

# Jenny Jones: “My vision for London is of a more sustainable, fairer and cleaner city”.

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*Green Party candidate for London Mayor **Jenny Jones** details her proposals to encourage a 10:1 ratio of company pay, to boost contracts to smaller firms through her mayoral office and how Londoners could have a safer and healthier life in the city. This is the third in a three part series with the mayoral candidates, including **Brian Paddick** and **Ken Livingstone**, with an *introduction* by **Tony Travers**.*



I've spent the past twelve years on the London Assembly, holding the Mayor to account and pushing Green ideas into action. In overseeing our transport, fire and police services, the Mayoral office holds a direct influence over the order of urban life, and through the two or three Green seats we have held on the London Assembly, the Green Party has been able to have a positive effect on how City Hall treats Londoners, whether through the housing and planning sector, in the procurement of contracted works and in the pockets of the people we pay.

I'm currently standing for Mayor and I am part of a team of 24 Green candidates seeking election on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May. The work I'm perhaps most well known for is my critique of the Met police and for my support of walking and [cycling](#), but what I want to discuss here is how I will use the Mayoral office to tackle inequality and support small growing businesses. Our Green vision for London is one where our air becomes cleaner to breathe, our streets become safer to walk and cycle along, and we can provide housing and services to all those who need them. A less polluted London with a healthy relationship with our environment, but also a fairer London where people are lifted out of poverty, small businesses are supported and young people can find work or training.

One thing that has always been a particular concern for the Greens is equality. The polarisation of rich and poor we've seen over the past decades is [detrimental to the city's social fabric](#). There is a growing body of research showing that, when compared to economically divided populations, more egalitarian populations are healthier, happier, live longer, are more law abiding and much more politically engaged; people are less stressed, less anxious, more secure and happier. In short, they fare better. The fewer social ills, fewer psychological conditions and fewer instances of drug addiction precede reduced health and penal costs.

What's just as concerning is inequality's effect on democracy. Research on 'democratic deficit' suggests that divided societies see fewer voters turn out, as those who lose out from political decisions see little point in voting. In turn, the policies that facilitate widening inequality continue, weakly opposed. Clearly, we need a preemptive attack on the root cause, rather than to endlessly spend on patching up the symptoms. As Mayor there are two feasible methods for achieving this.

First, where the mayor can control employment and procurement directly within the Greater London Authority (GLA) – including City Hall, Transport for London, and the Met Police – I will make sure no one earns less than a tenth of the highest earner. By trimming off a small portion of excessive earnings internally and dividing that amongst the lowest earners, this policy requires no external alteration of budgets and would dramatically improve the material means of those at the bottom of the earnings' ladder. Secondly, I will introduce a fair pay mark, which will be awarded to companies that adopt a 10:1 pay ratio or better. These are the first steps toward properly alleviating the adversity associated with gulfs in earnings and form the basis of [my vision of a fairer London](#).

Encouraging jobs and growth is a challenge for national government, but here in London we can harness subtle tools to influence local economies. Micro-businesses, those with fewer than 10

employees, provide employment for 2 million people and 90 per cent of London's enterprise is composed of self-employed individuals. These small businesses are at the front of the line for innovation and new jobs. We can tailor planning policy to favour 'high-streets' with essential services, and protect market traders, even encourage new market spaces – hotbeds for low-cost retail. There is often the assumption that supermarkets create new jobs, yet jobs lost in outcompeted independent retail outlets near the superstores commonly outnumber those gained. What's more, research commissioned by the Federation of Small Businesses shows that an average of only five per cent of a chainstore's turnover will find its way into the local area, compared to around 50 per cent from an independent retailer. Of course, small business isn't confined to retail and we would support growth sectors like those of the 'silicon roundabout', renewables and those using co-operative models through planning controls and investment in infrastructure that favour the high street and upstart industries.

The objective of project Merlin was to see Britain's five biggest banks lend £76bn to businesses, yet the Bank of England's [latest report](#) shows that lending to small and medium sized businesses continued to contract, falling by 5.1 per cent last August. As we know, capital is needed to kickstart a business and support it through quiet months and hard times. Company owners have told me that the banks' unwillingness to loan means growth opportunities have been missed and survival made much more difficult. Accordingly, we will stipulate that the GLA won't place its £15bn budget with banks that refuse to lend to the capital's small businesses. We can do that by assessing a lenders' track record on the matter before we reach any agreement.

Furthermore, the Mayor's office can use public contracts to boost smaller firms. Each year the GLA secures around £8bn worth of contracts for public services, such as waste management. The sheer scale of the services offered mean that smaller enterprises attempting to compete are screened out, preventing the growth of innovative entrepreneurial activity and different, smaller-scale business models. To begin to amend this, we would commit 15 per cent of contracts to small and micro-businesses, more than doubling the current figure. By dividing the demands placed on providers we'd hope to open the contracts to new competition from smaller firms. Similarly, we will invite accountability and competition for contracts through 'CompeteFor', committing contracts worth £10,000 and above to this online system. We would commission research into 'buy local' schemes with the intention of encouraging the types of schemes that work. In all, this would mean a GLA committed to growing the businesses that matter, the ones that really are sewn into the city's fabric.

My [vision for London](#) is of a more sustainable, fairer and cleaner city; a London where people really are given the option to dispense with dirty motors; where new technologies are properly harnessed on public transport; where the option to cycle is feasible for everyone of all ages and abilities, not just the brave willing to go head to head with traffic so that we can really make headway on [London's filthy air](#).

I want to see a London where economic activity is for the city and its inhabitants, not just physically in it; where we target our support toward the small-to-medium businesses that need support to grow, innovate, create jobs, take on apprentices, try out new business models and integrate into their local area. I want to see a London where the gulfs between high and low pay are reduced, so that as prices continue to inflate those who really need it will have more and those unjust excesses – far beyond anyone's needs – are reigned in.

Unfortunately, one blog entry doesn't give much space for all the things I'd like to write about. I've left out my concerns for a London where we set in place a system of perpetuated [social and co-operative housing](#) (as opposed to the fallacy of Boris' 'affordable' houses. I've decided not to write about my commitment to [animal welfare](#). But please do read more about the Green approach to the areas of policy you are interested in. We offer a unique and complete vision for the city; not just a collection of populist slogans aimed at short-term electoral success.

In 12 years of attendance at the London Assembly I've seen City Hall turn from red to blue, but always in parts coloured green too. In that time we've been able to push through the Living Wage, fought against the closure of a police unit that educates heavy goods drivers on road sharing,

successfully opposed Heathrow's expansion and secured cycling budget commitments under Ken Livingstone and upped the climate change budget from £300,000 per year to £8bn.

Wherever the Greens have made themselves heard, we've helped improve Londoners' lives. After May, the greener City Hall is coloured—in both the Mayoral and Assembly elections—the cleaner, healthier, happier and fairer our capital will become.

*The British Politics and Policy blog team attempted to contact the Conservative candidate, Boris Johnson and his campaign team, on numerous occasions. However we had not received a response at the time of publication.*

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### **About the author**

**Jenny Jones** has held public office as an London Assembly Member since 2000, and was a Southwark councillor from 2006-10. In 2003-4, she held the position of Deputy Mayor of London. Before she entered politics, she worked as a financial controller and as an archaeologist in the Middle East.

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