland. The failure of the traditional parties to come to an agreement and form an Executive has led to thousands of people facing job losses and massive cuts to public services.

The Green Party will:

- Seek to devolve more tax powers to a devolved Executive and Assembly, to take account of local needs.
- Increase the block grant through the ending of Westminster austerity and the associated Barnett consequentials.
- Establish a constitutional convention to reform, refresh and revitalise the existing devolved institutions, making them more democratic and accountable in the long-term.
- Immediately release funding for inquiries into Troubles-related deaths promised in the Fresh Start Agreement, accept the UK government cannot be an independent arbiter and establish an internationally-chaired talks-process involving politicians, civic society and victims to resolve legacy issues once and for all.

Your Candidates
Susan Glass – West Tyrone
Philip Randle – East Antrim
Maurice Macartney - Strangford