

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

Tamsin Omond (Independent 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? Yes. We need to encourage smaller farms, the switch from livestock to agriculture, shorter production lines, and practices that will restore our soils and ecosystems. These changes will be better for protecting the commons and restoring democratic and co-operative control over land and space as well.

What would you do to address the fact that the meat and dairy industry is a massive contributor to climate change and deforestation? We're going to need a profound cultural shift away from meat and dairy, and these things have to start at home. As your MP I will take steps to highlight and perhaps transform the kinds of foods on offer in Parliament, focusing on reduction rather than outright rejection. Cutting down on the amount of meat and dairy we consume can't just be something for vegan hippies – it's got to be an integrated part of everybody's lives, including our political representatives.

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? Yes. I have protested against the use of palm oil and definitely think we should scrap biofuel targets and plans for agrifuel electricity plants. There may be a case for very low levels of energy production from biomass in the future but the number one priorities right now have to be protecting and reclaiming forests and ensuring global food security.

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? Yes, As an independent there will be limits to what I can do but I will certainly support moves by other parties to internalise these externalised costs.

As Flanders has shown that 70% recycling targets can be met, what targets will you set for recycling of waste? Recycling is important but it should be the last resort, after reducing, reusing, regulating and rejecting! Of course, we want recycling rates to be as high as possible, but we shouldn't approach recycling as a matter purely for individuals. We need to make it easier for people to reject or reuse packaging, which will probably come about through regulation and changes to the tax system.

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. Fuel poverty is going to become more severe as

peak oil and climate change set in and we need to be taking every possible step to protect the most vulnerable during the transition to a low-carbon future.

Transport

Do you oppose the 3rd runway at Heathrow? Yes and I've been very vocal about it - including dropping banners from the roofs of Parliament

Community

How will you encourage space in urban environment to be release for local and community based food production? I will support, take part in and help promote schemes like landshare, trees for cities and guerilla gardening, and investigate and try to undo the knots in the planning process that make it hard for land to be released.

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? All three main parties are basically centrist – none is really committed to properly devolving power and moving away from the trend towards bigger hospitals and bigger schools. The Commons believe that strong local democracy is the building block of everything else and that services need to be accessible and accountable at that level. I will oppose attempts to consolidate community facilities when this is against the wishes of the communities they serve – which seems to be most of the time!

Climate

Do you agree we should still try to avoid dangerous climate change happening? Absolutely. The risks are far too high for us to simply focus on adaptation now.

What will your party do to engage the public in the need for action against climate change and to curb wider resource use? One of the Commons core values is sustainability and we certainly need to find ways of living more lightly. Ultimately, the model of economic growth we've been working with is unlikely to be compatible with the quest for sustainability. But we also need to acknowledge that what happens after growth is very uncertain – even those who have been writing about it for years aren't really sure what the model will look like in practice. And this uncertainty is frightening, for everybody. We need to start a national conversation about how to get us out of the spiral of debt we are now in – without dealing with the debt culture we won't be able to reduce our consumption. But we also need to be very careful not to impose preconceived ideas about the future on people who might have very different ideas and aspirations.

Do you recognize that technology alone won't solve this? All the technological innovations in the world won't work unless we build a culture of sufficiency. My work as a climate campaigner has been part of this attempted cultural shift.

And if you do, what specific measures would you call for? We need to reform our tax system so that we are no longer subsidising the airline industry, the arms trade or intensive livestock farming, and instead plough that money into public transport, sustainable agriculture and social enterprise. We need to stop widening roads, force large businesses to publish their carbon accounts and put far stricter regulations on advertising to help break the

debt/consumption cycle. And we may well need something Tradable Emission Quotas to encourage consumption of lower carbon products.

in the measures that you propose, how will you avoid exacerbating poverty and inequality? Air travel is still predominantly done by the rich so measures to restrict it shouldn't be regressive. Public transport, sustainable agriculture and social enterprise are better at creating jobs than the arms trade and intensive livestock farming, and don't have the same side effects of war and obesity. TEQs should broadly be progressive as those on lower incomes tend to emit less than those on higher incomes, although there may be a spike at the very bottom when we get into issues of fuel poverty. These will need to be addressed through grants and investment schemes to improve the housing stock of those on low incomes.

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? No. Road building and airport expansion of both red herrings anyway – we don't need bigger airports, we need better trains, and it's well known that new and wider roads don't reduce traffic or congestion. Coal-fired power stations with 100% carbon capture and storage may need to be part of our energy mix in the future, but it seems a massive gamble to build any more now when the technology is not yet proven.

Do you and your party support an end to offsetting being used to fulfill national or EU emissions targets? There may be a place for limited, very tightly regulated carbon trading in the future (TEQs involve low-level carbon trading) but clearly offsetting is not being used for its intended purpose – to reduce emissions – and is instead being used as a new sort of financial instrument. Until we have an absolute global cap that will guarantee that emissions are actually being saved through offsetting the Commons will oppose it as a policy to fulfil national or EU emissions targets.