

CHOOSE THE FUTURE



FOR A FAIRER, GREENER DARLINGTON





EMPLOYMENT

JOBS AND SKILLS TO IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY AND SHARE OUR WEALTH MORE FAIRLY

Over the last decade, wage growth has stagnated in the north east.

The opportunities of a Green council will see investment to rebalance industry, away from the carbon past and towards the renewable future.

New technologies, along with huge expansions in renewable energy, will **create thousands of new, good quality, well-paid, secure jobs** in the Borough, with training for these new jobs funded by regional and national government. This investment in training and skills will prioritise communities hit hard by economic changes over recent decades.

A circular economy will underpin this green industrial revolution, designing out waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use, and regenerating natural systems. **Recycling and repairing**

will be made easier for all, reducing the need to buy new, expensive products on a regular basis.

We recognise the opportunities offered by the relocation of government departments to Darlington. We will **seize the opportunity to attract other significant employers to the town.**

We will develop the links between Teesside University and the town, to **improve access to training and higher education** while acting as an incubator to the new technologies and employment of the future.

We will encourage the better sharing of wealth in the borough through Fair Tax accreditation, fairer pay ratios and promoting the benefits of the Real Living Wage.



HOUSING

DECENT HOUSING FOR ALL: ADDRESSING THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS AND MEETING OUR CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITMENTS

All new **council homes to be built to best in class standards** in a move that will save tenants year after year in heating bills and delivering homes that last. There will be savings for the Council: reduced rent arrears and lower void rates; and for decades to come expensive and disruptive retrofitting to meet new standards will be avoided.

Working with Tees Valley Councils, we will deliver a **refit programme for social housing that creates training opportunities** that lead to well paid jobs. We will also support and develop the supply chain for products and services that refit homes to a consistently excellent standard.

The Local Plan needs updating with Supplementary Planning Documents. This will ensure that all new houses will be **built to the highest standards, with the lowest utility bills** and ready for our zero-carbon future.

The private rental market provides a significant number of homes in Darlington. **We will begin the legislative process of introducing a landlord accreditation and registration scheme** to ensure that tenants can feel safe and secure in a well maintained home. The self-funded scheme will follow similar schemes that are in place in London and Wales.

GREEN SPACES

BUILDING ON A GREEN LEGACY BENEFITING FROM NATURE

We will ensure that planning decisions make space for nature, with **policies to restore habitats in urban, suburban and countryside settings**. We will encourage, through changes to the planning documents, the 'rewilding' of spaces to provide new habitats for wildlife. We will **restore, expand and join up green spaces** that nature needs to thrive.

We will ensure that all children receive the basic elements of a good childhood: **a decent place to live, safety and security in their community**, time and space to play, as well as opportunities to learn and develop inside and outside of school.

We will encourage urban food growing, including new community

farms and allotments, through the planning system, as well as matching those with gardens and who want to grow food with those with the skills to undertake the work for communal benefit. Similarly **we will encourage the creation of new green spaces wherever they can take root** – from pocket parks on vacant land, to living green roofs and walls. We will also encourage urban gardeners to plan for wildlife – opting for grass and shrubs over paving in a garden can create vital new habitats for wildlife.

We will **protect existing parks and green spaces through Deeds of Dedication**, and enhance them through working with the local community in forming "Friends of..." groups.



TRANSPORT

INVESTING IN OUR TRANSPORT NETWORK MAKING OUR ROADS SAFER AND CLEANER

Our transport system is built on fossil fuels. As well as destabilising our climate, this reliance traps us into stressful, unhealthy and expensive forms of travel. Car dependency contributes to congestion, road danger and air pollution whilst reducing physical activity.

We will **update our transport system by investing in alternatives that work better for the climate and for people.** This means more reliable and affordable, buses, and better options for cycling and walking. We will also enable the transition to electric vehicles through **a network of charging points.**

We'll meet government targets for active travel to make up 50% of in-town journeys, and a 16% reduction in car trips by 2035.

We will make travelling by bus cost the same as travelling by car by supporting local bus services and reducing the subsidies handed to car drivers. We will explore bus franchising, to ensure good service delivery.

Civilise our streets by making **Active Traffic Neighbourhoods** (in which through traffic is blocked) the norm for residential areas and **making 20mph the default speed limit** where people live, work or go to school. These changes would **reduce traffic, carbon emissions and danger to people walking and cycling.** They would restore our streets to all people. They would also form part of a wider commitment to the core principle of the Vision Zero campaign – that **there should be no fatalities or serious injuries as a result of road traffic collisions.**





DEMOCRACY

BETTER DECISIONS BASED ON CONSENSUS AND OPEN TO PUBLIC SCRUTINY

We **will improve decision making and transparency** by dropping the Leader and Cabinet model. The Cabinet model can allow a minority group to force through a raft of decisions that affect your day-to-day life without the necessary checks and balances.

We would introduce a Leader and Committee system where the need for **open discussion and consensus will lead to more long-term planning and greater stability.**

Balanced scrutiny committees will replace single portfolio holders.

Decisions will be based on consensus rather than winner-takes-all, with collective accountability of the council as a whole.

We will **further democratise our processes, including introducing more participatory democracy**, allowing residents to form panels and assemblies to directly input into council decision-making.

We will introduce participatory budgeting, to **enable local citizens to decide how to allocate part of the council budget**, through identifying, discussing and prioritising public spending projects, and having real power to decide how money is spent.



CLIMATE CHANGE

A TRANSITION TO A STABLE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY THAT LEAVES NO ONE BEHIND

We will **tackle the cost of living crisis, income inequality and cut greenhouse gas emissions** from the Borough of Darlington through a number of measures.

Domestic energy consumption will be cut by rolling out a program of housing retrofits.

Residents will be able to apply for **green loans to invest in solar and battery installations and low energy heating systems**, using the money they save from utility bills to pay off the loan.

We will improve recycling and waste management by **increasing recycling rates from businesses and households** by learning from the huge improvements made in Wales.

Ensuring any contract with the proposed incinerator at Grangetown

has no penalty for reducing the amount of waste Darlington sends to be burnt.

Phase out the use of glyphosate and other toxic herbicides and play our part in preserving our peat land by only using peat-free compost.

We will address water pollution and flooding by making the most of the co-benefits of natural flood prevention measures, such as 'slowing the flow'.

Restoring riverside habitats alongside public access by foot and bridle paths to encourage leisure activities, tourism and mitigation against flooding.

Liaising with our water authority and environmental bodies to strictly monitor the release of toxins and sewage into our rivers.



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