## Introduction

Climate science has proven the link between the concentration of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere and how this causes increased global average temperatures. This warming is causing severe disruption to our climate, our water and food systems, eco-systems and biodiversity.

These changes affect all living things, everywhere. Urgent action to reduce greenhouse gases is required if we are to have a chance of limiting the rise in average global temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, a target agreed globally in 2015.

In Kirklees the target is to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2038. The Kirklees Climate Commission (KCC) is an independent, trusted organisation working for fair and inclusive local action on climate change. The Commission aims to enable the Kirklees area to reduce our carbon emissions and help residents and organisations to prepare for the economic, environmental and social impacts of climate change.

Climate change is an urgent, existential challenge for us all. The Members of Parliament from the Kirklees area have a responsibility to act locally, nationally and internationally to meet the challenge.

Kirklees Climate Commission thanks candidates for responding to our questions and providing an opportunity for local voters to hear their views and priorities on this vital issue.

Kirklees Climate Commission wrote to General Election 2024 candidates in Kirklees with four questions, requesting responses up to 200 words for each.

The questions and each candidates answers are below, listed in order of candidates surname.

## The questions and responses

### Housing and other buildings in Kirklees are responsible for 51% of carbon emissions. What will you and your party do to tackle this urgent problem in Kirklees and the UK more generally?

**Javed Bashir (Independent)**

*My proposed strategy to address this urgent issue is a comprehensive one, focusing on several key actions. Firstly, we will implement large-scale retrofitting programs. This will involve improving insulation, installing energy-efficient windows, and upgrading heating systems to low-carbon alternatives. These measures will significantly reduce energy consumption and emissions from existing buildings. Secondly, we will enforce strict energy efficiency standards for new buildings. This is crucial to ensure that all new constructions are zero-carbon by design. This will help prevent future emissions and promote sustainable development from the outset. Additionally, we will provide grants and subsidies for homeowners and businesses to adopt energy-saving measures. This is vital to encourage widespread participation in these initiatives.*

*Furthermore, I am a strong advocate for implementing Land Value Taxation (LVT) as a means to promote the efficient use of land. By taxing the unimproved value of land, LVT incentivises property owners to develop underused or derelict properties, sparking urban regeneration and reducing urban sprawl. This approach not only supports sustainable housing developments but also ensures they are energy-efficient and environmentally friendly. The evidence is clear-retrofitting existing buildings can reduce energy consumption by up to 50%, demonstrating the significant impact these actions can have on reducing…(limited to 200 words).*

**Andrew Cooper (Green):**

In Kirklees the Green Party has consistently prioritised reducing emissions from buildings in our budget amendments. In 2024 we proposed:

Establishing a Council Owned Company to help householders improve the energy efficiency of their homes

* A retrofit model based on the Energiesprong model trialed in Nottingham
* Specifying the Passivhaus standard or equivalent on all Council new build projects
* Specifying solar PV on all Council new build projects
* In our 2024 General Election Manifesto the Green Party proposes:
* Ensuring that all new homes meet Passivhaus or equivalent standards and house builders include solar panels and heat pumps on all new homes, where appropriate.

Elected Greens will push for a local-authority-led, street-by-street retrofit programme to insulate our homes, provide clean heat and start to adapt our buildings to more extreme climate conditions. This would mean investment of:

* £29bn over the next five years to insulate homes to an EPC B standard or above as part of a ten-year programme.
* £4bn over the next five years to insulate other buildings to a high standard
* £9bn over the next five years for low-carbon heating systems (e.g. heat pumps) for homes and other buildings

**Susan Laird (Reform):**

Retrofitting cavity wall insulation to old housing stock invites health damaging moulds to form. Buildings don’t emit Carbon. They emit Carbon Dioxide, a colourless, odourless trace gas making up 0.04% of the atmosphere which is plant food.

**Kim Leadbeater (Labour):**

Insulating homes is a priority for a Labour government – to cut down on carbon emissions and stimulate economic growth in every community, including Kirklees. Labour plans to insulate four million homes by 2030, saving families hundreds of pounds on their bills.

**Jason McCartney (Conservative):**

Almost half of homes in England are now energy efficiency Band C, up from just one in seven in 2010. We will invest £6 billion in energy efficiency over the next three years to make around a million homes warmer. And we will fund an energy efficiency voucher scheme, open to every household in England, to support the installation of energy efficiency measures and solar panels, helping families lower their bills.

**Heather Peacock (Green):**

The Green party would spend 29 billion pounds on retrofitting and insulating houses in a street by street basis. 9 billion pounds for heat pumps. All new houses will be required to have solar panels and heat pumps.

### The other major sector responsible for carbon emissions is transport at 31%. What will you and your party do to get Kirklees and the UK back on track to eliminate petrochemical fuels in transport?

**Javed Bashir (Independent)**

Transport is not just a mode of travel, but a significant contributor to carbon emissions in Kirklees, accounting for 31% of the total emissions. The urgency of this issue cannot be overstated. To address this, a multifaceted approach is necessary. Firstly, expanding and improving public transport options is not just a suggestion, but a necessity. By making public transport more affordable and accessible, we can reduce reliance on private vehicles, thereby cutting emissions. Secondly, increasing the number of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations and offering incentives for EV purchases will encourage the adoption of cleaner transport technologies. Thirdly, investing in cycling and walking infrastructure is not just a plan, but a promise. It is essential to promote these low-carbon modes of transport, further reducing emissions from the transport sector.

Additionally, implementing Land Value Taxation (LVT) can play a pivotal role in this strategy. LVT discourages the excessive allocation of land for parking and low-density developments, promoting more efficient land use. This can lead to higher-density developments that support public transit and reduce car dependency. Evidence from other cities shows that improving public transport and cycling infrastructure can lead to significant reductions in transport-related emissions. By adopting these measures, Kirklees can… (limited to 200 words)

**Andrew Cooper (Green):**

In Kirklees we have opposed road widening projects, promoted traffic calming and the electrification of the Kirklees fleet of vehicles over the years. We continue to call on Kirklees and West Yorkshire Combined Authority to support safer routes for cyclists.

In our General Election Manifesto we have called for:

* *Invest in an additional £19bn over five years to improve public transport, support electrification and create new cycleways and footpaths.*
* *Bring the railways back into public ownership.*
* *Give local authorities control over and funding for improved bus services.*
* *An increase annual public subsidies for rail and bus travel to £10bn by the end of the next Parliament, with free bus travel for under-18s.*
* *Investment of £2.5bn a year in new cycleways and footpaths.*
* *Reimagining how we use streets in residential areas to reduce traffic and open them up for community use.*
* *Adopting Active Travel England’s objective of 50% of trips in England’s towns and cities to be walked, wheeled or cycled by 2030.*

**Susan Laird (Reform):**

We will scrap NetZero and allow people to decide for themselves what the best options are for themselves.

**Kim Leadbeater (Labour):**

We need to see an affordable transition to electric transport. Labour will drive this in government through accelerating the roll out of charge points, restoring the phase-out date of 2030 for new cars with internal combustion engines and supporting buyers of second-hand electric cars.

**Jason McCartney (Conservative):**

The Transport Decarbonisation Plan is a step change in the breadth and scale of ambition to reduce transport’s greenhouse gas emissions to reach net zero. The plan sets out a roadmap to improve public transport and increase support for active travel, which will make them the natural first choice. Ending the sale of petrol and diesel cars and vans in 2035 and increasing the use of electric vehicles will play a crucial role in helping the UK to hit this ambitious, legally binding target in an proportionate and cost effective way.

**Heather Peacock (Green):**

I have personally campaigned to stop road widening projects that encourage more cars and destroy nature. I am a key campaigner for Better buses West Yorkshire to improve public transport to get people out of cars. i have not travelled by plane since 2009 because its so bad for the environment . The Green party wants to eliminate petrol and diesel vehicles by 2035 to be replaced by EVs. Support for firms using heavy goods vehicles to move to rail freight.

### A further area of concern in Kirklees is the massive reduction in tree cover, open grassland and especially peat bogs. What will you and your party do to ensure all mature trees are protected, peat bogs are restored and open grassland is maintained?

**Javed Bashir (independent)**

*Kirklees has faced a significant reduction in tree cover, open grassland, and peat bogs, which are vital components of our natural environment. To combat this, I propose several actions aimed at conservation and restoration. Firstly, implementing policies to protect mature trees and increase tree planting initiatives is essential. This will help preserve existing green spaces and expand our tree cover. Secondly, funding projects to restore and maintain peat bogs is crucial, as these ecosystems are critical carbon sinks that play a vital role in mitigating climate change. Thirdly, protecting existing open grasslands and preventing their conversion to other land uses is necessary to maintain biodiversity and ecological balance.*

*Moreover, Land Value Taxation (LVT) can significantly support these conservation efforts. By promoting the efficient use of land, LVT helps prevent the unnecessary development of green spaces, thereby supporting the conservation of natural habitats and the restoration of degraded lands. Evidence indicates that restoring peatlands can sequester significant amounts of carbon and improve biodiversity. By implementing these measures, we can ensure the protection and enhancement of Kirklees' natural environment, contributing to a healthier and more sustainable community.*

**Andrew Cooper (Green):**

The Green Party in Kirklees has actively initiated and supported tree planting projects for a number of years e.g. the Kirkburton 1000 fruit tree project. We support the great work by Moors for the future to promote our peat bogs and moorlands. We have actively supported the retention of mature street trees in Edgerton and the Town Centre against Kirklees Labour proposals to remove them. We have also played a key role in helping save Highfields Community Orchard from development by getting it Urban Greenspace designation.

In our General Election Manifesto we protect and promote nature in the following ways:

* *Introduce a new Rights of Nature Act, giving rights to nature itself.*
* *End the scandal of sewage pouring into our rivers and seas by taking the water companies back into public ownership.*
* *Extend people’s access to green space and waterways close to where they live with a new English Right to Roam Act.*
* *Set aside 30% of our land and seas by 2030 in which nature will receive the highest priority and protection.*

*Green MPs will also press for:*

* *An immediate end to the emergency authorisation of bee-killing pesticides.*
* *A new Clean Air (Human Rights) Act, giving everyone the right to breathe clean air.*

**Susan Laird (Reform):**

*We won’t pull down trees to make way for cycle lanes as Sadie Khan does in London.*

**Kim Leadbeater (Labour):**

Kirklees natural beauty is part of what makes this a special place to live – but it hasn’t been looked after well; 14 years of Conservative governments have left our landscapes depleted, weakening regulation, cutting funding to local government and turning a blind eye to private companies polluting our water. I want to see everyone in Spen Valley have the opportunity to enjoy our natural landscape – which means more protection, investment and regulation.

Labour has committed to restoring and protecting our natural world by working with civil society, communities and business. We will create nine new National River walks, three new National Forests and plant millions of trees. We will also expand nature-rich habits like peat bogs and forests for the benefit of families and local wildlife.

**Jason McCartney (Conservative):**

As a former Chair of the APPG for Woods and Trees this is a important issue for me. The £750 million Nature for Climate Fund is helping to plant millions of trees across England, to meet the legal requirement to have at least 16.5 per cent tree and woodland cover by 2050. The Sustainable Farming Incentive pays farmers for actions that support food production and can help improve farm productivity and resilience, while protecting and improving the environment. Actions on offer cover areas include soil health and moorland, as well as new actions on hedgerows, integrated pest management, nutrient management, farmland wildlife, buffer strips, and low input grassland.

**Heather Peacock (Green):**

I run a campaign group called Save the trees Kirklees which tries to stop mature trees being felled in planning applications and transport schemes. We have has some successes including saving an ancient woodland threatened by a transport scheme. Id like to see real protection for mature trees. Trees are crucial to the health of our planet and should be protected like a listed building would be. Id like Kirklees council to create an area wide tree preservation order so all mature trees have some form of protection. I have pressed Tracey Brabin the West Yorkshire Mayor and Network Rail to actually count the trees that are being lost in their schemes. They count trees planted and even acorns planted but not mature trees lost. After the trees lost have been counted Id like the figures printed so the general public can see the loss that is currently hidden. I am also in a group to protect the peat bog at Howarth Moor which is threatened with a wind turbine. Green party would introduce a new Right of Nature act to give a legal personhood to nature.

### How would you and your party maximise the potential for renewable energy generation in Kirklees? In particular, are you supportive of onshore wind and small-scale hydro generation in Kirklees?

**Javed Bashir (Independent)**

*Kirklees has considerable potential for renewable energy generation, especially through onshore wind and small-scale hydro projects. To harness this potential, several actions are proposed. Firstly, promoting the development of onshore wind farms by streamlining the planning process and offering financial incentives is crucial. This will facilitate the establishment of wind energy projects, contributing significantly to our renewable energy capacity. Secondly, encouraging small-scale hydro projects by providing technical and financial support is essential. These projects can generate clean energy locally and contribute to the overall energy mix.*

*Supporting community-led renewable energy projects is another key action. By ensuring local benefits, these projects can foster community engagement and support for renewable energy initiatives. Additionally, Land Value Taxation (LVT) can play a vital role in this strategy. LVT encourages the optimal use of land, reducing speculation and land hoarding. This helps identify and utilise suitable sites for renewable energy installations, facilitating their development.*

*Evidence shows that onshore wind and small-scale hydro are cost-effective methods of generating renewable energy and reducing carbon emissions. By implementing these measures, Kirklees can maximise its renewable energy potential, contributing to a sustainable and low-carbon future.*

**Andrew Cooper (Green):**

*In our amendment to the 2024 Kirklees Budget we said*

* *Generate renewable energy locally to support our swimming pools and leisure centres. Instead of paying £114,000 a year to an energy company for a dubious claim to ‘green’ sourcing we will use that revenue to support local priorities.*
* *Funding Renewable Energy from Municipal Climate Bonds*

Yes I am supportive of onshore wind and small scale hydro projects and have been criticised for my support of onshore wind in planning applications by local Conservative Councillors.

In our General Election Manifesto it says

Elected Greens will push for:

* *Wind to provide around 70% of the UK’s electricity by 2030.*
* *Delivery of 80GW of offshore wind, 53 GW of onshore wind, and 100 GW of solar by 2035.*
* *Investment in energy storage capacity and more efficient electricity distribution.*
* *Communities to own their own energy sources, ensuring they can use any profit from selling excess energy to reduce their bills or benefit their communities.*

**Susan Laird (Reform):**

We will encourage Rolls Royce and its customers to apply for permission to install a modular nuclear powered electrical generation plant in the area. We oppose onshore wind, like small-scale hydro, it won’t generate any useful quantity of reliability dispatch-able energy.

**Kim Leadbeater (Labour):**

Transitioning to renewable energy generation is a huge opportunity - to bring jobs and investment to Britain and Spen Valley, tackle the cost-of-living crisis and make our country energy independent. With our Green Prosperity Plan to reach net zero by 2030, a Labour government can maximise this potential and make our country a clean energy superpower.

If elected, Labour will work with businesses to invest in the industries of the future, doubling onshore wind, tripling solar power and quadrupling offshore wind. This will create 650,000 jobs across the country by 2030. To drive this investment, Labour will switch on Great British Energy, a new publicly owned company that will invest in leading technologies and deploy local energy production to benefit communities. We will also invest in home insulation upgrades to save families on their bills. Local power generation is key to reducing pressure on the transmission grid – Labour will invite local communities like Kirklees to take the lead on their transition, so that it is local people who feel the benefit.

On the second part of your question - I would take a pragmatic and positive look at onshore and small-scale hydro generation in Kirklees but as with all planning… (limited to 200 words)

**Jason McCartney (Conservative):**

I appreciate that there are a range of views on onshore wind, which is why I agree with Ministers that local authorities - who know their areas best - are best placed to make decisions on onshore wind. Under the new planning measures, it will be possible to take forward onshore wind projects where they can demonstrate local support and address planning impacts identified by the community. The Government has been clear that local areas that support hosting onshore wind should benefit directly. Following a consultation on proposals for improving rewards and benefits to be offered to communities backing onshore wind farms, the Government has announced that it will update the Community Benefits Protocol for England so that it reflects the full range of benefits communities could receive, including local energy bill discounts.

**Heather Peacock (Green):**

I personally support the use of renewable energy in the right place with no loss to nature. the Green party would introduce new support and incentives to directly accelerate wind energy. We want 70% of our energy to come from wind by 2030. We would introduce new support for solar energy.

## Candidates statements

Candidates were also invited to make a statement up to 200 words on their thoughts and priorities on climate change and the environment.

**Javed Bashir (Independent)**

*As the independent candidate for Spen Valley, I am committed to leading our community towards a sustainable and resilient future. Tackling climate change is not only an environmental imperative but also an opportunity to create jobs, improve public health, and ensure energy security. My priorities include retrofitting our homes to enhance energy efficiency, revolutionising our transport system to eliminate fossil fuels, protecting and restoring our natural habitats, and harnessing our renewable energy potential.*

*A key element of my strategy is the implementation of Land Value Taxation (LVT). Introducing LVT in this parliament, even as a pilot project, can accelerate our progress towards the 2038 target. LVT promotes efficient land use, encourages sustainable development, and generates funding for climate action. By taxing the unimproved value of land, we can discourage speculation and land hoarding, facilitating the development of underused properties.*

*In the short term, I will focus on providing incentives for homeowners and businesses to improve energy efficiency. Medium-term strategies include piloting LVT to support sustainable land use. In the long term, we will transform our transport infrastructure and fully implement LVT. By working together and embracing practical solutions like LVT, we can make Spen Valley a model for climate action… (limited to 200 words)*

**Andrew Cooper (Green):**

Priorities for action on climate change have to include the retrofit to a high standard of our existing housing stock. Obviously reducing carbon emissions is a principal driver for this but there are so many knock on benefits that include new skills, employment, less money on fuel bills more on money in the local economy and by reducing demand we make it easier to meet our renewable energy targets. Crucially we need a compelling offer that millions of householders can access to carry out the measures needed. My own view is that releasing the capital in peoples own homes is a significant part of the way we can achieve that.

I am very wary of the push to make hydrogen the fuel to replace natural gas in our homes as a potential solution. The sourcing of that hydrogen possibly from fossil fuels is an issue but a bigger concern is the potential disincentive to improve the energy efficiency of buildings. The ”just change the gas“ option seems to serve the vested interests in the current fossil fuel sector.

I also believe that there needs to be a new respectful and equal relationship between local and national government to enable us to work together effectively on Climate Change Action Plans to drive down emissions.

**Susan Laird (Reform):**

The UK produces only 1%of global Co2 emissions, yet China produces 27%.  China and India are building hundreds of coal fired power stations. Even the IPCC admits Net Zero would make no difference to sea level rise for 200-1,000 years; in other words they do not have a clue. Instead, Net Zero sends our money abroad and damages critical industries like steel production. The government has turned Britain from being an exporter of oil and gas into a net importer. They have bet our future on unreliable wind and solar power and destroyed our energy security. It’s time for a common sense energy strategy.

**Kim Leadbeater (Labour):**

Climate change and its consequences pose grave questions for our planet and the way we live – but we also need to see this as a huge opportunity: to grow our economy, put more money and power back in local communities like Spen Valley and encourage more connection between our lifestyles and the environment. The Conservative governments of the past 14 years have failed to make this most of these opportunities. A Labour government, if fortunate enough to be elected on July 4th, will seize it with both hands. We have a plan to fix the environmental mess the Conservative have made and make sure that Britain isn’t left behind in the race to claim the jobs and wealth that transition offers.

In my role as chair of the APPG for Tidy Britain, I have led clean ups across the whole of Spen Valley. If elected, I will continue to champion our environment locally and work to make sure that we see the benefits a Labour government’s green agenda can bring. I want to see the transition to green energy be felt here – with lower energy costs for families and businesses and the creation of new jobs.

**Heather Peacock (Green):**

My priorities for the climate and ecological emergency we now face are a nature based recovery. The end of fossil fuels. The end of petrol and diesel. Retrofitting and insulating homes. The clean up of waterways by taking water back into public hands. To consider trees, peat bogs, moorland as listed buildings.

## Notes and further information

Andrew Cooper and Susan Laird are candidates in Huddersfield.

Jason McCartney and Heather Peacock are candidates in the Colne Valley.

Kim Leadbeater is a candidate in Spen Valley.

Kirklees Climate Commission invited all candidates, by email where email details were available. A full list of candidates can is available at: <https://www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/voting-and-elections/statement-of-persons-nominated.aspx>

For further information about the Kirklees Climate Commission online hustings 2024 see [www.kirkleesclimate.org.uk](http://www.kirkleesclimate.org.uk) or email [generalelection2024@kirkleesclimate.onmicrosoft.com](mailto:generalelection2024@kirkleesclimate.onmicrosoft.com)