

Alison McGovern, Labour MP for Wirral South

Shadow Minister for Work and Pensions

Background

Alison was born in Clatterbridge, Merseyside in 1980. She was educated at Wirral Grammar School for Girls before graduating with a degree in Philosophy at University College London. Alison is married and has a daughter.

Alison worked in the House of Commons as a researcher before joining Network Rail where she handled communications for development projects. Following that, Alison worked for the Art Fund and then Creativity, Culture and Education where she focused on helping young people achieve their potential through the arts.



Alison was elected as a Councillor for Brunswick Park in the London Borough of Southwark in 2006 before winning the seat for Wirral South Labour MP in the 2010 General Election, the constituency in which she grew up.

Constituency

Alison was first elected in 2010, increasing her majority to 14.1% last election. However, Alison will still be keen to give herself the best possible chance of reelection by representing the views of her constituents. After boundary changes, the Wirral South constituency was subsumed into Birkenhead; [Alison won the race to represent this constituency at the next election in June 2023](#).

Wirral South sits within Wirral Council, which is currently under no political control, however, Labour leads a minority administration. Wirral Council is a Metropolitan District Council, meaning it provides all local services from larger areas such as transport and housing, to environmental health and waste collection. Wirral South also sits within Liverpool City Region, where Steve Rotheram has been Metro Mayor since 2017.

Wirral Council declared a climate emergency and published its [climate strategy](#) in 2019. It also has a whole area pledge, committing to acting to “promote wider action to help reach ‘net zero emissions for Wirral as a whole no later than 2041”

Within Wirral Council, [domestic \(heating etc\) is responsible for 44% of all total emissions; transport for 30%; and industry, commercial and public sector for 26%.](#)

According to the Local Government Association, the Wirral will need 2,690 jobs in low-carbon industries by 2030 if it is to meet its share of the UK's climate targets. The majority of these would be in energy efficiency and low-carbon heat.

Political Activity

Alison has held several important roles in Parliament since her election in 2010. She has worked as a Shadow Minister for Digital Culture, Media and Sport; Treasury; Education; and International Development, as well as her current role for Work and Pensions.

Shadow ministers are less free to speak their mind than backbenchers are as they have to agree to support their party's policy positions in order to keep their role. However, they do have a much greater opportunity to scrutinise the work of a specific government department than most MPs and have more time allocated specifically to them on the floor of the House of Commons. This means that while it may be more difficult to get shadow ministers to agree to asks than backbench MPs, if accepted they may be more impactful.

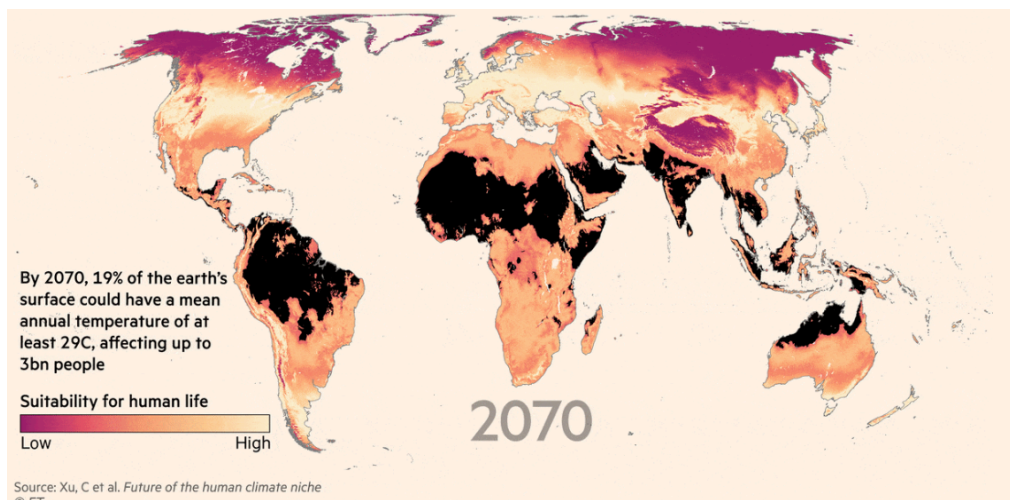
In judging her climate credentials, Alison has mentioned "climate change" [21 times in parliament since being elected](#), most recently in [January 2022](#). In May 2023, [Alison attended a students debate on climate change at South Wirral High School](#), boosting her climate credentials.

Furthermore, by department, Alison has asked the majority of her parliamentary questions to Work and Pensions - 267 out of 590 times. This is followed by the Department of Health and Social Care (65) and the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport (58). She has also initiated 2 adjournment debates, on [mental health support in the Wirral](#) and [Government policy on Syria](#), as well as a Westminster Hall debate, on the [humanitarian situation in Syria](#).

From researching Alison's written and oral questions asked in parliament, it would appear that she directly cares about the impact policy can have on children. The most three recent examples of this include a question on [the government's political strategy to protect the lives of children in gaza](#) (December 2023), how [the government will respond and help the children affected in Gaza](#) (Jan 2024), as well as [supporting a private members bill which sought to ensure children receive better schooling and care - free from poverty affecting them](#) (Jan 2024).

Save the Children has highlighted how [for those already living in poverty, the climate crisis will inherently make the situation worse](#). This will affect directly, where issues such as cheaper and low quality housing will be more at threat from destruction from extreme weather events, and indirectly, where issues such as impacts to crop yields from extreme weather will lead to resource scarcity - causing unaffordable consumer prices for those already at risk from poverty.

[Save the Children have also estimated that 653 million children in the Global South are living with the dual impacts of poverty and high climate risk](#). This matter is further exacerbated when considering the future impacts of climate change on these areas. As the [figure below](#) shows, the areas in black contain up to 3bn people and will have an extremely low suitability for life by 2070. The majority of this area covers the very countries which are disproportionately affected by climate change.



To be able to protect the citizens of these areas and secure the rights for future generations, it is imperative that such countries receive adequate funding to be able to invest in their peoples and alleviate poverty. The Conservative government has slashed the aid budget under its tenure, resulting in a **hole of £4bn for overseas aid**. Financial aid such as this is absolutely vital for maintaining the ability to invest in the necessary development of their people, while also investing in climate measures.

Last October, Shadow International Development Minister Lisa Nandy MP [refused to commit to reinstating the overseas aid budget to 0.7% of UK national income](#), should a Labour government obtain power. This follows a previous commitment by the Labour party to reinstate said figure, just [January of last year](#). To be able to combat poverty, and attempt to alleviate part of the dual pronged attack that it and climate change produce, it is vital that Global South countries receive the necessary overseas aid.

- **Possible Ask 1: Would Alison write to International Development Shadow Minister, Lisa Nandy MP, to ask what measures the Labour Party would take to ensure the poorest in the world receive adequate financial aid to help fight against social injustice and climate change?**

International Climate Finance (ICF) is a further route for lower-income countries to access the funds necessary to invest in adaptation and mitigation measures.

On October 17th 2023, Andrew Mitchell MP, Minister for Development and Africa, presented how the government changed the rules on how it would [calculate its £11.6bn International Climate Fund](#) (a commitment held since 2011/12). This change has been criticised by [Climate Action Network UK](#) as a way of “*cynical 'creative accounting' rather than living up to the UK's responsibilities for climate change and actively supporting the needs of countries and communities that have been made vulnerable to climate change*”. Some officials have suggested this move has pushed the UK in line with other countries' more [liberal climate finance definitions](#). However, many critics believe this is a poor excuse, and that the UK should be leading the way in meaningful financial support for addressing the impacts of climate change internationally.

With many vulnerable Global South Countries already laden with debt, the fact that climate finance has been restructured in this way risks exacerbating the current crisis, while non-efficiently delivering aid. Previously, climate finance aid was issued directly to the countries themselves as grants. However, the government restructuring has meant that aid is now delivered through loans, issued by international organisations such as the World Bank.

- **Possible Ask 2: Would Alison write to Annelise Dodds MP, Labour National Policy Coordinator, to ask what Labour's position is on issuing International Climate Finance as loans, rather than grants is (as current government policy could further burden many debt-laden developing countries)?**

We have also identified work and pensions as potential areas of common ground for engaging your MP. Please [get in touch](#) if you'd like to discuss asks for other areas of common ground, as well as accessing our free, tailored support for engagements with your MP. We can help draft your letters and meeting agenda, do further research and help you craft your ask.

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