

Green Party

European Election Manifesto 2004

*Europe can do better –
You decide!*

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Part 1 Manifesto

	Introduction.	Page	2
	Statement of core principles.	Page	4
	Europe can be better.	Page	5
(1)	Safeguarding our environment.	Page	8
	• Food, Agriculture & Fisheries.	Page	9
	• Energy Policy.	Page	13
	• Reliable, inclusive transport.	Page	15
(2)	Greening the Social Dimension.	Page	16
(3)	Greening the Economy.	Page	18
(4)	Welfare State.	Page	21
(5)	Home & Community	Page	23
(6)	Developing Democracy.	Page	24
(7)	Strengthening the Peace Policy.	Page	26
(8)	Promoting Grass Roots Globalisation,	Page	29
(9)	Green Achievements.	Page	30

Part 2 A Green Contract for Europe

Proposals for the next Parliament.

Part 3 Green/EFA achievements

1999-2004 (summary)

Introduction

This manifesto sets out to re-build confidence and hope in politics. It outlines a better future, not just for Northern Ireland or the EU, but for the global community as well.

It is time for real change.

It is time to move on.

It is time to make real progress.

It is time to build the peace here in Northern Ireland.

Green politics offers that change, that opportunity to move on, to build a peaceful, prosperous and tolerant Northern Ireland. It is the politics Northern Ireland has to take up on June 10th for the sake of our children's future and for generations to come.

A vote for the Green Party on June 10th will be a sign that politics here in Northern Ireland has moved on from the past and the destructive zero-sum politics of Unionism and Nationalism. We invite all those eager to move on to a better Northern Ireland to join with us in building the peace, to support us as the new generation that will re-make Northern Ireland.

The Greens are standing in this election as a party committed to making the Agreement work, and demanding the restoration of our local democratic institutions.

The Agreement struck by the two Governments and political parties in 1998 can do for us what the European institutions have done for Europe in the wake of the second world war. The Greens will defend the Agreement, while also being critical of aspects of it, especially in respect of how it has institutionalised sectarianism through the mandatory designation of MLAs as 'Unionist', 'Nationalist' or 'Other'.

'Think Globally, Act Locally' is the motto that launched the Green Movement. The need to see the bigger picture – that vision of a better world and how it might be achieved – along with the belief that each and everyone of us can contribute to creating such a world, informs all the policies and actions of the Green Party.

This Manifesto is based on the framework of the European Federation of Green Parties' Manifesto, demonstrating that the Green Party is part of a much broader European Green

Movement. Not only are we members of the recently launched European Greens that crosses the countries of Europe and works to great effect in the European Union, but we are also part of a larger movement for green politics that extends across the globe. The Green Movement is the fastest growing global movement and our aim is to bring that dynamism, energy and global experience to Northern Ireland.

The Green Party warmly welcomes the addition of ten new EU States and looks forward to new Green MEPs from these countries joining us in the European Parliament, where we already have 45 Green MEPs from twelve countries in the Green group in the European Parliament. There is also a new EU Constitution under consideration which will influence the future course of the EU's development. Issues involving the EU's economic and environmental health, the safety and quality of our food, energy and transport systems, justice and immigration policy, the 'war on terrorism', Social Europe, globalisation, the EU's military dimension - will all have to be considered by our elected MEPs.

The core issue of this election is democracy and accountability. The Green Party believes that decision-making should be taken at the lowest effective level, as close as possible to the people affected by those decisions.

There is a need for the European Parliament - as the most democratically accountable and open body in the EU - to be strengthened within the EU.

There is a need for the EU to make a significant policy shift in its economic policies, away from corporate driven globalisation towards more localised production and democratic controls: issues such as social justice and environmental protection go hand in hand and must not take second place to the single pursuit of economic competitiveness.

The EU must also take subsidiarity more seriously and devolve more power back to States and regions. Local authorities must be given more powers, with true de-centralisation of decision-making.

There is a need for the EU to take a lead in tackling food quality and safety - we need a food policy that includes the right of the poor to feed themselves, that reflects the sustainability of our agriculture and that shares responsibility between farmers, fishers and consumers. We need fair prices for quality food. We also need to tackle the growing problem of obesity, especially in children, and need Europe-wide regulation of 'junk food' advertising.

A vote for the Greens on the 10th of June is a vote for positive changes which will improve our quality of life for everyone.

Statement of Core Principles

Life on Earth is under immense pressure. The environment around us, upon which we depend, is threatened with massive destruction. Existing political and economic models have failed us because their values are fundamentally flawed.

Green politics are new and radical and are guided by these core principles;

- 1 Humankind depends on the diversity of the natural world for its existence. We do not believe that other species are expendable.
- 2 The Earth's physical resources are finite. We threaten our future if we try to live beyond those means, so we must build a sustainable society that guarantees our long-term future.
- 3 Every person should be entitled to basic material security as of right.
- 4 Our actions should take account of the well-being of other nations and future generations. We should not pursue our well-being to the detriment of theirs.
- 5 A healthy society is based on voluntary co-operation between empowered individuals in a democratic society, free from discrimination whether based on race, colour, sex, religion, national origin, social origin or any other prejudice.
- 6 We emphasise democratic participation and accountability by ensuring that decisions are taken at the closest practical level to those affected by them.
- 7 We look for non-violent solutions to conflict situations, which take into account the interests of minorities and future generations in order to achieve lasting settlements.
- 8 The success of a society cannot be measured by narrow economic indicators, but should take account of factors affecting the quality of life for all people: personal freedom, social equity, health, happiness and human fulfilment.
- 9 Electoral politics is not the only way to achieve change in society, and we will use a variety of methods to help to affect change, providing those methods do not conflict with our other core principles.

The Green Party puts changes in both values and lifestyles at the heart of the radical green agenda.

EUROPE CAN BE BETTER - YOU DECIDE!

Greens are pro European and support expansion

The Green Party warmly welcomes the addition of ten new EU States and looks forward to new Green MEPs from these countries joining the Green Group in the European Parliament, where we already have 45 Green MEPs from twelve countries.

The outcome of the 2004 European elections will determine our common future. It will be held in an enlarged European Union of 25 countries. Greens have been among the most convinced promoters of fair enlargement. The reunification of Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall was, and remains, one of the main duties of the Union. Greens in Europe are already playing a crucial role in building a more tolerant, social, ecological and democratic Union.

We welcome the expansion of the EU, just as we welcomed the entry of so many post-colonial and post-communist countries into the UN, for it is only via such international institutions that humankind can tackle those problems which affect us all. Pollution and environmental degradation recognise no borders.

We rejoice in the bio-diversity of all life forms, and so too do we welcome human diversity, with its range of languages and cultures. Accordingly, we long for the day when the borders which divide this island and these islands no longer hold the significance they held in the past.

Trade

A strong Green presence in the European Union is the best guarantee for a European commitment on better governance of globalisation. Economic and trade rules must be put to the service of environmental and social objectives. The Green Party recognises that sustainable economic growth is the only way to provide the services that this and future generations desire.

Foreign Policy

We Greens want the EU and all of Europe to make a difference for peace, solidarity, respect for diversity and equity in an increasingly fragile and divided world. That requires concrete proposals for a sustainable and just future. Greens are working to create an independent and cohesive European foreign policy based on democratic and ecological values.

In particular, we want the EU to adopt a greater role in conflict resolution. So far, its role in Northern Ireland has been minimal, despite the best efforts of the Haagerup report, while its

role in the Balkans was little short of disastrous. Initially, the Badinter Commission (1991-2) made the mistake of suggesting that every 'people' could resolve its constitutional status by a referendum. And this was followed by Germany's premature recognition of Croatia's independence, to which the UK agreed in return for an opt-out on the social contract. Since then, however, the EU has given considerable support to both conflict zones. In particular, Northern Ireland has benefited from Peace I and II. Furthermore, the Green Party supports the call for the EU to participate in helping to restore some form of local administration along the lines of the Belfast Agreement.

Energy

We want Europe to take up its environmental responsibilities by implementing a radical shift in energy and transport policy. Nuclear energy must be phased out and replaced with cleaner and safer alternative energy. The future belongs to sun, wind, biomass, hydrological and other renewable sources.

We believe that an Island Sustainable Energy strategy and agency is required to complement the emerging all Ireland energy market.

The island of Ireland has the greatest wind-energy production potential in Europe and if properly supported through the European Union as well as at the state level, could be a net exporter of energy, rather than a net importer, relying on dwindling reserves of fossil fuel in increasingly unstable regions of the globe. It is far better to rely on our own energy resources.

Cultural diversity

The EU we want is open and tolerant with strong protection of both cultural and natural diversity. Our Europe is committed to high social and ecological standards on a regional, European and international scale. These criteria must take preference over purely commercial interests. In our Green Europe, the rule of law and the rights of local peoples and individuals shall prevail over military might and economic dominance. Greens are already making a difference, and with your support in the 2004 European Elections, our influence will be even more decisive in the future.

Constitution

The new constitutional treaty must make the EU more accountable, transparent and democratic and bring it closer to its citizens. We are convinced that the Convention that produced the proposal for a new European Constitution went in the right direction. It is an historic document. The nightmare of Nice - where behind-the-scenes horse-trading decided the content of the treaty - has to be overcome. Our position is that the European Constitution should be ratified by referendum.

Empowerment

In order to advance the aim of greening Europe, we will not hesitate to use the possibilities offered by the clause in the constitution which obliges the Commission to propose a European law when one million citizens ask for it. Citizen empowerment and more participatory democracy for civil society and NGOs are among our priorities. We want a social Union built on the basic principles of equality and solidarity and a European Union that strives for sustainable ecological development for the whole continent.

Peace

In our Green Vision, the European Union must be synonymous with and emblematic of the concept of peace. The European Union must stand for peace and should be a prime actor in working for peace in the unstable international situation.

The Greens' objectives are:

1. SAFEGUARDING OUR ENVIRONMENT

Pollution does not respect national boundaries. 80% of our environmental legislation comes from the EU. The European Parliament has made a real difference to our environment thanks to Green Party input. It shares decision-making powers with the Council of Ministers in the environmental area and has an important 'oversight' role with the Commission and the Council on environmental law implementation.

Our Green MEPs have shown environmental leadership, making important improvements to EU legislation in areas such as water policy, climate change, air quality, animal welfare, GMOs, waste management and access to environmental information, amongst others. Achievements have included, for example, the strengthening of the Water Framework Directive, promoting air quality legislation, and the establishment in the Electronic Waste Directive of 'producer responsibility' for the 'end of life' treatment of electrical and electronic equipment, thus encouraging the producers of such equipment to move towards eco-design.

Green MEPs -will continue to push for;

- the introduction of an EU instrument banning the use of phosphates and all phosphate detergents.
- full compliance with the EU Air Quality Directive.
- the EU Commission to legislate against car emissions that are responsible for growing health problems, including alarming rises in asthma levels.
- the availability of EU funding for further research and development of 'green' cars, powered by biofuels, electric batteries, solar panels or hydrogen fuel cells, thereby reducing damaging emissions.
- the EU to follow the example set by New Zealand, Western Australia, California, Toronto and elsewhere to establish a Zero Waste economy within a twenty-year period based on best practice around the world.

1A. FOOD AND AGRICULTURE YOU CAN TRUST.

Safe Food – From Field to Fork

Intensive agricultural practices have led to EU- wide food scares and a call for better food safety standards in order to protect consumers. Meanwhile a new threat to the agriculture and wildlife is imminent through the proposed introduction of GM crops. The Green Party is concerned about the potentially irreversible effects that GM crops may have on the natural environment.

Current agricultural policies have also let the farming community down. We want to see Northern Ireland's farmers and producers establishing world-class products and becoming market leaders by excelling in wholesome production techniques, reducing chemical and energy inputs and rejecting GMOs throughout the island. We therefore advocate that the island of Ireland as whole be declared a 'GM Free Zone', just as the Welsh Assembly has declared Wales 'GM Free'.

Our Green Party MEPs have been proactive in promoting food safety measures and have been key players in adopting EU legislation regarding the authorisation, traceability and labelling of GMOs and GM products. We have;

- pushed for the internet 'rapid alert system' warning about food risks connected with residues in food;
- helped achieve a ban on feeding meat and bone meals to animals, and;
- contributed to the decision to abolish the only four remaining antibiotics still authorised in animal feed.

Green MEPs will continue to:

Campaign for the overall levels of EU funding for rural development to be increased by at least 20% .

Ensure that all GM products are labelled and that member states can take appropriate measures to prevent the unintended presence of GMOs in conventional and organic products.

Campaign to have 10% of the EU agricultural land area farmed organically by 2010.

Lobby to have food safety regulations adapted to foster and support high quality regional and local food enterprises.

Lobby for the introduction of an EU instrument to reduce the overall use of pesticides.

Promote a development budget for agri-environmental schemes, in order to establish practices that protect and improve biodiversity, habitats, landscape and animal welfare and reward farmers for adopting them.

Ensure animal welfare and the phase out of live animal exports: the Greens are the only political force with an animal rights philosophy at its core.

There are few things more essential to our every day lives than food. More and more people are asking themselves whether they can trust the food they eat. We are told that the chemicals, growth hormones and antibiotics the food industry adds to our food are a sign of progress. We are told that those of us who are concerned about genetically modified (GM) foods are anti-progress. The Green Party prefers safe food, food without additives.

Farming reform

The first of our priorities is safe, healthy and nutritious food for everyone. In order to achieve this we will continue to seek and support radical reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), with a strong reorientation towards;

- the promotion of organic farming and other high value added markets.
- regional food production,.
- the localisation of food production and consumption – through farmers markets and the ending of the stranglehold large supermarkets have over farming families and communities.
- the integration of food production and farming reform within a firm rural development strategy that includes non-food economic opportunities for farming families and communities, such as
 - eco-tourism;
 - biomass production, and the production of energy from crops and wind generators.

These changes are the way forward to safeguard the diverse landscapes of Europe and protect the biodiversity of its flora and fauna, as well as offering the best sustainable future for farming families and communities.

Compassionate farming & animal welfare

We must ensure that the consumer comes first, and in order to ensure safe food for all, animal rights must be safeguarded. This includes their rearing as well as how they are transported.

Greens believe that people care as we do about the treatment of animals. Farm animals have a right not to suffer, and our stand against intensive factory production lines promotes respect and compassion in farming. Greens oppose factory farming and advocate phasing out cruel live exports.

We want an end to animal experimentation and real investment in non-animal chemical testing. Green MEP Dr Caroline Lucas has helped increase funding for the validation of non-animal test methods.

Food Labelling

We must also ensure that the consumer receives adequate protection by mandating correct food product labelling which guarantees traceability of contents.

Genetically Modified crops and Chemicals

We want a GM-free Ireland. We want to rein in the power of the chemical industry and make them take responsibility for the safety of their products and processes.

In the last decade the amount of organic food produced in Europe has gone up by five times, but British farmers lag far behind - even though we're one of the biggest markets for organic produce. Less than half of the organic food we eat is home-grown. We must encourage local food producers to meet the demand for natural food by growing it in this country. That could mean 40,000 extra jobs for our rural and farming communities throughout Britain. British & Irish Greens in the European Parliament played a key role in making sure that all food with any GM links is properly labelled - so you can choose whether or not to buy it.

Fair Food Distribution

Green Party Euro-MPs Dr Caroline Lucas and Nuala Ahern have been outspoken critics of the Common Agricultural Policy and have campaigned for an organic, local and safe agricultural system. With other Greens they have written reports proposing ways of reducing supermarket power, and have lobbied to use EU money to help farmers promote local food initiatives.

Caroline Lucas won support from many farmers for highlighting the absurd trade where British food products are flown half way round the world to countries which sell exactly the same type of products back to us.

Fisheries.

Current fishing policy is wasteful and inefficient and requires fundamental reform. The fishing stocks are being plundered and in order to ensure future viability of our fishing industry it is essential that local fishing fleets control local waters so that it is in the interests of the local fleet to ensure that stocks and habitats are maintained. In addition we would support the introduction of initiative schemes involving marine reserves that have been

introduced elsewhere. It has been found that stocks replenish and spread out from them. Greens are for nurturing our marine environment and ensuring a future for our fishing industry. Greens regard this as a complex matter that requires the support of the local fishing industry, and, though regulated with agreement, their control over their own future.

1B. ENERGY POLICY

Shift in Energy Policy: Climate Change

Climate change, arising from the burning of fossil fuels such as oil, coal and gas, presents a key challenge to global sustainable development. While the EU has taken the lead amongst industrialised nations in pushing for commitments and targets under the Kyoto protocol, scientists are now telling us we need to reduce our emissions by some 60 – 80%. The Green Party wants to make sure that we meet all our energy needs without storing up problems for our children and grandchildren.

In Northern Ireland we need to shift to clean renewable energy sources;

- offshore and on shore windfarms,
- current turbines,
- biomass,
- biofuels,
- wave and solar power

At the same time we must promote much greater levels of energy efficiency and energy conservation. Investing in clean energy production and conservation means ensuring Northern Ireland is part of one of the fastest growing employment sectors in Europe.

Green Party MEPs have;

- contributed to the adoption of the first emissions trading scheme to curb greenhouse gases.
- campaigned against BNFL nuclear transports and campaigned relentlessly to have Sellafield decommissioned.

Green MEPs will continue to:

Lobby to have the Euratom Treaty reviewed and phased out.

Insist on an increase in the use of clean renewable energy sources to 25% of overall energy consumption within the EU by 2020.

Campaign for a long-term, ecologically sound, fair and equitable Climate Change Stability Pact.

Push for the integration of environmental concerns, in particular energy consumption, into the transport sector and for the inclusion of all stakeholders, including environmental NGOs, in the development of EU transport policy.

We will do everything possible to put an end to the anachronistic and nuclear-supportive Euratom Treaty. We must work unceasingly to make our governments comply with the Kyoto Protocol as a first step to reduce CO2 emissions. Because of Green pressure the EU is a leader in the battle to combat climate change. This position has to be enhanced. We ask for the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol through the establishment of a European Climate Stability Pact. The Union has to continue to face up to its Kyoto commitments while making all efforts to convince reluctant countries to sign up. Our transport system must be reformed to increase efficiency and reduce pollution. This is a prerequisite for climate stability and is a necessity to prevent increasingly hot summers, extreme floods and their dramatic consequences.

Energy Poverty

Around 30,000 people- mainly older people and the very young- die in Britain every year because poverty prevents them from properly heating their homes. The cost to the NHS alone has been estimated at £1 billion each year. We need to direct fuel grants and payments to the people that need them.

Uneconomic Nuclear

Real Progress means stopping a nuclear industry that can't even stand on its own feet. Nuclear power gets nearly two million pounds of our money in subsidies every day - enough to employ fifteen thousand extra teachers. It makes sense to choose clean, honest, reliable energy we can trust and not cling to a failed nuclear dream.

Gina Dowding, one the 7 Green councillors in Lancaster, blew the whistle on Lancaster City Council allowing the local nuclear plant to get away with putting off paying its business rates at a cost to local taxpayers of £18000. Green MEP Caroline Lucas dug further and sparked a European Commission legal investigation that uncovered a vast web of subsidies paid by the Labour government to dinosaur nuclear companies that costs the British people 100s of millions of pounds every year. These hidden subsidies must end.

1C. RELIABLE, INCLUSIVE TRANSPORT

Britain's public transport systems used to be among the best in the world. Now they're at breaking point. For decades governments have siphoned away money earmarked for essential investment - and now we're paying the price - not just in wasted time but also in lost lives.

In Northern Ireland we have a roads based planning system and little consideration given to the needs of pedestrians and cyclists. Greens believe that this must change.

Our rail network suffers underinvestment. Greens would;

- Re-allocate a quarter of the road budget to the rail network;
- Seek EU funding for the rail network;
- Upgrade the rail line to Derry and fight for the designation of the Ballymena-Derry line as 'core';
- Upgrade the rail line to Larne;
- Substantially invest in new rolling stock;
- Reopen the Crumlin line and form a commuter loop from Belfast to Antrim to Lisburn back to Belfast.
- Connect the three airports to the rail network.
- Upgrade existing stations and build additional halts.
- Support an integrated transport and planning strategy.
- Support proposals for a light rail service to Comber and appraise the viability of a similar service along the South approach out to Carryduff..
- Support better transport links in the North-West, from better roads to a rail link from Derry to Sligo which in turn would link to a proposed rail line to Limerick and Cork. We see this as essential for regional development and expanding our tourist industry.

Progress means making public transport an easy, reliable and efficient option, but we also know that most journeys are local ones, and that walking and cycling should be a pleasant experience that everyone can enjoy, without having to risk life and limb. So we would also;

- Introduce safe cycle and walking routes to schools
- Invest in a cycling and pedestrian network.
- Create safe neighbourhoods where car speeds are restricted so children can once again play on our streets.

Good public transport is good for the economy and is an inclusive form of transport available to the frail and the poor. However we recognise the difficulty in providing an effective rural public transport network and whilst we would support pilot schemes for mini bus services and other initiative proposals used elsewhere we recognise that the car will be the major means of transport for the foreseeable future. It is not our intention to stop car use but to radically reduce unnecessary car use.

2. GREENING THE SOCIAL DIMENSION

The Greens believe in strong communities and liveable cities. A focus of Green politics is social inclusion and efficient basic public services for all. Green social and employment policies include active efforts to ensure women are able to participate equally in society and also to facilitate a good work and family life balance. Greens also believe that people with disabilities have the right to live a normal life where barriers to work and to facilities must be removed.

The Green Party – working in the European Parliament and in local ‘authorities’ across Europe – is committed to what the German Green Party’s Joschka Fischer, has described as “A new politics of generosity”. As a Party that believes we should measure the ‘real progress’ of a society not by the size of its GDP or military might, but by how it looks after its most vulnerable, we believe that we need to:

- Provide an infrastructure of caring, including greater public recognition and valuing of caring and carers;
- Provide for an aging population;
- Reverse the growing inequality in society;
- Provide access to a whole range of public services and infrastructure that does not exist at present.

Strong Communities

The major goals that we Greens will strive for are strong communities and liveable cities; with social and economic security for all European citizens and the deployment of European Union regional and structural aid in order to give life to unity through common purpose throughout Europe.

Social inclusion and equal opportunity

One focus of Green Politics is on social inclusion and efficient basic public services for all. Green social and employment policies include;

- active efforts to further the interests of women in our society and enable equal participation is part of all our policies. It is of great importance to facilitate a good work and family life balance, particularly by providing affordable child care.
- A belief that people with disabilities have the right to live a normal life. Barriers to work and to facilities must be removed.
- Inclusive health care,
- Access to gas, water and electricity services;
- Proper pensions for senior citizens;

- The right to good education;
- Job security; safeguarding health and safety at work; decent minimum wages; insistence on fair labour conditions;
- Developing a fair and responsible welfare system and developing the tradition of an efficient Welfare State, which entails unity for common benefit and a regulated market economy.

We resist the simplistic and wasteful neo-liberal tendency to leave everything to the market. We Greens will also work to ensure that Regional and Structural Funds are used to guarantee social inclusion and will therefore fight to secure Peace III funds for Northern Ireland.

3 GREENING THE ECONOMY

Progress is achieved by shaping economics to people's needs, not the other way round. Greens are strongly committed to creating sustainable increases in real wealth and in encouraging sustainable development. Economic benefits should also be measured in terms of quality of life, development and protection of people and care for the environment, as well as money in the bank. Greens fundamentally realise that you need to create the wealth to pay for the services we all desire. Equally we understand the need to provide those services efficiently. Inefficiency in administration is a waste of resources.

The economic growth and jobs of the future will come from the new clean technologies which will also solve some of our environmental problems. The Green Party wants to help develop a thriving enterprise culture.

To achieve this we would lower labour taxes and instead, raise the revenue from environmental taxes, such as the proposed carbon tax, which will also help clean up our act.

Small Business support

Europe is increasingly being run for the benefit of multinationals, not its citizens. Economic progress involves positively supporting and encouraging more local, smaller businesses, which are the real backbone of the economy, rather than the multinationals, which wield huge power, but provide relatively few jobs. More jobs, and more secure, long-term jobs, are created by the small and medium business sector than the large corporate sector. Equally, unlike multinational corporations, SMEs are more likely to stay within the local economy and put wealth as well as employment into the local community rather than exporting profits to corporate headquarters in another country.

Progress involves making sure everyone has a high minimum standard of living, and of course this includes pensioners having their income linked to earnings. This will help to create an enterprise culture as guarantees of security in old age or ill health enables one take the risks necessary when setting up a business, becoming self employed or re-locating..

Greens want to use EU policy to set high minimum social, labour and environmental standards for industry, both in Europe and on the world stage. We want to encourage responsible companies that are rooted in and serve the communities in which they're based.

But for the companies to flourish we also recognise a need to have;

- efficient administration, and;
- minimal unnecessary bureaucracy.

Our demands on business must be realistic and appropriate. In addition it is the responsibility of government to deliver an efficient civil service. Inefficiency in administration diverts resources from other priorities and is in itself a form of waste. For our

society to introduce the improvement in services we desire it is essential that we have both a vibrant economy and an efficient civil service, without these the finances will not be there to pay for Health care or Education.

Many small businesses are also being forced to close because of sharp increases in insurance premiums. Greens believe that this is an issue that needs addressed at a European level and may require a reduction in liabilities, encouraging competition in the sector or risk underwriting. Locally we are also pushing for reform of commercial and domestic rates, which are an unfair levy on the poorer people in society. They are not based on income and ability to pay and are a punitive tax on many small businesses.

Debt

Greens recognise that current levels of personal and national debt are a threat to our well being and economic stability and will seek to introduce measures to progressively reduce levels of debt, including tighter European wider regulation of credit card providers and financial institutions.

Eco Taxes

We want a better quality of life for all. In order to encourage all this to happen, a shift in taxation is essential. Tax on labour must be reduced and eco-taxes on pollution and the use of fossil fuels must be introduced. We need to shift the tax burden away from positive activities, which we want to encourage, such as employment, towards taxing social and environmentally negative activities, which we want to discourage, such as pollution.

Tax Dumping

Tax dumping by Member States should be stopped. The Union's competition policies have to be adapted to include social and ecological parameters. Tax differentials are causing the illegal importation of rubbish from the Republic into Northern Ireland and the collapse of recycling facilities in the North.

The Euro

The Green Party in Northern Ireland supports the introduction of the Euro. Whilst we are mindful of the Chancellor's criteria we would suggest that the economy here is out of sync with that of the South East of England. Being out of the Euro zone is costing all businesses with loans, and all people with mortgages, additional interest payments. The higher interest rates in the Sterling zone are a deterrent to investment and job creation. When people travel here currency conversion is an additional cost. Joining the Euro zone would;

- Encourage investment.
- Make it cheaper for us to trade with the rest of Europe.

- Boost the tourist industry.
- Encourage cross border development.

Why should the economy of Northern Ireland be sacrificed because of the housing boom and shortage in the South of England?

European Central Bank

Green MEPs are the only group in the European Parliament to question the European Central Bank on its need to integrate economic with social and environmental policies. Greens throughout Europe are active in the Wage, Pension and Poverty campaigns. A stable sustainable future means one in which we all have a stake – the strong support the weak, and this principle applies not only in Europe, but for all people around the world.

4 WELFARE STATE

Learning for Life

Should schools see our children solely according to their future function in the job market? The Greens believe in education being for the public good, and as such should be publicly-funded.

It is outrageous that students will have to borrow to pay top-up fees. We believe in student grants and higher education freely available to anyone who wants to invest their time in learning the skills to make a greater contribution back to our society. When they are educated, and if they do earn more, then they will pay more in income tax. Borrowing to pay for education merely increases personal debt. We cannot continue to run our economy on growing levels of debt.

A critical appraisal is required into the appropriateness of the education available and the spending priorities. There is a lack of vocational training and apprenticeships and there must also be easy access to education and training for all age groups and skills. Greens also put great emphasis on smaller class sizes at Primary school level and see these as the key to improving levels of literacy. We have to invest and critically examine how that investment is spent.

In Britain Green MEPs Jean Lambert and Caroline Lucas are fighting to prevent public services from being forced to open to international competition and privatisation. Education has enough problems without privatisation and fragmentation.

Health and Well-being

Should our public services be run to make life easier for politicians and managers or to make life better for the people who need them and pay for them? Who would you rather made healthcare decisions that affect you; a doctor or an accountant?

National Health Service

The Green Party wants progress on essential services and continues to fight for the protection of our public services. That means building a partnership between government, public sector workers and the communities they serve. It doesn't mean wasting our money by paying a private company £240m to provide a hospital that could have been built for £60m less through the NHS. That's not progress, it is reducing government expenditure now by borrowing - that's an inefficient accounting fiddle which burdens the future economy.

Greens want healthcare that aims not just to cure but also to prevent illness, and local services that are part of our communities in our cities, towns and villages. Greens want many more services to be free at the point of use, including prescriptions, eye tests and dental treatment. Our ability to do this will depend on the state of the economy, government priorities and administrative efficiency.

5 HOME AND COMMUNITY

Our environment defines us. It's not just our glorious countryside; it's our landmarks, our streets, our housing estates and our towns. Greens have always been in the forefront of the struggle to protect and improve the world we live in.

Human dimension.

Making progress towards a better environment requires putting a human dimension back into development. It means designing homes and neighbourhoods with character and for our needs, revitalising old buildings, reusing wasteland and not destroying green fields. It means stopping motorways and urban sprawl from disfiguring hills and forests and using up good agricultural land.

Housing.

No one should be without a home in the 21st Century and action needs to be taken to address the housing shortage, land speculation and the burgeoning buy to let sector. But it is not just about having a roof over one's head it is about quality of accommodation. The Green Party was a major player in drafting and pushing for the Home Energy Conservation Bill- aimed at giving everybody a properly-heated energy efficient and environmentally benign home. This was proposed legislation was scuppered by Blair's Labour government.

Vibrant Communities.

Greens want vibrant and real communities with local services, Schools, Post Offices and Health Centres accessible and used by all.

Recycling & Reuse.

We want to make better use of the things we'd throw away, and invest in re-using and recycling materials, not pointlessly and harmfully incinerating them. It's the Government's job to make recycling not a chore but easy and second-nature.

Tetra Masts

British Green MEPs have fought for tighter rules on mobile phone masts, with Euro-MP Dr Caroline Lucas pushing for a moratorium on untested Tetra masts.

6. DEVELOPING DEMOCRACY

Citizen Empowerment

Developing democracy demands strong citizen empowerment. This means that at the forefront of our Green Vision we must have the full protection of Citizen Rights, Human Rights, Women's Rights and Minority Rights. Minorities should be integrated, but their diversity and cultural rights must be respected. With those rights come responsibilities and through those responsibilities to each other we secure our own rights. We Greens will work for a more Participatory Democracy involving Civil Society. With respect to European justice and police cooperation: we Greens demand more civil right guarantees. We will take all possible initiatives to ensure that the Charter of Fundamental Rights is fully applied.

Tolerance

Enlargement countries have to respect fully the need to have stable political institutions that guarantee democracy, justice and human rights. In our vision of a tolerant and open Europe there is no room for the intolerance of extreme right wing forces and undemocratic nationalistic or violent religious movements. All citizens - independent of gender, colour, disabilities, sexual orientation, religion, language, origin or culture - must have equal civil and political rights. Non-EU citizens established legally in the Union should have the right to become European citizens after not more than five years. Long-standing immigrants without legal status must have the opportunity to regularise their situation. We welcome those who wish to live and work in Europe for they are not a burden but an asset.

Legal safe guards

The EU has an important role to play in combating cross-border crime. However, increasing justice and police cooperation should not be at the expense of civil rights. The introduction of the European arrest warrant has bypassed the safeguards built into extradition procedures. Whilst the Greens welcome measures that enable more effective policing they also demand guarantees of fair trials.

To sum up: for us Greens, democratisation of Europe means more solidarity amongst people; more transparency; more accountability and democratic control of the European Parliament. It means increased subsidiary, with decentralized powers given to regions and cities; more participatory democracy - including through referenda.

Finally, fair and equal access to and by the Media is an essential part of our democratic process.

By the People, For the People

Should government be about maintaining a framework that protects human rights of its citizens and their environment? Or should government be about allowing big business to become bigger?

We believe in people taking control of their own lives. But that doesn't mean that the State has no role to play. What is the function of Government if not to regulate the economy in favour of the majority and of the long-term interests of the world we live in?

Real Progress is the further devolution of power to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and to the English regions. Greens believe in government being as local and participative as practically possible.

We believe in Europe. We want a Europe;

- where decisions are made by elected parliamentarians and not behind closed doors.
- where there is transparency and accountability.
- that believes local people know and understand their local communities and are best placed to make decisions that affect their daily lives.
- which is culturally, ethnically and economically diverse, where rights are protected for all, and discrimination, poverty and inequalities are consigned to history.
- which protects workers, public services and minorities.
- that fosters and encourages local business and enterprise.
-

We want a commonsense Europe that works for the interests of all. Progress means equal treatment for all people regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability or religious (non) belief.

The Green Party works for a significant reduction in immigration control and the protection of the rights of migrant workers regardless of their 'economic value'. These people are here to work and we believe that we must ensure decent minimum standards are set so migrant's human rights are properly protected, but above all we must address global inequalities so people are not compelled to migrate because of economic hardship.

We must also remember those forced to flee their countries due to oppression. Refugees are made not born, and they are human beings just like us – parents, husbands, wives, sisters, brothers, and children. They deserve to be treated with the dignity and respect we owe to every human individual.

7. STRENGTHENING THE PEACE POLICY

Security is for all.

At its very basic level security is about the individual and on one hand how secure each person feels and the need for us all to treat our neighbours with consideration and respect.. Greens believe everyone has a right to feel secure in their own homes and neighbourhoods irrespective of age or belief. We fervently support the need for a police force that is acceptable to all sections of this community. Such support is needed to effectively counter the criminal gangs that terrorise many of our community. Effective policing is about community support, community involvement and about the community looking after the vulnerable, the weak and the isolated. Greens support community watch schemes and believe that getting the sense of community back into where we live is essential.

Arms Trade.

Greens believe that Europe should undertake conflict prevention and not launch pre-emptive strikes. The Greens in Europe are in favour of multilateralism and disarmament. We are opposed to weapons of mass destruction and want to free our continent from their menace. We work to prevent further production and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Weapons exports should be submitted to a strong and binding scrutiny. The Greens want to stop trafficking in small arms as well as production and use of landmines. We strongly believe that Europe must always act in the spirit of peace. The Greens point out that the existence of neutral countries within the EU should be highly valued by the Union itself.

European Peace Corps.

The Greens will help to build a Europe that has international solidarity and cooperation as its priorities. Therefore Greens are working in favour of an autonomous and cohesive European foreign policy that actively defends human rights and democratic, social and ecological values. We Greens will encourage the formation of a European Peace Corps that should be involved in conflict prevention under the direction of the United Nations. This also means giving solid economic support to developing countries in order to achieve a better economic balance amongst the countries in the world.

Post-conflict restoration & democratic structures.

The priorities which we Greens insist upon are that peace policy should be centred on mediation, diplomacy and early conflict resolution, cultural appreciation, fair trade and fair control of energy resources as well as post-conflict restoration.

In particular, in the two divided islands of Cyprus and Ireland, we ask for political institutions and voting procedures which are not based on designations: Unionist and Nationalist, Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot. Furthermore, we ask for more open, i.e., multi-option polls, instead of the closed questions which invariably end with vetoes: Ulster says 'no', (Gibraltar says 'no'), and now Cyprus says 'no'. Instead, governance should be based on all-party power-sharing coalitions; parliaments should be elected by proportional and preferential electoral systems; and all constitutional plebiscites should be based on a multi-option vote by which may be identified the collective highest average preference.

The EU should also argue for similar democratic structures in those countries which will be seeking entry into the EU in the near future but which are not yet eligible because of their own internal conflicts: Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia in the Balkans, Moldova, and the three countries in the Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Peace, Justice and Security

We all want our children and grandchildren to grow up in a fair and peaceful world. After September the 11th the threat of terrorism hasn't receded. Poverty and oppression still fuel conflict and nurture extremism. The people of Iraq, Afghanistan, Israel and Palestine still long for real peace. As we know in Northern Ireland real peace does not come through the barrel of a gun.

Sympathy for the United States has been replaced with feelings of anger and injustice across the Muslim world, while in Britain our freedoms have been eroded. Meanwhile conflicts like that in central Africa continue to claim millions of lives are ignored.

Progress is not the inequality that comes from half the world living on less than £1.70 a day. Progress is not the heads of 471 multinational companies having more wealth than half the world put together. At home, our commitment to human rights must extend to welcoming those who are forced to flee their own countries, and building a world where they don't have to.

Lasting peace must be built on firm foundations. That means renewing our commitment to a radically reformed and revitalised United Nations, to international law, to justice and human rights.

Green Party MEPs Dr Caroline Lucas and Patricia McKenna have spoken of their experiences in Iraq and Palestine at rallies across the UK. Euro-MP Jean Lambert has campaigned against the tabloid media distortions of asylum seekers. Dr Lucas is pushing the EU Commission to review world trade rules in favour of developing countries.

The United Nations.

Finally, as Greens we believe that the UN is the best institution to deal with global threats, whilst promoting a joint European Policy, we maintain that European international actions should be under the control of the United Nations.

8. PROMOTING GRASS ROOTS GLOBALISATION

For us Greens, the EU must play an important role in reforming and regulating the presently unfair system of globalisation. The EU has the weight in international bodies (World Bank, IMF, etc.) to bring about change. Europe must be at the forefront in the fight for shaping the reform of the current system.

Tobin Tax.

A Tobin-type tax must be introduced. We Greens insist that ecological and social criteria must be taken into account in trade issues. We must therefore re-regulate the world economy in order to make it more sustainable - there must be more democratic control of the economy.

Fair Trade not just Free Trade.

In matters pertaining to world trade, we Greens believe in corporate responsibility - with strong and binding rules for corporations. In transnational governance, Europe must have a strong role in North- South aid and development cooperation. The rules of free trade must take into account the necessity to protect the quality of food and the living conditions and income of small farmers here and abroad.

Local business, film production & broadcasting.

We Greens believe that there should be more consideration of and participation by regional and local economies. We need to protect, support and nurture smaller and local businesses whose rights must be equal to those of global corporations. We will also work to maintain cultural diversity, for instance, by allowing incentives to local public broadcasting, or the film industry.

Ecological & Social criteria.

The Greens insist that ecological and social criteria must be taken into account in world trade talks. The trade policies adopted by the European Union have often had negative consequences for the poorest countries in the world. The worldwide protests against these sort of policies are part of the global movement which is saying that there is a better way for us to use and share the planet's resources.

The Greens are also deeply concerned by the over reliance on market forces. This is evident in the EU's competition policy, its monetary policy, and in the fiscal discipline that goes with the Stability and Growth Pact as large business institutions continue to dictate policy. Far from protecting the European Social Model from the worst forms of globalisation, the EU is undermining this through economic deregulation; and the narrowing and reduction of the tax base, resulting in poor public services.

9. GREEN ACHIEVEMENTS

Throughout the last 20 years the Greens in the European Parliament have helped to produce a significant political and cultural shift. Before the forthcoming European elections, the members of the European Federation of Green Parties have decided to build a European Green Party with strong common goals.

We want to Green Europe
Europe can do better - You have the power to
decide!

v o t e:

LINDSAY
WHITCROFT

No. 1

on June 10th 2004