

# Greens Launch Charter for Small Business

Green Party Communities spokesperson Ellie Chowns today launched a Green Charter for Small Business designed to help them and our High Streets thrive in the green economy of the future.

Chowns, who is the party's parliamentary candidate in North Herefordshire, said:

"Small and medium-sized businesses are the lifeblood of our economy and our communities.

"There are around 5.6 million small businesses that employ between them over 13 million people. (1)

"This is a vital part of the economy too often overlooked by government. The best and most successful small businesses are embedded in their local economies and support their local communities.

"Our new charter will support them to survive and prosper with VAT breaks in key sectors."

Green MPs elected on 4 July will push in Parliament for:

- Regional mutual banks to drive investment in decarbonisation and local economic sustainability
- £2bn per year in grant funding for local authorities to help businesses decarbonise
- Encouraging community ownership through greater access to government funding in the transition to a zero-carbon economy.
- Supporting the high street and local businesses through VAT and rates exemptions, with a particular focus on supporting local pubs, clubs, theatres and community arts venues.
- Backing farmers to produce and sell more food locally.
- increasing annual public subsidies for rail and bus travel to £10bn by the end of the next parliament to make public transport reliable, frequent, accessible and affordable, including free bus travel for under-18s
- Building social housing to support workers in small towns and the countryside
- Rejoining the Customs Union to enable small business to trade with Europe.

Chowns said:

"This is a comprehensive package offering direct support to small businesses that also introduces measures to encourage customers to get to and use small, local businesses.

“These innovations will set the framework for small enterprises to succeed and our High Streets to once again become vital community hubs.

“These new regional banks would be capitalised through a Co-operative Development Fund using some of the funds made available through the United Kingdom Infrastructure Bank (UKIB), along with an additional £10bn of public money.

“Local authorities would be funded nationally to channel grants worth £2bn per year to local businesses which want to decarbonise faster.

“Our new generation of Green MPs will press in Parliament to remove any legal blocks to companies wanting to transform into mutual organisations, especially at the point of succession from one owner to another.

“We know the current approach to protecting our High Streets and supporting local businesses is failing. Across the country, too many people are totally out of reach of vital resources like a local bank or pharmacy.

“We want to change the existing market structures that leave customers, suppliers and workers open to exploitation through market dominance. Markets must work to support a fair transition to a zero-carbon economy.

“Some small local businesses struggle to get their payments on time which can leave them financially exposed and unable to thrive on our High Streets.

“Elected Greens will campaign to bring the Prompt Payment Code into law and bar late payers from public-procurement contracts. We also want to mandate the Small Business Commissioner to investigate potential instances of poor payment proactively, instead of only when a complaint has been made.

“We are offering a win-win-win package for our small businesses, our High Streets and our communities.

“For instance, we want all children to have a daily free school meal, made from nutritious ingredients. That would offer farmers a sustainable local market for their produce.

“We would invest in public transport, including buses, cycleways and walking routes to make it easier for people to get around and to use their High Street local small businesses.

“Taken as a whole, our evidence-based, practical charter gives hard-pressed local small businesses the chance to join the green revolution today.

“It offers real hope and real change to our High Streets and communities for the future. In Parliament, Green MPs will work hard to get these practical steps for a thriving local economy implemented as fast as possible.”

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

For more information or to arrange interviews, please email: [press@greenpartry.org.uk](mailto:press@greenpartry.org.uk), tel: 020 0203 691 9401 or 07826 529 013.

1. FSB | UK Small Business Statistics –  
<https://www.fsb.org.uk/uk-small-business-statistics.html>

## **Background briefing**

### **Small businesses matter**

- At the start of 2023 there were 5.6 million small businesses (with 0 to 49 employees), 99.2% of the total business population. SMEs account for 99.9% of the business population (5.6 million businesses). (Federation of Small Businesses, FSB)
- Employment in small businesses (with 0 to 49 employees) was 13.1 million (48% of the total) (FSB)

### **SME and community sector support offers**

- Regional mutual banks to drive investment in decarbonisation and local economic sustainability
- £2bn per year in grant funding for local authorities to help businesses decarbonise
- Encouraging community ownership through greater access to government funding in the transition to a zero-carbon economy.
- Supporting the high street and local businesses through VAT and rates exemptions, with a particular focus on supporting local pubs, clubs, theatres and community arts venues.
- Putting more money into local economies by paying a £15 an hour minimum wage, with the costs to small businesses offset by increasing the Employment Allowance to £10,000.
- Backing farmers to produce and sell more food locally.
- increasing annual public subsidies for rail and bus travel to £10bn by the end of the next parliament to make public transport reliable, frequent, accessible and affordable, including free bus travel for under-18s
- Building social housing to support workers in small towns and the countryside
- Rejoining the single market to enable small business to trade with Europe.

### **Our charter in more detail**

#### **Funding**

Green MPs will back the setting up of regional mutual banks to drive investment in decarbonisation and local economic sustainability by supporting investment in SMEs and community-owned enterprises and cooperatives. These banks will be capitalised through a Cooperative Development Fund using some of the funds made available through the United Kingdom Infrastructure Bank (UKIB), along with an additional £10bn of public money.

#### **Decarbonisation**

We will give local authorities £2bn per year to provide grants to help

businesses decarbonise. We will explore legal ways for companies to be transformed into mutual organisations, especially at the point of succession from one owner to another.

Community ownership can be encouraged through greater access to government funding in the transition to a zero-carbon economy. We want to change markets where customers, suppliers and workers are open to exploitation through market dominance.

We also want to ensure that structures exist in markets that allow for a competitively fair transition to a zero-carbon economy.

More government support for ordinary car users and small businesses to replace their vehicles as diesel and petrol engines are phased out.

### **Late payment**

Late payment remains a problem for many businesses and sole traders.

Elected Greens will campaign to bring the Prompt Payment Code into law and bar late payers from public-procurement contracts. We would mandate the Small Business Commissioner to investigate potential instances of poor payment proactively, instead of only when a complaint has been made.

### **VAT reduction**

We would also propose a range of changes to VAT, reducing it on hard-pressed areas such as hospitality and the arts and increasing it on financial services and private education.

Exempt cultural events, including everything from theatre and museum tickets to gigs in local pubs, from paying VAT

### **Business rates reduction**

We want to see local authorities given discretionary powers to exempt socially and economically essential local enterprises from business rates.

### **Food and farming**

Increasing domestic food production and expanding local horticulture.

- Incentivizing growing a much greater variety of plant food types to protect sourcing and enhanced nutrition.
- Rebalancing the power dynamic between big food manufactures and local alternatives such as local food networks, community-supported agriculture and other co-operatives

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Reducing the vulnerability of the small-scale farming suppliers relative to

the oligopolies in retail and food manufacture, by regulating for fairness in negotiation and new legally binding codes of practice.

Putting farmers, including smaller and family farms, back in the room so they are part of developing new farming policy, including a new Fairer Farming Charter.

Elected Greens will fight to ensure that all new trade agreements:

- Respect workers' and consumers' rights.
- Meet UK animal protection and environmental standards

### **Creating markets for local goods**

All children should have a daily free school meal, made from nutritious ingredients and based on local and organic or sustainable produce and free breakfast clubs for children to Year 6

### **Rejoin EU and Customs Union**

SMEs have been really hammered by the end of access to the single market and increased costs of doing business with our neighbours.

We would re-join the EU as soon as the domestic political situation is favourable and EU member states are willing.

We would join the Customs Union as a first step towards full EU membership, and a way of resolving many of the worst problems resulting from Brexit.

We want to see a speedy return to the free movement of people between the UK and the EU, including reciprocal rights to work for both UK and European citizens

### **Local social housing**

Rural businesses really struggle with recruitment due the lack of affordable housing

We will build 150,000 social homes a year.

### **Transport**

We would increase annual public subsidies for rail and bus travel to £10bn by the end of the next parliament to make public transport reliable, frequent, accessible and affordable, including free bus travel for under-18s.

We would invest an additional £19bn over five years to improve public transport, support electrification and invest in new cycleways and footpaths; this includes the reallocation of funding earmarked for road building.

Urban bus services have dropped by 48% and rural buses by 52% since 2008. Yet they are vital to our High Streets. Every £1 invested in bus services is estimated to bring an economic return of £4.50.

Elected Greens would push for local authority control and proper funding for bus services, to increase these in urban areas, and in rural areas ensure that there is a bus service to every village.

We will empower local authorities to run bus services themselves if they see fit and provide a service that meets their community's needs. Cities and sparsely populated rural areas will need different solutions; we need to give them flexibility and funding.

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## [Snap reaction from the BBC QT Leaders broadcast](#)

### 2. [Press Releases](#)

Speaking from the spin room at the BBC QT Leaders, Green Party Baroness, Natalie Bennet, said,

“The contrast between the fear mongering of Nigel Farage and the positive, ambitious hope offered by Adrian Ramsay and The Green Party could not have been clearer. Tonight, Adrian showed what a Green society with real investment in our frontline service could offer; a fully funded NHS, an affordable house building programme, and real action on the climate crisis. He showed what real hope and real change looked like. In contrast Farage continued to deliver a message of bile and hate, with dog whistle politics a regular ‘feature’.”

She continued, “As an immigrant myself – albeit a privileged one – I found his scapegoating particularly offensive. Adrian in contrast was clear, the failing frontline services that we can all see, is as a result of 14 years of Tory managed decline and the conspiracy of silence between the Conservatives and Labour who now have a shared vision of underfunding our frontline services”.

She added: “As a former newspaper editor, I have no question about who I would trust, Channel Four or Mr Farage. And the Channel Four expose of Reform language on the streets in this election reminded me very clearly of Mr Farage’s words in the 2015 leader debates when he sought to question HIV treatment being made available to foreign-born patients.”

28 June 2024 by [Gemma Walker](#)

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## [“His racist, Islamophobic and homophobic chickens have come home to roost.”](#)

### 2. [Press Releases](#)

Responding to [Channel 4’s undercover filming of Nigel Farage’s supporters racist, Islamophobic and homophobic comments](#), Green Party Co-Leader, Carla Denyer, said,

“Farage’s Reform Party’s mask has not just slipped, it’s been well and truly trampled into the ground. Farage’s attempts to re-write history by distancing himself from these remarks just don’t wash. Just a few months ago he was [accused by the Muslim Council of Britain for “horribly Islamophobic, racist and hate-filled rhetoric of misinformation”](#) and he stands surprised when the culture he has created allows supporters to spew Islamophobic hate. His racist, Islamophobic and homophobic chickens have come home to roost. Farage needs to take a long hard look at himself and ask how he has enabled this culture to take hold.”

27 June 2024 by [Green Party](#)

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## [Greens offer route to pay justice for junior doctors](#)

Green Party co-leader Carla Denyer today offered a route to pay justice for junior doctors embarking on another round of strikes in their long-running dispute.

Denyer said:

“The outgoing Conservative government should have come to an agreement with

the junior doctors a long time ago. The fact it hasn't underlines why the Conservatives can't be trusted with the NHS.

"Unfortunately, Labour, on the brink of government, is offering no solutions either.

"Elected Greens will support the junior doctors' call for pay justice. It's foolish and irresponsible to continue to invest hundreds of thousands of pounds in training staff and then paying them so poorly they leave the NHS.

"We need to value junior doctors – and all NHS staff – so they stay in the NHS and make it stronger.

"Pay justice is key to staff recruitment and retention, so we can restore the NHS to have it deliver for all of us who rely on it."

According to the British Medical Association, it would cost £1.6bn to settle the junior doctors' dispute.

The Green Party manifesto pledges £4.6bn, specifically to tackle pay injustice, including settling the junior doctors' dispute and funding a workforce plan designed to recruit and retain staff across the NHS.

Denyer, who is speaking to junior doctors on the picket line in Bristol today, said:

"Greens believe passionately in the NHS. We are the only party being honest with the public that it's going to cost money to nurse the NHS back to health after 14 years of Conservative damage.

"It costs taxpayers around £200,000 to put a doctor through medical school. Yet, when these talented and highly trained people graduate, we are losing them because the pay and conditions have been worsening for years. The BMA points out that junior doctors' real-terms pay has been cut by more than a quarter since 2008

"Labour has simply abandoned its responsibility and is opening the door to ever greater privatisation.

"We need a different approach that attracts and keeps staff who are dedicated to a publicly-owned, publicly-funded NHS, free at the point of use."

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## [Plan for our rivers: Greens say](#)



# privatise water companies, invest in sewage infrastructure and give regulator real teeth

- Greens highlight poor health of River Wye to argue for “drastic change”
- £12bn infrastructure fund for sewage and water
- £1.5bn boost to environmental regulator Environment Agency
- Cast-iron commitment to renationalise water companies
- Near triple support for farmers for transition towards nature friendly methods

TV personality Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and the Green Party parliamentary candidate for North Herefordshire, Ellie Chowns, will today be testing the River Wye for phosphate levels alongside a group of local campaigners and wild swimmers. The duo will outline The Green Party plan for rivers that will include the nationalisation of our water companies, investing £12bn into our sewage and water infrastructure and to boost the Environment Agency a £1.5bn boost to better regulate.

The River Wye’s ecological status was recently downgraded by Natural England from “unfavourable-improving” to “unfavourable-declining” – evidence, Greens say, that “drastic change” is needed. [Government figures](#) say that 72-74% of the phosphate pollution in the Wye comes from agriculture. According to [CPRE](#) there over 20 million chickens in the river catchment at any one time. Phosphates at unnaturally high levels alongside other nutrients in rivers can result in algal blooms and the death of many species in the river including fish, birds, invertebrates and plants that are vital to the river ecosystem.

The Green Party is calling for a Water Protection Zone around the river to give it a fighting chance to recover.

In addition, The Green Party is calling for a £12bn investment in water and sewage infrastructure to prevent sewage being dumped into our rivers and seas, and a cast iron commitment to nationalise water companies.

The Green Party is also committed to almost tripling support for farmers over the next 5-year parliament to support the transition to nature-friendly farming.

**Ellie Chowns, the Green Party Parliamentary Candidate for North Herefordshire** will today say that:

“We are reminded of just how much this shared resource means to the community and why drastic change is needed. The decline in the Wye’s ecological status is a stark warning that has been ignored for too long. The river has no voice, but it does have a political manifesto that puts its priorities front and centre. We are here both demand a Water Protection Zone around the River

Wye and to put forward a bold vision for how we can protect all of Britain's rivers. We need to tackle sewage pollution through real investment in water infrastructure and putting people before profit by taking water companies back into public hands. And we need to tackle agricultural pollution through proper support for farmers to transition to nature-friendly farming, plus giving the Environment Agency the funding and teeth it needs to enforce the polluter pays principle. With these measures, we can restore our rivers back to health."

**Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall will add:**

"Ellie and I are clear that the only way to end the scandal of our filthy water is to tackle the pollution at source. For the Wye this means addressing the factory farmed elephant in the room, and working closely with farmers to give them the support they need to grow food locally, and in a way that protects the environment. Nationally we need to be bold, and bring to an end the disastrous and unfair experiment with privatisation of a basic human right – clean water. We cannot allow shareholders to profit by extracting money from these disgraceful businesses which completely fail to deliver their obligations to society. And so I fully support the Green Party policy of bringing the water companies back into public ownership."

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