

A FAIRER, GREENER EXETER - FOR ALL

EXETER GREEN PARTY MANIFESTO 2024

OUR KEY PRIORITIES

- ✓ Build the right homes, in the right places and - at the right price - for everyone in Exeter.
- ✓ Enable communities in Exeter to have a better say in helping shape a greener, fairer city.
- ✓ Fight cuts to vital services and support for people in greatest need.
- ✓ Protect and improve our green spaces and waterways - investing in parks, planting more trees and holding polluters of the River Exe to account.
- ✓ Transform Exeter's recycling rate from the lowest in Devon to one of the highest.
- ✓ Keeping communities warm is a good job with a planned programme to improve insulation and ventilation of homes and building local skills, jobs, and investment to do this.
- ✓ A new Ridgetop Park: Connecting Exwick, across the Mincinglake and Beacon Hills, to join up to the Clyst Valley, and down to the Valley Parks to protect precious landscape from development.
- ✓ A modern market in the city centre - market space small local businesses and local affordable food.
- ✓ Get Exeter City Council and Devon County Council to work better together. Especially on frequent, reliable and joined up public transport and safer streets for healthy walking, cycling and wheeling.
- ✓ A visible police presence in the city centre to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.



On 2nd May 2024, Exeter citizens will elect councillors to represent their communities on Exeter City Council. Local Councils provide vital services that our communities and environment rely on and have a major role in determining what the places we live in look like.

Green Party councillors provide a strong voice for the community and stand up for the local environment. Where Green Party councillors are elected, people see hard working individuals who listen to, help, and support residents with their concerns.

Many people have told us they feel overwhelmed by national and environmental concerns. Some feel in 'survival mode' because of the cost-of-living crisis. Greens understand that action to address the climate crisis can, and must, tackle the cost-of-living crisis and reduce inequality in our city.



“We believe that a wider range of voices on the Council leads to better decision making. Debate and constructive challenge is an important part of a healthy democracy, especially in these difficult times.” **Councillor Diana Moore, St David's**

“Now more than ever it's important that decisions are scrutinised to make a positive difference for residents and ensure that the Council's precious funds are spent wisely.” **Councillor Catherine Rees, Heavitree**



“As a result of our work, the council have now acknowledged that the Paris Street roundabout crossings are dangerous and need improving.” **Councillor Andy Ketchin, Newtown and St Leonard's**

“Green Councillors worked with residents and City Council planning officers to ensure the Panny crossing in Heavitree will reopen for the public once the building in Hamlin Gardens ends.” **Councillor Carol Bennett, Heavitree**



“One of our budget amendments showed that secure cycle parking for residents with nowhere to store or park their bikes is possible. The Council is now investigating this idea.” **Councillor Tess Read, St David's**

OUR PRIORITIES IN DETAIL

HOUSING

We believe in the right homes, in the right place, at the right price. We will work with communities for better solutions to the housing crisis. We want people to live locally rather than feeling forced out of the city.

- Truly affordable homes to rent and buy: the Council must enforce the policy that developers provide 35% affordable housing in new developments. We want empty homes bought back into use, and spaces above shops converted into decent homes. We will work to ensure sustained funding to help people out of homelessness and partner with other organisations to develop creative housing solutions.
- Homes to be fit for purpose: We need homes for single people and young people that are built to recognise decent space requirements. The rent must be affordable. Better regulation of landlords and houses in multiple occupation will ensure safe and decent homes to rent.
- Keeping communities warm is vital: We need a planned programme to improve the insulation and ventilation of homes, making them more affordable to heat. We'll prioritise help for those least able to afford to do this work themselves and focus on improving the skills, jobs, and investment across the city to achieve it.

We fought for affordable housing and challenged Labour's plans for a Council owned private-rental property company. We continue to challenge their backing of co-living bedsits and are working hard to improve the Council's housing repairs service.

We challenged Labour's proposed developer levy rates - demanding more from developers of 'co-living' to help fund vital city infrastructure like community centres, parks, cycle paths and bridges. And we secured an end to the subsidy to the developers of luxury student blocks who now have to pay their fair share of the developers' levy. We continue to speak up for residents on unacceptable developments and help residents respond to planning policy.

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COMMUNITIES

Our strength as a city lies in people coming together for good - in our neighbourhoods and as those with common interests. The Council has an important role working with communities, not doing things to them.

- **Planning for a realistic future for our city:** From neighbourhood plans to planning applications, we believe communities must have a meaningful say in Exeter's future development. We will continue to speak up for local people to shape a new Local Plan that creates healthy communities, protects local heritage, enhances nature, and really considers how our small, regional city can respond to the impact of climate change.
- **Working with our communities:** We continue to value and support the important role of community building and community grass roots action in the city. Whether it's creative, heritage, culture or democracy - the life of the city is enriched by community action.
- **Better democracy:** We know that the Council can't do what everyone wants all the time, so we will scrutinise plans and work for the Council to be accountable and transparent. When the Council consults on new ideas, or on changes to services, Greens believe decisions should be taken at the most local level possible.
- **Positive partnerships:** We will work to encourage the Council to partner with communities, businesses, and organisations to develop positive solutions together. We want the Council to improve how it works with social enterprises, voluntary organisations, and community groups to support community needs.



We worked with residents to develop local responses to reclaiming spaces to prevent anti-social behaviour. There are now regular community activities in St Bartholomew's cemetery, for example.

Our work to highlight Labour's inaction to reduce carbon emissions across the city - and the risk of misleading the public into thinking more significant action is being taken than actually is - has led to the development of new efforts to address this.

COUNCIL SERVICES

We will work to protect essential services from the impact of the £5.6m cuts planned over the next 3 years. We will scrutinise spending and decision making.

- **Improving Recycling Rates:** Work for the full roll out of food waste collection services to all our homes in the next year. Work for the introduction of a glass doorstep collection service. Exeter's recycling rates are the lowest in Devon - 26%. This is no better than in 2004.
- **Leisure Services Accessible for All:** Improved access for people with disabilities or particular needs to Council-run leisure services and facilities.
- **Bringing the Council to the People:** Work to ensure council services are easy to use and offer a new customer service centre in the Guildhall Shopping Centre.
- **A More Equal Exeter:** We will push the Council to use all its powers to support those most in need. We want to reduce rising inequality in the city. We will work better with communities and other agencies to prevent and tackle the most pressing issues in our city.

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We put forward alternative budget proposals. Our budget would have invested £6m in extending the doorstep food waste service, introduced a new glass collection service to all homes in Exeter, supported parks and open spaces, reversed allotment cuts, and improved customer services. While Labour rejected these proposals and forced through £5.6m cuts over the next three years, we know from previous years that our ideas meet community needs. In fact, some of our proposals from previous years have now been taken forward such as the appointment of a planning enforcement officer and the introduction of pre-application advice fees for large developments.

A WELCOMING CITY

Our wonderful regional city should be a welcoming place, with a wide range of activities available for visitors and residents. We want residents who live in the city centre to enjoy green space near their homes.

- **New City Centre Park and Market:** We want to develop a new city centre park and home for a covered modern market in the city centre to give shoppers a real choice where to buy their food. It will offer a great community space for supporting new and small local businesses and promoting local affordable food and products.
- **Promoting our assets:** A new arboretum on the slopes of Northernhay Gardens. Restoration of the City Wall and celebration of our great heritage.
- **Better for business:** Work with local businesses to support energy efficiency and promote community safety.
- **Safe for All:** Support those who are victims of anti-social behaviour and work to reduce the threat and fear of anti-social behaviour. Improve and support the night time economy safety schemes and develop an alternative early evening calm and safe space for young people.
- **Police and Health Presence:** Continue our campaign for a Police Office on South Street. Coordinate a public health lead response to those who are 'street attached'.

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The Progressive Group of Councillors brought a motion to Council calling for a business rates loophole to be closed which deprives Exeter City Council of an estimated £150,000 per year and leaves empty commercial premises in our high street. This issue will now be considered by a Council committee.

ENVIRONMENT

We want people to enjoy our local green spaces and the water that runs through the heart of the city. We believe there is space for people, nature, and heritage to thrive.

- **A New Ridgetop Park:** Connecting Exwick, across the Mincinglake and Beacon Hills, to join up to the Clyst Valley, and down to the Valley Parks to protect precious landscape from development.
- **Investing in Green Spaces:** We will invest in the infrastructure to connect our parks and gardens. We will provide fresh planting and improved pathways, benches and bandstands. We want to make it easier to get to green spaces - increased footfall will enable these to be social spaces and drive out anti-social behaviour.
- **Community Ownership:** We will support the growing number of communities keen to nurture unloved spots. To meet rising demand, we'll push for increasing the number of allotments, especially on council owned land.
- **Clean waterways:** We will continue our campaign to clean up the Exe. We want healthy waterways for nature, swimming, and boating.
- **Clean Air:** The Council must take an active role to tackle air pollution. A range of solutions, and enforcement where required, can improve air quality, and reduce environmental damage.

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We won the backing of the City Council to call for action to clean up the River Exe. South West Water and the Environment Agency were called to the Council to be questioned about their actions. Green Councillors are now working with voluntary groups on a citizen science project to test the quality of the River Exe.

We've led scrutiny on the nature crisis and achieved agreement for more work on biodiversity to be progressed. We planted 500 trees to create a new woodland by the Canal, with Devon Wildlife Trust, the community, and the Council. We've helped protect trees, secure tree protection orders, and worked to protect access to open spaces.

ACTIVE TRAVEL

Exeter City Council and Devon County Council have different transport responsibilities. They must do better at working together to keep people moving in a sustainable way. We will continue to press for this as a priority.

- **Better Buses:** Improve the reliability of buses and increase frequencies of services in the evening.
- **Joined Up Transport:** We need buses and trains to connect better - both within the city and beyond. This will make them viable options for people to get to college and work.
- **More Frequent Trains:** We will campaign for an increase in the trains stopping at the 10 stations across the city. We want guaranteed bus replacement services all the way to and from Exeter when rail lines are disrupted.
- **Green Travel:** Promote safe and healthy walking, cycling and wheeling*, slowing traffic speeds to 20mph in residential streets and making routes and crossings safer.
- **Better Bike Storage:** Secure, covered, and lockable community bicycle storage spaces - with charging points for electric bikes.

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We campaigned for better bus services, directly lobbied bus company Stagecoach, and spoke up for residents to the Transport Commissioner. We encouraged residents to give constructive feedback to the active streets trail. We responded to proposals for walking and cycling improvements.

One of our budget amendments showed that secure cycle parking for residents with nowhere to store or park their bikes is possible. The Council is now investigating this idea.

DOING POLITICS DIFFERENTLY - COOPERATING WITH OTHERS

There are six Green councillors on Exeter City Council. In 2019, with an independent Councillor and Liberal Democrats councillors, we established the Progressive Group to cooperate on issues. We are the official opposition to Labour. We hold them to account and put forward bold, fairer and greener solutions to the issues facing Exeter.

As a Group we will continue to hold the Labour-dominated City Council to account and offer constructive challenge for positive change.

It is a fact that the Government's austerity programme since 2010 has starved local authorities of vital funding. This has led to cuts and means Councils must be even more careful about the spending decisions they make. Over the years we have raised our concerns about Labour's priorities and spending, the choices they have made in where these cuts are made, the planned £5.6m cuts to come over the next three years, and their ineffective income generating plans.

Our alternative budgets have found the funds to ensure that the services that matter most can be protected or invested in. Our ideas, such as a planning enforcement officer and pre-application fees for large developers have since been adopted.



#GetGreensElected

FOR FAIRER, GREENER COMMUNITIES 
Local elections May 2024