

# Sustainable lifestyle changes for a green and caring economy

Feminist Green New Deal Policy Paper



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# **Sustainable lifestyle changes for a green and caring economy**

## **UK Feminist Green New Deal Policy Paper**

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## Executive Summary

Responding to the inequality and climate crises will involve rethinking the economy itself. The current system rests on the extractive logic that nature and human labour are there to exploit for profit and economic growth, causing gross inequality and environmental breakdown. Most politicians cling to the fantasy that we can face these crises with our current economic model, but we need a plausible, hopeful vision for a green and caring economy: one that puts wellbeing over profit. Crucial to this is democratising the natural resources and basic services we need to survive and thrive, redefining access to land, food, energy, water, and care as rights rather than commodities to enrich global corporations.

This paper sets out some of the changes we will need to see in key sectors of our economy and the way we interact with them. It is a vision of how our lives could change for the better, rather than a policy roadmap of how to get there. Decarbonising and reducing energy use is crucial. The UK is the 17<sup>th</sup> largest contributor to global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, although this belies the true impact of its historical emissions and those associated with the overseas goods we consume today.<sup>1</sup> It poses as a climate action leader, but the government is off-track to meet its own targets and continues to pursue climate-wrecking policies such as drilling for more oil and gas, airport expansion, and road building, while doing little about the enormous household emissions of the UK's draughty homes. Many high-emitting sectors will need to shrink, retool, or in the case of fossil fuels wind down altogether, while ensuring a genuinely just transition for affected workers and communities. At the same time, massive public investment in social infrastructure like care will both create more jobs and reduce inequality.

All sectors will need to limit their climate and ecological impact with renewable energy, resource efficiency and waste reduction. We look at the construction and garment industries to demonstrate some of the challenges facing high-emitting sectors, while arguing that relatively low-carbon sectors like health and care must grow while also further reducing their emissions and resource use. Alongside this, sectors should be desegregated, with equal access to employment opportunities and decent pay and conditions guaranteed for all workers.

But decarbonisation is not enough. As the 2022 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) made clear, we also need to shift consumption patterns through sustainable lifestyle changes.<sup>2</sup> But most of us lack the power and resources to reduce the impact of the goods and services we consume. We need structural change to make low and no-carbon options cheaper and more accessible. This is not a vision of austerity, but of shared abundance: we would meet everyone's needs with excellent public services and amenities; consume fewer goods but improve their quality; reuse and share more materials; spend less time in paid work without risking financial insecurity; spend more fulfilling time with our families and friends and in our communities; and value the labour that sustains life. In a green and caring economy this would involve changing:

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1 House of Commons Library (2021) [UK and global emissions and temperature trends](#)

2 IPCC (2022) [6th Assessment Report: Mitigation of Climate Change](#)

- **How we travel:** reorienting away from car-centric transport with investment in affordable, accessible, and sustainable public transport and active travel, while reducing excessive air travel by the rich through progressive taxes.
- **What and how we eat:** rethinking nutritious and sustainable food as a right rather than a profitable commodity, with public investment to support more plant-based and nature-friendly diets and create decent jobs in agroecological farming.
- **How we work:** redistributing paid and unpaid work more equitably, addressing the gender pay gap, and reducing work-related emissions through a shorter working week, allowing people to fulfil their potential in and outside of formal work.
- **How we care:** massive public investment to put care at the centre of a green and caring economy, valuing care recipients and workers, and creating millions of good, inherently low-carbon jobs.

## Introduction

The climate crisis is often framed as a technological challenge: in this line of thinking, if we can just transition quickly to renewable energy, we will stop GHG emissions and limit global heating to a level consistent with a liveable planet. But a political economy that has led us to climate and ecological breakdown, cannot now bring us back from the brink. Capitalism has driven technological change, but this has overwhelmingly focused on extracting profit, even when the technology responds to a human need. The causes and damaging effects of climate change and ecological degradation have been understood for decades, but our economic system has perpetuated and rewarded the very activities we know are responsible. It has not delivered a global energy transition and there is no indication that it can do so in the timeframe set by the IPCC. Where renewable energy and low-carbon technology have been adopted, they have often reproduced the exploitative logics of their high-carbon analogues, with a new “green extractivism” targeting the rare earth minerals needed for electric batteries and low-carbon infrastructure at enormous human and ecological cost.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, efforts to decarbonise that leave our current economic system intact would reproduce the social injustices embedded in our economy. Transitioning to renewable energy is entirely compatible with the continued exploitation of women, racialised and other marginalised groups. In the UK, and particularly in the global South, people would continue to work in appalling conditions on farms, in factories, mines, and the ancillary sectors necessary to feed our consumption habits. Globally, women provide an estimated \$10.8 trillion worth of unpaid care work every year.<sup>4</sup> In the UK, women contribute an estimated £700 billion worth of unpaid work to the economy.<sup>5</sup> A green economy could, in fact, add to the burden on women with labour-intensive changes such as making less processed food and washing more reusable items like nappies. A green economy that continues to exploit that labour will obviously not deliver climate justice.

The energy transition is crucial but focusing on this alone has prevented an open discussion about the more complex lifestyle changes we need, particularly those of us in the global North and the richest among us. Being frank about the need to change the way we work, travel, eat, and care does not need to mean reducing living standards, but rather lets us imagine living differently, caring more for each other and our environment. It lets us reimagine the social relations that allow some to live extravagantly while others, disproportionately women and racialised groups, struggle to make ends meet. This is an opportunity to address an economic system that isn't working for most people and to develop an alternative vision of a green and caring economy which looks after people and planet. Crucially, we should break with GDP growth as the key objective and instead implement and measure targets related to wellbeing, gender equality, and sustainability.<sup>6</sup>

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3 War on Want (2021) [A Material Transition](#)

4 Oxfam (2020) [Time to care: unpaid and underpaid care work and the global inequality crisis](#)

5 Anderson, J., *The i* (2020) [Women's unpaid labour is worth £140bn to the UK economy, analysis finds](#)

6 Women's Budget Group (2021) [Commission for a Gender Equal Economy](#)

Governments are reluctant to acknowledge the importance of changing consumption patterns through “demand-side” measures, often relying instead on market forces and technological innovation to deliver the climate change mitigation we need. Every IPCC report and each year of record-breaking droughts, floods, wildfires, and hurricanes, reminds us that this approach has failed. But it allows politicians and business leaders to conjure a future in which the lifestyles of the most privileged are undisturbed: those of us who can afford to will drive an electric car; we might fly by hydrogen plane; we will continue to consume enormous levels of resources; and we will store continued greenhouse gas emissions underground or in forests planted in poorer regions. This vision may be politically expedient for leaders in the global North, but it will not address the fundamentally flawed economic system responsible for both the environmental and inequality crises.

The experience of the Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated that governments can mobilise massive resources and shift behaviours almost immediately. The climate and inequality crises require a comparably concerted effort, but this time it must be sustained to improve lives now and to ensure a liveable planet for generations to come.

## UK emissions and climate policy

The UK is the 17<sup>th</sup> highest GHG emitter globally, contributing 1.1% of total global emissions.<sup>7</sup> This obscures historical emissions, which are an estimated 3% of cumulative global emissions, making the UK the 8<sup>th</sup> largest emitter.<sup>8</sup> This too is underestimated as it is based on territorial emissions and excludes those for which the UK was responsible as a colonial power and those embodied in imported goods, which could account for almost half the UK’s carbon footprint.<sup>9</sup> The UK government has committed to reducing territorial emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels, with a pledge to reach net-zero emissions by 2050.<sup>10</sup> This target itself has been criticised as insufficient by the climate justice movement<sup>11</sup> and some climate scientists<sup>12</sup>, while mounting evidence suggests the government is off-track, even by its own standards.<sup>13</sup> We know that the bulk of emissions mitigation needs to happen this decade,<sup>14</sup> but government policy continues to support carbon-intensive projects while offering limited support for activities and investments which would actually reduce emissions and repair ecological damage.<sup>15</sup>

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7 House of Commons Library (2021) [UK and global emissions and temperature trends](#)

8 Carbon Brief (2021) [Which countries are historically responsible for climate change?](#)

9 Harvey, F., *The Guardian* (2020) [Half UK’s true carbon footprint created abroad, research finds](#)

10 BEIS and Ofgem (2021) [Transitioning to a net zero energy system: Smart Systems and Flexibility Plan 2021](#)

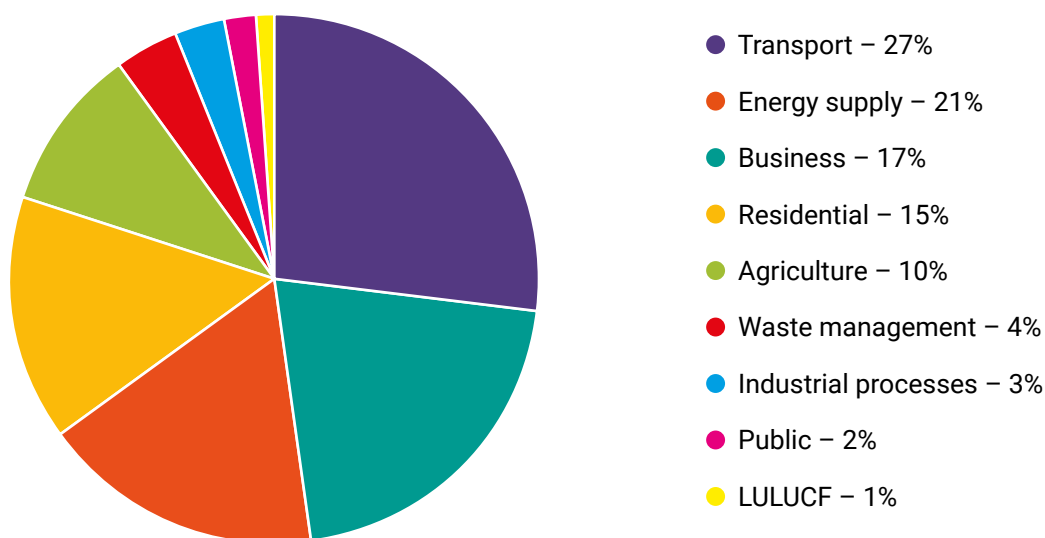
11 See [Christian Aid’s fair share infographic](#) for a calculation of the UK’s “fair share” target.

12 Anderson, K., Broderick, J.F., and Stoddard, I., *Climate Policy* (2020) [A factor of two: how the mitigation plans of “climate progressive” nations fall far short of Paris-compliant pathways](#)

13 [Climate Change Committee](#) and the [Lords Industry and Regulators Committee](#)

14 McGrath, M., *BBC* (2022) [Climate change: IPCC scientists say it’s ‘now or never’ to limit warming](#)

15 Greenpeace (2022) [Boris Johnson’s new energy strategy: five reasons why it won’t work](#)

Figure 1: Territorial UK greenhouse gas emissions by sector, 2019<sup>16</sup>

Source: ONS data on UK greenhouse gas emissions, 2019  
Note: LULUCF is land use, land use change and forestry.

As Figure 1 shows, an estimated 27% of UK GHG emissions came from the transport sector, followed by energy supply, business (including fuel combustion for industrial processes), residential homes (primarily heating and cooking) and agriculture.<sup>17</sup> Within industrial sectors, agricultural products, gas production, and air transport were the highest emitters, producing an annual 136 million tonnes of GHG emissions collectively.<sup>18</sup> Addressing UK emissions requires dramatic change across economic sectors. Energy-intensive sectors will need to transition from fossil fuel use and polluting production and behaviours or, where possible, reorient their activity altogether towards more sustainable ends, while retraining and retaining workers. Some industries will need to be phased out, ensuring a just transition for workers. A green and caring economy also requires a broader definition of a just transition, one that addresses existing inequalities in the labour market and fundamentally reorients the economy to meet the needs of all.

16 We refer to 2019 data here because 2020 was an anomalous year due to COVID-19-related restrictions, and the final statistics for 2021 are not yet available.

17 BEIS (2021) 2019 UK greenhouse gas emissions: final figures – statistical release

18 Ibid.

## Energy Use

While energy demand shows no sign of slowing down, an estimated 759 million people still lack access to electricity globally and a staggering 2.6 billion people rely on dangerous and polluting cooking fuels with enormous health impacts, disproportionately shouldered by women.<sup>19</sup> Addressing this inequality does not mean turning the lights out for the rest of us. Indeed, recent research has shown that we could reduce global energy demand by 60% by 2050 while ensuring decent living standards for all.<sup>20</sup> That means those of us in the global North, and especially the most affluent who use the most energy, must consume less.

Emissions from UK energy supply have fallen by 66% since 1990.<sup>21</sup> Most of this was achieved by switching from coal and high-emitting fuels to natural gas and, more recently, renewables.<sup>22</sup> As oil and gas prices soar, deepening the cost-of-living crisis for those on low-incomes, the UK government has an opportunity to scale up renewable energy, support households to reduce demand through measures such as home insulation, and lower bills now through adequately taxing<sup>23</sup> oil and gas producers which are making record profits.<sup>24</sup> Instead, from 2016-2020 the UK government provided £13.6 billion in subsidies to the oil and gas industry in the form of tax breaks and decommissioning relief.<sup>25</sup> The new energy security strategy instead looks to maximise North Sea oil and gas production, depends on expensive, uncertain and long-term expansion of nuclear energy, and offers no new support for households struggling with energy costs now.<sup>26</sup> As the International Energy Agency has said, expanding oil and gas production is incompatible with limiting global heating to 1.5C, the Paris Agreement goal.<sup>27</sup> Ignoring this warning risks locking us into fossil fuel infrastructure and jobs when we should be investing in good jobs in low-carbon sectors.

Feminist economists have called for an energy system built on democratic, decolonial and decentralised principles, prioritising wellbeing and biodiversity over profit.<sup>28</sup> This means not only switching to renewable energy, but also reducing energy demand and changing ownership models. There is evidence that a community wealth building approach to local renewable energy can prioritise environmental and social value over profit.<sup>29</sup> However, while community and locally owned energy initiatives can be empowering for citizens, they are also vulnerable to market changes driven by a profit-driven system. Across Europe, community-owned energy has declined as governments have phased out incentives for micro renewable energy generation and exposed them to market competition.<sup>30</sup> Nationalising the energy system and removing the

19 UN, Sustainable Development Goal 7

20 Millward-Hopkins, J., Steinberger, J.K., Rao, N.D. and Oswald, Y., *Global Environmental Change* (2020) [Providing decent living with minimum energy: A global scenario](#)

21 [2019 UK greenhouse gas emissions: final figures – statistical release](#)

22 BEIS (2020) [Measuring UK greenhouse gas emissions](#)

23 While the government was right to introduce, belatedly, a windfall tax in May 2022, but this is undermined by the deliberate loophole that discounts the tax for oil and gas companies investing in the North Sea, which is incompatible with UK climate commitments.

24 Lawson, A, *The Guardian* (2022) [Shell profits soar to \\$9.1bn amid calls for windfall tax](#)

25 Paid to Pollute (2021) [UK has given £14bn in subsidies to oil and gas industry](#)

26 BEIS (2022) [Major acceleration of homegrown power in Britain's plan for greater energy independence](#)

27 IEA (2021) [Pathway to critical and formidable goal of net-zero emissions by 2050 is narrow but brings huge benefits, according to IEA special report](#)

28 Bell, S.E., Daggett, C. and Labuski, C., *Energy Research and Social Science* (2020) [Toward feminist energy systems: Why adding women and solar panels is not enough](#)

29 CLES (2021) [Toolkit: a community wealth building energy transition](#)

30 Sweeney, S., Treat, J. and HongPing Shen, I., Trade Unions for Energy Democracy (2020) [Transition in Trouble? The Rise and Fall of "Community Energy" in Europe](#)



profit incentive entirely would allow us to redesign it around need, transition to fully renewable energy, and create good, green jobs. We know that the government can step in to the energy system, as it did in 2021 when the energy crisis caused mass bankruptcy among providers.<sup>31</sup> In France, where the state owns 80% of the national provider EDF, the government has capped the energy bill rise to 4%, in stark contrast to the 54% rise in the UK.<sup>32</sup>

There are multiple ways to renationalise energy, including issuing a bond to the financial markets to take advantage of near-record low interest rates to finance acquisition or through Quantitative Easing (QE), which central banks have used in the recent past to bail out banks and industries deemed “too big to fail”. But instead of leaving their operating models intact, as was done in the 2008 financial crisis, QE coordinated between the Treasury and Bank of England could be used to buy out energy companies, making them answerable to the public in a new era of energy democracy.<sup>33</sup> Nationalisation is also popular, with polls showing that 60% support bringing energy back into public ownership.<sup>34</sup>

## Greening sectors

A green and caring economy will require some sectors to shrink, some to grow, and others to dramatically change the way they operate. As the Women’s Budget Group green jobs paper set out, this will reshape the labour market and a just transition that guarantees affected workers good, green jobs and a say in the process is crucial.<sup>35</sup> The most polluting industries will need to transition to renewable energy and in many cases reduce their activity, or wind down completely as in the case of oil and gas, although we will continue to need energy-intensive materials such as steel for low-carbon infrastructure. While we need to reduce energy and material-intensive production, we will increase labour-intensive activity in inherently low-carbon social infrastructure including care, health, and education, while further reducing these sectors’ environmental impact.

All sectors will need to reduce their material throughput i.e. the total amount of matter and energy involved at every stage of the economic cycle: extraction, production, use and disposal. This could be done by using sustainable materials, making production processes less energy-, resource- and water-intensive, decreasing waste materials, linking input and output materials to a local circular economy, shortening supply chains, and banning non-essential single use plastics. We have chosen three example sectors – construction, the garment industry, and health and care – that will remain key in a green and caring economy but will need to change in different ways. We look briefly at these in order to demonstrate some of the specific challenges facing different industries, while changes to other sectors are described in relation to lifestyle changes below.

31 Sky News (2021) [Taxpayers left with £1.7bn bill as Bulb, UK’s seventh-biggest energy firm, collapses](#)

32 Ambrose, J., *The Guardian* (2022) [France to force EDF to take 8.4bn hit with energy bill cap](#)

33 See, for example, Bozuwa, J. and Skandier, C., Common Wealth (2019) [Shifting Ownership for the energy Transition in the Green New Deal](#)

34 Mahmood, B., Left Foot Forward (2021) [60% of UK adults support bringing energy companies back into public ownership, poll finds](#)

35 Johnston, A., and Reis, S., Women’s Budget Group (2022) [Labour Market Changes for a Green, Caring Economy](#)

## Construction

Construction is both high emitter and crucial to providing low-carbon infrastructure. Greening existing commercial and residential building stock is urgent, particularly the 19 million homes that need to be retrofitted with energy efficiency measures. Measures such as double-glazing and heat pumps are currently expensive so government will need to subsidise their installation, especially for those on low incomes. Residents in social housing are ill-equipped to reduce emissions from often leaky homes and existing support falls far short of what is needed: the government's ten-year £3.8bn Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund forces councils to compete for funding and even successful bidders can only retrofit a fraction of their housing stock. There needs to be a plan for retrofitting private-rented housing as market incentives do not apply: the person benefitting from reduced fuel bills (the tenant) is not the same as the person investing in insulation and renewable energy sources (the landlord). The New Economics Foundation estimates that a green stimulus for housing of £35.6bn to upgrade seven million homes could save over 40 million tonnes of GHG emissions over four years, equivalent to the annual emissions of 9 coal-fired power stations.<sup>36</sup> This would also create an average 295,000 jobs per year across the UK.<sup>37</sup> The government could further incentivise home upgrades by zero-rating VAT on this work. Retrofitting would drive down energy costs, crucially for 13% of households in fuel poverty<sup>38</sup> and save the NHS money by preventing excess winter deaths due to cold and damp housing. As the Royal Academy of Engineering has urged, refurbishing existing buildings should be incentivised over demolishing and rebuilding, which is far more carbon intensive.<sup>39</sup>

We do, however, also need to build new low-carbon social housing and affordable homes, using low-impact and recycled materials. Internal form and design must be responsive to different and changing needs such as care throughout life and different mobility needs, and should cater for diverse families, including multigenerational households. The CCC identifies resource efficiency, energy efficiency, and materials substitution as key to reducing construction emissions.<sup>40</sup> Reducing reliance on concrete, which alone contributes 1.5% of UK GHG emissions, is fundamental to this.<sup>41</sup> Using locally sourced materials, such as cob and chalk, and circular economic processes would improve transparency in the environmental footprint of building materials as well as reducing the pollution caused by long-distance transportation. Some materials, such as straw bale and hemp, trap carbon in the walls of buildings. This would also support new local businesses and the reuse and recycling of building materials.<sup>42</sup> These changes would require extensive up-skilling and retraining of the current workforce. Ensuring women and workers from minority ethnic backgrounds are overrepresented in these opportunities would rectify their current underrepresentation as only 12.5% and 5.4% of the workforce respectively.<sup>43</sup> The sector should also improve conditions for its workforce, a large proportion of whom are migrants and on temporary and insecure contracts.

36 Brown, D., Wheatley, H., Kumar, C. and Marshall, J., New Economics Foundation (2020) [Green Stimulus for Housing](#)

37 Ibid.

38 ONS (2022) [Fuel Poverty statistics for England](#) (data from 2020, before current energy and cost of living crisis),

39 Harrabin, R., *BBC* (2021) [Climate change: Construction companies told to stop knocking down buildings](#)

40 Climate Change Committee (2020) [The Sixth Carbon Budget: Manufacturing and construction](#)

41 Institute of Civil Engineers (2022) [Construction sector could more than halve emissions from concrete by 2035 – industry task force](#)

42 Gibbons, A., Women's Budget Group (2021) [Rethinking Housing Supply and Design](#)

43 Watkins, O., and Hochlaf, D., IPPR (2021) [Skills for a Green Recovery: A call to action for the UK construction sector](#)

## The garment industry

The production, transportation, sale, and use of goods we buy every year through the UK retail sector produce 200 million tonnes of GHG emissions.<sup>44</sup> We need to reduce the impact of all the goods we consume, but the garment industry is a particularly egregious case. The global fashion industry provides a graphic manifestation of the extractive logics of our current economic system, which jointly exploits nature and labour, predominantly in the global South and disproportionately performed by women. The industry is responsible for 4% of total GHG emissions, equivalent to the combined annual emissions of France, Germany and the UK. Approximately 70% of this comes from the “upstream” activities of production, and 30% from “downstream” retail, use and end-of-use activities.<sup>45</sup> It also uses five trillion litres of water annually for fabric dyeing alone.<sup>46</sup> This is compounded by the harmful impacts of using chemicals in production and petrochemicals to make ubiquitous materials like polyester. In the UK, we now buy five times the amount of clothes we bought in the 1980s, with the advent of “fast fashion” contributing to an estimated 350,000 tonnes of waste each year.<sup>47</sup> The fashion industry is also notorious for widespread abysmal working conditions, tragically demonstrated by the collapse of the Rana Plaza garment factory building in Bangladesh, which killed over 1,100 people, mostly young women, in 2013.<sup>48</sup>

Reducing the impact of the garment industry means reducing consumption, notably buying fewer clothes which last longer. This means contracting parts of the sector and improving the remainder, which should be done in consultation with trade unions, ensuring that workers receive fair compensation and retraining through a genuinely just transition. Ensuring the right to organise is particularly crucial in the global South, where union-busting is rife and employers see women workers as “cheap and compliant”.<sup>49</sup> Remaining production must prioritise sustainable and recycled materials, shorten supply chains, improve working conditions across the supply chain, and ensure transparency, adherence to environmental, human and animal rights protections. Many jobs could be retained and improved by reducing the pressure to produce as much as possible, reorienting them towards sustainable practices, and by reducing working hours without loss of pay.

The economic impact on producing countries must be carefully managed to ensure that a smaller garment industry does not push marginalised workers into jobs with even worse pay and conditions. Environmental and worker protections could be mandated in binding clauses in trade agreements. The UK could adopt steps towards a new strategy for the textile sector based on the Clean Clothes Campaign’s demands of the EU: this includes setting a quantitative target for material and consumption footprint reduction while ensuring a just transition; setting targets for the re-use of textiles creating new, quality jobs; ensuring Ecodesign measures go beyond recyclability and recycled content to focus on design for longer lifetimes; phasing out harmful substances through regulatory action; and requiring transparency on producers’ environmental and social impacts.<sup>50</sup>

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44 British Retail Council (2021) [Climate Action Roadmap](#)

45 McKinsey (2020) [Fashion on climate: How the fashion industry can urgently act to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions](#)

46 World Resources Institute (2017) [The Apparel Industry’s Impact in 6 Graphics](#)

47 Laville, S., *The Guardian* (2019) [The story of a £4 Boohoo dress: cheap clothes at a high cost](#)

48 War on Want (2021) [Rana Plaza Never Again](#)

49 Jenkins, J., *Theory and Struggle* (2020) [Struggle in the garment sector](#)

50 Clean Clothes Campaign (2022) [Don’t lose the thread: the need for an ambitious and tangible vision to change the textile sector](#)

A more sustainable garment sector would produce more expensive clothes, which would reduce demand and consumption. Fast fashion has enabled even those on low incomes to access the latest trends and a move to lower consumption could be controversial. Our increasing appetite for throwaway goods is driven by an overactive advertising industry that completely obscures the human and ecological costs embedded across the supply chain. Instead, we need a national public education programme to ensure people understand where their clothes come from, and what impact their production, use, and disposal have on both people and planet. In a green and caring economy, everyone would have access to the clothes they need, but these would be high quality, durable clothes designed to be re-worn, repaired, and reused rather than thrown away. To enable this, the government should support a circular economy approach, fostering new and widespread services in textile repair, reuse and rental. Additionally, the tax system should be used to shift company and consumer behaviour away from unsustainable practices, for example by following Sweden's lead in reducing VAT on repair services, as the Environmental Audit Committee has called for.<sup>51</sup>

### What is a circular economy?

A circular economy is one in which products, materials and resources are used and reused for as long as possible, reducing energy use and waste in contrast to the mainstream “extract, make and dispose” model. This is particularly crucial for the metals and minerals necessary for an energy transition, which could be recovered from existing waste to reduce the need for ecologically damaging mining. The circular economy is often summarised as recycling, but its principles should also address consumption, applying throughout the design, production, use and disposal processes to ensure that products are designed to be long-lasting, reusable and repairable. While some proponents of a circular economy believe it can be achieved by reforming our current economic system, others have called for a circular society in which wealth, knowledge, technology and power are also circulated and redistributed.<sup>52</sup> This latter approach is more in line with a green and caring economy.

### Health and Care

In the UK, healthcare is responsible for an estimated 5.4% of domestic emissions. The carbon-intensity of this work, however, is relatively low, given the large number of jobs it entails.<sup>53</sup> On average, health and care jobs are 26 times less emission intensive than manufacturing jobs, over 200 times less intensive than agriculture jobs and nearly 1,500 times less intensive than jobs in the oil and gas sector.<sup>54</sup> But considerable work is needed to make these sectors greener. To start, like all other sectors, health and care organisations should immediately remove any investments from fossil fuel companies. Removing the profit incentive, particularly from social care, where privatisation has compromised quality and exacerbated a staffing crisis, would

51 Environmental Audit Committee (2019) [Government must end era of throwaway fashion](#)

52 See Friant, M.C., Vermeulen, J.V. and Salomone, R., *Resources, Conservation and Recycling* (2020) [A typology of circular economy discourses: Navigating the diverse visions of a contested paradigm](#) and War on Want (2021) [A Material Transition](#)

53 ARUP (2019) [Health Care's Climate Footprint](#)

54 WBG analysis of ONS Emissions Inventory and Business Register and Employment Survey, 2019

allow providers to redirect resources away from shareholders and towards improving care and reducing its environmental impact. Reducing energy throughput (for example, from travel) and waste (such as single-use plastics) should be prioritised across the UK. This will require innovation in where and by whom care is delivered, as well as investing in preventative health and educating the public on healthy lifestyles.<sup>55</sup> There is some progress in this area, with the “Sustainable Social Care Programme”<sup>56</sup> and the NHS pledge to become the world’s first health service to commit to reaching net-zero emissions by 2040 for its own operations and by 2045 across its supply chain.<sup>57</sup> In British Columbia, Canada, the government responded to the Covid-19 crisis by taking over as the employer of all long-term care workers.<sup>58</sup> Facing the climate crisis, the UK government could similarly ensure the care sector reduced its impact more easily and coherently if local authorities were empowered to take over private care providers as the Women’s Budget Group has previously recommended.<sup>59</sup>

## Sustainable lifestyle change

The rest of this paper will focus on changing lifestyles for a green and caring economy. We need to consume less and differently, especially the most affluent among us. The economic growth imperative has caused an exponential growth in consumption, as capital constantly searches for new markets of consumers and new seams of labour and natural resources to exploit. Of course, we all need to consume goods and services, but huge disparities in consumption levels between and within countries, show some groups are over-consuming, while others consume hardly enough to get by. Globally, the richest 10% of people consume about 20 times more energy than the bottom tenth.<sup>60</sup> In the UK, 25% of us are in the top 5% of energy consumers globally, compared to only 2% of Chinese people and 0.02% of those in India.<sup>61</sup> There is also massive inequality within the UK, where the poorest half of the population consume less energy than the richest 5%.<sup>62</sup> Research shows that as consumption levels, particularly among the richest, grow, their environmental impact has “cancelled out” the environmental gains achieved by technological advancement in areas such as renewable energy.<sup>63</sup> Reducing consumption, rather than just “greening” it, is therefore crucial.

This is not about individual behaviour versus systemic change: we will need to overhaul the current economic system, legal framework, international trade and financial systems which shape consumer choice. Most consumers have limited power to reduce the emissions of the goods and services they consume in the absence of government intervention to make low or no-carbon options cheaper and more accessible. We might be able to drive a bit less, or eat more locally, but this depends on alternatives being available and affordable. We need structural change to enable us to make significantly greener lifestyle choices such as taking public

55 Cohen, M., and MacGregor, S., Women’s Budget Group (2021) [A Draft Roadmap for a Feminist Green New Deal](#)

56 Social Care Institute for Excellence, [Sustainable social care programme](#)

57 NHS (2020) [Greener NHS](#)

58 Wyton, M., *The Tyee* (2020) [BC Boosts Pay for Long-Term Care Workers amidst COVID-19](#)

59 Women’s Budget Group (2021) [Crises Collide: Women and Covid-19](#)

60 Oswald, Y., Owen, A., and Steinberger, J., *Nature Energy* (2020) [Large inequality in international and intranational energy footprints between income groups and across consumption categories](#)

61 Ibid.

62 Garcia, A.C., Ambrose, A., Hawkin, A. and Parkes, S., *Energy Research and Social Science* (2021) [High consumption, an unsustainable habit that needs more attention](#)

63 Wiedmann, T, Lenzen, M., Keyßer, L.T. and Steinberger, J.K., *Nature Communications* (2020) [Scientists warning on affluence](#)

transport, changing our energy source at home, or eating more sustainably. But the rich do have the power to dramatically reduce their consumption and resulting environmental impact, and we should be frank that they will need to do so. Instead of a tiny minority monopolising land, resources, and even atmospheric space for private luxury, we need a new approach to public luxury, in which everyone has access to decent housing, nature, and excellent public amenities.<sup>64</sup>

The latest IPCC report notes that changing consumer behaviour has been substantially “overlooked” as a strategy to achieve climate goals.<sup>65</sup> For the first time, it has a section on behavioural change which says lowering demand would “significantly reduce” the challenge of mitigation, potentially reducing emissions by an extraordinary 40-70% by 2050.<sup>66</sup> It would also ease pressure on land, and would reduce reliance on controversial and uncertain carbon removal technologies and carbon markets.<sup>67</sup> Crucially, the IPCC says that demand-side measures are “consistent with improving basic wellbeing for all”.<sup>68</sup> So, if we reorient consumption around needs rather than profits, we can all live well within planetary boundaries.

We can do this through policy interventions including taxes, subsidies, and regulations, as well as re-evaluating whole sectors of our economy, for example investing massively in low-carbon social infrastructure. Citizen juries have found that people were broadly in favour of green taxation where consumer taxes are implemented fairly (with those most polluting paying the highest costs), effectively, transparently, and simply.<sup>69</sup> Changes must be implemented alongside measures to ensure those in low-income households are not disadvantaged and are able to access services and resources. In some cases, low-income households will need to consume more to meet their essential needs and improve their living standards.

When planning sustainable lifestyle changes, it is crucial to account for gendered differences in terms of time use, need and priorities.<sup>70</sup> Involving people in decision-making processes and creating spaces for local people and stakeholders to meet, connect and collaborate is key. Community wealth-building approaches have shown that people are more likely to support change when they can see the benefits. Extending this, reforming ownership models so that need is prioritised over profit can give communities a say over what and how goods and services are provided. Interventions should be accompanied by a public education campaign that communicates the benefits of consuming less and differently as a society.

## How we travel

Energy use is most unequal when it comes to transport. Globally, the richest tenth of the population consumes 187 times as much fuel as the poorest tenth.<sup>71</sup> In the UK, domestic transport is the largest sectoral contributor to the UK’s territorial emissions, with the vast

64 Monbiot, G., Schumacher Center for New Economics (2020) [Private Sufficiency, Public Luxury: Land is the key to the transformation of society](#)

65 IPCC (2022) [6th Assessment Report: Mitigation of Climate Change](#)

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

69 Green Alliance (2021) [A greener tax system: The people’s verdict](#)

70 Cohen, M. and MacGregor, S., Women’s Budget Group (2020) [Towards a Feminist Green New Deal for the UK](#)

71 Oswald, Y et al, [Large inequality in international and intranational energy footprints](#)

majority coming from private cars.<sup>72</sup> The government has supported the shift to electric vehicles (EVs) by ending the sale of petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030 and requiring that all new cars and vans must be zero emissions by 2035.<sup>73</sup> Yet a transition to EVs is not a panacea. Firstly, while they do not produce GHG emissions themselves, they still largely run on electricity generated by fossil fuels: in the UK only about 40% of electricity is generated from renewable sources.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, the production process for EV batteries is carbon-intensive, and they require mining raw materials which exacerbates global injustices as materials are concentrated in countries within the global South, whilst consumers are largely in industrialised countries.<sup>75</sup>

Car-centric policy and planning have caused “public transport deserts”, especially in rural areas where public transport is particularly inadequate and local government investment is declining.<sup>76</sup> Women, people from minority ethnic backgrounds, disabled people and those on low incomes are less likely to own a car.<sup>77</sup> But this does not insure them against the effects of congestion, air pollution, and lack of public space associated with car-centred design. Remarkably, privately-owned cars spend 96% of their time parked,<sup>78</sup> taking up space that could be used for children’s play, green space, socialising or exercising. Air pollution from cars causes approximately 8,400 UK deaths every year and one in five childhood asthma cases: government figures estimate the health and social costs of air pollution to be £157 million every year.<sup>79</sup> An emphasis on road-based emissions solutions and private vehicle ownership will reproduce existing inequalities.

As Women’s Budget Group research on gender-inclusive transport showed, transport systems are generally designed around commutes into city centres and do not adequately enable care-related journeys, disproportionately taken by women.<sup>80</sup> Recognising that road transport will continue to be needed for those with particular needs, including some disabled people, safe, accessible, and affordable travel should be prioritised alongside greening the transport sector. We need public investment in a well-connected, integrated, and widespread national public transport system, with an emphasis on improving bus services and active travel routes.<sup>81</sup> Expanding and improving public transport would create jobs, which could be prioritised for those moving out of sectors that will shrink, including aviation – where automation has already displaced many workers – and car manufacturing and servicing. Furthermore, investment in public transport is popular, with a Women’s Budget Group poll finding that 61% of people are willing to pay more tax to support it.<sup>82</sup>

Flights from the UK account for around 7% of UK-based emissions.<sup>83</sup> While most other sectors have begun to lower their emissions, those from aviation have steadily risen. As the Climate

72 BEIS (2021) [2019 UK greenhouse gas emissions](#)

73 Green Jobs Taskforce (2021) [Report to Government, Industry and the Skills Sector](#)

74 BEIS (2022) [Statistical Release: Energy Trends](#)

75 Lam, T., Women’s Budget Group (2021) [Towards Gender-Inclusive Sustainable Transport Systems](#)

76 ONS (2022) [Infrastructure in the UK, investment and net stocks: May 2022](#)

77 Lam, T., [Towards Gender-Inclusive Sustainable Transport Systems](#)

78 Murray, L., Common Wealth (2019) [Away with All Cars \(Redux\)](#)

79 O’Hare, R., Imperial College London (2018) [Air pollution in England could cost as much as £5.3 billion by 2035](#)

80 Lam, T., [Towards Gender-Inclusive Sustainable Transport Systems](#)

81 Ibid.

82 Women’s Budget Group (2020) [New Polling: Public wants an economy that prioritises care and equality and they are willing to pay more tax for this](#)

83 BEIS (2021) [Final UK greenhouse gas emissions national statistics: 1990 to 2019](#)

Change Committee has made clear, technological change and the introduction of “sustainable” fuels will not be enough to reduce aviation emissions in line with the UK’s climate commitments. But, ignoring its advice that demand must be reduced, the government’s recent Jet Zero strategy projects an astonishing 70% increase in passenger numbers by 2050. Analysis by the New Economics Foundation shows that recent airport expansion plans wildly underestimate the cost of increased emissions and overestimate the benefits to local economies.<sup>84</sup> Instead of relying on a technological miracle and gambling on carbon offsets, the government must stop airport expansion and urgently manage demand.<sup>85</sup> One way of doing this equitably would be through a frequent flyer levy that rose progressively with the number of flights a consumer took each year.<sup>86</sup> In the UK, 70% of flights are taken by a wealthy 15% of the population, while over half the population does not fly at all during a year.<sup>87</sup> It is therefore an affluent subset of the population whose behaviour will most need to change.

## What and how we eat

The food we eat is entwined with our social and cultural habits, and it remains an area in which government is loath to intervene. But we are also disconnected from the way our food is produced and the people who produce it: most of us buy food without knowing where it comes from, how many processes it has been through or under what working conditions it was picked, cooked, or packed. Our food system is characterised by inequality, with over 2.1m people relying on food banks in 2021/22,<sup>88</sup> while 9.5 million tonnes of food is wasted every year.<sup>89</sup> Jobs in agriculture, food production and retail are also among the lowest-paid and most precarious in our economy and are disproportionately occupied by women and migrants.<sup>90</sup> A green and caring economy would reform the way we eat, valuing the natural resources and people who produce food, while dramatically reducing its environmental impact and improving public health.

Agriculture accounts for 10% of UK GHG emissions, while food and drink manufacture and processing are also highly carbon-intensive.<sup>91</sup> We import around half of our food, so the true impact of our food consumption is much higher. The most obvious shift needed is reducing meat and dairy intake and moving towards more plant-based diets. Globally, the livestock industry accounts for 14.5% of GHG emissions. In countries with high levels of meat and dairy consumption, like the UK, shifting to plant-based diets could cut diet-related emissions by 73% and would require 70-80% less farmland<sup>92</sup>, freeing it up for rewilding which would draw down target and address biodiversity loss. Our overconsumption of meat is also associated with poor health: Public Health England recommends that for a healthy diet we should reduce consumption of red meat by 78%, white meat by 86% while increasing our intake of fruit and

84 Chapman, A., and Postle, M., New Economics Foundation (2021) [Turbulence Expected: The climate cost of airport expansion](#)

85 Chapman, A., New Economics Foundation (2022) [On a wing and a prayer: Five ways the government's irresponsible plans for aviation are putting us all at risk](#)

86 Chapman, A., Murray, L., Carpenter, G., Heisse, C. and Prieg, L., New Economics Foundation and Possible (2021) [A frequent flyer levy: sharing aviation's carbon budget in a net-zero world](#)

87 Harrabin, R., BBC (2021) [A few frequent flyers 'dominate air travel'](#)

88 Trussell Trust (2022) [Food bank provide more than 2.1 million food parcels to people across the UK in past year](#)

89 WRAP (2021) [Food Surplus and Waste in the UK: Key Facts](#)

90 IPPR (2021) Coleman, P., Nyman, M., Murphy, L. and Oyeboode, O., IPPR (2021) [Building a food system that works for everyone](#)

91 BEIS (2021) [2019 UK greenhouse gas emissions](#)

92 Carmichael, R., Climate Change Committee (2019) [Behaviour change, public engagement and Net Zero](#)



vegetables by 54%.<sup>93</sup> Consumer behaviour has already begun to change, with more people choosing vegan, vegetarian, and “flexitarian” diets, but, as the CCC notes, the shift we need “will not happen if left to the market, individuals, or voluntary industry initiatives”.<sup>94</sup>

Consuming less meat and dairy isn’t enough: we need to eat more whole, fresh, and locally produced food. One barrier is cost, with sustainable and healthy diets costing an estimated three times as much as food containing high levels of sugar and fat.<sup>95</sup> Campaigners have called for a Right to Food to ensure everyone has access to nutritious food. Ensuring this food is sustainably produced and locally sourced where possible will require demand-side interventions to ensure access for low-income households, for example through universal free, healthy school meals, and supply-side measures to shift land use towards nature-friendly farming.<sup>96</sup> As in other areas of our economy which we need to survive and thrive, food production should be reoriented around need instead of profit. This means democratising food production away from agri-businesses that gobble up and contaminate common land and water, often in some of the poorest communities, profit from patenting seeds<sup>97</sup>, and mistreat workers.<sup>98</sup> Public investment should support alternative ownership models including community-owned and county farms.

Producing more of the food that we consume in the UK is fundamental to reducing our environmental impact and improving our food security. Farmers will need help to move away from synthetic fertilisers, pesticides and fossil fuels, and to use more of their land for growing sustainable crops for human consumption rather than animal feed and bioenergy crops.<sup>99</sup> This has dramatic implications for jobs: existing workers will need upskilling and retraining to diversify away from livestock and monocultures and to apply agroecological methods. Agroecology aims to create a sustainable and fair food system by applying ecological principles that optimise interactions between plants, animals, humans, and the environment.<sup>100</sup> These methods are generally more labour-intensive, with shorter supply chains, less reliance on machinery, fertilisers, and pesticides, and would therefore be a source of green jobs, particularly in rural areas. This is an opportunity to attract younger workers as well as more women into agriculture jobs by offering meaningful work and decent pay and conditions. As the Women’s Budget Group labour market paper notes, a reformed food system could also create new jobs in community food preparation. Without these new jobs and reforms to the working week (see section below), the increased labour involved in buying and preparing more whole and local foods is likely to fall on women, exacerbating existing inequalities in unpaid labour.<sup>101</sup>

93 Ibid.

94 Ibid.

95 The Food Foundation (2021) [The Broken Plate Report](#)

96 Booth, R., Common Wealth (2022) [A Right to Food Systems](#)

97 Peschard, K.E., *The Conversation* (2019) [Monsanto wins \\$7.7b lawsuit in Brazil - but farmers’ fight to stop its ‘amoral’ royalty system will continue](#)

98 Abbott, C., *Mother Jones* (2017) [Monsanto just got hit with a lawsuit it didn’t see coming](#)

99 Sustain (2022) [Sustain Alliance writes to George Eustice re agricultural transition and food security](#)

100 Sustain, [An agroecology future](#)

101 Johnston and Reis, [Labour Market Changes for a Green, Caring Economy](#)

## How we work

Almost 100 years ago, John Maynard Keynes predicted that societies like ours would have a 15-hour working week by now. Although we are working fewer hours than we were in 1930, when Keynes was writing, technological progress and widespread access to material goods have not delivered his prediction. As David Graeber argues, the displacement of materially productive work in the global North by automation and cheaper labour in the Global South has been accompanied by the rise in jobs to service the evolving needs of capitalism, in sectors like financial services, marketing, public relations and ancillary services.<sup>102</sup> He points out that if workers are kept busy, they do not have time to organise against the forces that keep them struggling for little reward in a grossly unequal society. Work itself has long been cast as moral value, from the Victorian workhouses that punished ‘idlers’ to the castigation of “benefits scroungers” today. In a green and caring economy, we would rethink both how we work and how much we work, prioritising socially valuable work, redistributing paid and unpaid work, and freeing up time for other pursuits.

As we have argued, changes in consumption patterns would rebalance the economy away from energy-intensive work and towards labour-intensive work in social infrastructure. The pandemic revealed that the jobs we most need, in sectors like health, care, education, and food services, are often poorly paid and insecure. We need many more of these jobs, and we need to properly value the workers who do them. All sectors should be desegregated, with equal access to employment opportunities and decent pay and conditions guaranteed for all workers.<sup>103</sup> One way of redistributing paid and unpaid work is through a shorter working week, spreading jobs and unpaid work among a larger number of people. Implemented as part of a comprehensive package of pro-labour policy and institutions, public investment in universal basic services, and careful planning and impact assessment, shorter working hours can help lower gender gaps in paid and unpaid work and in wages<sup>104</sup> and improve wellbeing.<sup>105</sup> Against a background of improved and expanded childcare and care provision, reformed parental leave, greater job security and higher minimum wages, a shorter working week would allow more women into the workforce and men to spend more time on domestic work and care.

Recent analysis suggests that introducing a four-day week without loss of pay could reduce the UK’s carbon footprint by 127 million tonnes per year by 2025, equivalent to taking 27 million cars off the road.<sup>106</sup> A pandemic-related shift to more homeworking has already reduced emissions from commuting, although many workers cannot perform their jobs at home. But for those with short commutes or who previously used public transport, remote working can increase their emissions by shifting energy use (and cost) from workplace to home.<sup>107</sup> A hybrid model that includes more shared office spaces closer to homes could further reduce the need to commute. A shorter working week would crucially address consumption emissions, which are harder to reduce through government levers. Evidence shows that working longer hours is

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102 Graeber, D. (2018) *Bullshit Jobs: A Theory*

103 Johnston and Reis, [Labour Market Changes for a Green, Caring Economy](#)

104 Onaran, Ö. And Jump, R.C., Women’s Budget Group (2022) [A shorter working week as part of a green caring economy](#)

105 Soojung-Kim, P. (2017) Rest: Why You Get More Done When You Work Less

106 Mompelat, L., Platform (2021) [4 Day Week: Stop the Clock: The Environmental Benefits of a Shorter Working Week](#)

107 IEA (2020) [Working from home can save energy and reduce emissions. But how much?](#)

correlated with more environmentally harmful consumption patterns.<sup>108</sup> Working less could free up time for lower impact behaviours such as spending time with family and friends, exercising, shopping locally and home cooking, walking and cycling to destinations and volunteering.<sup>109</sup> Additional levers such as increasing the minimum wage and improving access to services, amenities, and nature would be necessary to ensure that those currently on low incomes could take advantage of free time rather than using it to seek additional employment. A green and caring economy would see beyond market value and recognise the social and environmental value of the much more diverse set of roles a person has, and could have, in society.

## How we care

Care, paid and unpaid, will be revolutionised in a green and caring economy. As energy-intensive sectors of the economy contract, low-carbon social infrastructure like care will expand, improving the quality and reach of services and redressing inequality for those who currently can't afford or access the services they need. Creating millions of new jobs would also reduce the burden on the 13.6 million unpaid carers, overrepresented by women, while changes in the workplace (see above) would redistribute unpaid care more equitably within the home.<sup>110</sup> Crucially, care provision must be disentangled from profit-seeking: rapid privatisation of childcare and adult social care in England has compromised quality, as cost-cutting measures invariably focus on reducing staff numbers or paying them less.<sup>111</sup>

The Covid-19 pandemic shone a light on just how inadequate and unfair our care system is, with women disproportionately shouldering the burden of underpaid and precarious work as paid carers and of the gendered division of housework and childcare at home.<sup>112</sup> The current childcare system doesn't work for children, parents, or workers. Even before the current cost of living crisis, 1.7 million women were prevented from taking on more hours of employment due to childcare issues.<sup>113</sup> The Women's Budget Group has called for free universal childcare for all children in the UK between the age of 6 months and primary school. Investing in 1.5 million new jobs and ensuring childcare workers were paid salaries equivalent to primary school teachers, a universal service would cost £57bn annually, 76% of which could be recouped through tax receipts from the additional jobs.<sup>114</sup>

Addressing the care crisis means reimagining our conception of care.<sup>115</sup> The government's promise to "fix" social care with an extra £5.4bn over the next three years doesn't come close. In England, 1.8 million people have unmet care needs.<sup>116</sup> For those who do receive care, it is designed to ensure they survive, rather than thrive, often limited to 15-minute slots to support basic functions. Instead, as the Women's Budget Group and the New Economics Foundation have set out, we need a universal quality social care service.<sup>117</sup> This would promote care-

108 Ibid.

109 Onaran and Jump, [A shorter working week as part of a green caring economy](#)

110 Carers UK (2019) [Facts and figures](#)

111 Women's Budget Group (2022) [Childcare and Gender](#)

112 Women and Equalities Committee (2021) [Unequal impact? Coronavirus and the gendered economic impact](#)

113 [Childcare and Gender](#)

114 Women's Budget Group (2020) [Budget Representation to HM Treasury: Invest in Social Infrastructure](#)

115 We refer here mainly to the adult social care crisis in England, given that the devolved nations have distinctive approaches to the care sector.

116 Age UK (2019) [Age UK General Election Manifesto 2019](#)

117 Bedford, S., and Button, D., New Economics Foundation and Women's Budget Group (2022) [Universal Quality Social Care: Transforming adult social care in England](#)

receivers' wellbeing and autonomy while professionalising the sector and improving pay and conditions for staff.<sup>118</sup> We estimate a universal care service could generate 928,000 new direct and indirect jobs in 2021/22 terms, costing £19.6bn per year in care costs and another £12.3bn if pay was increased to the real living wage.<sup>119</sup> It would also bring in an additional £14bn in tax receipts.<sup>120</sup> 75% of respondents to a Women's Budget Group poll said they would pay more tax to support investment in free social care for all adults over 65 and disabled people.<sup>121</sup> The Welsh government is adopting elements of this approach by introducing the real living wage for care workers in care homes and domiciliary settings and seeing this as a first step in adopting a broader set of Fair Work principles throughout social care.<sup>122</sup>

A decade of austerity and undervaluing of care work has produced a workforce crisis, with a vacancy rate of 10% in March 2022.<sup>123</sup> This is unsurprising, when 73% of workers in the English independent care sector are paid less than the real living wage and a quarter are on zero-hours contracts.<sup>124</sup> Women and ethnic-minority workers are at the sharp end of this: 83% of the English care workforce are women and 21% are from ethnic-minority backgrounds (compared to 14% of the population of England).<sup>125</sup> Care work, like other labour performed disproportionately by women, racialised groups and migrants, is often seen as unskilled or low-skilled and therefore deserving of low pay. Care workers have a diverse set of skills, many of which are not recognised, but to achieve the Care Act's aspirations to "help people achieve the outcomes that matter to them in life", the sector will need new training, qualifications and routes to progress.<sup>126</sup> Professionalising and improving pay and conditions in the care sector would help to desegregate it by making it a more attractive career prospect for both women and men. Reports suggest that care workers are leaving for better paid jobs in warehousing, a sector hardly known for its good pay and conditions.<sup>127</sup> In a green and caring economy, this movement would go the other way around, with droves of workers moving from low-paid, precarious jobs driven by over-consumption to well-paid, secure, and fulfilling work in social infrastructure.

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118 Himmelweit, S., [Transforming Care](#) in Macfarlane, L. (ed.) *Open Democracy* (2018) *New Thinking for the British Economy*

119 [Universal Quality Social Care: Transforming adult social care in England](#)

120 *Ibid.*

121 Women's Budget Group (2020) [New Polling](#)

122 Welsh Government (2022) [Implementing the Real Living Wage for social care workers in Wales](#)

123 Skills for Care (2022) [Skills for Care's latest monthly data shows vacancy rates continue to rise in social care](#)

124 *Ibid.*

125 *Ibid.*

126 Himmelweit, [Transforming Care](#)

127 Booth, R., *The Guardian* (2021) [Care workers in England leaving for Amazon and other better-paid jobs](#)

## Conclusion

The changes outlined above are not straightforward and they require careful planning and impact assessment to prevent adverse economic impacts. But done right, they will address the intersecting crises of climate breakdown and inequality. The first step is acknowledging that the current system that got us into this situation will not get us out. We need to break with economic orthodoxy that prioritises profit over people and planet, and work towards a green and caring economy for all. These changes go far beyond the Net-Zero rhetoric and plans of our political and business leaders. They have important implications for the way we live our lives, for our jobs and our relationships. But that is something we should welcome. It is a vision with care at its centre, reorienting economic activity service provision away from the endless search for profit and around public goods, delivered within planetary boundaries.

The Feminist Green New Deal is bringing a gendered and intersectional approach/ perspective to the Green economy/Green Recovery - ensuring that the voices of women, people of colour and other marginalised groups are heard during environmental and political debates.

Through a programme of nationwide grassroots workshops and policy roundtables a Feminist Green New Deal Manifesto will be created and launched in 2022.

This Project is a collaboration between Wen (Women's Environmental Network) and the Women's Budget Group (WBG).

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