

The market has been in charge for so long that it dominates our imagination and colours our view of ourselves. The market is short sighted and short term. It's time for change – time to put the market to work for the common good and for people to be put back in charge.

The Green Party knows that:

- It's hard to be a citizen when life tells you that you are a consumer;
- It's hard to think of others when we are pitted against one another and sold the lie that individuals are to blame for their misfortunes; and
- It's hard to think of the common good when it's never mentioned.

Private interests have ruled the roost for far too long. The result is a society scarred by inequalities of power and wealth, and a planet plundered of resources and damaged by pollution. All in it together? We don't think so. Those with power and wealth have done very well out of austerity: the UK's wealthiest 1% grab more than anywhere else in Europe.

Politics has fragmented, public institutions have weakened, people's lives are dominated by insecurity, and prejudice is rife. We live in a price-tag society – and if you can't pay the price, too bad.

Things that used to be done by public agencies have been outsourced. Once it was a duty for all of us to look after the vulnerable when times were hard. We paid taxes into a common fund to look after the poor, the weak, the old and the sick, and to educate the young. This is what we did as citizens, bound together by what we share rather than separated by what divides us.

Now care has been outsourced to charity, to food banks. Some think this is a sign of the Big Society, but we think it's the sign of a failed society. Individual charity is no substitute for collective justice.

For 40 years the rich and powerful have forced us to live in their fantasy world – a world that suits the minority not the majority. This is a world imagined from the point of view of the healthy, the wealthy and the privileged. Where there is a satisfying job just round the corner if only we could be bothered to look for it, where resources are limitless, and where the only obstacle to total fulfilment is the psychology of individual failure.

Meanwhile, in the real world where most of us live, we are young and old, sometimes poor and sick, jobs are scarce, the Earth groans under the weight of our demands, and the obstacles in the way of our flourishing can be stubborn and unyielding.

How should we organise life in this real world?

Do we want our security to depend on the underpaid zero-hours worker of an outsourced company, maximising shareholder profit? No, we want well-trained, committed workers, properly paid and secure in their own lives – because our well-being is linked to everyone else's.

Do we want a world in which privatisation is the solution for everything? Or have we learnt from energy, water and rail that down that road lies private gain rather than the common good? It's public ownership and democratic control that lead to fairer services and better outcomes.

The market makes us impatient with the suffering of others, tolerant of inequality, prone to prejudice, suspicious of difference. We know we can be cooperative, appreciative, understanding and fair. We just need a world that encourages us to be these things. Together we can create that world.

The challenges that lie ahead of us are unique in their combination: declining resources, global warming, deepening inequality, footloose capital. But these problems have been created by us, so they can be solved by us.

We need to remake society. And in this remaking we need finally to realise that consumer capitalism is the problem, not the solution. The solution lies in a democratically managed economy that operates within the Earth's resource limits.

We don't want a privatised outsourced state, we want a green and democratic one. We want a public National Health Service, not privatised healthcare. The uncoordinated actions of millions of individuals, with unequal access to wealth and power and urged to maximise their own interests without regard for anyone else's, will only deepen the crisis. This is what's on offer from the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, from Labour and from UKIP.

We need a party prepared to challenge the damage this has done, a party that expects something better.

We need a party prepared for the real world.

We need a party for the common good.

We need the Green Party.