

CAMDEN GREEN PARTY MANIFESTO

“Fair is worth fighting for”

Foreword

On 6th May 2010, you have the opportunity to vote for Greens to represent you on Camden Council. We ask you to cast your vote to ensure a strong fresh Green voice on Camden Council. Greens will challenge the views of the main parties and work for fairness, good quality public services, well thought-out green policies which create jobs and also benefit our children and grandchildren, for greater community participation, and human scale organization.

We're expecting to build on our successes over the past few years and substantially increase the number of Green Party Councillors elected to Camden Council.

Green Councillors across the country have an excellent record. Greens in Kirklees led the way in introducing the first scheme to insulate all lofts and cavity walls for free. Brighton councillors fought for and achieved free school meals for all at primary school, and Stroud Greens succeeded in protecting their local post office by putting Council funds into it.

In Camden, we've succeeded in getting a firm commitment to cut the Council's emissions by 10% in a year. We've been instrumental in protecting the Frank Barnes School for the Deaf, in ensuring all Camden's employees receive the London Living Wage, and in exposing poor practice on the part of the Primary Care Trust. We've worked at a ward level to ensure safer streets, more youth services, greater resident engagement in planning issues, more street trees, and resident involvement in a new development in the Highgate Newtown area. We've campaigned for a Green New Deal which means the Council investing in our homes and infrastructure and creating hundreds of new jobs to bring our borough up to 21st century standards.

With more Greens on the Council we will continue to provide a strong Green voice on Camden Council across a wide range of issues – not only on the environment but on social justice and community politics too. We will ensure that the Council is accountable to the people. We will push for a new sort of politics which means genuine local involvement and participation, and which involves honesty and openness on the part of political leaders.

For a long time the Labour Party monopolized power in Camden. By 2006, they were strongly associated with new Labour politics – using the Private Finance Initiative to

finance school buildings, supporting academy schools, and increasingly, tendering out of services.

The Lib-Dems and Conservatives came into power in 2006 with a pledge to be a listening administration – but on so many issues they have let people down badly. For example, community involvement on the new school was abysmal with no choice given to the public as to whether to have an academy school, consultation on urban regeneration projects have been very limited leaving residents in places like Maiden Lane and the Highgate Newtown area very disappointed, and expenditure on many youth services projects has been cut.

They have also engaged in dishonest gesture politics insisting on cutting the Council tax in real terms whilst Council revenues have fallen and those in need of local services increased. Some cuts have already been implemented such as cuts to UK On-Line services and we are concerned that many more will materialize after the election. They have talked about sustainability but do not have a coherent plan nor the will to make the sort of change we need in Camden.

The local elections are on 6th May. Please make full use of your democratic rights and go out and vote!

Councillor Maya de Souza and Parliamentary Candidate for Holborn and St Pancras, Natalie Bennett

Our Priorities

1. **A fairer society:** fair treatment for all, with a focus on the rights of the most vulnerable, and creation of jobs and action to minimize unemployment.
2. **Better public services:** ensuring quality public services and expanding provision in important areas like housing, education, leisure and mental healthcare.
3. **Leading the way as the greenest borough in London:** setting and achieving greenhouse gas reduction targets, in line with our national targets of a 90% cut in GHG emissions by 2030 and 65% cuts by 2020, creating jobs greening our infrastructure, and seeking to ensure Camden residents enjoy cleaner air, safer streets, and quieter homes and streets.
4. **Greater well-being through more human scale institutions and community participation:** human scale schools, support for community organizations and initiatives, residents associations and conservation area advisory committees, and strong support for local, independent businesses.

Our commitments

A Fairer society

We believe that this is the time to address the rising inequality which has so disfigured our society in recent years. Fairness is paramount and we will not compromise on this. Our priorities are below.

A Green New Deal to tackle unemployment

- Green jobs through a local green new deal, which means a large-scale programme to insulate our homes street by street and to put in place an improved local energy infrastructure which includes combined heat and power plants. This means warmer homes and lower bills in the future, whilst doing our bit for climate change and creation of jobs.
- Focus on training in this field to secure jobs for local people.

High levels of employment

- Expand the Council's apprenticeship scheme and work with the private sector for high quality training and apprenticeships.

- Oppose redundancies in the Council and elsewhere. Reduce working hours instead when costs need to be saved.
- Address high levels of unemployment in certain sectors of society, such as amongst women, the disabled and ethnic minorities.

Good quality affordable housing

- A real strategy to address our housing shortage which will involve a high proportion of affordable housing and housing for families in all new developments, stopping sell-offs, building new homes, and seeking to ensure that homes are not left empty or under-occupied.
- Only accept the public management of Council housing in Camden.

A fair deal for leaseholders

- Long term value for money from maintenance and repair works: carry out a thorough review of how repairs are procured to identify better ways of keeping costs down, ensure unnecessary work is not carried out, and that repairs are to a good standard.

Fair wages for all

- A London Living Wage for all those employed indirectly by Camden, such as those working on tendered out services like catering and cleaning contracts.
- Push for the application of equal pay laws preventing gender discrimination by the Council, its contractors and other employers, and ensure that the necessary legal services are available.

Fair treatment for all

- Action to address homophobia, Islamaphobia, racism, gender inequality, disability discrimination and other forms of discrimination in schools, amongst employers, and elsewhere by challenging stereotypes, promoting positive images, and taking firm action against harassment.

Protect the Rights of the disabled

- Advisory and advocacy services that protect the rights of disabled people,
- Action to ensure mobility
- Promote access to employment.

Full inclusion of older people in our community

- Ensure employment and educational opportunities, supporting legal services to allow rights to be enforced
- Limit isolation through a range of accessible community activities - luncheon clubs, adult education and volunteering opportunities

- Homes built to lifestyle homes standards, and warm well-insulated homes for all
- Continue to support the freedom pass, and safer more pleasant streets,
- Cheaper transport for carers, and parking for mobility scooters.

Fair Trade

- Fair trade goods and supplies for the Council, so that workers abroad receive a fair wage.

Ethical investment and procurement

- Camden's pension fund invested ethically so that we do not invest in the arms trade, and companies that destroy our environment.

Better public services

The quality of our lives depends a great deal on the quality of our local services. They are especially important to the most vulnerable like our older people and teenagers. No-one wants to travel miles to access these services. They must be easy and affordable to reach by public transport. Key services must be free at the point of contact.

The Green Party would seek to reverse the trend towards putting our local health provision into private hands. We also oppose the trend towards bigger schools, centralised surgeries, and contracting out services to create impersonal services. We recognize that good services are not only about the provision of services but also about ensuring personal relationships and continuity, so we will oppose continued tendering out of services to private companies.

We will seek to keep Council Tax down. This means real efficiencies like in building procurement and saving energy. We will not however prioritize a low council tax over and above good public services, but will engage the public in an open and honest way in the choices that may have to be made.

Personalized and Life long Education

- Promote lifelong education, from toddlers to older people, by using our existing schools and colleges to provide many more classes.
- Raise the aspirations and achievements of all children, and ensure that vocational work is encouraged not stigmatized.
- Support community schools where parents and local people control governing bodies rather than outside bodies such as corporations and academies

- Oppose elitist academy schools which will negatively impact on the performance of our other schools, and selection that leads to segregation on rounds of religion, ethnicity and class.
- Support smaller schools including a smaller secondary school south of the Euston Road.
- Ensure sufficient primary school places for all.
- Sufficient nursery school places, including improved childrens centres such as on the Holly Lodge Estate.
- Ensure special schools and also, pupil referral units are given high priority.

Reduce Crime

- Better community policing through enhanced Safer Neighbourhood Panels: streets and homes to be safer by ensuring that the community identifies priorities for the local police,
- Ensuring risks are addressed through for example: effective lighting, good design to “design out crime”, and more local police services.
- High levels of funding for youth services and other community activities that reduce alienation, and strengthen community bonds.

Protect our National Health Service

- Challenge the creeping privatisation of healthcare through tendering –out services, and oppose costly Private Finance Initiative schemes.
- Oppose cuts in services at our local hospitals, such as the possible closure of the Whittington Hospital A & E unit.
- Tackling ill-health by promoting healthy living - lots of exercise, good fresh food, and a proper work-life balance.

A Focus on Good Mental Health

- Improved services that include strong effective day centres, as well as key worker support.
- Ensure more joined-up work with police, families and social workers to minimize entry into the criminal justice system.
- Ensure that people are treated with respect and dignity, that discrimination does not take place, and promote a good work life-balance which is critical for people’s mental health.

Better Community facilities, Libraries and the arts

- Reinstate and expand essential community services such as children’s centres and youth projects, post offices, libraries, and public toilets.
- Enhance library services in Camden, and increase the range of cultural services provided. Too many libraries in Camden do not open fully every week

- Re-direct efforts into maximizing the use of the libraries as public services to the community and consider expanding them so they can be hubs for working people who are “working from home” rather than in their office.
- Support for theatres, arts venues and cultural events.

Excellent leisure facilities and activities for all

- Prioritise, reinstate and expand local leisure facilities to improve health, include more young people, and help address social isolation amongst older people.
- More skate board parks, improved facilities in Parliament Hill and Primrose Hill by the railway lines, and workshops with young people to find out what they really want.
- Engage the Royal Parks and the Corporation inviting them to ensure greater community use of parks in Camden
- Promote community gardens and other community activities which are relaxing and bring us together

Local banking

- Promote a new, local and mutual financial sector with community bank and a credit union.

Well-being – human scale and local

Communities and services must be on a human scale. Size matters. To the Green Party, well-being is not only about how much we earn or the things we possess. Strong supportive communities, our heritage, and the character of our own distinct areas is just as important.

Support Local shops and Small Businesses

- A wide range of practical measures to help hard-pressed local shops, including improved parking policies and good business advice services.
- Use the planning and licensing system to ensure a wide range of shops are available to local people, by ensuring that small sized units which attract local, small scale rather than chain stores are attracted.
- Special planning guidance for all our high streets to protect their distinctive nature, and ensure viability, and development of business conservation districts along the lines of the Hatton Gardens model.

Protect and Enhance our Conservation areas

- Strong conservation area statements, that have the support of the local community, to protect our heritage and the distinct character and identity of areas, whilst recognizing that areas need to evolve to take on board energy efficient design
- New Article 4 directions which offer greater protection to conservation areas to be subject to sustainability assessments.

Support Local schools

- Smaller human scale schools, including a smaller community school for those who live south of the Euston Road.

Neighbourhood partnerships, Area Forums, Cross-boundary forums

- Support organizations that encourage people to come together and which empower them to get involved for the good of their communities.
- A one-size fits all approach does not work and for poorer areas special forums like neighbourhood partnerships are necessary over and above the Area Forums, and require administrative support.
- End wasteful expenditure on consultants: redirect it to representative community organizations.
- Cross-boundary forums with neighbouring boroughs for edge of borough areas like Highgate.

Safer Neighbourhood Panels

- Strongly support enhanced safer neighbourhood panels.

Working with civic organizations and transition towns

- Working closely with local organizations like the Heath & Hampstead Society, the Highgate Society, community organizations and TRAs, whilst seeking to ensure the organizations that we work with are properly representative of the community.
- Eco-teams to help set up local community initiatives such as carbon reduction groups.

Civil liberties

- Our freedoms and human dignity must be protected. We will work to provide strong legal services and advocacy services.
- Avoid proliferation of personal data collection systems, as well as ID cards.

Making Camden the greenest borough in London

Tackling climate change

Human-made climate change is an unprecedentedly serious threat to our welfare. Only the Green Party has a plan to tackle climate change as quickly and as systematically as we need to. The Green Party is committed to tackling climate change at a national level to achieve a reduction in carbon emissions by 65% by 2020, and 90% by 2030.

At a local level we will seek to go beyond the target demanded by Friends of the Earth of 40% by 2020. This can be done in a manner that Camden Council can afford and which helps social justice by reducing fuel poverty and which reduces our dependence on imported fuels.

The Green Party would put in place a rigorous plan to achieve its exacting target. Current measures being taken by the Council do not add up to a coherent strategy tackle climate change. The approach has been ad hoc and piecemeal.

Overall

- Ambitious and strategic - setting challenging targets and putting in place plans to meet them in a cost-effective manner, which accord with Green Party national targets of 90% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and 65% reductions by 2020
- Ensure Camden becomes a leader in the field leading by example. Once, we can show what can be done in the UK, we will be better placed to make an impact in international negotiations.

Warmer fuel efficient homes

- Through a local Green New Deal, building on the work of Kirklees Greens, work street by street to ensure that Camden's existing homes are insulated to the highest standards. To be funded through a mixture of low interest loans plus grants to lower income households, making use of funds arising from energy company obligations and prudential borrowing.
- Planning policy so that new homes require little energy and use the sun's natural heat and light.
- High energy efficiency standards in all repair and regeneration works.
- Incentives to encourage reduced fuel consumption, which will include metering in Council properties to ensure all pay in accordance with what they use, but making sufficient provision for the elderly and other fuel poor groups. This will bring bills down for all.
- Make big reductions in wasted heat and electricity from Council homes currently heated 24-hours a day and common parts lit 24-hours a day.

Energy efficiency, renewable energy and other low-carbon technologies

- New public buildings including new school and council buildings are built to a passiv haus or equivalent low carbon standard
- Planning guidance to ensure higher levels of energy efficiency for new private sector buildings
- The Community Infrastructure Levy to be used to collect funds from developers to pay into new local renewable/Combined Heat and Power fund. Developers to have the option to pay reduced amount into this in comparison with cost of on-site renewables.
- Support combined heat and power using sustainable sources of energy such as wood and waste including ensuring use of heat for example from hospital incinerators and waste to energy plants for the Borough, and putting in place local energy networks.
- 30% renewable requirement for all new public buildings, including social housing and strict requirements for green energy in private developments, but with option of paying a reduced sum into local renewable/Combined Heat and Power fund.
- The Council's buildings to become generators of renewable energy.
- Promote the use of new technologies, for example ground or air source heat pumps in schools, churches and swimming pools.
- Public services such as libraries to work towards carbon neutral status by 2015
- An energy advisory service for local residents and businesses.

Green transport

Reduce carbon emissions generated by the use of cars and other vehicles, through a wide range of policies to promote and reward walking, cycling, public transport and greener cars and motor bikes.

- Continue policy of emission related parking permits, to reduce GHG emissions and encourage use of electric vehicles.
- Offer a scrappage fee for those willing to get rid of their car and promote car clubs, as this also frees up space for cyclists and walkers.
- Free parking in Camden only for those public sector staff who need to carry equipment and where they use electric or other very low emission cars.
- More renewable energy charge points to support the use of electric vehicles in out of town areas.
- Improved network of safe cycle routes using backstreets and ensuring easy permeability.
- More segregated cycle routes, where this is possible, to encourage more people to cycle
- 20mph speed limits on all roads to encourage walking and cycling.
- Fewer one way streets, which means shorter distances for cyclists.

- More living street schemes making high streets safer and more pleasant, eg Kentish Town High Street and Hampstead in line with 2020 scheme.

Parking

- Ensure that this works as a service protecting our streets from congestion and reflects sustainability considerations in charges.

Improving our living environment

- Make our streets and open spaces more welcoming: cleaner, less cluttered and with fewer and slower cars, and more green soft spaces with green corridors for cyclists and pedestrians.
- Parks and gardens to be more wildlife-friendly and suitable for sports, play and cultural activities.
- Different varieties of trees to be planted in consultation with the community and with involvement of residents.

A zero waste strategy for Camden

- Prioritise waste reduction, by making maximum use of waste materials locally, introducing better repair and re-use services, discouraging purchase of non-reusable goods, and enforcing the packaging regulations strictly.
- Improve recycling facilities with greater segregation at source so that recycled materials retain their value.
- Ensure all estates are fully serviced with equivalent and appropriate recycling/composting facilities as street properties
- Ensure that facilities are accessible to disabled and that all facilities and households have clear instructions as to what can be recycled.
- Services to be audited, transparent and trustworthy.
- Campaign for supermarkets in the borough to reduce their excessive and unnecessary packaging and distribution of plastic bags.
- Review procurement plans for the proposed new waste to energy plant in Edmonton to ensure value for money, and to avoid being committed to producing large amounts of waste.

Strong Environmental Leadership

- An Executive member with over-arching cross-departmental responsibility for climate change
- A participatory sustainable taskforce including councillors, officers and residents, which works across the Council and the Local Strategic Partnership.

High standards of Animal welfare and food production

- All meat bought by the Council is humanely reared, transported and slaughtered
- Promote the purchase of organic food
- Promote vegetarian food in the borough with weekly “veggie days” in schools, hospitals and other institutions.

How will Greens pay for this?

The Green Party Budget proposals for 2009/2010 were costed and covered many of these proposals. In broad terms, our proposals for payment are:

- to finance the improvements in energy efficiency and district heating, make full and systematic use of national schemes like Carbon Emission Reduction Targets, Community Energy Savings Programme and Decent Homes – we will do this by entering into partnership arrangements with an energy supplier and ensure the highest performing materials are used.
- raising finance through using “prudential borrowing” which allows the Council to raise money from the markets at a lower cost than individuals. Interest costs to be financed from the savings from the energy consumption.
- make full use of section 106 funds and the new Community Infrastructure Levy, always making sure we get the most for developers money and that we do not support inappropriately sited renewable schemes that generate little energy.
- installation of solar PV on Council buildings has high capital costs, but costs to be recovered using the generous feed-in-tariffs introduced by central government in April 2010.
- reduced gas use through improvements in energy efficiency and the savings from CHP in the social housing will be used to pay off the loans.
- reviewing housing repairs procurement to avoid wastage, ensure that we do not have shoddy repairs that need to be carried out more than once, and that we get good value for money.
- reduce bonuses for senior officers and seek to replace the bonus culture with a public service culture.
- cutting unnecessary and polluting services such as the two rubbish collections, which are not needed in many parts of the Borough.
- small increases in Council tax if necessary, which will be fully transparent, as more can be achieved in terms of good public services and a greener infrastructure through efficient effective public spending than a few extra pounds in each of our pockets.