

# CHAPTER 4

## ENERGY AND THE CLIMATE

Imagine flicking a switch and knowing that the energy was coming from the sun, the wind, the earth and the tides; energy forever, not just for now. Imagine not having to decide between ‘heating or eating’; no fuel poverty. Imagine glancing out of the window and seeing a van arrive to insulate your neighbour’s house as part of a funded nationwide programme – reducing demand as well as creating supply. Imagine your energy bill coming from a community-owned company or cooperative rather than from one of the ‘Big Six’. Imagine being part of the company or cooperative yourself; energy security for us all rather than profits for the few. This is all possible; this is Green Party energy policy. Energy for all without climate change.

We all use energy. It keeps our houses warm, powers much of our transport and home appliances, and cooks our food. Our lives depend on it and it takes up a large part of our spending, especially if we are poor. Too many people suffer fuel poverty.

We get a bad deal on energy. When wholesale prices go up, the prices for domestic electricity and for fuel at the pumps go up rapidly. When wholesale prices go down, the retail prices seem to stick. The big energy companies make huge profits but do not serve the common good. We need to put this right and ensure that:

- Everyone is able to cook and keep warm;
- We are charged for what we use, and not penalised for using less;
- We are not cut off or forced to use pre-payment meters.

But burning fossil fuels for energy causes climate change. If we are to secure a safe and habitable climate for current and future generations, we need a rapid shift to a zero-carbon energy system; we need to leave the vast majority of fossil fuel reserves underground and unburned. Other ways of getting energy, such as nuclear power, pose other unacceptable risks. So we have to build a secure and affordable energy system that meets our basic needs while protecting our environment.

We believe this requires an energy policy that:

- Reduces the amount of energy we need, mainly by improving energy efficiency.
- Ends fuel poverty.
- Invests massively in renewable generation.
- Reorganises the energy generation and supply industry, in particular breaking the dominance of the Big Six suppliers.
- Puts community, cooperative and locally owned clean energy generation and supply at the heart of our energy system.

We have to start with climate change, because this drives the degree of urgency with which we change our energy system.