

Islington

The Green Party Manifesto 2010



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Front cover: Harvist Estate from the Islington Ecology Centre



A Fairer and Greener Islington

Islington is a great place to live and work; but not all residents can share equally in what it offers. The divisions in our community - between those with decent jobs and those on the margins, between those with a bright future and those struggling with ill-health - make this one of the most unequal places in London.

We believe that everyone loses from these divisions. At their sharpest, they create the kinds of tensions that can fuel crime and violence. But every day, the sense of living in an unequal society rightly troubles us all.

The Green Party was founded on the principles of fairness and equality. We believe that everyone should have the same rights and opportunities as well as the same responsibilities. It's why we believe that public services should not be driven by the profit motive but by a sense of service to others. It's also why we believe that we have obligations beyond the borders of our borough, and that we should not pursue our prosperity at the expense of others in the developing world, or by impoverishing future generations.

Making this a reality in Islington isn't easy, given the kind of politics we have at national level. But the actions that we take as individuals, as households and as communities can make a real difference to where we live and can affect the wider world. If we want to tackle the economic and environmental challenges facing our society and create a fairer world, we have the power to do it - starting with our homes, our streets and our borough.

With One Councillor

Since Katie Dawson was elected as Islington's first Green councillor in 2006, she has achieved an amazing amount to make Islington both fairer and greener:

Introducing a 20mph speed limit on all residential streets, which will save lives and reduce noise and pollution

Introducing free sport for young people, so that all children in the borough have a chance to enjoy games and learn how to work together

More apprenticeship places for school leavers, to give more young people the skills they need later in life

A council-run repair service for everyday household goods, to cut down on waste and help residents save money by not having to replace household items

Funding for new allotments and new tree planting, so more people can enjoy the pleasures of the natural world

Making Islington the first Local Authority in the country to have a policy for no net loss of permeable land, so helping to tackle the growing risk of flash flooding in our borough

Including plastics in doorstep recycling, so cutting down on waste and saving the council money on payments for landfill

Katie and her Green colleagues have also worked hard behind the scenes to hold the Council to account, from championing tenants and leaseholders being treated unfairly by HFI to winning more say for local people on new developments.

The Next Four Years

Whoever wins the national election on May 6, Islington is facing hard times. Not only are the effects of the recession hitting the borough, but all three of the main parties are promising swingeing cuts to council funding.

But when times are hard, Council services become more important than ever. If cuts have to be made, we believe it is better that the process is honest and transparent. We know there is waste in the Council, and will work to root it out, working with staff, community groups and service users and with residents who have specialist skills. But the claims made by the other parties that they can make huge savings solely through “efficiency gains” just don’t add up.

We have shown over the last four years that we take a responsible view of Council finances. We have supported tough decisions when we have believed these are in the interests of local people – but not when they are designed to benefit private businesses or property developers. An independent Green voice on the Council is the best guarantee that decisions will be taken in the open and for the benefit of everyone in the borough.

In this manifesto we set out our priorities in these seven areas:

- High-quality services that put people before profits
- Creating more local jobs and apprenticeships
- Better places to live
- Stronger communities
- Better and safer transport
- More green space and affordable leisure
- Lower-impact living

Your vote matters; working together we can make a real difference. Re-elect Katie and elect more Green councillors this May and think how much more we could do!

Our Manifesto

High-quality Council services that put people before profits

Those hit hardest by cuts to services are often those who are most in need. The other parties say they will protect health and education: but that's little comfort if the cuts fall instead on social services or housing. That is why we are pledging to protect all front-line services and to tackle the biggest waste of all - the extra costs that come from privatising public services.

Green Achievements So Far

We've used our position on the Council to scrutinise the Council's annual budget, exposing plans buried deep in the detail such as proposals to sell off the office space for dozens of Islington charities and voluntary groups. We've pledged to end the contracting-out of housing, restoring proper accountability. And we've campaigned to keep Accident and Emergency and Maternity units open at the Whittington, which would help guarantee the hospital's long-term future.

What we would do with more Green Councillors

- Hold a fair and open consultation with tenants and leaseholders on closing Homes for Islington and making the Council more accountable for management and repairs
- Use the Council's scrutiny committee to challenge plans for cuts and privatisation in health and social care, such as the proposed closure of the Finsbury Health Centre and any down-grading of the Homerton and Whittington Hospitals
- Make Islington's education service more accountable and support and promote public education on the basis of 'every school a good school' instead of 'the right to choose'

- Provide additional remedial teaching for primary children
- A single threshold for free school meals for both primary and secondary schools, so that more low-to-medium income households qualify
- Provide free fruit for all school children – including secondary schools, where unhealthy eating is often more of a problem than primary
- Use school meals payments from higher income households to pay for improved quality and nutritional value for all school meals
- Establish a dedicated borough team to deal with childhood mental illness and an additional community mental health team
- Manage parking enforcement not to make profits but to keep traffic moving, with no financial incentives for parking wardens to issue more tickets

We know that there is waste within the Council and that outside specialist skills can help improve its performance. But instead of employing expensive consultants we would create a Commission on Waste, calling on Islington residents who have expertise in finance and management (for example, who have helped run national charities) to give their time for free to help make the Council more efficient. Through this Commission we would also encourage individuals, community groups and Council employees to identify where savings can be made that don't harm frontline services.

Creating more local jobs and apprenticeships

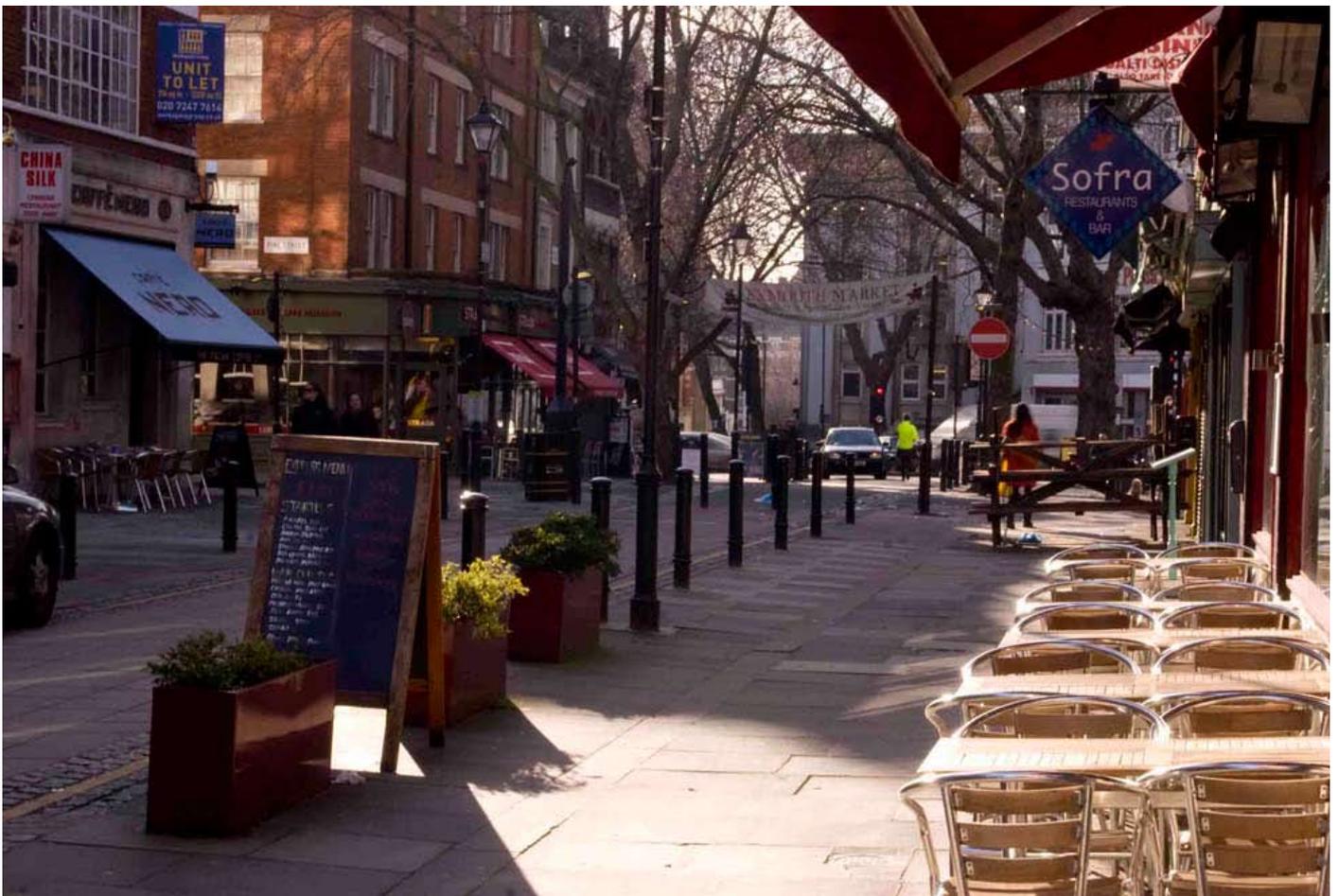
The Council is one of Islington's major employers and has the potential to make a greater contribution to local employment and skills by supporting local businesses and providing training opportunities. Bringing services such as housing maintenance back under proper Council control will open up new opportunities to do this.

Green Achievements so far

- Backed small businesses, shopkeepers and market traders
- Set up new apprenticeships for local young people
- Introduced a council-run repair service for everyday household goods (due to open in April 2010)

What we would do with more Green Councillors

- Ensure that all council employees and contractors earn at least the London Living Wage
- Require council contractors to maximise the number of jobs and training places they create locally directly or through sourcing supplies and services from local firms
- Encourage mixed developments with local employment opportunities and more affordable family homes



Better Places to Live

By 2016 all new homes will have to be 'zero carbon', but we don't only have to ensure that all new developments provide 'green' buildings, to the highest environmental standards: we also have to find ways to make the huge numbers of older buildings in Islington warmer and more affordable to heat.

Green achievements so far

- Helped win over £100,000 of national funding for Monsell Road residents to redesign their street
- Secured funding for home zone style improvements for Jackson, Lowman and Annette Roads
- Reviewed planning conditions in favour of timber windows rather than PVC, from individual house extensions to whole estates (such as the historic Taverner Estate)
- Promoted the use of carbon neutral slag cement in building works
- Introduced a policy on Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDS) to reduce the risk of flash floods, making Islington the first local authority in the UK to have a policy for no net loss of permeable land
- Won extra funding for renewable energy installations

What we would do with more Green councillors

- Hold a fair and open consultation with tenants and leaseholders on closing Homes for Islington and making the Council more accountable for management and repairs
- Create an independent voice for tenants and leaseholders so they can hold HFI and the Council to account, with funding guaranteed for the lifetime of the council to ensure that voice is effective and not influenced by fears over funding

- Encourage housing associations and co-operatives to lead developments with local people
- Extend the free home insulation scheme, so helping residents save energy and cut their bills
- Give tenants the right to have a shower installed if they want one, so helping them save on their energy and water bills
- Install better insulation and solar panels on suitable housing blocks
- Provide more attractive packages to tenants who may want to move to a smaller property, so freeing up precious family-sized flats and houses
- Carry out an audit of council property and of derelict or 'brownfield' sites across the borough to identify opportunity sites for new social and affordable homes
- Ensure empty Council properties are brought back into use more quickly
- Act on empty private and commercial properties to increase the number of homes available for rent and reduce the scope for properties become derelict or used for crime
- Rigorous enforcement of sustainable drainage policies through the planning process to reduce the risk of flooding

Strong Communities

The more that people have a stake in society, the more communities can flourish and the less crime and disorder we have to suffer. We would give more power and resources to local neighbourhoods to tackle local problems together. Greens have always supported community policing, and we would work with the Borough Commander to find ways to encourage officers to stay longer in one patch and build up their local knowledge and contacts. To help reduce crime further, we would target specialist support services at helping offenders find a place in society, which is both cheaper for the community and more beneficial for the individuals than putting them behind bars. And Islington's young people deserve more opportunity and support, rather than criticism and bad press.

Green achievements so far

- Changed the Council's constitution so that more planning decisions are taken in area committees, closer to local people
- Extended the apprenticeship scheme
- Introduced free sport for young people
- Saved the Sobell Centre from closure and demolition

What we would do with more Green councillors

- Engage the community in setting priorities for tackling crime and anti-social behaviour
- Work with the borough commander to encourage police officers to stay longer in one area and build up their local knowledge
- Counter the negative effects of a 'surveillance society' and only install CCTV after other methods have been tried and where there is overwhelming support from local residents
- Make streets safer and more welcoming, ensuring shop fronts are kept tidy and commercial rubbish is not left piled on pavements

- Work with neighbouring Councils to improve 'borderline' areas such as the corner of Blackstock Road and Seven Sisters Road
- Ensure that developments are planned in genuine consultation with local people
- Maintain local area planning committees so that decisions are taken by councillors who are accountable to their local residents
- Train local people to run consultations rather than use outside consultants
- Ensure that consultations include genuine choices and realistic cost estimates rather than being biased towards particular outcomes; and that consultations happen at a stage in the process where outcomes can still be influenced
- Continue to oppose vigorously new 'gated' developments, which create divides in local communities
- Extend homework clubs in libraries to provide a dedicated safe place to study
- Publish senior council officers' pay, expenses and employment history on the Council's website
- Publish all Freedom of Information requests and responses on the Council's website

Better and Safer Transport

Islington should be a beacon for sustainable urban transport, where walking, cycling and public transport are all safe, attractive and accessible; and where all road users are encouraged to respect the needs and safety of others.

Green achievements so far

- Introducing 20mph limits on all residential streets, saving lives and reducing noise and pollution
- A fairer sliding scale of parking charges based on a car's CO2 emissions
- Islington's first secure estate cycle shed (on the Harvist estate). Similar sheds are planned and being put up across the borough
- Ensuring the provision of cycle parking at the Emirates Stadium
- Campaigning for safety improvements at Angel bus station
- Providing a new zebra crossing for Drayton Park / Martineau Road

What we would do with more Green councillors

- Extend 20mph limits to all main roads under

the Council's control where evidence shows journey times are not significantly increased

- Sort out dangerous crossings to save lives and make it easier for people to get about; and ensure road markings are regularly repainted
- Deal more quickly with pot-holes and ensure utilities make good streets and pavements when they have completed their works or pay to put them right
- Target maintenance of roads and pavements where it is needed most
- Work to keep streets clean and free of dog mess
- Support on-street secure cycle parking (where we have already secured initial funding), for people with no room to store bikes in their homes
- Extend car clubs, so more people in Islington have access to a car or van when they need it
- Find an acceptable long-term solution for coach parking for the Emirates Stadium
- Implement a full 'home zone' for Jackson and Lowman Roads and other communities who want them
- Safeguard the Freedom Pass



More Green Space and Affordable Leisure

Islington has the least open space per person of any borough in the country. We would protect and enhance all existing green space and trees and take opportunities to create new parks, gardens and allotments. We also want to protect existing leisure facilities and create new ones, while making sure that they are affordable to all, not only those who are well-off.

Green achievements so far

- Campaigned against plans to destroy open and green space and remove trees at dozens of sites across Islington, including at 85 Highbury Park, Farringdon Road and Ashmount School.
- Saved dozens of trees from the chop, including horse chestnuts in Finsbury, plane trees on Rosebery Avenue and the famous “killer pears” in Archway
- Secured over £1 million funding for new allotments and new tree planting and won improvements to the Council’s strategies for planning, land use and trees.
- Blocked plans to demolish the Sobell Centre and are now pushing for refurbishment of the building to allow skating and other sports to continue and saving existing green space from being built upon
- Introduced free sports for young people.

What we would do with more Green councillors

- Prevent green space being used for development
- Take every chance to create green space and leisure facilities
- Save the NCH ‘Secret Garden’ and other precious green space from development
- Continue to fight to save the plane trees on Highbury Fields and elsewhere

- Double the number of trees on private land which have protection orders
- Create a green link between Gillespie Park and the Arvon Road allotments
- Keep the site of the Sobell Centre for sport and green space

Our long-term strategy is to create at least one major new open space in the borough over five years. To help achieve this, we would introduce a levy on the council tax of £1 per household per year to create a separate fund for new green space in the borough. This could be used to release matched funding from other sources, such as the National Lottery.

Lower impact living

Islington has always had a tradition of fairness and a positive view of how people's lives can be improved. Our actions can make things better for our neighbours and for people throughout the world, which is now more important than ever, given climate change and global trade. The Council has a role in helping create a sustainable, low carbon, future in which we take only our fair share of the world's resources.

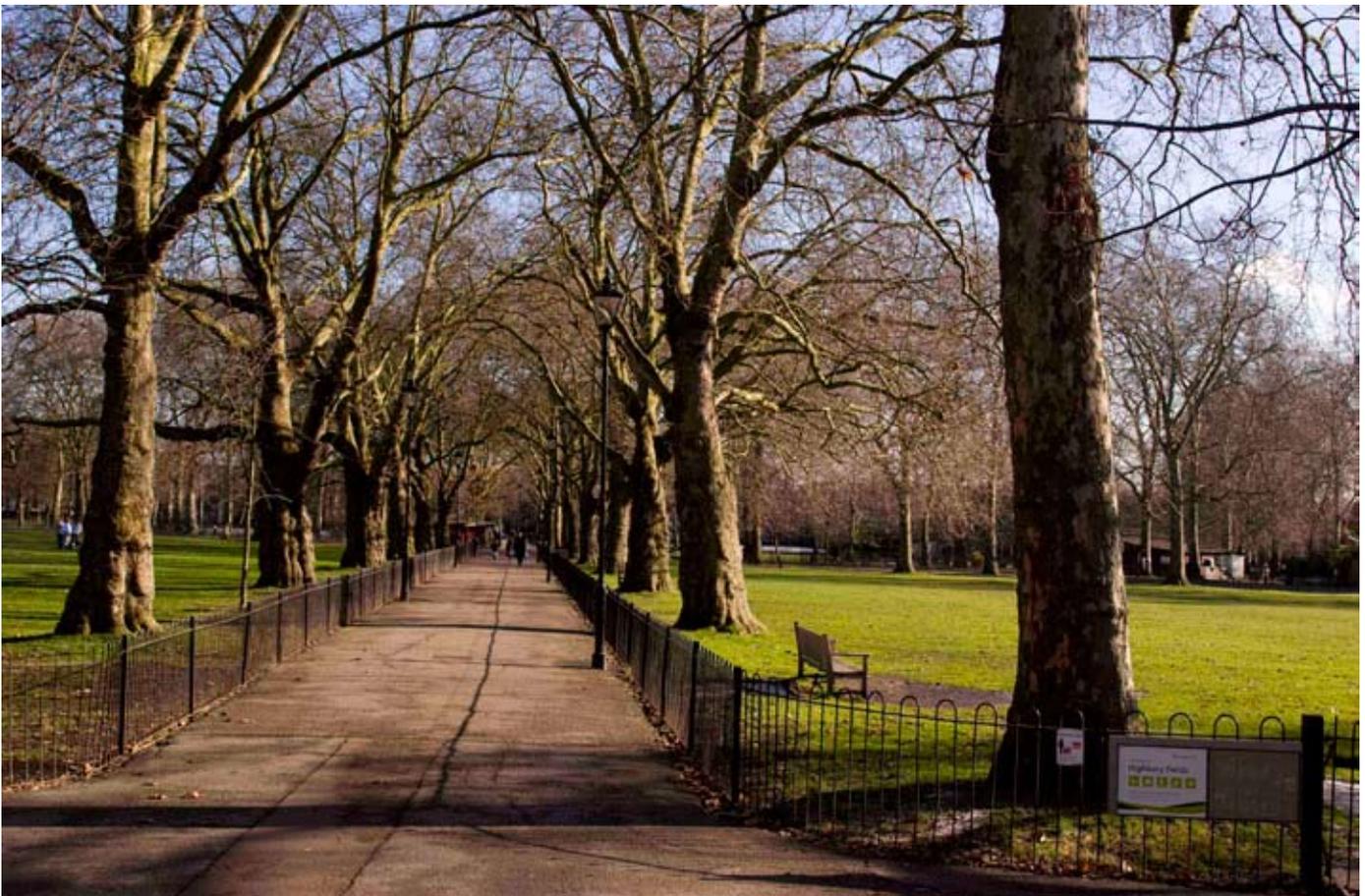
Green achievements so far

- Set up the 'Bright Sparks' service for re-using and repairing household items such as computers and toasters - the first of its kind in the country (opening April 2010)
- Introduced recycling around the Emirates Stadium on match days
- Included plastics in doorstep recycling
- Won extra funding for renewable energy installations
- Gained funding for new allotments and new tree planting

- Encouraged Arsenal and other Islington businesses to switch off unnecessary lighting at night
- Required new traders selling food at the Emirates Stadium to use recyclable packaging (from 2010)
- Ensuring the provision of cycle parking at the Emirates Stadium
- Won backing for a food waste recycling pilot at the Emirates stadium

What we would do with more Green councillors

- Extend car clubs
- Develop strategic pedestrian routes in the borough, to target investment in safer walking
- Extend the free home insulation scheme
- Implement a full 'home zone' for Jackson and Lowman Roads
- Set up a 'smart meter' loan scheme through libraries, to help people cut their electricity bills



TEN REASONS TO VOTE GREEN FOR ISLINGTON COUNCIL

We will protect all frontline services from cuts and privatisation, including committing the Council to support the Whittington Hospital, Finsbury Health Centre and other threatened services.

We will improve the quality and accountability of Council services, starting with a fair and open consultation with tenants and leaseholders on the future of Homes for Islington

We will create a Commission to reduce waste, with residents and others who have the right skills and experience giving their time for free to help make the Council more efficient

We will work with the police to extend community policing, encouraging officers to stay longer in one area and reducing dependence on CCTV

We will increase the proportion of affordable and family housing built in Islington, including working more closely with housing associations and co-operatives

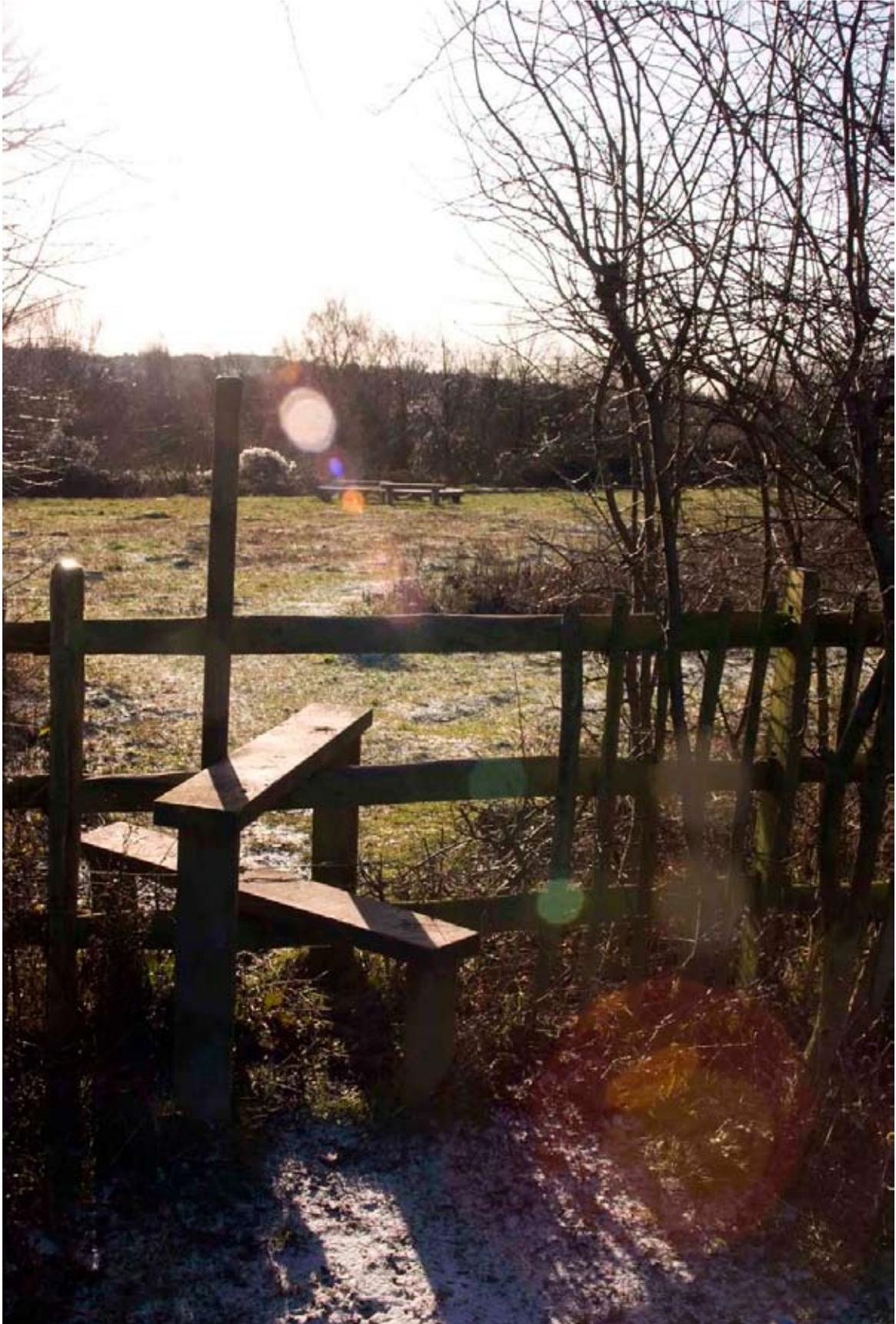
We will provide insulation and energy efficiency measures for homes across the borough to help people cut bills and waste

We will continue to make our streets and public spaces safer and more attractive for everyone, including better protection for trees and more secure on-street cycle parking

We will create a new fund to provide more open space in Islington, which will attract additional money from the lottery and charitable trusts

We will give people a real say in the planning decisions that affect them, and train local people to run proper consultations, not rely on external consultants

We will continue to work with local communities threatened by inappropriate development, including a cost-effective refurbishment of the Sobell Centre and protection for the NCH 'Secret Garden'.



Gillespie Park, Highbury

For more information visit www.islington.greenparty.org.uk