

Wen (Women's Environmental Network) submission to: RESET Call for Evidence

About Wen

Founded in 1988, [Wen](#) has been building strong partnerships promoting social action on environmental issues, as well as coordinating national projects focusing on women's health and the environment. Wen aims to inspire and empower more women to take action for a healthier planet and to help diversify the environmental movement so that we are better able to bring an intersectional feminist angle to environmental issues, locally and nationally. Wen has brought a gender analysis to environmental issues such as the climate crisis where a gender-blind approach has been the norm. Wen advocates for an intersectional feminist approach to environmental action and policy.

Our Feminist Green New Deal UK work

Wen wants to build support for a Feminist Green New Deal (FemGND) in the UK – this is a joint project between Wen and The Women's Budget Group (WBG). We aim to engage different stakeholders in developing a vision for a FemGND in the lead up to the COP26 UN Climate talks in Glasgow in November 2021 and beyond. This will build on the recommendations outlined in Wen's and the Women's Budget Group's (WBG) joint [FemGND Policy Paper](#) and [Briefing](#) which was launched in May this year. A key element of a FemGND is putting the care economy at the heart of climate and economic policy and a just transition.

We plan to actively reach out to a wide range of stakeholders spanning the environmental, women's, social and racial justice sectors to ensure greater buy-in for a FemGND through a UK-wide programme of grassroots workshops and a series of roundtables in the lead up to COP26.

Event at COP26

We will organise a high-profile event at the COP26 climate talks in Glasgow in 2021 linking with global efforts around a FemGND. We will be joining together with like-minded organisations to call for mobilisation at COP26 to ensure that women's and feminist perspectives are part of the UK and international dialogue at COP26. Event partners are: WBG, WEDO (Women's Environment & Development Organisation), and CEMVO Scotland.

Part One: Lessons from Covid-19

1. What policy measures or initiatives were introduced in response to Covid-19 that we should look to replicate for the long-term?

- **Health and social care**- Government taking over private hospitals for the greater public good. Building temporary hospitals to increase capacity. The appreciation of the vital role of care homes in our society. Starting to address the obesity crisis with various measures – banning adverts of junk food to children, free bikes for people.
- **Social infrastructure** - Local community action to support vulnerable people during the pandemic. Increased uptake of reusable products such as cloth nappies and reusable menstrual products.
- **Housing and homelessness** - Housing for homeless people provided. Rent and mortgage freezes.
- **Transport and travel, including cycling and walking** - Encouraging daily exercise. Prioritising walking and cycling in city centres – creating pedestrianised zones and widening pavements to help with social distancing. Creating more cycle lanes. People flying less.
- **Education and training** - Some schools providing free meals to children and adults in their local community. Some schools and schemes providing free laptops and computers for children who don't have these.
- **Business and manufacturing** – Some companies switching their manufacturing to produce PPE, ventilators.
- **Food and farming** - Increase in people growing their own vegetables and cooking meals from scratch. Increased uptake of organic vegetable box schemes.
- **Access to nature, nature restoration and green spaces** – Keeping the parks open during lockdown so that people can enjoy nature and green spaces. Improved air quality due to less traffic on roads.
- **The public realm, including the removal of statues** - Asking people to change their behaviour for a wider public good or necessity. Online Parliament and online voting for MPs. Removing racist statues.
- **Employment (home working, quantity and quality of employment, labour standards, wages and security of income)** - Furlough scheme to guarantee people's incomes. Encouraging people to work remotely where possible. The recognition of how vital paid and unpaid care work is – looking after children, the elderly etc. A re-evaluation of what is considered important and valuable work – appreciating the work of all key workers and that they should get a pay rise and be on secure contracts.
- **Tax and public finances** – Using public finances to pay for the furlough scheme.

2. What were the benefits of some of the policy measures implemented in response to Covid-19 that we should look to secure for the long-term, and how could this be done?

- Eliminating rough sleeping – good for homeless people + wider society.
- A guaranteed basic income through the furlough scheme enabling people to meet essential needs.
- Increased health and well-being from daily exercise.
- Appreciation of the benefits of nature and green spaces to people's health and well-being.
- Healthier diets from growing your own vegetables and cooking from scratch.
- Increased participation and a strengthening of democracy with online voting leading to more constructive dialogues between MPs.
- Increased appreciation about the value of the care economy to our society. Revealed the need to urgently invest in our social care system.
- Private hospitals part of NHS – this created a fairer health system where everyone gets equal treatment regardless of their income. Strengthens the NHS – more efficient, cost-effective + fair.
- More remote working improved air quality as less travel.
- Local community action – helped to strengthen communities and reduce isolation and loneliness. Enabled people to get to know their neighbours more.
- Rent freezes enabled people to focus on meeting their basic needs for food and utilities.

3. What existing weaknesses in UK society and economy made the response to Covid-19 more difficult, and how might these be addressed to improve life in the UK and reduce the risk of future crises?

Society: The pandemic has highlighted how unequal UK society is and that many people are living in poverty, especially BAME communities who have been disproportionately affected. Covid-19 has brought to the spotlight the health inequalities and structural racism endemic in British society. Ethnic minority communities are more likely to live in areas with toxic air, which weakens the immune system and exacerbates Covid-19 and to live in households that are multigenerational and overcrowded due to high rents and a lack of social housing. People from ethnic minority backgrounds and people living in deprived areas are more likely to have underlying health conditions such as diabetes or heart disease due to this inequality and deprivation making them more susceptible to Covid-19. Many people from ethnic minority backgrounds are key workers making them more vulnerable to catching the

virus. Women also predominate in the NHS workforce. A lot of these jobs are underpaid and undervalued despite being essential to our society. A lack of a gender analysis to policy making meant that the disproportionate impact on women of the pandemic and lockdown was not initially taken into account by the Government. This was particularly the case when they failed to realise the impact of the stay at home message would have for women experiencing domestic violence

Economy: A lack of a gender analysis to policy making means that the work of caring for children or the elderly was overlooked and not seen as real work. The lack of affordable childcare in the UK also means that many parents rely on relatives to help with child-care. When this was not an option during the pandemic many parents, and mothers in particular, struggled to combine paid work with looking after their children. Failure to acknowledge the value of unpaid care work to our society is a fundamental weakness as this work supports the whole economy and should be taken into account in policy making.

4. What has the pandemic revealed about how we make decisions in the UK, and how well it enables us to respond to complex challenges?

Decision-making is concentrated in a very limited group of people in Government often reflecting a significant white male bias, which has serious implications for policy decisions. Decisions are therefore too partisan and not representative enough of our society as a whole. It would be better to have a cross-party decision-making process when facing complex challenges in the future and also involve many other stakeholders such as trade unions and other key people with relevant expertise or experience leading to more effective solutions and policy making.

Part Two: Resetting UK Society after Covid-19

1. What should be the primary aims of a post-Covid economy, and how should progress against those aims be measured?

The primary aims of a post-Covid economy should be to create a fairer, happier, healthier, more equal and net zero economy and society. Progress should be reviewed regularly against an agreed set of targets on equality (gender, social and racial) and decarbonisation across the economy covering health, housing, transport, the care economy, business, education, banking, social infrastructure and well-being. Equal emphasis needs to be placed on gender, social and racial justice alongside green goals. This needs to be central to our post-Covid economy as the climate crisis is inextricably linked to gender, social and racial inequality.

2. What shape should government stimulus packages have if they are to deliver an economy that is greener and fairer, and what should they include?

1. Expand and invest in the care economy

Government stimulus packages should invest and expand the care economy as this would make the economy significantly greener while also addressing gender, racial and social inequality. Investing and expanding our care economy should be a top priority for government in the post-Covid recovery. This stimulus package should sit alongside other green stimulus packages. There should be an equal balance between investment in low-tech and high-tech initiatives. This can be done by:

Promoting a culture shift towards valuing care as foundational to the economy, society and environmental sustainability. Reframing and promoting the caring industries and large portions of the service industry as green jobs. Supporting the caring industries to become greener through the promotion of sustainable buildings, low-impact equipment and cleaning materials, and strategies to reduce waste. Rebalancing job creation in green technologies and infrastructure with investment in foundational low-carbon sectors. Labelling care, service, maintenance and stewardship as low-carbon activities would increase their social value, potentially making them more attractive to men. This will ensure that new green jobs are not purely concentrated in male-dominated sectors.

The [Women's Budget Group](#) research found that a net investment of around 2.5% of GDP in childcare and social care would:

- Create over **2 million well paid jobs**
- Increase **overall employment by over 5 percentage points** and
- Decrease the **gender employment gap by 4 percentage points**.
- Investment in care has the potential to mitigate the worst employment effects of the Coronavirus recession:
- Investing in care would create **2.7 times as many jobs as the same investment in construction: 6.3 as many for women** and 10% more for men.
- Increasing the numbers working in care to 10% of the employed population, as in Sweden and Denmark, and giving all **care workers a pay rise to the real living wage** would create 2 million jobs, increasing **overall employment rates by 5% points and decreasing the gender employment gap by 4% points**.
- **50% more can be recouped by the Treasury in direct and indirect tax revenue from investment in care than in construction**

- Investment in care is **greener** than in construction, producing **30% less greenhouse gas emissions**. A care-led recovery is a green led recovery

This [research](#) shows that such investment also provides a far better economic stimulus than investment in construction. It would also promote gender equality which the pandemic risks widening. (Women's Budget Group)

Recognise that paid care jobs are low carbon jobs and that they redress gender inequality

Women's disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care work sees them own less and earn less over a lifetime as they have less time for paid work.

- Investing in care therefore has the dual benefit of creating jobs – and tax revenue - that are mostly done by women therefore increasing their labour market participation and, enabling other women to achieve labour market equality. Children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, also benefit from high quality childcare and education.
- The narrow definition of 'green jobs' as those in construction and technology often obscures the fact that care, as an already low carbon, high recompense sector, is increasingly neglected in the UK. All green jobs ought to be paid at real living wages, securely contracted and unionised.

2. Invest in policies that promote the redistribution of unpaid care

Encouraging men to take on more unpaid care work is also essential:

- Implementing a 30-hour paid work week in recognition of unavoidable unpaid work. (Increase minimum wage significantly to enable people to reduce their work hours)
- Actively incentivise and normalise care leave for men by, for example, implementing 'use it or lose it' parental leave and increasing length and pay of paternity leave.
- Consider forms of Universal Basic Income or Universal Basic Services to guarantee everyone minimum living standards and recognise and remunerate care as work.

3. Consider gender in rethinking food production and consumption

The way we source food is contributing to climate change via food miles and fossil fuel emissions. It is also predominantly the responsibility of women in heterosexual households. Reconfiguring food means taking account of the extent to which women take responsibility for the procurement and preparation of food by:

- Balancing recommendations for greater food self-reliance with recognition of the gendered, unpaid and low-paid labour involved in producing and providing food.
- Supporting and developing sustainable small businesses that save time and reduce domestic work through mass preparation and distribution of locally grown food.

4. Investment in social and physical infrastructure

- Promote participatory town planning to co-create spaces with those who use them.
- Ensure that physical infrastructure is designed with local communities to accommodate the life patterns of women and other marginalised groups at the same time as green goals.
- Transport plans should take account of how women use transport differently to juggle caring responsibilities. Women are significantly more likely to rely on public transport, especially buses, which allow them to ‘trip-chain’ (i.e. make multiple short distances at either end of their working day) affordably.
- Design new houses and flats with dedicated spaces for drying laundry and storing bulk goods and recyclables, providing communal gardens, kitchens and utility sheds for sharing tools, toys, appliances and work between neighbours.
- Enable collectivisation of unpaid care and domestic work through design in order to move away from ‘caring as usual’ as well as to reduce the material throughout involved. Better design will enable better service provision and mutual aid, thereby making care work less time consuming.
- Promote, fund and facilitate co-housing development, intentional communities and community land trusts in urban and rural areas, in order to co-locate carers, people requiring care (such as lone older women and people with disabilities) and amenities in close proximity.

5. GREEN JOBS

Support women's enrolment in green technologies

A green recovery needs to address gender and other inequalities and should be wary of reproducing occupational segregation and take steps to enrol women in STEM jobs crucial to a green economy including:

- o Providing subsidies or other incentives (including paid education leave) to support women, low-income and BAME people to access training and development programmes and give more people access to high-skilled work in the new green economy is key.
- o Provide subsidies or other incentives to support those whose jobs are at a high risk of being replaced by automation in order to future proof employment also matter.
- o Encourage women and girls into male-dominated green sectors promoted a green recovery or Green New Deal, as well as encouraging boys and men into the already green caring sectors

6. DEMOCRACY AND OWNERSHIP

Key to restructuring our society is changing how governance works so that it involves communities. Women, especially BAME and disabled women, are still underrepresented in all areas of political life and rectifying this is crucial to democratising the economy.

Inclusive participation is central to localising power and resources by:

- o Promoting economic, ecological and carbon education in schools as well as through the media, to best engage all children.
- o Require all consultation on environmental policies to have proportional representation of gender and race and engage civil society.
- o Experiment with different models of consultation like citizens' assemblies.

- o Support new forms of ownership such as cooperatives and community-owned enterprises and ensure that women are enrolled in these processes.
- o Implement community wealth building to address gender, social and environmental concerns locally.

7. Gender, racial and social equality should be a central goal of a green post Covid economy

- o Make socio-economic equality (of gender, race, disability etc.) a key goal of any green new deal framework and enrol feminist thinkers in co-creation of planning and policy.
- o Work to abolish violence against women and girls as it continues to exist in the UK and around the world as well as supporting victims/survivors with sustainably funded services including those by and for BAME women.

8. (INTER)NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITES

Key to a Feminist Green New Deal is reducing and redressing international inequalities by:

- o Ending the hostile environment in the UK including rethinking the new Immigration Bill, abolishing the No Recourse to Public Funds condition and ending information exchange between public bodies and the Home Office.
- o Promoting fair tax policies which close tax loopholes, redistribute wealth between women and men and, hold transnational corporations to account for practices that exploit people and planet. This could include: a fossil fuels tax for corporations, a financial transaction tax and reform of progressive taxation like income and corporation tax.
- o Hold transnational corporations to account for practices that exploit people, animals and the environment for profit.
- o Protecting human rights including sexual and reproductive rights in the UK and globally.

- o Promoting trade justice within all global supply chains including those dominated by women
- o Transforming food supply chains to enable socially just and environmentally sustainable food production, distribution and consumption.
- o A FemGND for the UK would acknowledge the need to repay debts and heal harms caused in the UK's colonial past, as well as its racist and misogynist present, by the finance, development, military and care/service sectors.

3. **What training is needed for people to be able to take up the jobs created by such investment, and how might national government put in place measures to distribute available work more equitably, and address intergenerational inequity?** – see point no. 5 above.
4. **What contribution might the following policy proposals make to ending wealth, income and pay inequality?** – see point no. 1 above for more details about how investment in the care economy would address inequality.
5. **Should there be conditions (or exclusions) applied to government support for particular industries, and if so, what should they be?** – Yes, the government should not be supporting high carbon industries to carry on business as usual. Any support should be conditional on a firm

commitment and plan to significantly reduce their CO2 emissions and move towards zero or low carbon alternatives.

6. **What mix of investment and changes to taxation would be needed to deliver a government stimulus package that resets the economy so that it is green and fair?** – Much higher taxes of people on higher incomes and of corporations is required, especially closing tax loopholes and tax havens. Stop subsidising the fossil fuel industry and other high carbon industries. Stop investing so much budget in arms and defence to enable more investment in the green economy.
7. **What changes are needed to the structure of public and private finances to support a fair and green recovery?**
8. **What kind of businesses we need to deliver a fair and green economy, and how should they be owned and run?** – see point no. 6 above
9. **What should the priorities of national, devolved, local and city government be for ending inequalities and decarbonisation in the UK?** – the starting point for any policy decision should be how will this address equality and decarbonisation? Both should be seen as priorities and not pitted against each other. What is the point of a decarbonised economy if we still have endemic racism and gender inequality?
10. **Looking forward, what changes to democracy and decision making in the UK might deliver better social and environmental outcomes?** – see point no. 6 above.
11. **What should be the key global priorities of the UK and what measures should the UK take to support a globally co-ordinated reset?** – see point no.8 above.
12. **What opportunities are presented by the UK co-hosting COP26 in 2021 and/or G7 presidency and how should these be used?** - The international platform in COP26, with the UK as convenor, provides a strong influencing window to mobilise for domestic climate and equality issues. The UK should take a lead role in this given our historical responsibility due to our colonial legacy. This is a unique opportunity to be a world leader in pioneering a more equal and green economy nationally and internationally.

See Wen's and WBG's [Feminist Green New Deal UK Policy Paper](#) and [Briefing](#) and [launch](#) for more details of all of the above points.