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Statement

I'm Rosi Sexton. I want to be the next Leader of the Green Party because I believe we need to get serious about inclusion, serious about credibility, and serious about gaining political power. This is how we will deliver the action on climate and social justice that we urgently need.

I joined the Green Party in 2015. It was obvious to me that climate change is the greatest threat that humanity faces. As a single parent living in Manchester at the time, I was increasingly aware of the impact of austerity on public services and our communities. I saw the Green Party as being the only party able to address both these challenges.

Before becoming involved in politics, I had a career as a professional Mixed Martial Artist. From 2007-2010 I was ranked #1 in the world in my weight class, and was the first British woman to fight in the Ultimate Fighting Championship. I'm no stranger to being an underdog in high stakes competition, and I understand what it takes to win.

I was elected to Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council in May 2019, where our group of 14 forms the official opposition to the Conservatives. I am our group spokesperson for Health and Adult Social Care. I also work as an osteopath, running my own business, and I have a PhD in computer science.

From my earliest experiences as a mixed-race child in a mostly white neighbourhood, to my time as a woman in male-dominated professions, I've always been an outsider. As a relative newcomer to Green politics, I know I'm an outsider and an underdog in this leadership contest, in much the same way that the Green Party is an outsider and an underdog in the arena of British politics. This can be a difficult position, but also offers some advantages. An outside view makes it easier to look beyond the status quo, and to avoid being caught up in tribal thinking.

As a small party under a First Past the Post electoral system, we have a mountain to climb. We are not a pressure group or a lifestyle movement. We have a responsibility to be the effective political voice of the green movement. We cannot keep expecting other "progressive" parties to carry our cause for us.

The scale of the challenge we face must not be underestimated - good ideas and good intentions don't guarantee good outcomes. We will not accomplish our goals without clear direction and commitment, careful strategy, and discipline to follow through.

My vision for the Party comprises of three key areas:

1. We urgently need to reform the party, to ensure that our systems and processes are fit for the task at hand. We must cultivate a reputation for competence and careful, evidence-based policy making that is rigorously backed by scientific consensus. We must welcome constructive criticism, scrutiny and expert input. Our policy platform must be comprehensive, constructive and credible.

Under our current system, it is possible for policies that aren't supported by scientific evidence to be passed by a minority of Green Party members at conference. This is a huge credibility problem for us and is one of the key hurdles we face in being taken seriously as a party.

2. We need to reach out to people from all backgrounds and walks of life, to engage with people who are not like us as well as those who are. We must meet people where they are and bring them with us, while at the same time holding firm to our values and principles. From families living in poverty to small business owners, we need to ensure that we speak to the everyday challenges of those who may not think of themselves as Greens with the same passion that we bring to our environmental policies.

We need also to remember that the Climate Crisis feels like a distant reality to those suffering discrimination in their daily lives or worrying how they'll provide for their families week-to-week. We must be vocal about issues of social justice, fairness and equality. We should make a habit of asking "whose voice isn't represented here?" and "why?" in all our discussions.

3. Finally, we need to focus on performance. We need to plan for and deliver electoral success under the First Past the Post system that we currently face. As a political party, our influence and credibility are directly tied to our election results.

We have a proven system for success in local elections. We must push this further and work to deliver results in Parliament, where greater Green influence is needed more than ever. Our clear goals should be a second MP, a Member of the Welsh Parliament, and Green representation on at least half the councils in England and Wales. This will take relentless focus and investment, prioritisation of time and resources, and a clear-headed strategy, not wishful thinking.

As an elected Green, I am already delivering on these principles. Earlier this year, I took the lead in Solihull Green Group's motion to council for a Fairness Commission to tackle inequality in the borough; and in my role as opposition health spokesperson I have been able to ensure that a healthy environment, equality, and care for our vulnerable residents are always high on the agenda.

Leading a political party is a huge undertaking, requiring a great deal of commitment and sacrifice. I pay tribute to Jonathan and Sian, who have carried that burden for the last two years, and recognise their hard work on behalf of the party. I believe that a fresh set of eyes and a new approach can take the Green Party to the next level.

If you believe, as I do, that the Green Party should be serious about inclusion, serious about evidence, and serious about winning elections then join me in calling for change. Now is our time: the clock is ticking.