

If everyone on Earth consumed at the rate we do in the UK, we'd need nearly three planets to sustain us. If it's the average North American, then we'd need nearly four planets. Greens are sometimes accused of being unrealistic about economics. Nothing could be further from the truth. It's our opponents who are the fantasists, believing that continual growth is possible on a finite planet. Greens are the realists, understanding that the planet imposes limits and focusing on essentials such as jobs, housing and the household budget. The economy depends on society, which depends on the Earth and its resources. That's the order of things – not the other way round.

And what's growth for, anyway? The aim of politics is to help us flourish, and by this measure growth has failed in recent decades. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) tells us that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per person has grown by more than three times since 1955, allowing for inflation. Are we three or four times more content? No, levels of life satisfaction have dropped in this period.

We're told that growth has returned to the UK. The result?

- More than one in four children is growing up in poverty.
- The bosses of the UK's 100 biggest companies earn on average 143 times more than their staff.
- The top 1% of the population has the same wealth as the bottom 55%.
- Five families in the UK have the same wealth as 12 million UK citizens.
- 913,138 people received three days' emergency food from Trussell Trust food banks in 2013–14 compared with 346,992 in 2012–13.
- Debt levels are growing. By 2018, 2 million households are expected to spend more than half their disposable income repaying loans.
- Household incomes adjusted for inflation are still on average 2% below what they were in 2009–10.

**Joining up the policies. Government is run too much by Departments, which rarely take any notice of each other. Greens like to join things up...**

*So what do social justice and greater equality have to do with health, education, opportunity, the numbers in prison, and even recycling? This manifesto has many other policies designed to improve all these things. But just making us more equal will improve all of them.*

So it's not the economy, stupid. Or at least not one that grows forever. The Green Party believes that equality is much more important than growth. And growth doesn't bring equality; in fact it helps to justify inequality.

The result of the corrosive trickle-down fantasy is plain: the sixth-richest society in the world is disfigured by high levels of deprivation. And it's not only those right at the bottom who have problems. Despite the fact that household incomes are now back to 2007–08 levels, families on ordinary incomes have faced a real squeeze since 2009–10 as prices go up and incomes stagnate.

We will abandon GDP and the pursuit of growth as a measure of economic success. We would use a measure of Adjusted National Product (ANP), which would take account of capital and environmental depreciation and include the value of many things not currently paid for, such as unpaid work at home.

**Green councillors mobilise alternatives to payday lenders...**

In a move to break people's dependence on payday lenders, in Stowmarket, Suffolk, Councillor John Matthissen is leading a cross-agency project to launch a collection and information point for the local credit union.

## SHORT-TERM ECONOMIC STIMULUS

We make an important distinction between short-term growth, or 'regeneration', and long-term dependency on continuing economic growth.

The measures we propose as alternatives to austerity will, by halting and reversing the cuts to public services, restore lost jobs and create new ones. The increased economic activity will cause the economy to grow rather than shrink in the short term, restoring employment and living standards.

However, we see such short-term growth as transitional, as a side-effect of ending the failed austerity project. We do not see it as a contradiction to adapting the economy for One-Planet Living in the longer term.