



SCRIPT: CLIMATE CHANGE ON THE DOORSTEP



This resource has been built from the wonderful work done by the Sheffield Labour for a Green New Deal, Greater Manchester Labour for a Green New Deal and Norwich Labour for a Green New Deal groups.

1. HOW TO START A CONVERSATION ABOUT CLIMATE

As a topic of conversation, climate change can often feel intimidating in its complexity and can end up being overly technical. What we are trying to do – particularly during canvassing sessions – is to engage people with issues that are already important to them and explain how they fit in to a Green New Deal framework. A great way to engage the public is to ask them questions to get them thinking and to make our conversations personal and meaningful.

OPENING QUESTIONS

Hello, I'm [forename surname], I'm a local activist from Labour for a Green New Deal calling on behalf of [MP/ PPC], Labour's candidate for [place name]. Do you have time to answer a few questions?

1. Have you experienced changes to the climate impacting your local area?
2. What changes would you like to see, either nationally or locally, that would deal with climate change?
3. Have you heard of Labour's plan for a Green Industrial Revolution?

Our local group in Greater Manchester spent the summer of 2019 testing out some canvassing techniques. Through the course of their conversations they picked up lots of useful tips...

"We felt that a lot of the conversation previously around the climate emergency has involved scaremongering and can be quite off-putting for a lot of people, whereas a positive message will resonate with the electorate"

By using a short questionnaire to open the conversation they found...

“people were very receptive to hearing more about our green policies, and the plans for a Green New Deal that will have a tangible positive effect on their quality of life.”

It's important to remember that these questions are not just a means to an end – actively listening to people's thoughts and concerns (and taking notes to share with your group later) is one of the most important parts of canvassing.

2. DIFFICULT QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

No matter how much you prepare or practice, conversations with voters on the doorstep won't always stick to the script. With the help of our local group in Sheffield we have gathered examples of difficult questions and some of the ways that you might respond.

Remember – you are not expected to know Labour's policies inside and out, nor are you expected to act like an official spokesperson for the Labour Party! You're there to be yourself, engage with people, listen to them, and explain why you are voting Labour. The more genuine, honest, and open you can be with people, the more engaging and persuasive conversations will be.

“Why should I vote Labour for climate justice, rather than the Greens?”

Rebuttal

- We respect the work the Greens have done in campaigning on specific issues. The reason I support Labour rather than the Greens is because they are the only party committed to action on the scale needed to address the crisis.
- Not only are Labour the only political party who can possibly form a government and want to tackle climate change, but their plans for a Green New Deal are the broadest, most comprehensive and most transformative approach to the crisis of any political party.
- For example, [*speak to specific parts of the Green New Deal you're most enthused by where we differ from Greens – i.e. investing in green public transport to*

disincentivise private vehicle ownership, rather than taxing motorists before creating capacity to transition]

- It's really good to input your own personal stories here – personal stories are the most convincing. It makes the conversation personable, rather than like someone has turned up to lecture someone!

“Brexit is more important than climate justice”

or

“You know Brexit will make it harder to deal with the climate, right?”

Rebuttal

- Whatever Brexit outcome we have, however, the Labour Party is committed to a climate change-led approach, with the greatest scope for climate justice.
- Brexit is important, especially because of how it will affect tackling climate change OR Brexit is important, but it's one only one aspect of policy. Have you heard about Labour's Green Industrial Revolution, which will invest in communities, provide cheap, well-connected public transport, and lower our emissions? In this area, that could look like ...

Labour's policy on Brexit has been focused on preventing a no-deal Brexit, which would be disastrous for climate – particularly because our government is made up of right-wing climate-deniers.

“How can I trust Labour on the environment, they support [something bad for the environment, e.g. a new runway at Heathrow]?”

Rebuttal

- The Labour Party has been moving in a new direction since 2015, and that transformation is still ongoing. That's why *Labour for a Green New Deal* was set up – we knew that Labour are the only party in the UK that can take action on the scale needed to ensure climate justice and real action on climate change
- The Labour Party has committed to decarbonise and democratise our economy by 2030, and invest in healthcare, education, public transport, energy, care, and create unionised, green jobs, because we see economic, social and climate justice as inseparable.
- We recognise that, as with every political party, there are parts of our manifesto that we don't support. But what *Labour for a Green New Deal* have shown is the

strength of our party's mass-membership. We've already managed to get Labour to commit to decarbonisation by 2030 – and adopt the most ambitious climate justice policies of any party in the developed world – and support efforts to transform our stance on [x]

"How can I trust Labour on the environment when they support more industrial projects / won't deindustrialise right now?"

Rebuttals

- The Labour Party's Green New Deal is a detailed plan that will transform the entire economy to tackle the climate crisis, whilst investing in people. This project is being guided by our Labour values; we know that our economy will need to move away from some industries – and have for example committed to rapidly phasing out fossil fuels – but this needs to be a **just transition**.
- The closing of coal mines and Thatcher's destruction of the mining industry has left entire communities devastated to this day. We won't phase out industries until we know that those jobs can be turned into renewable jobs, and we will support the reskilling of workers as and where necessary, because those workers should not be made to pay the price of change!
- Our Green New Deal will decarbonise our economy, provide and transformed and reliable public transport network, create capacity for the shift to renewable energies, and insulate hundreds of thousands of homes; and this will allow us to create over 400,000 new, green, well-paid, unionised jobs.

"Why should I care about climate change? How does this affect me?"

Rebuttals – making it material (examples: *pick one*)

Air quality

- Air pollution is a national scandal – there are between 40,000 to 50,000 UK deaths each year due to air pollution, with asthma deaths having risen by a quarter since the Tories came to power
- Investing in public transport and renewable energies is not only good for addressing the climate crisis, it will help stop preventable deaths right now

Green public integrated transport

- Labour have pledged to massively invest in public transport – not only are we going to bring the railways under public ownership, but we're going to invest in greener, local, frequent buses, determined by local need rather than profit

- This will help enable people to get around for less, helping the planet by reducing the need for private vehicle ownership without putting the burden on people who drive out of necessity

Insulating homes

- Badly insulated homes are not only a cause of energy wastage – causing houses to require more energy to heat up, and losing heat more quickly, but this is doubly affecting the poorest and most vulnerable
- Labour have pledged to retrofit and reinsulate homes, which will not only require less energy production, but also help end fuel poverty by cutting people's energy bills

New green jobs

- Labour have pledged to radically reshape our economy by implementing a green jobs revolution to create 400,000 new, green, well-paid unionised jobs all across the country
- We're going to invest in renewable energies – building 37 new offshore wind farms and investing the profits into the neighbouring coastal towns
- We're going to create new, well-paid jobs for all those that want them, and put an end to in-work poverty and precarious work

[Local Example] "Why should I trust Labour on the environment when they needlessly cut down Sheffield's trees?"

Brainstorm with your group to come up with challenging questions that might relate to Labour policy in your local area.

Rebuttals

- We agree that the PFI deal Sheffield City Council signed with Amey was not good – while some of the trees were diseased or dangerous and had to be treated, the way Amey went about communicating this to the public, and how it dealt with protesters, was abhorrent.
- Olivia Blake, our candidate in Sheffield Hallam, is a City Councillor and formerly Deputy Leader of the Council. In this capacity she and other Councillors worked with residents, protesters and Amey to put an immediate stop to needless fellings, and assuage the concerns of groups like STAG, and worked tirelessly to ensure that the tree issue was resolved.
- Further, as Deputy Leader she also worked to get the Council to adopt a policy to in-source wherever possible, and end PFIs, so that similar situations won't occur.

3. BRIDGING

It's easy for conversations to get derailed so it's important to have some arguments that can bridge the gap and bring conversations back to the Green New Deal.

Here are some key tips for bridging:

- Active listening
- Acknowledging 'I understand', or 'that does matter', 'I see what you're saying'
- Back into a local example
- Use personal anecdote to connect if it works

Examples:

- Make it personal, but not just personal: Try to steer away from personal responsibility like recycling, cycling to work and becoming vegetarian toward more policy based things that labour offers.
- Why the Tories are inadequate: £12 Billion a year (largest in Europe) of fossil fuel subsidies, axing the solar panel subsidies, selling off the Green investment bank and weak targets and methods to go net-zero carbon any time in the not too distant future. (talking about subsidies is very effective, also mention the just transition to invest in industry and jobs while phasing out carbon)
- Emphasise that, so far, we have addressed climate change as a symptom of a wider issue in society and you have to address these root causes to tackle the problem (link with austerity and how both austerity and climate destruction were imposed on us). E.g. Allowing energy and water bills to rise significantly in real terms due to them turning a blind eye to rising prices at our expense.
- Make it personal to an area (or profession or class): The more you can relate it to the local area and working people's daily lives eg: bills, jobs and transport the more response you'll get. Have to impress that it affects them now and it's a far future or far away concept but something they need to be addressing now.