

. Does your party accept the need to leave 80% of the world's known fossil fuels reserves in the ground? How does this affect your policies?

*Unlike any other political party, the Green Party takes as the starting point for all its policy formation the need for a sustainable relationship between humanity and the planet. In this sense, every one of the party's policies feeds into the low-carbon objective. You will find our core values expressed at <http://policy.greenparty.org.uk/core-values.html>*

*The knowledge that 80% of currently recognised fossil fuel reserves have to stay in the ground has been the driver for the birth of the fossil fuel divestment movement. Green activists have been at the heart of that movement from the beginning.*

*The Green group of six city councillors in Oxford successfully brought a motion on fossil fuel divestment to City Council recently, as a result of which the City Council is committed to divestment. I am clear that divestment from fossil fuel extraction is now a moral issue and one to which we must devote a lot more energy than before – and at the same time we (the international community) need to work out mechanisms for 'turning off the tap' of fossil fuel extraction which are fair, effective and as fast as possible.*

*Since the present world order is dominated by global finance and corporate power, the prospect of 'stranded (fossil fuel) assets' (with the consequent impact on balance sheets) puts considerable power in the hands of the politicians who will determine the carbon ceiling. The Bank of England and large finance houses are already modelling the potential impact of a lower ceiling. It is my hope that the politicians will seize that opportunity in Paris in December, and were I there I would be pressing for at least a 20% ceiling.*

*However, committing to carbon reductions must be accompanied by robust actions now to enable our currently resource- and fossil fuel-hungry economy to adapt quickly enough. This is where the gulf between the Green Party and the grey parties of the centre opens up.*

*The economic thinking of the traditional parties, still wedded to the mantra of 'growth', has not caught up with the realities of the task ahead. Though I welcome it, I would have more confidence in the Cameron/Clegg/Miliband joint statement if I were convinced that they actually knew how to "accelerate the transition to a . . . low-carbon economy". The trillions of pounds that have been poured into subsidising fossil fuels and nuclear power in the UK (three times as much as is spent on subsidies to renewables) -- as well as propping up a corrupt and failed banking system, whilst leaving those at the bottom of the pile deeper in poverty and debt -- don't inspire us to believe that their hearts are where their mouths are. Neither do they seem to have appreciated the magnitude of investments needed in renewable energy, greener public transport, insulation of existing buildings, etc. -- which will also create about a million 'good' jobs.*

2. Does your party approve of fracking in England and do you support it in Oxfordshire?

*Absolutely not – not anywhere. Quite apart from the environmental impacts, even licences to explore reserves send the signal that government is not serious about conversion of the economy to renewable energy and reduction in energy use.*

3. Should Oxford West and Abingdon become a Zero Carbon Community by 2050? If so, what would be your top three policies to achieve this?

*I believe this is not only a necessary goal but potentially an achievable one, with one important qualifier: Oxfordshire, and this constituency in general, is predicted to experience considerable economic growth in the next two decades. There is likely to be much investment in new housing stock, new industrial, scientific and commercial buildings, and transport infrastructure. The embedded carbon emissions in all this construction is likely to 'run up a carbon deficit' that could not be 'paid off' before 2050. As an example of this : the new Westgate Centre is being constructed using reclaimed materials (including concrete) wherever possible, but the environmental consultants (Sturgis) estimate that the carbon embedded in the construction will be as much as the carbon emitted during the whole of its anticipated 60-year life span of running, including space heating. Therefore in the answers given below, I am assuming that the carbon embedded in construction appears on some other 'balance sheet', and that what we are talking about here is the operational carbon emissions.*

*To achieve zero operational carbon emissions will probably require enormous investment. In terms of priorities for achieving it, then in order of importance (in terms of carbon reduction) I would probably choose the following :*

- a. Space heating of old housing stock, commercial and public buildings is probably the biggest cause of fossil fuel burning in the city. It is a disappointment that even the new housing being built at Barton will not meet passive house standards, thereby working against that objective. Green councillors brought experts in this field together with senior city officers to promote zero-carbon standards on this development, without success. I would immediately press for building regulations to be raised to passive house standards for all new build – it would add about 10% to the build cost, I believe. Retro-fitting of insulation on old properties will generate thousands of new skilled and semi-skilled jobs locally. A major challenge would be that presented by our many wonderful historic (and listed) buildings, and they are the reason why I used the word 'potentially' above. However, the use of ground source underfloor heating and thorough draught exclusion might achieve significant results.*
- b. Generation of renewable energy needs a major step-up in investment. New technologies are increasing the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of solar PV, and it is likely that by 2030 the heavy and highly visible solar panels now familiar on our roofs will be regarded as prehistoric. Technology is not always the 'magic bullet' solution, and we know that the problem needs attacking from all directions at once, but I would see 'energy farming' as becoming a major industry.*
- c. Although Oxford boasts 16% of journeys to work made by bicycle, transport is still a major generator of air pollution quite apart from fossil fuel burn. The County's recent Transport Strategy does not give significant weight to the need for carbon reduction in its criteria, although in general the thrust is away from car use which is good. However, transport infrastructure is something that requires large-scale government and planning policy, and were I elected I would seek major investment in low-carbon public transport infrastructure.*

4. How would you significantly reduce carbon emissions from transport and personal travel in Oxford West and Abingdon?

*See above.*

5. Do you think your party should have policies to improve the energy efficiency of 500,000 homes of the fuel poor a year to Band C on the EPC scale? If not, what level of ambition should you have? What policies would you introduce to achieve this and how will they be funded?

*See above. I think the funding of retrospective insulation of older properties cannot be left entirely to property owners. Significant grant funding, combined with regulation and planning controls (or relaxations) will be required. Unless every property owner is both under the same obligation, but also able to finance the improvements, the target is unlikely ever to be met.*