

Green New Deal - What's the deal?

Tuesday 10 November 2009, by [JONES Davy](#), [LUCAS Caroline](#) (Date first published: 9 June 2009).

Davy Jones talked to Caroline Lucas about the fate and future of the Green New Deal, which she helped to launch nearly a year ago along with the New Economics Foundation and others.

How do you feel about the fact that everyone now has their own 'green new deal', though obviously yours was the first one? How do you differentiate yourself from the others?

Obviously we are delighted that the idea has got some momentum behind it and people are talking about using this opportunity to put serious amounts of money into the economy in a way that would not only create jobs but would also have serious environmental benefits. The downside is that because everyone is now using this language it is very difficult to differentiate between what is a real green new deal and what is not.

Are there plans, then, to revisit the Green New Deal - in the light of everyone else having one now, to go back and review it and produce a real one, more radical than the original?

There are certainly discussions about that but then we are also trying to encourage more people to get involved. The original group of eight to ten of us are not experts in some areas. So, for example, we are working with other specialist organisations to develop groups around issues like transport and agriculture to produce a green new deal for these sectors. We have been talking to the Soil Association and Sustain about what a green new deal for agriculture would look like. We have been meeting with lots of other NGOs too because there is this sense that we want to mainstream this by getting people to look at the Green New Deal through the lens of their own sector or area.

My first impression on reading the Green New Deal was that it was written as a top-down governmental programme. I understand why that was, but it did seem to me that it could also have been written in a way to encourage people to do things locally in their own areas - similarly to how you describe these plans for sectors. I understand things are happening in some areas already on this front. Could we not use the Green New Deal as a way to build a grass-roots movement - hundreds of meetings round the country to generate local enthusiasm and innovation to pressure government?

Yes, you are absolutely right. I was in Norwich yesterday with the Green Party there launching their election manifesto, 'A green new deal for Norwich', about what the local authority could and should be doing. We have also been looking at the idea of local bonds, which local authorities could issue as a safe place to put money in these troubled times and whose funds could be used for local renovation programmes and economic activity. The returns might not be as high as in the heyday of the real casino capitalism but people would know that their money was benefiting everyone, local communities and sustainable projects.

How do you think this would link to the 'transition towns' movement?

The Green New Deal does have slightly more emphasis, I suppose, on how to get national and local government to help this process more by removing obstacles and roadblocks – EU trade rules, World Trade Organisation rules and so on – which will need governments and local government to be pressurising to remove them.

The transition movement, though, is one of the most inspiring movements around, with ordinary people just getting on and doing things without waiting for national or local government. And it helps create a space by showing that there are people out there willing to go further than politicians think they are. I passionately believe in that bottom-up process, like transition towns, but we do also need the top-down governmental approach, and of course the bottom-up pressure makes that top-down approach more possible anyway, so it is all related.

It is very rare that you have a moment in politics when ordinary people are more radical than the politicians - I think maybe the 1960s was the last time. You have people in the pub wanting to string up bankers while the politicians want to bail them out - it is extraordinary. Is there not a danger of us all self censoring and not being radical enough?

It is a wonderful opportunity in a sense and a huge responsibility on us all to use this moment well. If we had been told five years ago that this moment was going to happen, we would all have got very excited and started preparing for how best to use it. But because it happened so quickly and unexpectedly, I am worried that it won't last forever. There will be a real movement to go back to business as usual and we might lose this extraordinary opportunity we have to change and reshape a whole range of things from the economic system to the whole way we organise society. We've got to seize that moment!

P.S.

* From Red Pepper, June/July 2009 issue:
<http://www.redpepper.org.uk/What-s-the-deal?>

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