ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Apart from rebuilding the UK's energy system, we also need to adapt to the climate change that will take place as the effects of past emissions work their way through the system. In the UK there will be wetter winters and hotter and drier summers. We can expect greater instability, with more episodes of extreme weather, such as the heavy rain and floods of the 2013–14 winter. We need to begin urgently to prepare for this by:

- Providing help for people and communities to prepare for an increasingly variable climate. We would give an extra £1 billion a year to local authorities and the Environment Agency to spend on assisting communities with flood protection and on defending homes and public buildings, such as hospitals, from heat waves.
- Obliging government departments and local authorities to *consider climate change and carbon reduction in all their planning* over a long time horizon of 50–100 years. Specifically, local authorities should do so in all planning decisions.
- Having the government act as an *insurer of last resort* where commercial insurance companies are refusing to provide flood cover.
- Preventing new building on flood plains.
- Encouraging storing water in uplands through full river system management – including wetland restoration, natural regeneration, allowing rivers to meander and allowing flooding upstream. Water management needs to become part of the rules for farming subsidies.

Green councillor sets the pace on flooding...

Thanks to a lone Green councillor, who at the time held the balance of power, Islington became the first UK Council to set a minimum amount of 'permeable' land to prevent flooding.

Nuclear energy – it's still no thanks

In recent years, the nuclear industry has tried to re-brand itself as 'green'. As the UK's only environmental party, the Green Party needs to set out why it still considers that nuclear is no answer to either climate change or our energy needs.

Nuclear energy is not green. Nuclear energy is neither zero carbon nor renewable and there is serious debate about whether it is even low carbon. Uncertainties involved in carbon costing, radioactive waste management and the carbon costs of obtaining uranium mean that the carbon costs of nuclear are unknowable. Unlike renewables, we simply cannot rely on it being low carbon.

In addition to its highly dubious 'low-carbon' credentials, nuclear energy is a seriously flawed policy in other ways:

- Nuclear energy is extremely expensive: not one nuclear plant has ever been built, anywhere in the world by private investors without huge public subsidies. The Coalition government has agreed to guarantee EDF nearly double the current market electricity price at Hinkley, in addition to other financial backing not available to other low-carbon generators. These subsidies would impose enormous and unjustifiable costs on householders and businesses.
- Nuclear remains a uniquely dangerous form of energy. If the new plant being built by EDF at Hinkley were to release an equivalent amount of radiation to Fukushima, and the wind was in the south-west, Bristol would need to be permanently evacuated.
- No long-term solution has yet been found to the question of dealing with nuclear waste.
- Wind power has been found to create around 12 times as many jobs as the same investment in nuclear, and solar power is estimated to create around 360 times as many jobs. Investing in energy efficiency (e.g. insulation) creates even more jobs.
- Renewables can provide the same 'base load' production as nuclear power at a lower cost without the risks. Nuclear power diverts investment, skills and expertise away from securing the economic, employment and energy security benefits of home-grown renewables, smart grids and demand reduction.
- The current UK nuclear programme is planned around a reactor design, the European Pressurized Reactor (EPR), which has an atrocious construction and cost record. EPRs being built in France and Finland are years behind schedule and have huge cost overruns. Even if nuclear were the answer, the EPR would still be the wrong plant to build.