

Leeds Alliance for Green Socialism

www.greensocialist.org.uk info@greensocialist.org.uk
Secretary: Mike Davies 07811 384888 m.davies@greensocialist.org.uk
Alliance for Green Socialism, Freepost NEA 5794, Leeds, LS7 3YY

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Dear Leeds Friends

This manifesto sets out a democratic, socialist and environmental local government programme for Leeds. It offers local policies that would genuinely benefit the people of Leeds.

Over the past few years our city has had a right wing New Labour council, a right wing Tory-LibDem-GreenParty council, and now a right wing Tory-LibDem council. None has put ordinary people first. The Alliance for Green Socialism offers genuinely different policies for Leeds which put people and planet before bankers.

These are our proposals, but we invite you to send us your comments and suggestions on the policies in this document.

Yours for democracy, environment and a fair society



Chair
Leeds AGS



Secretary
Leeds AGS

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Manifesto for Leeds

FOREWORD

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Electing even a few Alliance for Green Socialism councillors will make a significant difference to Leeds over the next few years. The party balance on the council is likely to remain close.

Of course, our current council (like our parliament in London) is just a big act – a pretence that there are real differences between the big parties. All three bigger parties (and the so-called Green Party that goes into coalition with them in Leeds) just take turns to administer the capitalist system.

In fact we now have a LibDem-Tory coalition enthusiastically carrying out the wishes of a New Labour government: cuts in services, cuts in wages and privatisation of everything in sight. Our children and grandchildren will be paying off this council's PFI debts for 30 years. Having a New Labour council enthusiastically carrying out the wishes of a Tory government would be just the same!

Lots of people understand this. As a result, many decide not to vote at all. Some even make the mistake of voting BNP in protest. The way to make a real difference and challenge the system is to vote for the Alliance for Green Socialism.

CRISIS & CRISIS

The economic recession has hit ordinary people hard, with jobs gone and wages cut. Under any of the other parties there will be huge cuts in service and benefits.

Meanwhile, bankers get millions in bonuses as a reward for nearly destroying our economy. We ordinary taxpayers have put up nearly a trillion pounds (£1,000,000,000,000) to bail out our greedy and incompetent bankers. Both government and council want to make us pay for the bankers' greed. The AGS would make super-wealthy corporations and individuals pay to maintain our services in Leeds.

Even worse, the environmental crisis caused by global capitalism threatens to destroy our civilisation. Global warming brings us storms, floods and drought. Sea level rises will drown our cities. Destruction of our natural environment for agro-business and quick-profit construction will lead to food and water shortages across the world. Leeds will not escape the effects.

In Leeds we need our council to take an imaginative lead in changing our economy, our transport systems, our retail systems, and our use and recycling of resources.

LIFE

The AGS is environmentalist and socialist. Capitalist greed has crippled the world economy and is destroying the natural world on which we depend for life.

The AGS believes people matter. The other big parties believe that capitalism matters – and that life is not about people but about selling ever more “stuff”. Global capitalism will never help people to be happy. Instead it will destroy us in the pursuit of ever bigger profits and ever faster “growth”.

We propose in this manifesto a range of non-capitalist policies to help ordinary people in Leeds now.

DEFENDING OUR SERVICES – NO TO CUTS

Privatisation

We oppose the privatisation of public services. Privatised services are more expensive but poorer quality. Private firms run public services for one reason – to make money. That means raking off some of our money into their pockets. Whether it is outright sell-off, "PFI", so-called "Public Private Partnership" or "arm's length" companies wholly owned by the LCC, the outcome of privatisation is always cuts in our services to fund profits for private shareholders. Already PFI has mortgaged our future for decades to come. Our children will still be paying it off. What they supply us with is often not fit for purpose.

Because private companies are there to make money as quickly as possible, they cannot avoid exploiting the environment. They produce large quantities of green words but inevitably continue to overuse resources and to pollute.

In Leeds, the "New Labour" privatised with enthusiasm in education, housing, leisure, refuse collection, and so on. The Tory/LibDem coalition continued the same path. We will reverse this sell-off. We will publish a catalogue of Leeds City assets – including those sold off, at what price, to whom.

Housing and "regeneration"

Ordinary people in Leeds cannot afford to buy homes at the current ever-rising prices. And people find it harder and harder to rent decent homes at sensible rents. The AGS is committed to affordable housing as a basic right.

"New Labour" handed over our council housing to "Arms Length Management Companies", a form of privatisation. We will end the semi-private ALMOs. The LibDem-Tory council fails to defend the interests of Leeds tenants. Instead the ALMOs have been pushed to behave like private profiteers, not providers of the houses people need. The council ignores the desire of most tenants to simply have well-run council housing. They ignore constructive alternative proposals such land trusts.

Council housing will be owned and managed by the Council, but with estate management boards – with real power – on which tenants would have a

majority. A joint housing committee for Leeds should oversee letting policy, development priorities and budget setting. People from outside Leeds or local businesses will not be on these boards.

The council has tried to push through "regeneration" schemes like EASEL, based on lies and deception. These schemes mean massive demolition of council housing and its replacement with expensive private housing. EASEL alone meant the loss of over three and a half thousand affordable homes. We oppose this theft of affordable housing and would give tenants the final say on major redevelopments.

We condemn the privatisation policies pursued by both the previous Labour council and the LibDem/Tory coalition. We will expand public housing throughout the city and promote affordable housing, rented and for sale, in both in the public and private sector. We will build sound, low energy, sustainable houses. We will work with our universities and colleges to encourage the provision of appropriately-sited housing for students. Recognising that excessive concentrations of houses in multiple occupation can degrade an area, we will use planning and other powers to the full to keep this to an acceptable level.

Education

We will bring local education back under democratic control within the council. "Education Leeds" will be closed down and its assets reclaimed. The private companies and consultants sucking money out of our education budget will be given the boot. There will be no more PFI and no more arms-length "Education Leeds" for the council to hide behind.

The Alliance for Green Socialism will involve the people of Leeds in the debate of the future our children's education. Unlike New Labour and Ed Balls (backed by the Tories and the Liberal Democrats) we take very seriously the major Cambridge report on primary education.

We will put an immediate stop to all school closures. There will be proper objective re-examination of the balance between numbers and school places, based on the universally acknowledged need for smaller classes. Schools have been closed and demolished since 2000 because of "surplus places". Now we find the projected population figures used by Education Leeds to predict future demand were flawed and we need far more school places. We need an efficient service and sufficient places for the 21st century.

We will fight central government to bring all schools under the control of the local authority. We will rebuild a proper education committee, bringing together councillors, staff, parents and pupils, to take the strategic lead in Leeds education. We will spearhead a challenge to central government over their harmful tests, ratings and league tables. Our schools should concentrate on real education to develop the life potential of all our children. Children must acquire the necessary basic skills, enquiring minds, and respect for others. Part of the curriculum will deal with the history of Leeds, including its labour movement.

Environmental awareness will be a significant theme throughout the curriculum. There will be help for schools to play a larger role in their local communities. We will ensure schools provide practical support for students whose family circumstances make it appropriate for them to take one or two weeks out of school.

To ensure the proper staffing levels, we will pay our teachers and other school staff the decent wages they deserve. We support the teachers' unions in their campaign to prevent discrimination by faith schools against non-faith teachers and gay teachers.

To improve the health of children, reduce accidents and cut pollution, we will take practical steps to encourage walking to school. We will consider restricting traffic around schools and providing traffic-free corridors from the surrounding areas.

Social Services

We will stop loading extra taxes onto disabled and elderly people. The council has imposed a harsh charging regime that takes back from the most vulnerable people the little money central government has provided for them.

We will develop systems to help all disabled and elderly people to make the most of their lives. We will support them whether they wish to live at home, in sheltered accommodation or a residential home. We will aim for all to have access to natural green space, preferably where they live. We will keep day centres open and further develop their facilities, making them accessible to all.

We realise the huge contribution made by carers. We will recognise this contribution and support carers properly.

At a time when child poverty levels are rising and the Government is falling

well below its own targets, Leeds City Council fails to address inequalities in the city. We will ensure resources to protect the essential needs of our most vulnerable citizens, both young and old. We will raise staffing levels in Services for Children. This will help to ensure that children who are looked after by the Council no longer have to face unacceptable delays in having their needs reviewed and met.

Unlike other parties, we will act from a belief that ill-health and crime are directly linked to poverty and inadequate opportunity instead of scapegoating those who are the victims of economic injustice. We will always support the right of those who most need social care to contribute to the planning of services and to have their grievances heard and rectified.

Health, hospitals and GPs

The National Health Service was one of Britain's finest achievements. Britain's "New Labour" government is privatising it piece by piece. As publicly owned hospitals are replaced by "PFI" hospitals the number of beds and the number of doctors and nurses is cut, typically by a quarter.

We will seek local control over local NHS services. If this is achieved, we will stop all privatisation of the NHS. No multi-national companies running our GP surgeries. No closures of our local hospitals. Our health services will be accountable to a local board with representation from local people, including patients and staff. We condemn the lack of NHS dentists in Leeds. We believe in public investment in a publicly-owned and publicly-delivered NHS.

We recognise that what most determines people's health is not medical treatment but the basics of life: housing, water, food, poverty, etc. The council will play a significant health role by encouraging walking and exercise, healthier eating and engagement with the natural world.

Water

Our water system was established by municipal socialists – cities acting to supply their citizens. We will seek the return of water to public ownership by city or regional boards with proper local representation.

We oppose the compulsory fluoridation of water because the case for it is unproven and the risks may be considerable.

A SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

Global Warming

Our climate is changing dramatically. We are already facing unpredictable weather, storms, floods, damage to farming and extinction of animal and plant species. Almost all scientists agree that climate change has been caused by our ever-growing production of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide. The never-ending growth and pursuit of profit that capitalism demands is killing our planet.

As sea levels rise, flooding and severe weather gets worse. The Arctic ice is already melting. If the Greenland ice cap melts, sea levels will rise over twenty feet. We face a global environmental crisis as well as an end to the era of plentiful oil and gas. Leeds is not exempt.

Our council will take a strong lead in doing everything possible to reduce local emissions of the greenhouse gases that cause global warming.

Integrated and Carbon Neutral

All the Council's environmental work will be co-ordinated through a single environmental directorate. A major aim of its work would be to transform Leeds into a carbon neutral city.

We will commission an Ecological Footprint for Leeds. Such Footprints, which detail the amount of resources the city uses up, have been successfully developed for York and London. An Ecological Footprint will enable an accurate plan to be developed for Leeds to save and enrich our environment.

Flooding

Leeds and Yorkshire have already had devastating floods caused by global warming – made worse by inadequate planning.

Our city must do everything possible to reduce its own emissions of greenhouse gases to contribute to a world-wide solution. It must also ensure that no new houses are built on flood plains, vulnerable to future flooding.

Renewable Energy

We would have a special focus on energy conservation and the generation of renewable energy within the city. We will use the purchasing power of the council to bring both energy conservation and local renewable energy production within the reach of all Leeds residents. There will be a planning presumption in favour of local renewable energy. We will explore municipal schemes such as combined heat and power and geothermal energy. The council will set an example with its own policies and practices.

Pollution, Waste, Incineration

We will use to the full Council powers to stop pollution in Leeds and to make polluters pay. We will publish pollution indices. Our transport and other policies will cut pollution.

We will pursue a proactive approach on recycling material. Our Tory/ LibDem council exported our pollution, sending waste to Indonesia for burial. We will reduce waste and recycle waste, developing products from recycling. We will develop city-wide composting schemes as well as encouraging and supporting home composting. The refuse workers will be involved in developing these services.

We will provide regular (at least weekly) collection of household rubbish and aim to provide far more "collection from the doorstep" recycling. We oppose the councils plans to build an incinerator in Leeds for general household waste. This would be a major health hazard and would, of course, be sited in a working class district. It is an irresponsible and defeatist approach to waste and recycling

Of course, the key to reducing waste is not to produce it in the first place. Unnecessary and excessive packaging is one major source of waste. We will work with manufacturers and retailers to reduce and simplify the amount of packaging for all goods. Our aim will be to ensure that those producing waste pay for its disposal, including both packaging and goods at the end of their useful life.

Noise

Our city gets ever noisier. The Noise Abatement Society says city noise has gone up tenfold in ten years. We will adopt measures to reverse this. Noise generation will be taken into account in planning applications. The council

will be proactive on noise problems such as burglar alarms and traffic.

Good Affordable Food

Local food is often fresher and more nutritious, avoids the climate damage of long distance transport, and helps our local economy. We will actively promote local produce. We will support small local shops to reduce the unhealthy dominance of the huge supermarket chains that try to control both shoppers and suppliers. We support Leeds market and the market traders' fight against rent increases. We will invest in the development of Leeds market as a city centre source of affordable food.

We will organise more regular and accessible farmers' markets to provide cheap, wholesome, fresh food. We need counterbalances to the power of the huge supermarket chains.

We will declare Leeds a GM-free zone, with no genetically modified crops or animals grown in the Leeds area and no genetically modified food on sale. Producing meat takes far more resources and does far more damage to the environment than producing crops. We would therefore encourage the eating of vegetables and make vegetarian options available in schools and public places.

Open Space

The City's green spaces woods, parks, open spaces, and school playing fields will be brought into a single conservation plan. We will not give planning permission for any building on green field sites. No more school playing fields will be sold off.

We will use planning powers to protect and enhance our natural spaces to provide viable habitats for wildlife, including wildlife corridors and reserves. Allotments will be expanded, with the aim of making them available for all who want them. This means developing new allotments in areas closer to where people live and ensuring that some plots are made suitable for those who are not so young or who have disabilities.

Green burials will be made available for all who want them. We will ensure that council expenditure on lighting promotes energy efficiency and drastically reduces the light pollution which prevents us seeing our skies at night.

Given the great increase in city centre apartments and the move to attract

people to use the centre of Leeds both for working and for shopping, we will create substantial green spaces in the centre. This could take the form of parks, mini-parks or botanical gardens. We will examine the development of a second “Tropical House” in the City centre with both a pleasure and scientific purpose. This would add to the general well-being of citizens and could also be an attraction for visitors, contributing to the economy of the city.

Consumerism and Life

We believe that the measures proposed in this section will improve the quality of life for the people of Leeds. Global capital regards everything – including life itself – as a commodity for sale. We believe that life is about more than making a quick profit. A healthy and sustainable environment will require changes in the way we live, but we believe such changes can improve our lives, making us healthier, happier and more truly human.

A CITY FOR PEOPLE

Transport

The city of Leeds is designed around the motor car, with people, buses and bikes fitted in as an afterthought. As result the city is dangerous, noisy, and smelly. If you are not in a car, travelling around in Leeds is difficult. And now there are so many cars that travelling by car is difficult as well! Our approach to planning, highways and public transport will put people first, not the car.

We will invest in a good and reliable system of public transport, including innovations such as superbuses. This will be funded by the council issuing public bonds not by the cripplingly expensive Private Finance Initiative. We will seek powers for the council to run all public transport – trams, buses and railways – in our area. We need an integrated, high quality, cheap or free public transport system to move people away from the car. The privatised chaos we now suffer cannot go on. Now the East Coast line is once more publicly owned and run, we will work to ensure that it stays in public ownership.

Pedestrian areas, footways and cycle paths will be given the level of support currently given to roads, encouraging pollution-free travel and improved fitness. We will provide a continuous network of footways and

cycle ways. The current dangerous patchwork of odd bits of cycle path on the edge of roads shared with cars is just window dressing – an invitation to accident and injury.

We will be prepared to restrict or penalise car traffic to enable public transport to move freely, and cyclists and pedestrians to move safely. However, restrictions on car access to the city centre are dependent on the provision of good, regular, cheap public transport.

We will positively encourage local production for local consumption to reduce the huge environmental costs of transporting goods by air and road.

Rail, Air, Water

Leeds must push for the return of national railways to public ownership. Locally our city needs much better rail, light rail or tram links with its neighbouring cities and towns, as well as good, fast internal links. We would seek to develop these and to provide, in cooperation with the rest of Yorkshire, an integrated transport system.

We will seek to return Leeds Bradford to public ownership. Only accountable public ownership gives us any chance of achieving a responsible balance between travel convenience and pollution and nuisance. We will encourage the use of canals for goods transport and leisure.

Home Zones

We support the establishment of more Home Zones putting local residents before traffic and outside use. Home Zones provide a more pleasant environment with less danger from traffic and more freedom for children and adults to use the streets.

Reducing Crime

Like most places, Leeds has problems with street crime and burglary. The keys to making our city a safe place to live lie in:

- making sure all our people have a stake in our society and our city
- ensuring our environment is lived-in and unfriendly to crime
- facilities for all young people, not just leaving them to wander the

streets and find trouble

- a reassuring and community-friendly personal police presence

For example, the best way to reduce street crime is not fast-response police cars. It is not even just having more police foot patrols, although we support that. It is having well-lit, clean, comfortable streets with plenty of ordinary, law-abiding people around, day and night.

Policing

The West Yorkshire Police are not sufficiently accountable to local people. We will support local committees and neighbourhood watches with a much stronger role in overseeing the West Yorkshire Police and in advising on the best approaches to making our city a friendly place for its people and an unfriendly place for criminals. Anti-crime policies with informed public support should be jointly pursued by the police and local personnel such as the council's security staff, the parks patrol, traffic wardens and the anti social behaviour teams.

Drugs and Criminals

The drugs which kill large numbers of people, generate a lot of crime, and cost society billions of pounds are alcohol and tobacco. We support approaches based on health and education to address these problems.

Compared to alcohol and tobacco, those drugs which are currently illegal are a minor problem . Most of the crime associated with them is caused simply by the fact that they are illegal. Their supply is controlled by criminals. Making them illegal has fuelled a whole criminal industry, from international drug-running cartels to individual users committing crimes, or turning to prostitution, to fund their drug use. Remember Prohibition of alcohol in the USA, which gave rise Al Capone's lawless, corrupt and bloody Chicago.

The great majority of violent crimes are associated with alcohol – not with drugs which are currently illegal.

All drugs have significant dangers. It is vital that people, most especially the young, are made fully aware of these. However this is primarily a matter of public health and education policy, not of the criminal law. We will ensure that the council takes a lead in such constructive measures.

We will campaign for the complete decriminalisation of cannabis and for a

public enquiry into the status of all other drugs, including alcohol and tobacco.

Our Liberties

The government's "war on terror" is really a cover for their war on liberty. The latest threat being to spy on people because they follow the Islamic faith. While there is indeed a terrorist threat, it is insignificant compared to, say, the toll of death and injury from road accidents. The government wants ever more dictatorial powers to stifle legitimate dissent.

UK deaths 2004-2008 from terrorism and road accidents

	TERROR DEATHS	ROAD DEATHS
2004	0	3,221
2005	52	3,201
2006	0	3,172
2007	0	2,943
2008	0	2,538

We will ensure that Leeds council tells the truth about the different dangers we face and does not cooperate with the suppression of our traditional rights and freedoms.

Disabled People

We will ensure that both the council and all businesses in Leeds comply fully with the Disability Discrimination Act and provide appropriate support for disabled people.

The Council

Recent changes to the way the council works have made most councillors powerless. Only a tiny Executive now has any say in decisions. These changes were brought in by New Labour and confirmed by the Tories, LibDems and the Green Party.

We will give power back to councillors as the representatives of their local communities, and restore a visible and democratic committee system. Further, we will support direct community involvement in decisions, including giving local people a real say in how council resources are spent. We believe in genuine involvement, not the kind of pretend "consultation" the current council gives us.

We will stop wasting council money on private 'consultants' (nearly seven million pounds in 2008!).

Democratic and Republican

We will push for local democratic accountability for local institutions such as the police and the National Health Service.

Leeds would be a republican city, avoiding the distraction of inviting members of the royal family or involving non-democratic institutions like the lord lieutenant in the activities of our city.

DEVELOPING LEEDS' ECONOMY

Full Employment for Leeds

The basic aim of the council's economic policies will be to provide the opportunity for worthwhile and rewarding employment, and access to a fair income, for all the people of Leeds.

Leeds must have broad based employment with a range of low, medium and high skilled jobs. The "New Labour" council has relied far too heavily on low paid jobs such as call centres. These jobs are now under threat from being moved to even lower paid areas overseas and from the growth of voice recognition technology. We will judge government agencies by their efforts to close the wage gap between Leeds and London.

Leeds needs to develop a workforce with a range of skills. To do this we need properly supported training, included improved grants for students from Leeds to study at college and university.

We will publish a catalogue of Leeds City assets, including those sold off, at what price, to whom.

We will actively oppose the continuing closure of local Post offices, vital for older and less mobile citizens.

Green Industries

We will actively promote the development in Leeds of environmentally sound industries, including those which contribute directly to the fight against global warming. Leeds could both produce and use things such as wind generators and bikes.

Leeds Brand

We will ensure that trade names that are essential parts of the prestigious Leeds heritage, such as "Tetley" and "Elland Road" can only be used by our city. We will campaign for the same sort of European rights that currently protect "Champagne" and "Melton Mowbray Pies".

City Centre

Our city centre should be a living space for the people of Leeds to enjoy, not just an area for expensive retailers and yuppie flats. The council's collusion with the capitalists in promoting huge developments in the city centre has produced half-empty buildings and big holes in the ground.

Our riverside ought to be a major asset for local people. We will make our waterfront accessible to all, not just those who live in expensive riverside developments. We will develop more public pedestrian areas – green areas, squares and gardens – for city centre workers and residents to enjoy.

Trade Unions

We support the role of trade unions in defending the interests of their members and favour the involvement of trade unions in decisions. The council will recognise trade unions and involve them in planning and in the development of employment opportunities. There will be no levelling down of pay.

We will help and actively encourage local trade union branches in a general drive to recruit workers working in Leeds in all areas, both public and private sectors. Further, we will run a translation service employing translators and provide adult education English language classes for migrant workers. This will help them to engage in trade union and political activity.

Pensions

Older people deserve respect and freedom from poverty. We support the Pensioners Manifesto of the National Pensioners Convention. We believe that the state pension should be sufficient to prevent pensioners suffering poverty, ill-health, or discomfort through lack of money. We deplore the withdrawal (or collapse) of pension schemes caused directly by government

policy.

We will ensure that no employee of the council loses his/her right to a proper pension. We will campaign for inflation-proof pensions, and for the right to company pensions based on final salary, for everyone in Leeds.

We will provide a range of free facilities, including day centres, to help older people enjoy their lives. We would aim to provide choices for older and disabled people between living in their own home, sheltered accommodation, and council run homes. Where care is provided privately we would monitor closely and enforce standards rigorously.

No two-tier Leeds

Leeds is currently a two-tier city. Those involved in finance and law prosper, along with much of the city centre. But Leeds also contains areas of great deprivation, with poverty and high unemployment.

We will work to reduce the glaring inequalities between rich and poor areas, and between rich and poor people. We will target council resources on the poorer areas of Leeds. We will also ensure that city centre developments, including housing, cater for ordinary people as well as the rich.

Our waterfront will be made accessible to all, not just those who live in expensive riverside developments.

We believe that reducing deprivation and narrowing the gap between rich and poor is a significant way to counter racism, sexism and intolerance towards different lifestyles, sexualities and cultures.

COMMUNITY, CULTURE AND PEACE

Diversity

Prejudice and conflict between different communities arise when there is a shortage of resources or where these are controlled by a privileged minority. In a fair society which aims to ensure the basic needs of all citizens are met, there is less ground for conflict.

Believing that all the people of Leeds should have equal rights and opportunities, we will pursue:

- stamping out racism
- opposing sexism
- tolerance for different life styles, sexualities and cultures.
- positive support for disabled people

Both the women's committee and the race equality committee will be made central to all the activities of the council.

We celebrate our diversity and appreciate the rich variety of cultures, races and beliefs in Leeds. We will welcome refugees and asylum seekers for their contribution to our city. Leeds, like other English cities, has been built on successive waves of migrants and refugees.

Communities

We will work to bring all our different communities together to celebrate their diversities and to build understanding of the ways in which they differ. Specific measures would be taken to combat race and religious hatred including anti-Islamic and anti-Jewish prejudice. The thrust will be to generate a culture of mutual understanding and solidarity as opposed to a culture of fear and suspicion.

We will strengthen the city's friendship links and twinning arrangements as a basis for building a truly internationally orientated city. This will specifically include taking forward the Leeds-Hebron Friendship Link.

Peace

We will reinstate the Peace and Emergency Planning unit, closed by "New Labour" and not reopened by the LibDem/Tory coalition. We will give it the resources and backing to make a difference throughout the council and the City. In particular it will review the city's ability to respond to flooding. We will ask the Council to condemn wars such as the illegal invasion and occupation of Iraq, based on how damaging such conflicts are to the citizens of Leeds. We will produce a modern version of the famous Leeds and the Bomb council booklet, addressing the impact of war, and preparation for war, on the people of Leeds. We will defend the status of Leeds as a nuclear free city.

Art & Culture

We will support the West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds International Film Festival, Leeds International Concert Season, Opera North, Leeds Youth Opera, and Phoenix Dance Company. As well as supporting the Leeds Symphony Orchestra we will promote the development of a professional Leeds Orchestra. We will work with the citizens of Leeds to enhance our City, including active consideration of major projects. We will promote the development of a Leeds Concert Hall to be owned and run by the Council.

Our view of culture goes beyond the narrow definitions pushed by "New Labour" to include science, poetry, history, literature, sport as well as visual and performing arts. We will encourage the involvement of local communities in all forms of culture and support local activities, events and cultural education. We will provide support for the many local festivals in the City, including such well established ones as the Leeds West Indian Carnival, the Irish Music festival, and the Mela.

Sport

Leeds City Council has scaled down the public sports presence in the city centre and plans to close yet more local facilities. We will reverse these plans and ensure the preservation and extension of publicly owned sports facilities for the people of Leeds.

The London Olympic Games have already cost Leeds over a billion pounds. We will fight to prevent another penny of our money being diverted to the Olympics. One of our city's best known sporting assets is Leeds United Football Club. The council's role in the fiasco of its successive bankruptcies has not been helpful. We will play a leading role in support for the club and examine ways of putting control in the hands of its supporters rather than those of shady businessmen.

The aims of the AGS include:

HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

The promotion of open, participatory, honest and accountable democracy offering genuine choice.

To advance the interests of ordinary people and defend their interests against those with most wealth and power, including multi-national companies.

To defend and promote the right of people to organise collectively at work and in their communities – locally, nationally and internationally.

To ensure civil and human rights for all and equality of rights and opportunities, to defend those rights, and to combat unjust discrimination in all its forms.

ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY

To promote and preserve a healthy and natural environment.

To promote a healthy and sustainable economy, benefiting those who contribute to it and those who need support. To promote a green socialist redistribution of wealth and power from the rich to ordinary people.

To restore the opportunity for full, worthwhile and rewarding employment, and access to a fair income, as a basic aim of economic life.

INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE AND PEACE

To promote honest and fair international relations, and end international exploitation.

To campaign for peace and the abolition of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

Find out more about the AGS by looking at www.greensocialist.org.uk

emailing info@greensocialist.org.uk

or writing to Alliance for Green Socialism
FREEPOST NEA 5794, LEEDS, LS7 3YY