

## Election Questions

The following questions were posed to Reigate & Banstead Candidates from J&P:

Ahead of the next election, we would like to find out more about your views on the key issues. As people of faith, we believe that the next government should urgently address domestic poverty as well as play a key role in tackling global poverty, climate change and the growing debt crisis faced by low-income countries.

As part of CAFOD's and St Vincent de Paul Society's A Year of Encounter initiative, our group is reaching out to our local candidates asking them what they will do on the issues that matter to us if they win at the next election. Specifically, we would like to know your views on the following topics:

Climate change – how will you work to ensure that the UK finally ends all new oil, coal and gas projects within the coming parliamentary term?

Overseas and International Development – will you, if elected, work to restore the aid budget to 0.7% of national income as agreed in the International Development Act?

Regional Inequalities - what will you do to address regional inequalities and help improve social and economic outcomes for left-behind areas of the UK?

### Responses:

**Conservatives** - Thank you for your email. Please rest assured that I will respond to you as soon as I can. Due to the high of emails, any questions requiring a more detailed answer can take a little longer so please bear with me.

**Greens** - Thank you for your email and I apologise for the slow response. These are big questions, so the following is just a summary of what I would seek to do on these three topics.

Climate change

The UK's current climate targets do not reflect the urgency of the climate crisis or what is required by global justice. Green MPs will push the government to transition to a zero-carbon society as soon as possible, and not wait till 2050.

Greening our economy will mean cleaner, cheaper energy and millions of rewarding and well-paid jobs. But we can't get there while we are also subsidising the very sectors that are causing the climate and ecological emergencies, such as fossil fuels, new roads and expanding airports. I am an active campaigner against Gatwick Airport's plans to expand, and I celebrated last week when my former Green Council colleague in Redhill, Sarah Finch, won a big case in the Supreme Court that will make it harder to build new oil and gas wells and coal mines.

The Green Party is committed to investing in a green economic transformation. We estimate that this will require an average investment of £40bn per year over the course of the parliament.

Elected Greens will push the UK government to partner with universities, other research institutions and business to assess the most economically and environmentally significant areas for research and development. International collaboration and supporting the research efforts of the Global South will be important aspects of international solidarity.

As the climate crisis worsens and the impacts on people in marginalised communities become more severe, more people may be forced to leave their homes. Our proposed significant increase to the overseas aid budget, as well as our policy of supporting lower-income countries to deal with the climate crisis, are vital to ensure people can stay in their home communities, but we will also ensure that those who are forced to leave can do so safely and with dignity, without fear or intimidation.

## Cost-of-living crisis

Green MPs will fight for an economy that delivers security, wellbeing and a better quality of life for everyone, as well protecting our environment and enabling us to tackle the climate crisis with the ambition and speed it demands. To tackle the cost-of-living crisis for the poorest in our society and make the social security system fairer and less punitive, elected Greens will campaign to:

- Increase Universal Credit and legacy benefits by £40 a week.
- Abolish the two-child benefit cap, lifting 250,000 children out of poverty.
- End the 'bedroom tax'.
- In the long term, introduce a universal basic income to give everybody the security to start a business, study, train and live their life in dignity.

## Aid budget

Green MPs would push for the UK to:

- Increase international aid to 1% of gross national income (GNI) by 2033.
- Increase climate finance for the Global South to 1.5% of GNI by 2033, with an additional contribution to a newly established Loss and Damage Fund.

Thank you again for writing to me on these important issues.

**Labour** - Many thanks for your email.

I have much admiration for Pope Francis.

Thanks for setting out the priorities for CAFOD.

I have worked on both international development issues and on climate change issues both professionally and through my charity and voluntary work.

For example in the European Parliament I worked on a 1 billion Euro aid package for developing countries to help them access international markets.

I set up a charity in 2008 with a friend in The Gambia West Africa in order to provide educational support to children in rural areas.

On climate change, I have worked in the context of global climate talks on low carbon technology.

The last Labour Government did an excellent job of setting the 0.7% commitment on international development. Gordon Brown worked hard on matters such as debt forgiveness and the Millennium Development Goals. I want to be part of a Labour Government that builds on this legacy.

Lastly on Gaza, Labour is committing to a campaign for an immediate ceasefire and will recognise Palestinian statehood.

I am committed to action in the areas that you set out below. Thanks for sharing them with me.

