

Green Party Contenders Clash Over Direction in Leadership Race

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The leadership race within the Green Party of England and Wales has sparked a sharp debate over the future course of the party. With ballots set to open on August 1, the contenders are offering competing visions, one rooted in traditional green principles, the other seeking to challenge the populist right with a recalibrated message.

Members of Parliament Ellie Chowns and Adrian Ramsay, standing as joint candidates, represent a continuation of the Green Party's long-standing commitment to grassroots politics, environmental justice, and inclusive policy-making. Their approach emphasises building trust through community engagement and addressing core issues such as housing, climate sustainability, and public investment.

On the opposing side, Deputy Leader Zack Polanski is advocating for a strategic shift in tone. While maintaining a commitment to green policies, Polanski argues that the party must speak to a broader, working-class base, particularly voters disenchanted by establishment politics. He has criticised what he calls "alienating woke language" and suggests the Greens can counter rising support for Reform United Kingdom (Reform UK), a right-leaning party gaining traction on anti-immigration and economic nationalism, by redefining environmentalism in practical terms.

Polanski's proposals include a wealth tax, a ban on private jets, and clearer communication on how green policies like solar energy or home insulation can reduce everyday expenses. "Most people can't afford a heat pump right now," Polanski said in a recent interview, underscoring the need to align green goals with economic realities.

Chowns, however, warns against embracing populist rhetoric, calling it divisive and counterproductive. She believes winning public support should not come at the cost of principle. "We want Green politics to be popular, not populist," she said, highlighting the importance of offering realistic solutions and earning trust through consistent outreach.

With only a one-year term up for grabs due to a delay in the election cycle, the outcome of this vote won't determine the Green Party's direction until the next general election, expected by 2029. However, both camps see the race as a critical opportunity to shape public perception and gain ground in upcoming local elections across Scotland and Wales.

The party currently holds four seats in Parliament, matching Reform UK's total following a resignation from their ranks. Yet, the broader challenge remains: expanding their support base

without compromising on principles or getting drowned out in a crowded political field. As the political environment shifts, the Green Party's internal debate reflects a wider question confronting many movements: how to remain true to foundational values while adapting to a volatile and increasingly polarised electorate.