

HEALTHY NEIGHBOURHOODS

LABOUR
FOR A
GREEN
NEW DEAL



Demand 3: Healthy Neighbourhoods

Coronavirus and the subsequent lockdown have unveiled how the design of our neighbourhoods is incompatible with healthy, sustainable living, from a deficit of green space to poor air quality. Around the world, many local and national authorities are taking the opportunity to reimagine space, from housing conditions, to environmental standards, to nature access. With just 9% of people wanting to go back to 'normal', we must transform our living spaces to be cleaner, greener and healthier.

The Government has failed to deliver effective policy at this level, as evinced by the recent [Environment Bill](#). Now is the time for real change. We need green transport and green spaces for the many.

1. Green Municipalities

The Environment Bill currently contains little reference to the role of local government in reaching net-zero by 2030, despite numerous commitments from local authorities - nearly 70% declared a climate emergency in 2019. A recent Centre for Cities [paper](#) similarly attributed lack of change at local level to a lack of funding and support. As a result, Labour should call for:

- *Creation of a Zero-Carbon Cities Fund* over a ten-year period to fund public and private initiatives for zero-carbon solutions.
- *Creation of a Green Energy Fund* over a ten-year period for local government to invest in innovative programmes, addressing waste-to-energy, recycling and local-energy solutions.

- *Review of existing public body funding with a view to re-allocate towards green infrastructure and transport.-*
- *The introduction of climate-risk pricing and a clean air duty for all public bodies from 2020, with an established cost of CO2 and pollution.*

2. Green Cities & Clean Air

Air pollution is the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK. It is responsible for an estimated [40,000 deaths](#) each year and has been [shown](#) to lead to an increase in Covid-19 deaths. There is a risk that this will increase if public transport usage declines long-term as a result of coronavirus. As a result national policy should advocate for:

- *Provision to expand Clean Air Zones (CAZ) in polluted areas of every UK city. Just two CAZs have been put in place in London and Glasgow despite evidence of the beneficial [impact on NO2 emissions](#).*
- *Triple the size of the Clean Air Fund, as advocated by the [Centre for Cities](#). Currently it stands at only £220 million for the period 2018/19 to 2020/21.*
- *Work with local authorities to create [low traffic areas](#), targeting areas around schools and areas with poorest air quality.*
- *Expansion of employee cycle to work-scheme through interest-free loans to employers to partfund bike purchase.*
- *Creation of a [‘Healthy Air Plan’](#) that adopts WHO’s stricter guidelines, establishes clear objectives and sets measurement reporting and [legally binding targets](#).*
- *Respiratory testing in all UK schools and workplaces.*
- *Introduce a legal right to green space for every community.*

3. Housing

Housing is a major source of carbon emissions in the UK and zero carbon housing offers huge potential benefits in terms of reduced energy bills, increased employment, reducing fuel poverty, and improved quality of life. Lockdown has led to higher utility bills for many households, and while private landlords have been offered mortgage holidays, private tenants continue to pay exorbitant rents at the same time as having their hours and salaries cut. The unfair status-quo is in need of urgent addressing. Labour must commit to:

- Take up the 2019 manifesto's Warm Homes for All [programme](#) to retrofit the UK's entire housing stock by 2030, cutting emissions, lowering bills and near-eradicating fuel poverty.
- Continue to require local authorities to provide accommodation for the homeless
- Cancel all rent debt and immediately abolish Section 21
- Provide grants for low income houses to switch to electric heat pumps.

4. New Universal Rights

Lockdown has exposed and exacerbated the vast inequalities in our home life, from internet connectivity to free school meals. Now is the time for Labour to push for public ownership of key industries in order to secure new universal rights, including:

- [Digital connectivity as a human right](#), with free, full-fibre **broadband** rolled out across the UK by 2030 via public ownership of OpenReach and parts of BT,.
- Restate Labour's commitment to public ownership of **water** to ensure it is a right, not a commodity, cutting water bills and spillages.

- Push for the **energy** policies in the 2019 manifesto, utilising the [power of public ownership](#) to decarbonise our energy network and provide low-carbon, affordable energy to the whole country.