

A New Economy – A Green Economy

A Green Economy Creates Jobs

Good afternoon everyone, thank you for taking time out to come here today and for all the support that you have given me so far. You have shown by your attendance that you care about the decisions which affect all our lives; that you are not going to sit back and watch while those who led us into these difficult times refuse to admit their mistakes, and that you share the Green vision for a new way forward. With the electorate now ready for change and the European elections just six weeks away, never has the Green Party had a better opportunity to make its voice heard.

While other Northern Ireland political parties treat Europe as a political backwater, in which to dump their waste, we in the Green Party recognise its importance. Most of the legislation which affects our lives is initiated in the European Parliament. This is particularly true in the case of environmental policies, virtually all of which have been initiated in Europe.

So the good news is that it's not all up to Sammy.

The Green Party has 43 members in the European Parliament from 14 different countries, making it the fourth largest grouping. We have played a major role in the creation of legislation that has helped to protect our environment, set ambitious targets for renewable energy, increase social protection and protect biodiversity. I want to join that team and continue the great work that the Greens are doing in Europe.

It is inspiring to know that the message that I share with you this evening is being echoed right across Europe, from Belfast to Brussels, from Lisburn to Lisbon, from Derry to Dusseldorf.

Anyone who thinks that our current economic crisis is a temporary blip until 'normal service' is resumed in a couple of years profoundly misunderstands the severity and significance of what's happening to the global economy and its impacts on and for our regional economy in Northern Ireland.

It represents nothing short of a re-structuring of the global economy.

Above all else the current crises present us with a real opportunity for change. As the noble prize winning economist Joseph Stiglitz put it, 'Let's not let a good crisis go to waste'.

It has opened people's eyes to the fact that business as usual is no longer the most comfortable option. I want to seize that opportunity, as failure to do so will be a greater sin than leading us here in the first place.

Everyone knows the problems; the 'triple crunch' of job losses on a massive scale, fuel poverty, and of course climate change.

We have 3 crises but they require one solution.

A solution that will create tens of thousands of jobs here in Northern Ireland.

A solution where new Green technologies will bring energy security to Northern Ireland.

A solution that will ensure that Northern Ireland plays its part in the fight against climate change.

That solution is the Green New Deal and the election of Greens from local government, Assembly, Westminster to European levels of governance.

A Green New Deal can create a new Northern Ireland where our indigenous industries will thrive once more, harnessing our unique natural resources and the manufacturing skill and industrial entrepreneurialism of our people.

We can create jobs for thousands of electricians, construction workers, fitters, plumbers, engineers, project managers and sales and marketing staff. These skills are plentiful in Northern Ireland and they are jobs that cannot be outsourced.

A Green Industrial Revolution is on its way.

We can already see it happening at Harland and Wolff, once internationally renowned for its ship building, now employing 400 people to assemble wind turbines. We see the skills, developed during the Industrial Revolution being adapted to meet the challenges of this new era. In 2007 Harland & Wolff was again leading the way with development of the tidal turbine the SeaGen, the first of its kind, which has now been installed in Strangford Lough with two others having been exported to Canada.

This is only the beginning.

These new industries must be nurtured and expanded to provide new jobs to replace those that are currently being lost. The Carbon Trust estimates that over 33,000 jobs can be created across Northern Ireland in renewable energy alone. At a time of job losses this is welcome news, but only with political leadership from the Northern Ireland executive will this happen.

We have the best natural resources in Europe for renewable energy production. We should be providing the lead, instead we lag behind countries like Germany where they have created a quarter-of-a-million jobs in their renewables sector with three-quarter-of-a-million more predicted in the next 10-years.

I support calls for a European Super Grid that would bring energy security to Europe. This would allow us to be exporters of renewable energy, a major shift from our current over dependence of gas and oil imports. But there is a lot of work still to do. With a

similar geography Scotland currently generates 20% of its electricity from renewables while here in Northern Ireland it is a mere 4%. But we can and must do better.

I want to see us tap use our natural resources to bring energy independence to Northern Ireland and end the fluctuation in energy prices that has seen thousands driven into fuel poverty.

Energy efficiency measures such as the insulation of homes can create much needed jobs in the construction sector, as well as reducing energy bills, and reducing emissions.

We need Sustainable waste solutions based on the principal of reduce, reuse, and recycle. Be wary of those who talk green but support incineration which would lock us into 30 years of waste creation.

I am delighted to be joined today by the Irish Green Party Leader and Environment Minister John Gormley. They have already begun to put the Green New Deal into action. Minister Gormley is investing €500million in water and waste projects which will create 4,000 jobs, while his Green colleague Energy Minister Eamon Ryan is spending €50million on insulation schemes, creating a further 2,000 jobs as well as improving the living standards for thousands of families and reducing their heating costs.

The Green New Deal maintains the radicalism that has always been at the core of the Green Party but finds wider favour as the ideas are also based on peer reviewed science, are underpinned by sound economics and utilise cutting edge technology.

With President Obama being elected on the promise of a Green New Deal and 5 million 'green collar jobs' Green Party ideas have entered the mainstream; it is time for our party to do the same.

To do that I will need the help of all of you during this campaign. Many of you have helped me already with canvassing and media, logistics support, and I have benefitted from the vast knowledge of our members and supporters which is essential in a European election where there is a myriad of issues to be addressed.

We need to take our message to the doorsteps and speak to people on a one to one basis. It is no good having the right message if no one gets to hear it.

We should not allow ourselves to get too distracted by those who wish to debate climate change. After all 'Empty vessels make the most noise'. It is unfortunate that a debate about the causes of climate change has been reopened when we need to be taking action on the solutions. The science is in, the debate is over, now it is time to act.

We must sell our message with confidence knowing that we are in good company with our message being echoed by international figures such as Sir Nicholas Stern, Al Gore, the UN General Secretary Ban Ki-moon and Barack Obama. Historically Green Party ideology has not sat comfortably with the views of former World Bank economists or

leading US politicians. We must not fear this new era, but instead walk with pride in the knowledge that we have managed to bring such people along with us through the strength of our ideas.

There is one thing of which I am sure; the Green Party did not lead us into these crises but we can lead us out.

Thank you.