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General Election 2017: A cleaner, greener, healthier, fairer UK

Our environment can't wait. For too long action has been seen as something that will only benefit future generations or put off as a 'nice to have'. But the harm done by problems such as air pollution and run-away climate change is costing lives now.

The result of the EU referendum means the next government will have unprecedented choices to make about how to protect people's health, rejuvenate our wildlife and green spaces, and meet our international commitments to tackle climate change.

At this General Election we are calling on all the political parties to present manifestos which promise to ensure that our local, national and international environment gets better, year on year – with cleaner air, less carbon pollution, greater biodiversity.

We need them to promise they will not water down the laws and regulations – built up over the past 40 years - that have protected our green and pleasant land, and have had a fundamental impact on the health and wellbeing of the public. They must demonstrate global leadership on shared environmental problems, especially climate change – which is already bringing chaos to the lives of millions in the world's poorest countries and flooding misery here.

We hope that all parties share our vision of a UK at the forefront of a transition to a cleaner, greener, healthier, fairer, high-tech, resource-efficient economy - powered by clean energy.

General Election manifesto pledges the parties should make:

CLIMATE AND ENERGY

Extreme weather is causing havoc across the globe, including flooding in the UK. We must reform the energy market to give power to consumers and communities, encourage energy storage and decentralised energy, and move to a flexible, renewable-based system.

- **Urgently publish a plan to deliver our legally binding carbon budgets under the Climate Change Act.**
- **Produce a UK climate strategy to play our part in delivering the Paris Climate Agreement goal to keep global temperature rises below 1.5 degrees.**
- **Set a target for making all electricity generation carbon free by 2030, and shut all old coal plants by 2023.**
- **Ban hydraulic fracking and end coal extraction.**

NATURE LAWS AND BREXIT

EU laws have led to cleaner air, bathing water and improved protections for nature and biodiversity. We must then display leadership and ambition for the recovery of our natural environment.

- **Ensure that all of the existing EU environmental laws and principles are fully maintained in UK or devolved nation law, and can be properly enforced here.**

- **Commit that these standards will improve over time, and not be watered down, abandoned or reversed.**
- **Introduce a new law mandating that the quality of our natural environment improves over time, with legally enforceable targets so as to build progress we have already made.**

FOOD AND FARMING

70% of the land in the UK is used for farmingⁱ. How it is used has a fundamental impact on our lives and biodiversity. The UK is home to around 270 species of bee - essential to pollinate our crops, gardens and wildflowers. But they are in decline. Climate change, habitat loss and pesticide use all contribute. There is now overwhelming scientific evidence of the threat from neonicotinoid pesticides.

- **Introduce a new food and farming policy that protects and enhances the ecosystems that underpin food production, builds resilience to climate change and supports sustainable diets.**
- **Ensure subsidies for farming are only given for actions which improve the quality of the natural environment and deliver public goods.**
- **Support a permanent and comprehensive ban on these bee-harming chemicals, and ensure future pesticide regulations are science based, precautionary, independent and transparent.**

HEALTH

Air pollution is a public health crisis linked to 40,000 premature deaths every year in the UKⁱⁱ. We must protect our nations' lungs – especially those of our most vulnerable citizens.

- **End illegal levels of air pollution by 2018, phasing out diesel by 2025, and put the UK on a path to meet World Health Organisation air quality standards.**

WASTE

We must end the waste scandal. The UK wastes over 10 million tonnes of food each yearⁱⁱⁱ - £400 worth per household^{iv}. Meanwhile our seas are being contaminated with 46,000 pieces of plastic pollution every square mile^v. Action is needed at all stages of the supply chain from food retailers to citizens to curb this monumental waste of resources.

- **Put in place a binding target to halve food waste from farm to fork by 2030, require all coffee cups to be fully recyclable by 2018, and cut the amount of plastic waste entering rivers and seas by at least three-quarters by 2020.**

RIGHTS AND JUSTICE

We need to reinforce our democracy for the political challenges ahead. This means ensuring the public, civil society and charities have the rights and freedom to challenge decisions which might harm the environment, and speak out on issues that concern them. In addition threats to Freedom of Information and changes to the costs of legal challenges to environmental decisions all reduce the ability of the public and civil society to hold politicians to account. The UK must reduce its contribution to the factors that lead to people being becoming environmental refugees (such as climate change or land grabs).

- **Reform the Lobbying Act.**
- **The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland should commit to abolishing the special status of donors to Northern Ireland's political parties which means that Northern Ireland citizens are the only people in the UK or Ireland who cannot see the names of the individuals and organisations that give large sums of money to political parties.**
- **Financially support neighbouring countries who bear the greatest cost of environmental refugees in recognition of our past contribution to the factors that have forced people to leave their homes.**

- **As a compassionate and tolerant country we must welcome our fair share of environmental refugees in the future, and support the rights and protection of climate refugees in international law.**

Finally

Friends of the Earth is a politically impartial organisation. Our aim is to ensure all parties have the strongest possible policies to protect the environment promises. And that they can be held to account for them in future. We have sent the policies above to all the main political parties asking them to support them in their manifestos. When the party manifestos have been published and as they make commitments and promises during the General Election campaign we will be checking how the main UK-wide parties measure up against these policies and publishing the results.

ⁱ Defra, Agriculture in the United Kingdom 2015

ⁱⁱ Royal College of Physicians, Every Breath We Take, 2016

ⁱⁱⁱ WRAP, Estimates of Food Surplus and Waste Arisings in the UK, 2017

^{iv} WRAP, Household Food and Drink Waste in the United Kingdom 2012

^v United Nations Environment Programme, 2006, Ecosystems and Biodiversity in Deep Waters and High Seas