

It is with deep sadness and rage that we must inform you that, as of today, we have resigned from the Labour Party. We will form a new group on Lancaster City Council, the Eco-Socialist Independents

In 2017 we campaigned for a Labour Party led by Jeremy Corbyn and a manifesto that offered the beginnings of the radical change our country needs. We continued to campaign and were elected to Lancaster City Council in May 2019. We had hope for a better future and we were inspired, as eco-socialists, by the socialist Green New Deal adopted by the Labour conference in September 2019. Living in a Climate Emergency and a time of extinction, fearful for the future, we saw a brief spark of hope in the encroaching darkness. Inspired by Jeremy Corbyn, and a small group of Labour MP's, we walked the streets of Lancaster, Morecambe and Fleetwood during the dark months of last winter; desperate for victory in the 'election of a lifetime', desperate for change in the 'climate election'. We lost, and we've been losing ever since.

The Labour Party we joined has moved rightward under Keir Starmer. The 'New Leadership' of the Party has meant tokenistic words in the face of deep inequalities and injustice, a reluctance to address any of the fundamental issues facing our country and an embrace of the corporate establishment. Under this 'New Leadership', Labour has failed to oppose the 'spycops' bill, which threatens human rights, especially those of trade unionists and leftwing activists. Under this 'New Leadership', Labour has failed to provide effective opposition to the government in the pandemic, minimising trade unions' concerns about the unsafe reopening of schools and universities. Under this 'New Leadership', Labour has distanced itself from the radical and vitally necessary policies of a socialist Green New Deal.

This 'New Leadership' has also seen a crackdown on party democracy as members are unjustly silenced and suspended. The suspension of Jeremy Corbyn, a man who has fought his whole life against racism, including antisemitism, represents both an unjust attack on a decent man and an attack on the left. Given the failure of leadership from the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary Labour left in recent weeks, it is clear that socialists have no credible strategy to regain control of the Party.

Humanity faces a future of spiralling inequality and climate catastrophe. The world needs strong socialist movements to fundamentally challenge the capitalist system that is destroying our planet. For a brief time, a 'moment', the Labour Party offered hope to millions, to the many not the few. Today under Starmer, it is offering a return to 'business as usual'. The country and the world doesn't have time for this. The climate extinction clock is ticking. So, we cannot in good conscience remain as representatives of this Labour Party with which we now hold so little in common.

Sitting as Eco-Socialist Independents, we hope to continue to work within Lancaster City Council's multi-party Co-operative Alliance to implement the local manifesto we were elected to deliver. We will continue to do all that we can to support residents during the COVID-19 pandemic and we remain committed to the Council's 2030 Plan, focused on local climate action, community engagement and community wealth building. Together we will work within our communities for a more sustainable, healthy and empathic world.

Cllr Faye Penny

Cllr Alistair Sinclair

Cllr Jack O'Dwyer-Henry

Cllr Katie Whearty

I first joined the Labour Party in the 1970s and was inspired to also join SERA (the Socialist Environment & Resources Association, founded in 1973) which is affiliated to the Labour Party. In 1980, SERA was campaigning for radical action on climate change, publishing [this pamphlet](#) which advocated a “fusion of ecology and socialism, seen by many people as the only hope for saving the world”. I thought I had found the place I belonged and could take action.

What gradually became very clear to me was that the Labour Party was not the place to be as someone who recognised that the environmental crisis affecting our very future on the planet needed transformative policies. I have since had periods of membership of the Ecology Party and later the Green Party.

In 2013 I spoke at Public meetings (including on a panel with Lancaster MP Eric Ollerenshaw) on the proposed Energy Bill which the Labour Party supported. At the time the Party had a decarbonization target of 2030.

In 2015, along with hundreds of thousands of others I saw the opportunity to join the Labour Party and vote for a leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, John McDonnell & Diane Abbott who had attempted to get a [climate emergency declared](#) as early as 2009. I attended the Labour Party conference in Brighton in 2018 where, against significant opposition, including from SERA, Labour adopted a radical Green New Deal with a baseline policy of zero carbon by 2030.

In December 2018, I started the [Climate Emergency UK](#) website and am pleased to report that, of the 75% of Councils that have declared a ‘climate emergency’, the majority have set a decarbonization deadline of 2030, including 37 that are led by a Conservative administration.

The new Labour leadership, elected in 2019, initially appeared to support this target, but last week published a [Green Economic Recovery Plan](#) that failed to mention the 2018 Conference motion, the 2019 manifesto or the submissions to the Policy Forum, which were reported to be two-thirds in favour of the Labour for a Green New Deal proposals.

I have reluctantly reached the conclusion that Labour Party democracy is not fit for purpose, and that members have no influence in developing a policy to urgently address the climate & ecological emergency and achieve a just transition from fossil fuels. There are also no indications, despite the support of individual Labour MPs, that Labour will support the [Climate & Ecological Bill](#) which seeks to: “significantly expand the remit and scope of the Climate Change Act 2008, assigning new duties to government, parliament and the advisory Committee on Climate Change to enact a strategy that meets more ambitious targets for both climate change and biodiversity loss, as well as stronger criteria of justice, responsibility and safety.”

It with great sadness and disappointment that I have reached the conclusion that the Labour Party is not going to take the urgent and necessary action needed to address the climate and ecological emergency. Therefore, I tender my resignation from the Labour Party, and will sit as an Independent, as part of the Eco-socialist independent group.

I am proud of the work that the multi-party Co-operative Alliance running Lancaster City Council, led by Labour, has been doing on developing meaningful actions to address the climate and ecological emergency locally, delivering on the manifesto we were elected on. I hope to continue working within the Alliance to deliver on this commitment.

As a group we will continue to do all that we can to support residents during the COVID-19 pandemic and we remain committed to the Council’s 2030 Plan, focused on local climate action, community engagement and community wealth building. Together we will work within our communities for a more sustainable, healthy and empathic world.

Cllr Kevin Frea