

'We are a completely different political party': inside the Greens' membership boom

By Peter Walker, *The Guardian*, Sat 14 Mar 2026

It is, as one Green activist put it, a never-ending series of “constantly good problems to have”. But how does a party adapt to the sudden trebling¹ of its membership?

The basic facts alone are startling. Before Zack Polanski took over as leader last September, the Greens in England and Wales had around 66,000 members. They are now at 5 215,000, and still rising at speed.

This means the party has many more people to knock on doors and fold leaflets, as seen with the vast numbers of canvassers² the party could call on in winning last month’s Gorton and Denton byelection³. But, according to some Greens, it also means the arrival of a sometimes quite different culture, particularly from those who have fled Labour.

10 “We are, in effect, a completely different political party,” one experienced Green organiser said. “The majority of people have been around for less than six months.”

There have been some hiccups, for example new members putting Palestinian flags on leaflets then distributed to well-to-do and decidedly non-radical suburbs. And some outsiders argue the Greens need to be wary of what could amount to a *de facto* takeover by 15 new members, particularly those from the traditionally well-organised left.

Many within the party are optimistic, not least because their famously decentralised and democratic structures, not to mention a lengthy approach to deciding policy, makes any sort of takeover highly tricky.

One Green-party organiser said: “What entry-ism looks like for us is people attending 20 conference and having their voices heard. Yes, if your membership triples, then by far the biggest cohort have been members for less than a year. So there will be some disagreements and tensions. But I’m really confident the culture of the party will remain.”

Some problems are purely logistical, for example, welcoming and finding roles for new members when some local parties are seeing as many as 500 new members a month. “In any 25 sudden growth there are always adjustments,” said one senior Green, whose local party has more than doubled in size. “But there is a lot of extra energy. And it’s great to have friends who have never been especially political message me to say they have signed up.” And some Greens argued a culture shift could be a good thing.

More members does, of course, bring something else: more money. The party’s budget for 30 2026 is expected to more than double from the year before, with new media and policy officers arriving as part of a professionalisation process.

“Currently all our policy groups are chaired and staffed by volunteers,” one official said. “Some are real experts. But others are nightmares. With the extra money we can get the process overseen properly.”

35 Some things, however, are not changing. “We’ve had some councillors defect from Labour recently, and they all seem surprised about the way we work together,” one organiser said. “One told me: ‘You’re all so nice to each other. Someone even brought a cake to a meeting.’”

1 – trebling = tripling

2 – to canvas = to solicit opinions or votes

3 – byelection = an election used to fill an office that has become vacant between general elections.