

# **A Green New Deal for Greater Manchester? Notes from a Steady State Manchester Workshop, 16 December, 2019.**

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## **Notes from four provocations.**

### **1) Labour for a Green New Deal.**

There was no speaker available from the GM Labour GND group so Mark Burton gave a summary of the proposal, drawing on the [national Labour GND website](#). *“Labour for a Green New Deal envisions a prosperous, socialist, zero-carbon society as the alternative to our current world ridden with political, economic and ecological crises. A Green New Deal will transform the economy through unprecedented investment in technology, infrastructure and people. ....An unequal and oppressive economic system has destabilised our climate, leaving working-class people in the UK and across the globe suffering the devastating impacts of climate breakdown. ....Together, we will build local groups across the country, put on participatory events, co-create local plans and support workers in struggle. We need a thousand Green New Deals across the country, and the labour movement can build them.”*

Labour for a GND makes proposals under nine broad headings which go beyond official Labour party thinking in several areas (e.g. constraining aviation): 1) [A commitment to zero carbon emissions by](#)

[2030](#), 2) [Rapidly phasing out all fossil fuels](#), 3) [Large-scale investment in renewables](#), 4) [A just transition to well-paid, unionised green jobs](#), 5) [Expanding public, democratic ownership](#), 6) [Green public, integrated transport](#), 7) [Supporting developing countries' climate transitions](#), 8) [Assuring everyone's basic rights through the provision of universal services](#), 9) [Welcoming climate refugees and preventing displacement](#). There was not time to explore these (and there is a lot of information available) and we did not have the benefit of a perspective from the local group.

## **2) Green Party proposed Green New Deal for the North West.**

Laurence Adams spoke on [this policy paper](#) from the office of the Green Party MEP Gina Dowding. It identifies opportunities and challenges in five areas: Energy, Industry, Buildings, Land And Food, and Transport. Laurence contrasted this with the official European Union Green Deal, which is “a new growth strategy” while the GP GND for the NW makes no mention of economic growth. The paper recognises the scale of the challenge: Laurence cited £40k per house for deep insulation retrofit, for example, and noted our role in the global economy, so it is illegitimate to pretend that emissions here can be offset elsewhere. As for the Labour GND, the notion of a Just Transition is important, with nobody left behind. For this to happen there needs to be alternative industrial investments. Going together with the deal is the need to localise democracy and rethink the way success is measured, getting away from the dominance of GVA, for example.

## **3) Work on Green Deals by CLES**

Jonty Liebowitz, from the Manchester-based Centre for Local Economic Strategies spoke next. He noted the decade of work from CLES on what they call Community Wealth Building<sup>1</sup>. The key problem with the current economy is what CLES call “wealth extraction” from the local economy so the aim is to replace this with generative wealth, keeping it in the local economy, recirculating it and sharing it. There is an inherent linkage between the problems of economy and environment. Progressive local government leasers are approaching CLES saying “we are in a climate emergency, what do we do?”. Devolved administrations are likely to radically misunderstand what taking on a climate approach to the local economy will mean. For example, Manchester’s model of inward investment is at loggerheads with what it needs to do on climate, and indeed with its good work on local procurement. So what can be actually done? What’s the operative space, the room for manoeuvre? An example is the opportunities offered by the Bus Act. But what also are the “known undoables”, those aspects requiring action at a different governmental scale. CLES’s [manifesto for the local economy](#) sketches out some of these key issues.

## **4) Green new Deal, a sceptical view.**

Mark Burton gave a radical degrowth perspective on the Green New Deal idea. This was a summary version of his [recent talk to the Future Economies](#) launch event at Manchester Metropolitan University.

He noted that the GND idea is not always well defined with multiple versions proliferating. It is almost like the ink blot test where people project their own preferred concepts onto the label. However, it is possible to identify two broad versions: 1) a core Keynesian version based on

1 For a Steady State Manchester commentary on CWB see <https://steadystatemanchester.net/2017/11/12/community-wealth-building-resources-for-a-new-dawn-or-for-a-better-collapse/>

investment in renewables, insulation and other cleaner technologies, to expand demand and restore prosperity while decarbonising the economy. 2) a peripheral set of ideas about where and how that investment will address a host of environmental and social ills. He contended that all versions have that Keynesian approach at their core and that therein lies the challenge.

On the input side of the economy there are two problems, the impact of the required mineral extraction for all that new technology on the locations where they are sought – lithium, copper, cobalt, aluminium, petrochemicals for plastic, manufacturing and transport, even sand and water. This is devastating for communities, particularly in the global South. Secondly, there is impending scarcity for many of these resources, for example rare earth for generator magnets, heavy metals for batteries and copper for windings and transmission. Costs increase rapidly as reserves are depleted, causing economic destabilisation too.

On the output side, the problem is the unselective consequences of the Keynesian multiplier, money in the pockets of the better paid workers. This can go into increased “dirty” economic activity, leading to increased emissions and pollution, an inevitable consequence of growth.

Finally, all financing models require a return from the productive economy eventually. That too means GDP growth and ecosystem destruction. Unless that is, that the multiplier can be made to solely benefit sectors such as the social economy, agroecology and biosphere restoration, but then where is the return on investment in a still largely capitalist economy?

## **Discussion**

Following provocations participants worked in groups to first discuss key Ideas arising from the talks, and then the implications of Green New deals for Housing, Transportation and Organisations and work and challenges for Greater Manchester in implementing a Green New deal. In each discussion the process was “think, write ideas on post-its, then discuss”.

## **Key Ideas arising from the provocations**

### *Crisis and the need for transition*

We are in crisis – speed needed  
Necessity for rapid change vs non-debt based finance  
Sense of time/development/transition  
Labour’s deal – why didn’t it work in the General election?  
What about science?

### *Questioning Growth*

Is it OK to have GREEN growth?  
GROWTH – is it necessary?  
Economic theory dealing with growth  
    Green space  
    Decommodification?  
    Land  
Is degrowth realistic?  
‘Rethinking success’- appeals to the older ‘traditional’ generation

## *Behaviour changes needed*

Changing people's behaviours

Without a clear definition of how to reduce, risk of the idea being hijacked

How to sell the level of change being proposed?

Are enough people bothered enough?

Politics – change scares people

## *Energy issues*

Impending failure of Robin Hood energy

Are we wasting time and resources with renewable energy

Energy4All

A market for cash for renewable energy

Using minerals

## *Alternative futures*

Need to identify alternatives to current situation

Free public services

Post-industrial communities in the North (of UK)

Renewal of manufacturing

Creative local economy

Public works for ecosystem restoration

Education for young (and old) people of different models to organise

Co-ops etc.

Carbon credits?

Borrowing and paying back

Productivity/increasing work vs less work, more play

(UBI, 4 day week, lower tax on leisure)

Why local democracy? Why not Co-ops?

## *Level of change*

Importance of understanding the national-local boundaries

Local/community action and Centralised action

Local or global?

The allocation of responsibility between local and national has to be debated in citizen's assemblies

Conceptualising the relationship with the global South

How to get resource transfer from the South to the North (within UK)

Encourage Local Government to go to the limit within a restrictive national government to combat the climate crisis

## *Social Justice*

GND needs to cut across potential parties if it is ever going to get anywhere

Social Justice

Just transition for workers

Gender issues?

## *A way forward*

Some sceptics may think of dark interests behind proposals

HOPE

## **Housing**

### *Co and community housing*

Increasing occupancy needed: there is no shortage  
How? Shared housing models and offer?  
Council tax rebate?  
Compulsory Purchase Orders for properties not brought into use  
Co-and community ownership linked with green  
Communal spaces  
Preston Model – local procurement  
Community Land Trusts in every area  
Understand and push for changes in National Planning Framework

### *Retrofit*

Education, training, awareness, energy saving  
Making retrofit an 'attractive proposition – not just saving (see carbon Co-op)  
Do NOT focus on reducing bills  
Community drive refurb  
Who to pay for retro fitting in old houses  
Paying for retrofit stays with the property not the occupier  
Lots of retrofit is cheap  
Develop a local financing model for street by street retrofit  
And for boiler replacement. Pilot scheme?  
Raise energy performance standard

### **New Build**

Increase (build) council housing  
Need model estates if new build  
Use wood and other organic materials – they are carbon sinks  
Prefabricated?  
Linked up thinking: new housing – infrastructure, schools, shops, doctors  
New housing – increased resources, energy, pollution  
Zero carbon!  
Homes for life standards

### *Housing Justice*

Rent control – creating neighbourhoods  
Cost of housing for the people  
Rent caps  
Homelessness – Housing First  
Decrease cost of housing with transport

## **Transportation**

### *Priorities*

Reduce need to travel  
Road use hierarchy in planning  
1 Cycling and walking; 2 public transport; 3 shared travel; 4 private road travel  
Bike, cycling and walking  
Understand who has which planning powers/budgets?

No vehicle spaces for new build housing  
Need a change of provisioning model away from large volumes and road/HGV dominance  
Northern moratorium on airport expansion – Manchester, Liverpool. Leeds, Bradford

### *Design of space*

Clean air zone  
Congestion zones  
Reduce the need to travel  
    eg 20 minute neighbourhoods  
Local work – no cars needed  
20 mph limits everywhere  
No parking zones around schools (eg Hackney)

### *Public transport*

Integrated public transport  
Devolution means public transport can be owned by GMCA  
Update the bus fleet  
More extensive bus services and growth in community transport  
Re-regulation of buses  
Buses routed to green amenities  
Free bus travel

### *Shared travel*

Collective taxis  
Car sharing

### *Private vehicles*

Limit the cc of motor vehicles – so SUVs allowed  
No more fossil fuel vehicles  
Workplace parking levy (as in Nottingham)  
    If we get bus re-regulation there's an incentive for this

## **Organisations (and work)**

### *Ingenuity*

Lack of vision  
Unions not very adventurous  
People need work short term – can this work with degrowth ideas?  
Lack of innovative propositions  
More co-operation and co-operatives  
Invisible supply chains  
Move businesses from Manchester to the outlying towns  
Transparency  
Public sector move to the Preston Model

### *Values*

How to motivate!  
Bottom line

Loss of profit  
Short term thinking  
National and global competition  
Organisations need motivation to adjust practices  
    Particularly countering short term share holder priorities  
Means of distributing capital  
Energy efficient businesses  
Green support for small businesses (SMEs)  
Identify the big emitters industries and prioritise transition plans with them  
Local work - reduce the need to travel

### *Employee skills, education and training*

Create serious capacity to lead, coordinate and drive green transformation  
People want growth – no growth is a new concept  
Employee attitudes and lack of knowledge  
Workforce not yet educated in new green technologies  
Build understanding into training  
Education on green skills  
Skills and training  
    Construction/retrofit; hydrogen; sectors of the future  
Get young people to design jobs  
Subsidise year season public transport ticket

### *Innovation*

Work-life balance  
Reduced working week – 4 days  
Green party: Universal basic income; 4 day week; lower tax on leisure activities  
    Pilot pathfinder schemes  
Gender issues (and care)  
Divest all fossil fuel holdings with a programme of clean and local re-investment

## **Priorities for getting a 15% year on year reduction in carbon emissions in Greater Manchester**

### *Public sector redesign*

Preston model now  
Behaviour change  
Work on public attitudes  
Carbon sinks  
Planting millions of trees

### *Energy*

Decrease energy consumption  
Decentralised energy production eg solar, wind  
Energy: renewable; retrofitting houses; insulation  
Mass retrofit – street by street. Needs a national programme  
Gas boiler replacement  
Fuel poor first

Launch a 1 degree challenge. All householders challenged to turn down their room thermostats to 18.5° C. but also guarantee this level of warmth so nobody loses.

### *Spaces*

Pedestrianise Deansgate

Add private cars to the clean air zone and introduce a congestion charge

Provide plenty of recharging points for electric cars

### *Public transport*

Full integrated, attractive, subsidised public transport for all

Interest free 85% loan for public transport season tickets

Free public transport

More attractive public/shared transport

### *Airport*

NO airport expansion

Departure tax at airport to fund a pilot boiler replacement scheme

### *Capacity building*

Establish support team for Councils to develop (and act on) climate emergency plans