

Camden Friends of the Earth Questions for Hampstead & Kilburn MP candidates 2010

Chris Philp (Conservative candidate)

Fix the Food Chain

The UK and Europe's imports of animal feed for intensive livestock production are destroying tropical rainforests. Would you support helping farmers switch to more planet-friendly farming by redirecting the £700 million of taxpayers' money that currently supports intensive livestock production in this country?

Conservatives will press for further reform of the CAP to create a more productive, sustainable and competitive farming industry, both here and in the developing world, and to deliver taxpayers greater value for money. We will press for the abolition of production subsidies across the EU. There must be a shift of resources away from direct payments towards funding for environmental schemes and measures to help the farming industry modernise. We support the Campaign for Farmed Environment to recapture the environmental benefits of set-aside, and will seek agreement for success to be measured in terms of biodiversity gain rather than just the amount of land put aside

What would you do to address the fact that the meat and dairy industry is a massive contributor to climate change and deforestation?

Given that liquid biofuels increase greenhouse gas emissions, increase food prices and increase hunger in developing countries and encourage tropical deforestation. Will you support scrapping targets for biofuels in road transport fuel and also a moratorium on other incentives for liquid biofuels from crop sources such as in electricity production?

Waste

Will you change the fiscal situation of incineration so that instead of being subsidised it is taxed to reflect the damage that incineration causes to the environment? And use the money saved to fund additional recycling targets?

We will introduce a Responsibility Deal on waste – a voluntary arrangement among producers to cut back on the production of waste and improve its disposal – as we move towards our goal of a zero-waste society we will put a floor under the standard rate of landfill tax until 2020 to encourage alternative forms of waste disposal.

As Flanders has shown that 70% recycling targets can be met, what targets will you set for recycling of waste?

Improving rubbish and recycling collections

We believe that rubbish collections are a vital front-line council service. Householders deserve comprehensive and regular rubbish and recycling collections for the council tax they pay. It should be made it easier to go green, rather than bullying households with taxes, fines and cuts.

Weekly Collections. *We believe that there is a massive public demand for a weekly rubbish collection service, backed up by comprehensive recycling collections - in contrast to the fortnightly model where recycling is collected one week, and residual waste the next week. Many Conservative councils are already taking the lead in providing weekly organic waste collections, which increase recycling and ensure that smelly rubbish is removed every week. A Conservative*

government will change Whitehall policy so that there is an expectation that councils should offer a weekly service, ending and reversing the Labour policy of bin cuts.

Unfair bin fines

We believe that new statutory guidance is needed to ensure that fining powers are only used against genuine fly-tippers. Greater emphasis should be placed on catching and prosecuting the commercial fly-tippers who dump to save, or make, money.

Green incentives not bin taxes

We will repeal the bin tax legislation, saving families from new taxes. We want to promote schemes which reward and encourage neighbourly behaviour and recycling, rather than imposing schemes which tax, fine or incentivise fly-tipping.

- The Government has already undertaken some 'reward-only' pilots, which showed positive behavioural effects of rewarding recycling (DEFRA, Evaluation of the Household Waste Incentives Pilot Scheme, August 2006).*
- Conservative-run Windsor & Maidenhead Council is already piloting the 'Recyclebank' scheme, used in America, where householders are paid for recycling through high street vouchers. Boris Johnson is also planning a pilot in London. The Greater London Authority has estimated that Recyclebank incentive schemes could result in a financial benefit of households of £14 a month (GLA, The Mayor's Draft Municipal Waste Management Strategy, January 2010, p.70). These pilots will show how it can be a fiscally neutral scheme, as increasing recycling reduces the costs of waste disposal.*
- We will work with councils to encourage the take-up of such Recyclebank-style reward schemes, creating a stable investment framework for councils by providing certainty over the long-term level of landfill tax.*
- We will also make it easier for councils to introduce discounts and incentives for recycling and green behaviour. Under the Local Government Act 2003, only billing authorities may introduce discounts and must fully fund their cost. This creates significant problems where the waste disposal authority is not the billing authority. We will amend the legislation to allow any local council to introduce a discount, funded from its own budget, and enable waste collection authorities and waste disposal authorities working together to introduce incentives.*

Housing

Do you think that landlords should be required to meet minimum standards for energy efficiency in the homes they rent out, in the same way that they have to comply with standards on gas and fire safety?

Yes- But we need to make this feasible, Conservative policies like the Green Deal will help Landlords to do this.

Transport

Do you oppose the 3rd runway at Heathrow?

Yes I do. I even signed up as an Airplot owner to prevent it.

Community

How will you encourage space in urban environment to be release for local and community based food production?

We will promote the expansion of local food networks for both retail and wholesale trade so that domestic and service sectors such as schools can obtain consistent and sufficient supplies of locally produced food.

Recent consolidations of community facilities as diverse as post offices, playing fields and doctors' surgeries has meant that people have to travel further and communities are diluted. What will you do to halt or reverse this trend?

We will encourage diversification in the services that post offices offer, so as to halt the trend of their closure, which has a big impact on communities. These one-stop shops mean people will not have to travel as far.

Climate

Do you agree we should still try to avoid dangerous climate change happening

Yes, Climate change is a real and present threat to our way of life and future.

What will your party do to engage the public in the need for action against climate change and to curb wider resource use?

We will work closely with other European countries to establish a common approach to common problems, such as climate change.

The wave of low carbon innovation we want to unleash requires investment, so we will create Britain's first Green Investment Bank – which will draw together money currently divided across existing government initiatives, leveraging private sector capital to finance new green technology start-ups. We will create green Individual Savings Accounts to help provide the financial backing we need to create a low carbon economy.

A credible and sustainable price for carbon is vital if we are to see adequate and timely investment in new electricity generation. Whatever the carbon content of electricity generated, operators considering new investments in projects with a life of several decades need to know where they stand. We will reform the Climate Change Levy to provide a floor price for carbon, delivering the right climate for investment in low carbon energy production. We will increase the proportion of tax revenues accounted for by environmental taxes, ensuring that any additional revenues from new green taxes that are principally designed as an environmental measure to change behaviour are used to reduce the burden of taxation elsewhere.

Do you recognize that technology alone won't solve this?

Yes, we also need a change in our culture, making recycling and energy saving widespread.

In the measures that you propose, how will you avoid exacerbating poverty and inequality?

We will push for a trade deal which brings growth to the poorest countries, helps those countries adapt to climate change, and puts in place the building blocks of wealth creation explore ways to help the very poorest developing countries take part in international climate change negotiations, and work to make our aid 'climate-smart';

The director of the Tyndall Center wrote last year that we need complete decarbonisation of our energy supply in OECD countries by 2030. Considering this can any new investment in major road building, airport expansion or major coal fired power station be justified?

*To limit harmful emissions from UK power stations, we will take steps to encourage new low carbon energy production, including: introducing an Emissions Performance Standard to limit the levels of greenhouse gases our power stations produce;
clearing the way for new nuclear power stations – provided they receive no public subsidy;
creating four carbon capture and storage equipped plants, taking coal – one of the most polluting fuels of all – and transforming it into a low carbon fuel of the future;
delivering an offshore electricity grid in order to support the development of a new generation of offshore wind power, and establishing at least two Marine Energy Parks;
giving local authorities the power to establish new district heating networks which use biogas and other low carbon fuels;
allowing communities that host renewable energy projects like wind farms to keep the additional business rates they generate for six years; and,
giving incentives for smaller-scale energy generation, including capturing heat that is currently wasted.*

*Britain has had no clear energy policy for thirteen years. A succession of eleven energy Ministers and eight Secretaries of State with responsibility for energy has left our policy muddled and put our energy security at risk. Britain needs an energy policy that is clear, consistent and stable. That means that Ministers will be unambiguously responsible for determining energy policy and delivering an Annual Energy Statement to Parliament to set a clear direction for energy policy. To safeguard our energy security, we will reform the energy regulator Ofgem so that:
it focuses on executing energy policy; it is tasked with monitoring the spare capacity in the energy market and making provisions for additional capacity where required; and, its competition policy and consumer protection powers pass to the Office of Fair Trading. As a result, we will cut the number of quangos intervening in the energy market. Labour's just-in-time approach to energy supply has left us badly exposed to events outside our control. We will work to diversify the sources of the gas we need, secure long-term contracts and increase storage capacity to guarantee supplies throughout the year.*

Rising energy costs hit families hard, so we will create a 'Green Deal', giving every home up to £6,500 worth of energy improvement measures – with more for hard-to-treat homes– paid for out of savings made on fuel bills over 25 years. We will increase consumers' control over their energy costs by ensuring that every energy bill provides information on how to move to the cheapest tariff offered by their supplier and how their energy usage compares to similar households.

We will improve the energy efficiency of everyday appliances by drawing on the experience of the 'top runner' scheme from Japan.

To help further, we will:

-ensure that 10 per cent of the staff directly employed by 'Green Deal' providers are apprentices, helping to build a green collar workforce for the future;

*-keep Energy Performance Certificates to help people improve the environmental rating of their property; and,
-give Post Office Card Account holders the chance to benefit from direct debit discounts, worth up to £150 a year*

Do you and your party support an end to offsetting being used to fulfill national or EU emissions targets?

We need to do all that we can to bring down carbon emissions, to provide real results, not artificially meeting targets,