

## LOCALISATION

The Scotland independence referendum put decentralisation back on the political agenda – a cause that Greens have championed for years. We have long argued that nothing should be decided at a central level that can be decided at a local level. We need to improve the way the UK is governed, passing power back to the people, back to where they live and work. Local councils have been starved of the funds they need to do their job. That is why requests for social care go unheeded, libraries are shut and public parks neglected.

And it isn't just money. Local democracy is withering and dying because councillors are hemmed about by regulation and their functions have been systematically removed over the past 30 years. Local Government Secretary Eric Pickles has virtually abolished onshore wind energy by overriding local planning and halting turbine projects. We will fund local government properly and extend its functions, reviving local democracy.

We will:

### Money

- Provide a *£10 billion a year uplift in local authority budgets* to allow local authorities to restore essential local services, creating more than 200,000 local jobs.
- Add further *higher bands to Council Tax* to allow authorities to raise more on the largest homes.
- *Not cap* what local authorities are allowed to raise in Council Tax, allow local councils to conduct revaluations and to set their own multiplier rates, provided they are more progressive, and not require a Council Tax referendum when they do so.
- Ensure that *grant funding is sufficient to pay for all statutory services* that councils are required to provide. To fund discretionary activities, we would allow local authorities to set *local business rates*, and then distribute the whole of Council Tax receipts and Business Rate receipts between local authorities on a basis decided by a Commission independent of central government set up by local authorities themselves.
- Also allow local authorities to levy *new local taxes*, such as local tourist taxes, empty homes levies, supermarket taxes or workplace parking levies, and to set rates for and keep part or all of some taxes collected locally, such as income tax and VAT, and distribute them as above.
- Allow local authorities freedom to set local *finances, fees and charges*.
- Put these taxation arrangements beyond future Whitehall revision by giving *formal constitutional protection* to local democracy and tax-raising powers.
- Scrap the *New Homes Bonus* and add the money to the Revenue Support Grant.
- Not start any new *private finance initiative* projects and set local authorities free to *borrow* to fund local capital investment in social housing, electricity generation and distribution, and local public transport.
- Set up a fund of up to £5 billion over the Parliament to *buy out* existing PFI projects where it is a good deal to do so.

### Democracy

- Restore local authority control over *education*, with full delegation of the appropriate budgets.
- Allow local authorities to run *local public transport* and *other local services* such as domestic and commercial waste disposal, community energy schemes and local food production entirely as they wish, including using publicly owned and run services and employing social enterprise and voluntary sector organisations.
- *Keep trade local* by allowing local authorities to favour local procurement to help their local economy.
- Give local authorities powers to encourage *local live performance* in the arts by moving funding from the regional to the local level and modifying regulations so that small-scale live performance in pubs and similar venues is not stifled.
- Create an *Assembly for Cornwall*, with similar powers to the Welsh Assembly.
- Work for the abolition of the *City of London Corporation* and the special statuses it enjoys. Residents will decide on the future governance arrangements for the local functions exercised by the Corporation, with the same division of roles between the local and the strategic as in any other part of London.