

A GREEN AND CARING ECONOMY

FINAL REPORT



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#GreenAndCaringEconomy

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UK Feminist Green New Deal Report

by Rebekah Diski

November 2022



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SUMMARY

The current economic system has delivered the intersecting crises of climate, ecological breakdown and inequality. It has sought growth at any cost, and has treated the earth, nature and people *carelessly* in pursuit of profit. Women and other marginalised groups have both borne the brunt of this exploitation and are most vulnerable to a climate changing and increasingly unequal world. Responding to these crises requires redesigning the economy around *care*: caring for the earth and its ecosystems, caring for the people who currently inhabit it, and caring for future generations.

The changes needed for a green and caring economy would rebalance economic activity away from energy-intensive and wasteful production and towards labour-intensive work that cares for people and planet. These changes would affect almost every aspect of our lives. This is a vision of shared abundance: we would meet everyone's needs with well-designed public services and amenities, and with restored and flourishing biodiversity and green space; 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, friends and communities; and value the labour that sustains life.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

We identify four **structural changes** needed for a green and caring economy:



Reorienting the economy: Put wellbeing above profit, moving away from energy-intensive and polluting industries and towards activities that care for people and planet, and ending GDP growth as our main economic objective.



Changing ownership models: Democratise ownership of natural resources and basic services, overhauling the energy system including through a new public renewable energy company; rolling back private provision of care, ending public land sell-offs, and supporting alternative ownership models throughout the economy.



Change how we raise and spend money: Put public investment in decarbonising physical infrastructure and expanding social infrastructure at the centre of UK fiscal and monetary strategy, supported by targeted subsidies and progressive taxation.



Supporting a global green and caring economy: Build efforts to reorder the global economy around climate justice through debt relief, gender-sensitive climate finance, reforming international financial institutions, clamping down on tax havens and ending exploitative treaties.

Alongside these structural changes, the following shifts will enable **life in a green and caring economy** to support everyone's wellbeing today while securing a liveable future for generations to come.



Where and how we live: Implement a right to safe, decent and affordable housing following the most recent UN guidelines, where housing as a home is prioritised over housing as an asset; roll out a massive housing retrofit programme to reduce emissions and bills.



How we travel: Invest in a well-connected, integrated, affordable and widespread national public transport system, with an emphasis on improving bus services and walking and cycling routes.



How we work: Redistribute paid and unpaid work more equally, with a shorter, more flexible working week, ensuring all workers have access to decent, well-paid, secure and unionised jobs.



How we shop/consume: Take clear steps to reduce and improve consumption patterns, for example by zero-VAT rating repair services and supporting measures to improve durability, recyclability and working conditions in production.



What and how we eat: Build a sustainable food system, supporting farmers in nature-friendly land use and farming methods, moving towards plant-based diets, and making locally produced, nutritious food affordable and accessible.



How we care: Invest in a universal quality social care service and universal free childcare from 6 months to primary school, improving reach and quality of care and creating millions of good, green jobs.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A GREEN AND CARING ECONOMY

In a green and caring economy, a woman wakes up in a warm, safe home. She lives in genuinely affordable housing, which is well-insulated to save energy, heated by heat pump and powered by solar panels, so she doesn't rely on fossil fuels. She and her partner spend an equal amount of time doing paid and unpaid work, sharing duties like preparing food and getting children ready for school. Her children walk through safe streets, dominated by people and green space rather than cars, to a well-funded local state school where her children receive an integral education. She takes a cheap electric bus from outside her building to work at the local hospital. She has a well-paid and fulfilling job that allows her to make the most of her skills while still having time and energy outside of paid work for other pursuits. She eats a subsidised, sustainable lunch with her colleagues and heads home after a six-hour day to collect her youngest child from their free nursery. That evening, she shares a nutritious, affordable meal with her friends and neighbours at her local community centre, while her children play in the community orchard outside their building.

Of course, this is just one version of a day, and women will have diverse experiences according to their needs and wants. In what follows, we look at some of those different experiences to imagine how women's lives could improve in a green and caring economy. But what needs to change for these experiences to become reality? We start by outlining the structural changes we need for a green and caring economy and then ask how these would enable almost every aspect of our lives to change, for the better. We acknowledge that many groups that are excluded or underserved by, or disillusioned with, our economic system already adhere to green and caring principles. Our challenge is to learn from, support, supplement and scale up these existing ways of living together to better serve everyone, as well as the health of the planet.

The research and recommendations are based on a series of policy papers and workshops with grassroots women's organisations as part of the **Feminist Green New Deal project**.

STRUCTURAL CHANGE

A green and caring economy would enable all of us to live in balance with the natural world around us, in addition to pursuing a life that makes us each feel happy and fulfilled. Responding to the inequality and climate crises reimagining what our shared economy could be and how it could better serve us and the planet. Our current economy rests on the extractive logic that nature and human labour are there to use *carelessly* for profit and economic growth, causing gross inequality and environmental breakdown. Breaking this logic means reorienting the economy away from carbon-intensive and polluting industries and towards activities that care for people and the planet we live on. Crucially, we should break with GDP growth as the main goal of our economy and instead implement and measure targets related to wellbeing, equality, and sustainability.



Reorienting the economy: investing in social infrastructure

Firstly, **we must phase out our fossil fuel industry, while ensuring a just transition for affected workers and communities.** Other carbon-intensive sectors will need to wind down, shrink or retool around low-carbon activities such as producing renewable energy or public transport infrastructure. While investing in such low-carbon infrastructure is crucial to ending our dependence on fossil fuels, it's not enough. **We also need massive investment in social infrastructure, providing millions of vital jobs in health, care and education.** These jobs will resolve the existing crises in these sectors and address inequality by ensuring that everyone has access to the services they need to survive and thrive. But they will also offer meaningful work for those moving out of shrinking sectors, like retail and aviation, which have already been affected by automation and Covid-19.

Women's Budget Group research shows that investment in the care sector could create 2.7 times as many jobs as the same investment in construction and produce 30% less greenhouse gas emissions.¹ Social infrastructure jobs are green jobs: the average job in health and care produces 26 times less greenhouse gas than a manufacturing job, over 200 times less than an agriculture jobs and nearly 1,500 times less than a job in oil and gas.²

1 Women's Budget Group (June, 2020), [A care-led recovery from coronavirus](#)

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

Social infrastructure jobs must also be well-paid, secure and unionised, ending the low-pay, precarious work that is disproportionately borne by women and racialised³ workers in these sectors, particularly in care. This would address entrenched inequality in the labour market and lead to better quality health, care and education for all.⁴ Ending the creeping privatisation of these services, which has compromised quality – again, particularly of care – is key to ensure that investment stays within the social infrastructure system rather than being diverted to shareholders and asset managers.



Changing ownership models (or democratising natural resources and basic services)

A green and caring economy will prioritise wellbeing over profit. **That means democratising the natural resources and basic services we all need**, redefining access to land, food, energy, water, and care as rights rather than commodities to enrich global corporations. At national level, taking the energy system back into public ownership would allow us to redesign it around need, transition to fully renewable energy, and create well-paid, fulfilling, green jobs. While already spiralling UK energy bills have risen 64% this year⁵, the French government has capped their rise at 4% and has announced plans to fully nationalise the state provider EDF, in which it has an 85% stake.⁶

The privatisation of the UK energy system in the 1980s and 90s has spectacularly failed to prevent fuel poverty, manage natural resources or invest sufficiently in renewable energy. The TUC⁷ has estimated that nationalising the Big 5 energy suppliers, which paid out £43bn in dividends and share buy-backs between 2010 and 2020, would cost an estimated £2.8bn, far less than the £4.9bn the government is spending to bail out failing companies⁸. Renationalisation could be explored as a way to bring energy production, transmission, distribution and supply under greater public control.

At the level of production, and as a first step, establishing a new public renewable energy company would reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and speed up the switch to renewables like wind and solar. Nine out of ten countries leading on green energy have such a public company.⁹

3 We recognise that the usual term of BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) or BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) to refer to people from minority-ethnic backgrounds is contentious and that there is an open discussion on race language. In this report we use the term "racialised" to refer to people from minority-ethnic backgrounds.

4 For more on adult social care and childcare see Women's Budget Group (2022) [Universal quality social care](#) and (2021) [Calculating the cost of a high quality, free universal childcare system](#)

5 Martin Lewis, Money Saving Expert (2022) [16 'Energy Price Guarantee' need-to-knows](#)

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

7 TUC (2022) [A fairer energy system for families and the climate](#)

8 Propping up Bulb will cost a £2.2bn on top of the £2.7bn already spent on bailing out 28 energy companies since June 2021. National Audit Office (2022) [The energy supplier market](#)

9 We Own It (2022) [Bring energy into public ownership](#)

The tax reliefs and allowances that oil and gas companies like BP and Shell are allowed to claim should be removed. Norway has used tax revenues from these oil giants to create a sovereign wealth fund, which could pay for investments in renewable energy and interventions to lower bills. Alongside this, nationalising the system which transmits energy across the country, which is currently almost entirely monopolised by privately-owned National Grid and the handful of companies that distribute that energy into homes, would save an estimated £3.7bn per year, paying for itself in 7.5 years.¹⁰

Unequal distribution of land is central to the climate, ecological and inequality crises. Land reform would give everyone access to green space, nature and opportunities to grow food, while addressing vast wealth inequality that most acutely affects women and other marginalised groups. In a green and caring economy, **land would be treated as a public good, rather than a financial asset**. The current distribution of land ownership allows a tiny minority to accumulate wealth from rent and asset appreciation while a growing number of people will never be able to afford their own home or rent somewhere that meets their needs. As a result of the increasing financial speculation on land, its value rose 544% between 1995 and 2016.¹¹ In England, half of all land is owned by less than 1% of the population.¹² 92% of land is owned privately, and only 8% of England's rural landscape is accessible to the public.¹³

In Scotland, where there is already a Right to Roam over rural land, the Land Commission recently found that concentrated land ownership significantly affects rural communities' social, economic and decision-making power.¹⁴ It recommended a public interest test for large land transfers and engaging local communities in land use change. The other UK nations could follow existing Scottish innovations such as the Community Right to Buy which helps communities buy land when it comes up for sale.

Ending the sell-off of public land to the highest bidder and empowering local authorities to buy and develop land in the public interest would make more land available for affordable housing, public amenities, allotments and wildlife. This could be funded by a progressive tax system that incentivises land use for social and environmental goods, while disincentivising the private ownership of land for tax avoidance, money laundering, rent and financial speculation.

10 Ibid.

11 Monbiot, G. (ed.), Grey, R., Kenny, T., Macfarlane, L., Powell-Smith, A., Shrubsole, G., and Stratford, B., (2019) [Land for the many: Changing the way our fundamental asset is used, owned and governed](#)

12 Evans, R., *The Guardian* (2019) [Half of England is owned by less than 1% of the population](#)

13 Horton, H., *The Guardian* (2022) [Fears over right to roam in England as ministers wind up review](#)

14 Scottish Land Commission (2019) [Addressing Scotland's pattern of land ownership can unlock economic and community opportunities](#)

“The lack of engagement with our communities means that women and people from diverse ethnic communities are not at the table, we’re not making decisions, we’re just not part of this.”

(Workshop participant)

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. Power and resources should be devolved to local and regional level, with local people involved in decision-making processes that revitalise their communities.¹⁵ This is particularly important for women and other marginalised groups who are often excluded from decision-making spaces.



Changing how we raise and spend money

Our current financial system continues to reward the very activities responsible for the climate and inequality crises. We are consistently warned by climate scientists that we need to phase out coal, oil and gas, but from 2016 to 2020, the UK’s five biggest banks provided £227 billion in fossil fuel finance.¹⁶ In the same period, the UK government provided £13.6 billion in subsidies to the oil and gas industry in the form of tax breaks and decommissioning relief, and plans to further maximise North Sea oil and gas production.¹⁷ In 2021, the government committed over \$1 billion towards a climate-wrecking gas project in Mozambique which, over its lifetime, could produce greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to the combined annual emissions of all 27 EU member states.¹⁸

Instead, we need to align financial flows with the Paris Agreement target of limiting global warming to 1.5C, regulating against fossil fuel finance in the UK and abroad and enabling lending for green and caring activities. **Expanding public banking and public investment in decarbonising our physical infrastructure and growing our social infrastructure should underpin fiscal strategy**, supported by targeted subsidies and taxes to change behaviour in the private sector.¹⁹ We could pay for this with a combination of progressive taxation, for example on wealth and energy windfalls, and the use of government bonds linked explicitly to activity needed for the green and caring economy. As well as greening finance, **we also need to democratise it, supporting diverse banking models such as community owned banks and credit unions**. This would give small and local organisations delivering green and caring services and goods access to sustainable finance, benefiting women and actively marginalised groups.

15 Cohen, M., Women’s Budget Group (2021) [Revitalising Local Communities](#)

16 Positive Money (2021) [Bank of England told to restrict fossil finance ahead of financial stability report](#)

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

18 Friends of the Earth and New Economics Foundation (2021) [Tip of the iceberg: The future of fossil fuel extraction](#)

19 Nikolaidi, M., Women’s Budget Group (2022) [Macrofinancial policies for a green and caring economy](#)



Supporting a global green and caring economy

The changes described above and below apply mainly to the UK, but the climate, ecological and inequality crises are global in nature and require a global solution. We are deeply connected to the rest of the world through networks of trade, finance, energy and migration, all of which must be reorganised around a green and caring economy.

“The government should be welcoming to individuals seeking asylum, including climate refugees.”

(Workshop participant)

Changes in the UK must be designed with global solidarity in mind to avoid reproducing or exacerbating existing inequalities. For example, a technological transition to renewable energy in the UK, ensuring gender equality in those new green jobs but without reducing energy consumption would perpetuate exploitation in poorer countries. It would rely on extracting enormous quantities of the raw materials needed for renewable energy infrastructure, such as lithium, steel and copper, and the labour needed to mine them at huge human and environmental cost.

SPOTLIGHT: intersecting crises for workers in the garment industry

The global fashion industry demonstrates how exploitation of natural resources and labour intersect in webs of financial flows, trade agreements, international treaties and law that must all be rewritten around principles of justice. The garment industry is responsible for greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to the combined annual emissions of France, Germany and the UK.

A woman working in appalling conditions in a Bangladesh garment factory is exploited in a global labour market where multinational corporations can demand cheap labour in one country, sell their products to consumers in another, and register for tax purposes in another (often a tax haven). She faces inequality from several angles: she may have no alternative livelihood, could not afford to buy the clothes she makes, and is most at risk from the deadly floods made more frequent by climate change. If she loses her house or needs medical treatment, she may not get the state support she needs because her government spends significant public funds servicing its debts to foreign creditors.

She might suffer long-term health problems from breathing polluted air from dirty cooking fuel, but she doesn't have access to electricity, and the country's diesel and gas supply is strictly limited by the global energy crisis. Her government can't afford to invest in home-grown renewable energy because the climate finance promised by rich countries a decade ago hasn't materialised. She might depend on financial help from a relative who was forced to migrate out of economic hardship, but even those paltry remittances have dried up as many migrant labourers lost their jobs due to Covid-19. She's stuck in a cycle of vulnerability not of her making – she needs a green and caring global economy to undo these injustices and secure her future.

Those least responsible for the crises we face, disproportionately women, racialised groups and disabled people, are already living on the frontline of climate breakdown and are most at risk from policies that don't reflect climate justice. The UK played a central role in building the systems that have entrenched global inequality and environmental degradation, first as a pioneer of colonialism and slavery and later as an industrial and financial power. The UK's wealth was built on these webs of exploitation and on fossil fuel extraction, so it bears greater responsibility for undoing their impacts. Accounting for historical greenhouse gas emissions, the UK is the 8th largest contributor to global emissions, although this is an underestimate, based on territorial emissions and excluding those for which the UK was responsible as a colonial power and those embodied in imported goods.²⁰

Analysis of projects funded by the Global Environment Facility found that only 15.7% had done a gender analysis.



Taking a “fair share” approach would mean the UK taking much faster action to decarbonise our own economy, while supporting poorer countries with climate finance and technology transfers to help them mitigate further climate damage, deal with existing impacts, and address inequality.²¹ Existing climate finance mechanisms are paltry, often come in the form of debt-burdening loans, and rarely respond to gender inequality. Women leaders are already pushing for gender-just transitions in key sectors, for example in sustainable energy in Nigeria, South Africa and Uganda; and in nature-friendly farming in Brazil, Cuba and Nicaragua.²² The UK and other governments should support these efforts to scale up. Crucially, **the UK should use its powerful position in trade, finance and diplomatic fora to push for a reordering of the global economy around a reparative climate justice**, for example through debt relief, reforming international financial institutions, clamping down on tax havens and ending exploitative treaties such as the Energy Charter Treaty.²³ It must also end the UK's hostile environment for immigrants, whether they are forced to move as a result of climate change or other factors.

20 Carbon Brief (2021) [Which countries are historically responsible for climate change?](#)
21 Christian Aid (2020) [The UK's climate fair share to limit global warming to 1.5C](#)
22 UN Women (2021) [Beyond Covid-19: A feminist plan for sustainability and social justice](#)
23 The Energy Charter Treaty (ECT) is a corporate court agreement that allows fossil fuel companies to sue governments outside the national legal system for taking climate action that might threaten their investments. For example, UNIPER and RWE are currently suing the Netherlands for phasing out coal power. The poorest countries, most vulnerable to climate change impacts, are also least able to pay the billions for which they might be liable in a ECT lawsuit.



LIFE IN THE GREEN AND CARING ECONOMY



Where and how we live

Let's look at what housing could look like for an older woman in a green and caring economy: she wakes up in her warm, spacious flat in one of the many new green social housing buildings. It's designed around her daily activities and can be easily adapted if she is disabled and as her needs shift over her lifetime. The space is powered by renewable energy, designed to minimise energy use so her bills are low, and it's built to withstand extreme weather events like heatwaves and floods. She is close to neighbours with whom she socialises and is embedded in a community she can count on to share caring duties, time and tools. She sits in the communal green space outside her flat to watch the trees and wildlife. Once a week, she volunteers in the communal vegetable garden, passing on her skills to younger neighbours. She is close to public transport which she uses to visit friends and access excellent public services and amenities.

Housing is fundamental to life, security and wellbeing as well as tackling climate change and working towards a zero-carbon future. It also remains a key site of gender and intersectional inequality, with design that does not accommodate diverse needs or caring responsibilities, with mortgages and rents out of reach, and a suburban ideal that requires a car for daily living and can isolate women and children in the home.²⁴ Acknowledging the connections between the climate crisis and housing crisis by investing in reducing housing's contribution to the UK's carbon footprint, housing the estimated 8 million people in need and reversing the rise of homelessness would transform lives and landscapes.²⁵

“Affordable, safe, secure tenure housing of good quality is required. Properties should be built to last.”

(Workshop participant)

Women and marginalised groups are often priced out of buying or renting good quality housing. 60% of all statutorily homeless adults in England are women; the number of women living in temporary accommodation has risen by 88% since 2011.²⁶ The

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

25 National Housing Federation (2020) [People in Housing Need: A Comprehensive Analysis of the Scale and Shape of Housing Need in England Today](#)

26 Shelter (2021) [Women are some of the biggest losers in England's broken housing system](#)

first step to addressing the housing crisis would be to **prioritise housing as a home over housing as an asset, implementing a right to safe, decent and affordable housing**, as per the recent UN guidelines.²⁷ This would mean transforming the private rental sector to discourage buy-to-let properties, bring down rents, guarantee security of tenure and reoccupy long-term empty homes for example by allowing communities, co-operatives and local authorities to purchase them.

Over 648,000 homes sit empty, with 225,000 of them classed as long-term empty.



The government must also fund a significant social house building programme, devolving power to local authorities and communities to plan and build. We should prioritise areas of historic under-investment, ensuring that sensitively built, genuinely affordable and social housing is available in working class communities, rural areas and

in the North of England. New housing should move away from suburban sprawl, which increases car dependence and can isolate women and those who are more homebound, and support compact and connected communities close to services to encourage walking, cycling and public transport use.

Engaging communities in housing design would ensure that it serves their needs. **New housing must meet the needs of diverse and increasingly multigenerational households**, while supporting care throughout the life course. Building homes that are adaptable as their inhabitants define and change their roles according to their health, care and family needs would allow people to stay in their homes for longer, which also conserves labour, money and materials in the long-term.

“Fit all homes with solar panels and that will help people with the cost-of-living crisis and help the planet.”

(Yusaira)

We need to build new green housing using more sustainable, locally sourced and recycled materials, **but we also desperately need to retrofit existing housing stock**, which is one of the largest contributors to the UK’s greenhouse gas emissions. Spending £35.6bn to upgrade seven million homes could save over 40 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions over four years, equivalent

to the annual emissions of nine coal-fired power stations.²⁸ Retrofitting would drive down energy costs, crucially for those in fuel poverty, which would prevent excess winter deaths due to cold and damp housing and alleviate pressure on the NHS. This would also provide hundreds of thousands of jobs, which must open a historically male, white and heterosexual industry to diverse workers.

Example: On **Goldsmith St, Norwich**, the council built 93 social homes to Passivhaus standard instead of selling the site to a developer, providing hundreds of people with new homes and reducing their energy bills by up to 70%.

27 Special Rapporteur (2020) [Guidelines for the implementation of the right to adequate housing](#)
28 Brown, D., Wheatley, H., Kumar, C. and Marshall, J., New Economics Foundation (2020) [Green Stimulus for Housing](#)



How we travel

Let's think about how a disabled woman might travel in a green and caring economy. She wheels her wheelchair down pavements that are always wide enough, clear of parked cars and have dropped curbs so she can easily cross roads. If she is from a racialised group, she is relieved now to move around freely, without fear of harassment or discrimination²⁹. She takes an affordable, publicly owned electric bus to work, to health services and to visit friends. The bus comes regularly, has plenty of space for two wheelchairs and is adapted for safety and accessibility. She is supported by a bus driver who is trained to support people travelling with additional needs. She enjoys the peace, quiet, and greater space that fewer cars and more street space have brought. She travels down a tree-lined street, breathing clean air, to local shops selling sustainably produced, nutritious food. When she needs access to a car, she rents an electric one from an affordable car club.

Women in England make a third more bus journeys than men.

.....

About 27% of the UK's territorial greenhouse gas emissions come from our transport system, mainly from private cars.³⁰ Electric vehicles are part of the solution, but they require enormous amounts of energy

and raw materials to produce – simply replacing all our internal combustion engines with electric cars would not be sustainable. It also wouldn't be fair. Women, people from racialised backgrounds, disabled people and those on low incomes are less likely to own a car.³¹ But this does not insure them against the effects of congestion, air pollution, and lack of public space associated with car-centred design. Car-centric policy and planning have caused “public transport deserts”, especially in rural areas where public transport is particularly inadequate. Privately-owned cars spend 96% of their time parked,³² occupying space that could be used for children's play, green space to improve biodiversity and air quality, socialising or exercising. Solutions that emphasise continued private vehicle ownership will therefore reproduce existing inequalities.

“I want to be able to use a bike to get around but I haven't got one and it doesn't feel safe, it's seen as weird to cycle around.”

(Maryam)

Instead, we need public investment in a well-connected, integrated, affordable and widespread national public transport system, with an emphasis on improving bus services and walking and cycling routes. Transport must move away from design around a default white, able-bodied, middle class male user, which can exacerbate inequality. Instead, they should enable a

29 We recognise that, while outside of the scope of this report, male violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a big cause and consequence of gender inequality and plans to achieve a green and caring economy would need to address it. An example of a strategy on how to tackle VAWG can be found [here](#).
30 BEIS (2021) [2019 UK greenhouse gas emissions](#)
31 Lam, T., [Towards Gender-Inclusive Sustainable Transport Systems](#)
32 Murray, L., Common Wealth (2019) [Away with All Cars \(Redux\)](#)

diversity of journeys, including care-related trips which are disproportionately taken by women using buses.³³

61% of people are willing to pay more tax to support investment in public transport.

(Women's Budget Group poll)



Public ownership can improve public transport routes, service reliability, affordability and accessibility as funds are reinvested in services rather than siphoned off to shareholders. To ensure that walking and cycling infrastructure is fairly distributed, **design must involve underserved communities with education, outreach and peer support** to promote cycling among underrepresented groups. It must be adapted for disabled people as much as possible and must not obstruct or stigmatise disabled people who need access to a car. Expanding and improving public transport would create green jobs which could be prioritised for those moving out of shrinking sectors such as retail, aviation, car manufacturing and servicing.

“Free transport would be really good because if you get free buses to a park or green areas it would encourage more of the youth or even the elderly to explore more of the area. And it will be public transport as well so they won't use their cars.”

(Umaymah)

In a green and caring economy, we would see a change in consumer habits away from excessive consumption, particularly for the wealthiest among us. 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.³⁴ Globally, the tiny proportion of people who use private jets produce more greenhouse gas emissions than Denmark every year.³⁵ As the Climate Change Committee has made clear, the current approach of waiting for technological change and “sustainable” fuels will not reduce aviation emissions in line with the UK's climate commitments. Instead, the government must stop airport expansion and urgently manage demand.³⁶ It could do this equitably with a frequent flyer levy that rose progressively with the number of flights a consumer took each year,³⁷ as well as banning private jets and the most damaging short-distance flights where alternatives are available, as France has recently done.

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

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

35 Milman, O., The Guardian (2022) [A 17-minute flight? The super-rich who have 'absolute disregard for the planet'](#)

36 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](#)

37 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](#)

Example: Where public transport is free, as in Tallinn and Luxembourg, people use it more and low-income users benefit. Several European countries are responding to the current cost-of-living crisis by reducing transport costs, for example with the summer-long 9 Euro monthly ticket throughout Germany which saved an estimated 1.8 billion tonnes of CO₂³⁸ and the free short and mid-distance train travel that Spain is funding through a windfall tax on energy companies. But evidence shows that governments will also need to invest in regular and widespread public transport, target car use, for example through taxation, and properly invest in active travel infrastructure and education.³⁹



How we work

Let's imagine how a woman moving out of a precarious and low-paid job might work in the green and caring economy: she left the shrinking retail sector and retrained, with a government grant, in one of many new green jobs as a retrofit coordinator supporting households to save energy. Construction and trades have been opened up to women in all their diversity, racialised groups and disabled workers, through specific training programmes and reforms to workplace culture and hiring practices. She is fulfilled at work, with decent pay, job security and flexible hours. Her partner is now a paid carer, attracted to the sector by vastly improved pay and conditions. Her partner works a shorter working week so has more time for childcare and housework, which they share equally. With less of a burden of combined paid and unpaid work, she can spend more meaningful time with their family. She visits an elderly relative, she uses the excellent municipal swimming pool, and she volunteers in her local community.

“Everyone could work a reduced working week at the same pay to help address the unequal burdens of unpaid caring work on women. The load of caring needs to be shared equally between men and women, allowing women to participate equally in community and political life to share power and resources equally. We need parental leave and pay that allows for parents to truly share child rearing.”

(Workshop participant)

In a green and caring economy, we would rethink how we work and how much we work, prioritising socially valuable work, fairly distributing paid and unpaid work, and freeing up time for other pursuits. Reducing and improving our consumption habits would rebalance our economy away from producing energy-intensive things and towards labour-intensive goods and services, particularly in social infrastructure. The pandemic revealed that the jobs we most need, in sectors like health, care, education, and food services,

38 Bloomberg (2022) [Germany's ultra-cheap train ticket saved 1.8 billion tonnes of CO2](#)

39 Cats, O., Susilo, Y.O. and Reimal, T. (2017) [The prospects of fare-free public transport: evidence from Tallinn](#)

are often poorly paid and insecure. We need many more of these jobs, and we need to properly value the workers who do them. The shift to a green and caring economy will require life-long education and training provision to equip new starters and those changing careers with the diverse skills needed during the transition and to sustain the future green and caring economy. **Local authorities should work with residents and employers to identify local educational and training needs. All sectors should be desegregated, with equal access to employment opportunities and decent pay and conditions guaranteed for all workers.**⁴⁰

“There’s an idea that new jobs are in the STEM sector... [We need to make] sure jobs go to diverse people, not just white men.”

(Workshop participant)

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.** This could reduce the gender pay gap⁴¹ and improve wellbeing.⁴² Evidence shows that working longer hours is correlated with more environmentally harmful consumption patterns.⁴³ Working less could free up time for lower impact behaviours such as spending time with family and friends, exercising, shopping locally, food growing and home cooking, walking and cycling to destinations and volunteering.⁴⁴ In the UK, 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.⁴⁵

Alongside changes to work itself, **a comprehensive social security package would form part of a new social contract between government and citizens** to give people confidence that they will be supported if they can’t work or are otherwise affected by economic change.⁴⁶

Example: A few countries have successfully reduced working hours, notably France, Portugal and Korea, but these all started from a base of a long working week and did not fundamentally rethink work around sustainable and equal outcomes. A four-day week pilot is currently running in the UK with 70 companies alongside similar pilots elsewhere. This is progress, but a green and caring economy requires scaling this up, for example beginning with the public sector, and ensuring that shorter working hours are flexible, to support those who need to work shorter days rather than fewer days.

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

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

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

43 Ibid.

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

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

46 Howard, M., Women’s Budget Group (2022) [Managing risk through security: Social security’s contribution to tackling climate change and gender inequality](#)



How we shop

Imagine how a young woman would shop in a green and caring economy. Her personal style is important to her, and she buys the clothes she needs from a shop in her local community that sells ethically and sustainably produced items. She buys less than she used to, because clothes are made to last, and she understands they are more expensive than they used to be because the people who made them are now paid properly. When something eventually wears through, she doesn't throw it away, but takes it back to the shop which has a partnership with a local tailoring business that repairs it to be re-worn. She takes her broken kettle or TV to her local repair café, where someone will fix it for a subsidised fee, or even teach her how to do it herself.

Globally, the richest 10% of people consume about 20 times more energy than the bottom tenth.



We need to consume less and differently, especially the most affluent among us. Striving for economic growth above all else has driven us to unsustainable levels of consumption, as businesses constantly search for new markets and sources of labour and raw materials to exploit. But this growth is uneven: some groups are over-

consuming, while others have hardly enough to get by. In the UK, 25% of us are in the top 5% of energy consumers globally,⁴⁷ but there is huge inequality within the UK too, where the poorest half of the population consume less energy than the richest 5%.⁴⁸ 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.⁴⁹ Reducing consumption, rather than just “greening” it, is therefore crucial.

The production, transportation, sale, and use of goods we buy every year through the UK retail sector produce 200 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.⁵⁰ Much of what we consume is made by people in poorer countries in abysmal conditions and then shipped or flown to us, used, and often thrown away. Our increasing appetite for throwaway goods is driven by an overactive advertising industry that obscures the human and ecological costs embedded in the supply chain. It is also fostered by media overwhelmingly owned and controlled by those with vested interests in increasing consumption. Instead, we need to nurture more sustainable cultural norms, for example by giving space to independent media, alongside a national public education programme to ensure people understand where their products come from, and what impact their production, use, and disposal have on people and planet.

47 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](#)

48 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](#)

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

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

Most consumers have limited power to directly 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. The rich do have the power to dramatically reduce their consumption and resulting environmental impact, and must no longer monopolise land, resources, and even atmospheric space for private luxury. There is enough to go around, but we must use and distribute it more carefully. The IPCC recently made clear that interventions to reduce and rebalance consumption are “consistent with improving basic wellbeing for all”.⁵¹ In a green and caring economy, everyone would have access to the goods they need: these would be high quality, durable items designed to be reused and repaired. Policy interventions including taxes, subsidies, and regulations are important in shifting consumption patterns, but it is also crucial to provide opportunities to establish a closer relationship with the environment.

Consuming less would mean **shrinking parts of the manufacturing and retail sectors and improving the remainder**, which should be done in consultation with trade unions. A genuinely just transition would ensure that workers have a say in the decisions that affect them and receive fair compensation and retraining. The economic impact on producing countries must be carefully managed to prevent pushing marginalised workers into jobs with even worse pay and conditions. **Environmental and worker protections could be mandated in binding clauses in trade agreements.** Remaining production **must prioritise sustainable and recycled materials, shorten supply chains, improve working conditions** across the supply chain, and guarantee environmental, human and animal rights protections. At the same time, **the government should foster new and widespread services in repair, re-use, recycling and rental.**

Example: Clean Clothes Campaign’s demands of the EU have not yet been implemented, but they are a good basis for reducing the enormous impact of the garment industry. They include 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.

51 IPCC (2022) 6th Assessment Report: Mitigation of Climate Change



What and how we eat

Let's think about how a woman in a densely populated urban area would eat in a green and caring economy. After decades of under-investment, her area now has plenty of thriving local and community-owned enterprises. She can walk or wheel to her local shop where she finds sustainable, delicious and affordable produce from a range of local and responsible international suppliers. She supplements this with vegetables grown in the community allotment outside her flat, and her partner cooks a nutritious meal for the family. When she and her partner are busy, she uses one of the local businesses which prepare and deliver affordable, plant-based meals by bike. Whatever her racial identity, she can enjoy culturally appropriate food which she also regularly shares with neighbours at the local community kitchen.

“We need to be able to eat well and just live”.

(Elisha)

Our food system is deeply unequal, with over 2.1m people relying on food banks in 2021/22,⁵² while 9.5 million tonnes of food is wasted every year.⁵³ It relies on harmful pesticides derived from fossil fuels which damage our soil, health and wider environment. Food jobs are among the lowest-paid and most precarious in our economy and are disproportionately occupied by women and migrants.⁵⁴ UK agriculture accounts for 10% of our greenhouse gas emissions, while food and drink manufacture and processing are also highly carbon-intensive.⁵⁵ We import around half of our food, so the true impact of our food consumption is much higher. 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.

“From a woman’s perspective, preparing good and nutritious food takes time and money. Women are exhausted when they are responsible for working, cooking and cleaning. This adds further pressure.”

(Workshop participant)

Shifting to plant-based diets could cut diet-related emissions by 73% and would require 70-80% less farmland⁵⁶, freeing it up for rewilding which would absorb carbon and address biodiversity loss. We also need to eat more whole, fresh, and locally produced food. A Right to Food would ensure everyone has access to nutritious food, for example through universal free, healthy school meals and subsidies for local and sustainably produced food.⁵⁷

Applying community wealth building approaches to food provision would see anchor institutions

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

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

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

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

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

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

like hospitals and universities procuring food from local suppliers with inclusive ownership models and sustainable practices.

Along with shorter working hours, **support for local food preparation and communal dining projects** would ensure women weren't unfairly burdened by the extra work involved in preparing this food. As in other areas of our economy which we need to survive and thrive, food production should be reoriented around wellbeing instead of profit. This means **democratising production away from multinational corporations, supporting farmers to adopt nature-friendly farming methods and encouraging alternative sustainable 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 food security. Moving away from synthetic fertilisers, pesticides and fossil fuels, and using more land for crops for human consumption would create green jobs, particularly in rural areas. Offering meaningful, well-paid work could attract younger workers as well as more women into agriculture jobs.

Transforming our food system would have significant repercussions for workers and economies that currently produce much of what we consume, but this is an opportunity to allow producing countries to determine how they produce, distribute and consume food and sustain local livelihoods.⁵⁸ **We would need to renegotiate trade agreements to rebuild sustainable global and local food systems** in partnership with growers, supporting food sovereignty, community agriculture, public procurement and high food standards.⁵⁹

Example: The Kindling Trust in Manchester is a local not-for-profit organisation set up to “challenge and subvert the industrial food system” and has been working since 2007 to practice sustainable land use, increase access to sustainable food, advocate for policy change and incubate start up food co-operatives. As well as supplying local shops and residents, they also run educational courses in organic urban growing, nutrition and wellbeing. The **Just FACT** project led by Wen, builds community power to create a blueprint for a climate-friendly food system that works better for the happiness, health and wellbeing of communities in Tower Hamlets. On the other side of London, the **Granville Community Kitchen** runs a garden, kitchen and veg box scheme, empowering the local community through food-related activities. A green and caring economy would give government support to scale up these approaches in every community.

58 For more information on the many campaigns being fought by peasant farmers around the world for agrarian reform, food sovereignty and human rights, see [La Via Campesina](#)

59 UN Women, Feminist Plan



How we care

Let's imagine how care would change for a single mother: her children benefit from universal free childcare when they are small so she can take on more paid hours before they move into well-funded, caring schools. If she is from a racialised group, a weight has been lifted knowing now that her children will not be unfairly treated by police or discriminated against at school.⁶⁰ She lives in a close community, where friends and neighbours stop by to help with evening childcare and cooking. If she is disabled, she gets the financial and other support she needs from a well-resourced and functioning social security and care system. Her elderly parents remain independent and in their own home with the help of professional and well-paid care workers. Their carer tailors support to their needs, spending time building a relationship with them rather than rushing through tasks on a checklist, and allowing them to continue to lead fulfilling lives.

83% of the English care workforce are women and 21% are from racialised backgrounds. (Skills for Care)

75% would pay more tax to support investment in free social care for all adults over 65 and disabled people.

(Women's Budget Group poll)

A green and caring economy would reimagine care as the key to societal wellbeing, designed to help everyone thrive, rather than just survive. Care is not a commodity and **taking the profit motive out of our care system is crucial** to improve quality, as private providers invariably cut costs by reducing staff numbers and pay.⁶¹ In England, 1.8 million people have unmet care needs,⁶² and those who do receive care often do so only in 15-minute slots.

Creating millions of good new jobs as part of a universal quality social care service would address the care crisis for carers and care receivers. We estimate it could create 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, while generating an additional £14bn in tax receipts.⁶³ This is a steep increase from today's paltry care budget but would certainly be affordable with the financial instruments made available by a green and caring fiscal strategy.

The care sector is plagued by low-pay, poor conditions and high vacancy rates. 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.⁶⁴ Care work, like other labour

60 Racial discrimination and institutional racism are sources and consequences of race inequality. The detail on how to address these are outside of the scope of this report but please see the work of anti-racism organisations like [Race Equality First](#) for more information.

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

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

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

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

performed disproportionately by women, racialised groups and migrants, is often seen as unskilled or low-skilled – rather than undervalued – and therefore deserving of low pay. **Professionalising the sector with new training, qualifications and routes to progress** would enable care workers to fulfil the Care Act’s aspirations to “help people achieve the outcomes that matter to them in life”.⁶⁵ Additionally, **improving pay and conditions** would address this longstanding injustice and make care work a more attractive career prospect for both women and men.

“Childcare is too expensive. Women cannot be expected to return to work when it is so expensive.”

(Workshop participant)

“The problem is that many people do not consider homecare as work. We need to change this and change the mindsets of others.”

(Workshop participant)

Expanding social care jobs would 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.⁶⁶ Similarly, we need a childcare system that works for children, parents and 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.⁶⁷ **Free universal childcare for all children from 6 months to primary school age**, with improved pay for childcare workers, would create 1.5 million new jobs at a cost of £57bn annually, 76% of which could be recouped through tax receipts from the additional jobs.⁶⁸

We need these jobs to end the economic inequality for women who currently bear the burden of unpaid care and the injustices of a privatised and threadbare system that compromises quality for care receivers. These jobs underpin a caring economy, but they are also essential to a green economy: instead of the energy and waste involved in industrial production, these jobs use human energy to produce the social goods inherent to care: human interaction, support, learning and comfort. They will offer well-paid, secure and valuable work for those leaving unsustainable sectors as well as those currently struggling in low-paid and precarious jobs.

Example: In Wales, the government is starting to address the care crisis by recognising the vital role of care workers and introducing the real living wage for workers in care homes and domiciliary settings. It sees this as a first step in adopting a broader set of Fair Work principles throughout social care, which include giving workers a voice in the workplace, encouraging trade union recognition, introducing clear professional progression routes and creating more inclusive workplaces.

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

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

67 [Childcare and Gender](#)

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

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

To build a green and caring economy in which this vision can be realised, we need **structural changes** to:



Reorienting the economy around wellbeing rather than profit, moving away from energy-intensive and polluting industries and towards activities that care for people and planet, and ending GDP growth as our main economic objective.



Changing ownership models, democratising ownership of natural resources and basic services, overhauling the energy system including through a new public renewable energy company; rolling back private provision of care, ending public land sell-offs, and supporting alternative ownership models throughout the economy.



Change how we raise and spend money, with public investment in decarbonising physical infrastructure and expanding social infrastructure underpinning UK fiscal and monetary strategy, supported by targeted subsidies and progressive taxation.



Supporting a global green and caring economy, advocating for climate justice through debt relief, gender-sensitive climate finance, reforming international financial institutions, clamping down on tax havens and ending exploitative treaties.

This architecture for a green and caring economy will enable us to improve:



Where and how we live: Implement a right to safe, decent and affordable housing following the most recent UN guidelines, where housing as a home is prioritised over housing as an asset; roll out a massive housing retrofit programme to reduce emissions and bills.



How we travel: Invest in a well-connected, integrated, affordable and widespread national public transport system, with an emphasis on improving bus services and walking and cycling routes.



How we work: Redistribute paid and unpaid work more equally, with a shorter, more flexible working week, and ensuring all workers have access to decent, well-paid, secure and unionised jobs.



How we shop/consume: Take clear steps to reduce and improve consumption patterns, for example by zero-VAT rating repair services and supporting measures to improve durability, recyclability and working conditions in production.



What and how we eat: Build a sustainable food system, supporting farmers in nature-friendly land use and farming methods, moving towards plant-based diets, and making locally produced, nutritious food affordable and accessible.



How we care: Invest in a universal quality social care service and universal free childcare from 6 months to primary school, improving reach and quality of care and creating millions of good, green jobs.

The Feminist Green New Deal is bringing a gendered and intersectional approach to the Green economy – ensuring that the voices of women, people from ethnic minority groups 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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