

THE GREEN ROUTE TO ALLIANCE-BASED POWER

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The Green Party occupies a unique space that combines principle and pragmatism in the fight for a just transition. We must be both bold and humble in securing the power to change our government in order to change our society and save our planet.

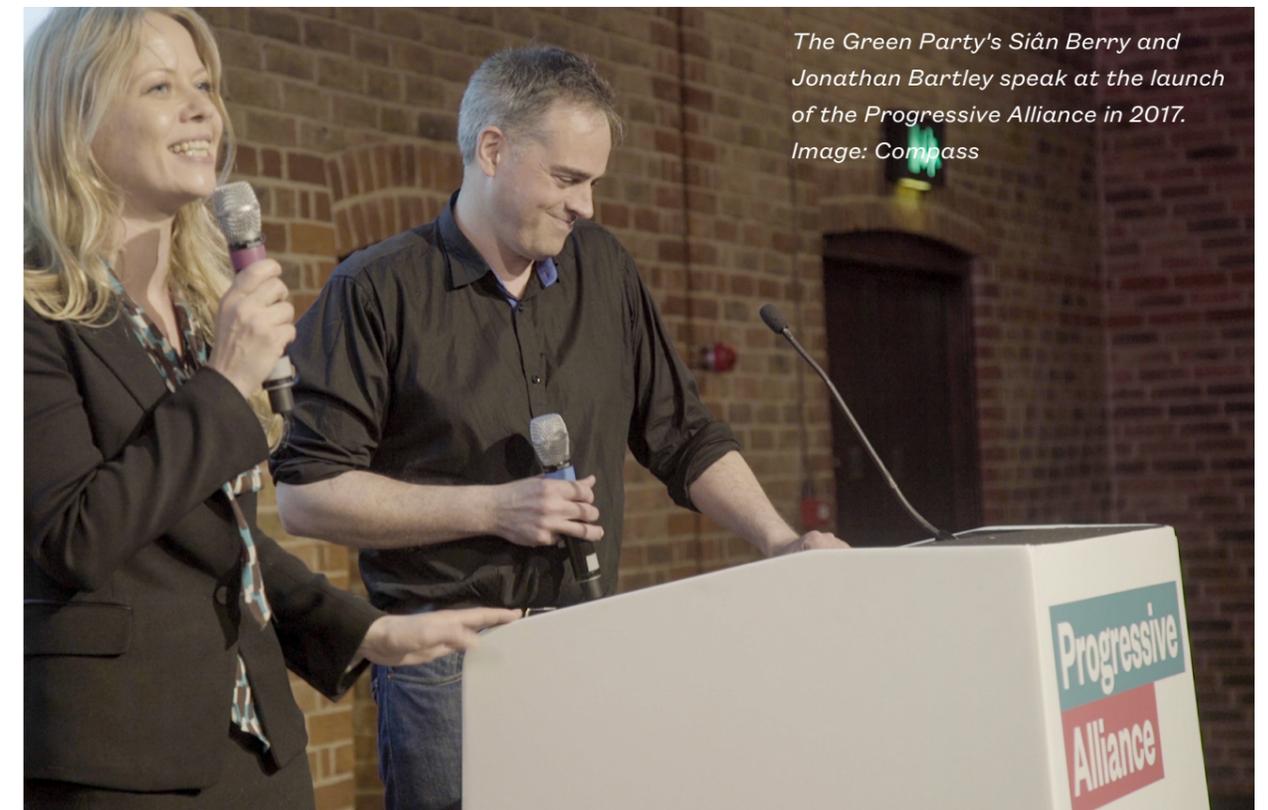
*This short paper sets out the thoughts of **Compass Greens** members ahead of the party's Autumn Conference in October, to help stimulate debate and discussion.*

Although to a greater or lesser degree the Green Party shares a vision, a way of doing politics and policies with individuals in other political parties or in none, it is unique in that:

- It is the only vehicle the green movement has that seeks to win representation in the UK parliaments and local authorities and to participate in government. However, this is not exclusive of the fact that it has always considered itself equally a campaigning organisation.

- It is the only political party committed to achieving net-zero carbon by 2030 and refuses to pass on the burden of redressing environmental destruction to future generations.
- It is the only party of significance to hold a vision of a post-capitalist Britain, rejecting financial indicators as measures of progress or human well-being. And it views the present economic system as inherently destructive of the environment that we share with all other living things.
- In the face of the problems that confront us, it is more prepared to work with other progressive political parties, pressure groups and civil society organisations to move towards our climate goals and address other societal issues.

We recognise these as vital differences. This is why it is important to us that the Green Party retains a clear and distinct identity, and does not choose to subsume itself into any other group or automatically



*The Green Party's Siân Berry and Jonathan Bartley speak at the launch of the Progressive Alliance in 2017.
Image: Compass*

defer in elections to any other political party.

But we also recognise that:

- The current first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system is heavily weighted in favour of the two major parties, and it is almost impossibly hard for a third force to break into government.
- We have no chance of forming a government, or of even gaining a second parliamentary seat, by 2030 – the period we are targeting for reaching net-zero carbon – without some form of cross-party collaboration.
- We have least in common with the Conservative Party, and indeed see them as a major roadblock to achieving net zero or a just transition to that goal. It is imperative that they are removed from office.
- We share many things in common with the Labour Party but do not believe that it is in any position to win the next general election alone, and perhaps not even the one after that. Furthermore, we question whether – facing the issues that confront us – it is in the general interest that a future Labour Government should form an administration alone, and certainly not on the basis of a minority FPTP mandate.
- The Labour Party machine has shown itself to be very tribal, and reluctant – even when it is to its clear advantage – to cooperate with other parties. But there is movement at the grassroots level of Labour towards endorsing electoral reform and dialogue with others. This opportunity must be grasped.

For Compass Greens, the only route to removing the Tories from office, achieving a Green New Deal based on a 2030 target, and the introduction of proportional representation (PR) is through the election of a Labour-led Progressive Alliance. The

Green Party has always accepted that contesting elections is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. It is part of a wider movement to bring about change.

We believe the Green Party should once again be a key mover in building and sustaining alliances and political pluralism. The deal with the Liberal Democrats at the 2019 General Election is a clear example of this. The object of such alliances is clear: to deliver power to progressive forces in politics, so that a new government can create the conditions for a green, more equal and more democratic society.

The ideas and policies needed to build such a society will be the substance of the alliances we help to forge. We are confident that there can be solid common ground between Greens and other progressives on a Green New Deal that sets out a programme for serious climate action and a just transition. We can see a common progressive agenda on making society more equal, incorporating a universal basic income, the eradication of racism and other forms of discrimination, and a humane instead of a hostile environment.

It is a matter of course that alliances we help to build will involve a strong shared desire for a new democratic settlement, a commitment to making our democracy meaningful again. We must agree on the need for a more democratic electoral system based on PR.

We must change the dynamic that either our votes don't count and the Tories get back in, or we are forced to vote for unreformed Labour candidates. This means we have to build independent progressive strength between and beyond the three parties.

Here is how we should go about building alliances for change:

1. We should take a different route to 2017, when the urgency of that snap election led us to give away more than we would have wished. We have longer to plan and should start early and get what we want from an alliance.
2. We must recognise that when the serious discussions begin the party must be able to negotiate from a position of strength. We want to focus on what other parties can bring to a progressive majority government, rather than dismiss them for past decisions or behaviours. But experience has shown that the Green Party has often found itself in the position of making unreciprocated concession. In the build-up to any arrangement – formal or informal – we should fight hard in every seat, local or national, where we have a chance of winning or stopping others from doing so. We should not be diverted, where it is in the party's interest, from standing in Labour-held seats and their Tory-held targets. The same applies to the Lib Dems. In this way UKIP had far more influence over the future direction of Tory policy than was justified through polling. We can do the same.
3. We must remember that alliances are not just an agreement of convenience to win the odd seat here and there. They are vehicles for driving green policies, fundamentally changing the way we do democracy and breaking the grip of reactionary forces in UK politics. We need to think about how we govern better with other parties, not just how we might win.
4. With the surge in Green councillors

on local authorities, we have a wealth of experience of making alliances work and directly influencing local decision-making. We must build on this strong base and the relationships that have been established to move beyond the zero-sum politics that has prevailed across the progressive left.

5. Compass Greens should take the lead in working with, or setting up, local Compass groups to provide vehicles for co-operative policymaking and campaigning across progressive parties. Relationships once formed will carry into the more formal process of local electoral alliance-building.
6. We should be open to democratic innovations such as open primaries and running joint candidates agreed from the bottom up. We should also be leaders in setting up citizens' assemblies to encourage wider participation in policy-making.
7. We should seek to include in alliances individuals and organisations from the trade union movement, the climate and environmental movement, and other groupings within civil society.
8. We will work with our colleagues in Compass Labour and Compass Lib Dems to agree a strategy for a successful Progressive Alliance that works to the benefit of all non-conservative parties and the country, ahead of the next general election.

Let's go to it!

If you want more information about Compass Greens contact us at: compass-greens@compassonline.org.uk.

COMPASS IS THE PRESSURE GROUP FOR A GOOD SOCIETY

We believe in a world that is much more equal, sustainable and democratic. We build alliances of ideas, parties and movements to help make systemic change happen.

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The logo for Compass, featuring a stylized '@' symbol followed by the word 'compass' in a lowercase, sans-serif font.

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