

Environmental, Climate, and Sustainable Economy Policy

An Ecological Economic Vision for Aotearoa

The Alliance has believed from its founding that the economy exists to serve people and communities, not the other way around. A healthy society depends on a healthy natural environment, and economic development must operate within the ecological limits of the planet.

We reject an economic system that measures success by the accumulation of financial wealth while ignoring the depletion of natural resources, the destruction of ecosystems, and the social costs imposed on communities. The plunder and destruction of our natural environment must end.

Our environmental policy is therefore inseparable from our economic and social policy. We seek a cooperative society in which people live in balance with the natural world, where essential resources are held in public or community ownership, and where economic decisions are made according to long-term social and ecological needs rather than short-term private profit.

This is the foundation of an **Ecological Economy**, developed from the original Alliance Party **Red/Green Charter of 1991**.

Our environmental policy is based on six fundamental principles:

- **ecological stewardship and sustainability.** Economic activity must respect the limits of the natural environment.
- **social and environmental justice.** Environmental protection must go hand in hand with equality and social justice.
- **intergenerational responsibility.** We must leave future generations a healthy climate, clean water, fertile land, and functioning ecosystems.
- **public and community ownership.** Essential natural resources and services should be controlled in the public interest.
- **democratic participation.** Communities and tangata whenua must have a meaningful role in decisions affecting their environment.
- **polluter pays.** Those who cause environmental damage must bear its full social and ecological cost.

1. A New Measure of Progress

Gross Domestic Product is an inadequate measure of national progress. GDP treats the destruction of forests, depletion of natural resources, and environmental disasters as economic activity, while failing to properly account for unpaid social contributions, community wellbeing, and ecological health. GDP measures the buying and selling of goods as a poor proxy for economic activity meeting human needs.

The Alliance will therefore move towards a **Genuine Progress Index (GPI)** as a central measure of national progress.

The GPI will recognise:

- environmental health and the condition of our natural resources;
- public health and wellbeing;
- social equality and security;
- the value of unpaid caring and community work;
- sustainable employment and economic security;
- the quality of public services;
- the preservation of natural and social capital; and
- the long-term interests of future generations.

Government policy will be judged against these wider measures of progress, rather than simply by whether it increases economic output.

Environmental Auditing

All major government policies, programmes and investments will be subject to systematic environmental assessment.

Environmental considerations must be incorporated into economic decision-making from the beginning rather than treated as an afterthought.

Government will also introduce **true-cost accounting**, ensuring that environmental assets and the social and ecological costs of their destruction are properly recognised.

The Polluter Pays

The Alliance will establish and enforce a strong **polluter-pays principle**.

Those responsible for pollution or environmental degradation will be required to meet the full cost of preventing, containing, and repairing the damage they cause.

Waste and disposability will be curbed through a principle for the **right of repair** on as many consumer goods as practicable.

The public should not be required to subsidise environmentally destructive activities through the taxation system.

2. Climate Change, Energy, and Clean Air

Climate change represents one of the greatest threats to the wellbeing of present and future generations.

The Alliance will undertake a fundamental transition away from dependence on fossil fuels and towards a publicly planned, renewable, and sustainable energy system.

Energy policy will be based on security of supply, environmental responsibility, and public need rather than private profit.

Public Ownership of Energy

The Alliance will establish **one hundred percent public ownership of electricity generation, transmission and distribution, and retail services.**

Public ownership will allow energy policy to be planned over the long term and will ensure that investment is directed towards reliable, affordable, and environmentally sustainable energy rather than shareholder returns.

We will prioritise renewable energy sources including:

- solar;
- wind;
- sustainable biomass;
- hydroelectricity where the environmental cost is acceptable, including pumped hydro storage; and
- other genuinely sustainable technologies.

The transition to renewable energy will be accompanied by major programmes of energy conservation and efficiency.

Carbon Taxation

The Alliance will replace the Emissions Trading Scheme with a carbon tax.

An emissions trading scheme sets a price by auction and then allows it to be undermined by free allocation, offsetting, and political adjustment of the cap. A carbon tax sets the price directly, and the public can see what it is.

The carbon tax will be structured so that the costs of transition do not fall disproportionately upon low-income households.

Revenue will be directed towards renewable energy, public transport, energy efficiency, and other measures that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Emissions and Energy Efficiency

The Alliance will establish strong mandatory energy-efficiency standards for:

- buildings;
- appliances;
- vehicles; and
- industrial equipment.

Vehicle emission testing will become part of the Warrant of Fitness system.

We will also:

- accelerate the phase out of HFCs;
- establish progressively stronger emissions standards; and
- require industry to adopt cleaner and more energy-efficient technologies.

The Alliance will pursue rapid and substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, reflecting the principle that Aotearoa New Zealand must make an ambitious contribution to climate action. As a small, wealthy, and developed nation we are well placed to take the moral lead on this issue on the global stage.

3. Water: A Public and Common Resource

Water is a fundamental necessity of life and must never be treated simply as a commodity.

The Alliance will ensure that water remains under **public and community control**.

Municipal water services will be publicly owned and operated. We will prohibit the privatisation of essential water services, end the requirement for councils to place water into arms-length corporate entities, and oppose public-private partnerships that place control of water infrastructure or services in private hands.

Water resources must be managed for the benefit of present and future generations.

Protecting Waterways

Strong controls will be imposed on the discharge of pollutants into rivers, lakes, groundwater and coastal waters.

Particular attention will be given to:

- pesticides;
- nitrates;
- herbicides;
- toxic chemicals;
- industrial pollutants; and
- thermal pollution.

Those responsible for contamination will face substantial financial penalties and will be required to meet the cost of environmental restoration.

Industrial facilities that discharge warm water will be required to capture and reuse that heat wherever technically feasible, including for industrial processes, heating or electricity generation.

Water Recycling

The Alliance will support substantial investment in domestic and industrial water recycling and conservation.

We will encourage technologies and systems that reduce unnecessary consumption and protect freshwater resources.

4. Waste and the Circular Economy

The Alliance will move Aotearoa towards a **zero-waste, circular economy**.

The objective must be to reduce waste at its source rather than continually expanding landfill and disposal systems.

We will:

- reduce unnecessary packaging;
- prohibit non-recyclable plastic packaging;
- expand recycling and reuse systems;
- support domestic manufacturing based on recycled materials;
- investigate and address the accumulation of hazardous heavy metals in soils;
- mitigate the accumulation of forever chemicals and microplastics in our environment, and invest in technology that seeks to remove them;
- promote product durability, repair, and reuse; and
- support community-based waste reduction initiatives.

The Alliance will invest in nationwide use of reusable consumer packaging (such as glass bottles) wherever practicable, with the aim of minimising the use of plastic and

products derived from oil. We will include externalities, such as cost of shipping and weight of packaging, in any determination of the most ecologically sound options.

Government will support research and investment in technologies that recover valuable resources from waste rather than treating them as disposable.

5. Sustainable Agriculture and Land Use

Agriculture is central to Aotearoa's economy and communities, but agricultural production must protect the land upon which future production depends.

The Alliance will promote farming systems that maintain soil fertility, protect waterways, preserve biodiversity, and reduce dependence on harmful chemicals.

Organic and Sustainable Farming

We will establish a vigorous, publicly funded research and development programme into organic and low-impact agriculture.

This programme will support farmers to:

- reduce dependence on synthetic pesticides and herbicides;
- improve soil health;
- protect waterways;
- reduce agricultural emissions;
- develop sustainable production systems; and
- maintain productive farms for future generations.

Government support will be directed particularly towards family farms and smaller producers who can otherwise be placed at a disadvantage by large corporations and financial institutions.

The Alliance will progressively strengthen controls over chemicals that pose risks to human health or the environment.

6. Forests and Native Ecosystems

Native forests are a national taonga and must be managed for their ecological, cultural, and long-term public value.

Native forestry will be restricted to **small-scale, selective, and low-impact harvesting** consistent with the protection of biodiversity and ecosystem integrity.

The export of indigenous logs and unprocessed native timber will be prohibited.

Government will undertake substantial replanting programmes on marginal, degraded, and environmentally fragile land.

We will protect remaining native forests and ensure that forestry policy is based upon long-term ecological sustainability rather than short-term commercial extraction.

7. Mining and Extractive Industries

Some natural resources are finite and some environments are simply too important to risk permanent damage. We also recognise that the continued reliance on these resources as imports is not a long-term solution.

Mining will be prohibited in:

- National parks;
- conservation areas;
- reserves and other protected public lands; and
- the Coromandel Peninsula.

The Minister of Conservation will have the power to veto mining activities on public conservation land.

Where mining is permitted outside protected areas, operators will meet stringent environmental standards and be required to fully restore the land, with restoration bonds held in advance.

The costs of restoration must be borne by mining companies rather than the public.

As part of a just transition, the Alliance will bring extractive industries into public ownership and manage their wind-down directly, rather than leaving the timing to the companies and the cost to the communities. Revenue from those industries during the transition will fund environmental rehabilitation, retraining and redeployment of the workforce, and investment in the regions affected by closure.

8. Protecting Our Land and Coast

The land and coastline of Aotearoa are part of our national heritage.

The Alliance will prevent the uncontrolled sale of land and beaches to overseas interests.

Public access to the coastline will be protected.

Land-use decisions will recognise the long-term interests of communities, the environment and future generations rather than simply the immediate interests of property investors.

The Alliance will invest in publicly accessible walking and hiking tracks, including on private land in consultation with land holders. These will be established and maintained under our new ministry of works, KiwiWorks.

9. Genetic Modification and Food Safety

The Alliance will adopt a precautionary approach to technologies where their long-term environmental and health consequences remain uncertain. Moreover, we

are concerned by the use of genetic modification to establish proprietary dominance of large, international agribusiness over local food production.

We will oppose the field testing and commercial release of genetically modified crops where adequate environmental safeguards cannot be demonstrated, or exploitative contracts with corporations are imposed.

We will maintain strong controls over genetically modified organisms and ensure that the public has the right to know how food is produced. Food will require accurate labelling for both contents and where it is sourced from, verified with MPI.

10. A Nuclear-Free Aotearoa and Pacific

The Alliance reaffirms Aotearoa's nuclear-free status.

We will prohibit:

- nuclear power;
- nuclear dumping;
- nuclear waste disposal at sea; and
- nuclear exploration or activities that threaten the marine environment.

Our opposition to nuclear power in this country is practical as well as principled. The waste problem remains unsolved, and the countries already invested in the technology are better placed than we are to solve it. Our own advantage lies in renewables, which we have in abundance.

Decentralised renewable generation also carries a resilience benefit. As disruptive weather events become more frequent, distributed generation keeps the lights on where a single large plant would not.

We will continue to advocate throughout the Pacific for a nuclear-free region and for strong international controls on nuclear materials and activities.

Our nuclear-free policy is part of a broader commitment to peace, environmental protection, and the democratic control of technologies that pose exceptional risks to humanity and the planet.

11. Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Environmental Governance

Environmental policy must be grounded in the constitutional relationship established by **Te Tiriti o Waitangi**.

The Alliance recognises the importance of Māori knowledge, values, and institutions in protecting the natural environment.

The principle of **kaitiakitanga**, or guardianship of the natural world, is consistent with our commitment to sustainable stewardship and intergenerational responsibility.

Māori must have genuine participation and power in decisions concerning natural resources and the environment.

Māori environmental values and interests will be built into all aspects of environmental legislation and decision-making rather than being treated as matters of consultation alone.

The Alliance will implement **Waitangi Tribunal recommendations relating to the environment and natural resources**.

Environmental governance must therefore be based on partnership, participation, and respect for the rights and responsibilities of tangata whenua.

12. A Cooperative Ecological Economy

Environmental policy cannot be separated from the way the economy is organised.

The Alliance rejects the idea that environmental destruction is an unavoidable price of economic growth.

A sustainable economy is one that provides people with decent work, secure incomes, quality public services, and healthy communities while maintaining the natural systems upon which life depends.

We will therefore promote:

- public ownership of essential infrastructure;
- democratic economic planning;
- renewable energy;
- sustainable agriculture and forestry;
- environmentally responsible industry;
- public and active transport;
- energy-efficient housing;
- resource conservation;
- recycling, repair, and reuse;
- scientific research directed towards social need; and
- investment that strengthens rather than depletes our natural and social capital.

The transition to a sustainable economy must also be a **just transition**. Workers and communities currently dependent on environmentally damaging industries must not be abandoned. Government will provide retraining, alternative employment, regional

investment, and public infrastructure so that the transition creates secure and meaningful work.

13. Our Commitment

The Alliance believes that environmental protection is not an optional addition to economic policy. It is one of the fundamental responsibilities of government.

We will build an economy in which prosperity is measured not by how rapidly we consume our natural resources, but by whether we improve the quality of life of our people while protecting the environment on which every generation depends.

We will halt the plunder of our natural environment.

We will place essential resources under democratic public and community control.

We will make those who pollute pay the true cost of the damage they cause.

We will protect our forests, waterways, land, and coastline.

We will build a renewable energy system and a zero-waste economy.

We will honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi and recognise kaitiakitanga as foundations for environmental stewardship.

And we will work with communities, workers, tangata whenua and the international community to ensure that Aotearoa New Zealand contributes to the protection of the global commons.

The Alliance's vision is a cooperative, democratic, and sustainable society in which the economy serves people and the environment, rather than the other way around.