

Virtual Parliament needed before decision can be made on ending lockdown, says Sian Berry



15 April 2020

The government's deadline for reviewing the lockdown measures is tomorrow [Thursday 16 April]

Green Party co-leader Sian Berry said:

"It is clear that before any decision can be taken on ending the lockdown we need to have mass testing, transparent data and robust democratic scrutiny from a virtually recalled Parliament.

"There is no substitute for cross-party debate and it is vital that MPs are able to represent the people who put them there during this time of crisis.

"Parliament not only ensures that the government is held to account but it also provides access to a wealth of knowledge and experience to help guide ministers to make the right decision at this crucial moment."

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Government must urgently provide care homes with direction and support to prevent fatal spread of coronavirus, says Green Party



14 April 2020

- **Greens urge government to provide clear plan for quarantining and routine testing in care homes as a matter of urgency**
- **Party echoes charities' call for a daily update on deaths in care homes**
- **Co-leader Jonathan Bartley: "Ministers cannot be complacent about what is happening. Action must be taken today."**

The government must offer clear direction and guidance and set out plans for support today on how care homes can self-quarantine to prevent deaths, the Green Party has said.

The party has called for a comprehensive plan which could include allowing carers to voluntarily isolate in homes, ensure provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and provide care for the residents to reduce the risk of transmission.

Fears are growing that coronavirus could be spreading through care homes untracked, as the government's daily update does not include those who have died in care.

Care home providers have warned they have already seen hundreds of deaths in the care system. One provider alone said there had been more than 300 deaths with outbreaks in two thirds of its homes. [1]

The Greens have now also backed a call from leading charities for a daily update on deaths in the care system. [2]

Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley said: "The government has said

vulnerable people must be cocooned from this terrible outbreak, yet we have not seen them take anywhere near sufficient action to protect those living in care homes.

“Ministers cannot be complacent about what is happening. Action must be taken today.

“Carers are being left to try and deal with this themselves, while the people who they have cared for years for are dying in front of their eyes.

“The government must come forward with a comprehensive plan of testing, provision of PPE and quarantine in order to slow the spread any further.

“The Government could allow carers and those with experience and appropriate checks to voluntarily self isolate within residential homes and provide care for the residents, while also safeguarding the jobs and livelihoods of care workers who are unable to.

“It is unconscionable that the government seems to be doing next to nothing to prevent or even track the spread of coronavirus among older people in care homes, while leaving carers, who are often among the most poorly paid members of society, to risk their lives and deal with this growing crisis by themselves.”

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/14/uk-care-home-providers-report-521-coronavirus-deaths>

2

Representatives from Age UK, Marie Curie, Care England, Independent Age and the Alzheimer’s Society yesterday wrote to Health Secretary Matt Hancock to ask for a comprehensive plan to support social care through the coronavirus crisis

<https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/news/2020-04-13/our-letter-secretary-state-health-and-social-care>

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Green Party urges government to help local authorities keep parks open this Easter



9 April 2020

- **Greens say local authority staff should be redeployed to ensure social distancing is observed**
- **More green spaces should be opened such as 300,000 acres of golf courses**
- **Co-leader Jonathan Bartley asks: "Where are people with no gardens supposed to go for their exercise?"**

The Green Party has urged the government to help local authorities redeploy staff from non-essential roles in order to keep parks and green spaces open this Easter bank holiday weekend. [1]

As families prepare to spend the weekend in continued isolation, the Greens have stressed the importance of keeping parks open so that those without a garden still have access to an outdoor space.

Last weekend saw Lambeth Council close Brockwell Park after people were seen sunbathing there [2], while Health Secretary Matt Hancock threatened to ban outdoor exercise altogether. [3]

Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley, and leader of the opposition on Lambeth Council, said such decisions would have an irresponsibly detrimental impact on everyone's physical and mental wellbeing.

He said: "Bank holiday weekend is coming up and it is absolutely vital that people continue to follow the public health advice on social distancing. However, it is also crucial that people have access to green spaces to go for their daily exercise.

"Many of these parks serve people who don't have any other access to an outdoor space. It is outrageous that government and local councils would

discriminate against people who don't have any other choice than using their publicly owned park.

"There is an inherent inequality in the fact that people who do not have gardens are being told they can no longer even go to their parks to exercise over this Easter bank holiday weekend. Where are people with no gardens supposed to go for their exercise in urban areas where they cannot easily or safely socially distance on the streets?"

The Green Party is also calling on the government to make park maintenance a statutory duty for local authorities and ensure that funding is provided to reverse the cuts felt across 92% of parks departments. [4]

Bartley said that if overcrowdedness remained a concern of parks then other spaces should be opened, such as the 300,000 acres of golf courses in the UK as has already been called for. [5]

He said:

"Government should be working with councils to help them do everything they can to monitor parks and ensure people are keeping to the social distancing rules. This way, we can be sure to keep the parks open and protect people's health from coronavirus."

ENDS

Notes

1

The Green Party calls on the government to work with local authorities to redeploy staff to monitor and enforce social distancing rules in green spaces and parks with the power to issue Fixed Penalty Notices using, where applicable, the existing byelaws for these areas.

2

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/brockwell-park-south-london-lockdown-lambeth-sunshine-a4407186.html>

3

<https://news.sky.com/story/coronavirus-follow-lockdown-rules-or-we-will-ban-outdoor-exercise-health-secretary-warns-11968783>

4

A [2016 Heritage Lottery Fund report](#) found that 92% of park managers had seen their budgets cut and 95% were facing more reductions.

5

<https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/18363824.coronavirus-lucas-calls-golf-courses-open-public/>

For more information or to arrange an interview please contact press@greenparty.org.uk or 020 3691 9401

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[Green Party calls on Labour leadership candidates to support electoral reform](#)



3 April 2020

The co-leaders of the Green Party [have written to the Labour leadership candidates](#) to offer to work together during the coronavirus crisis and to call on them to back electoral reform. [1]

Ahead of Labour's leadership election result being announced on Saturday [4 April], Sian Berry and Jonathan Bartley have written to each of the candidates outlining the importance of cooperation during the current crisis.

The letter also calls on whoever is announced as Labour leader to embrace proportional representation in order to strengthen our democracy and build a more resilient politics for the future.

Berry said: "The coronavirus crisis has shown just how vital it is that politicians work together and a fairer voting system which encourages more collaboration would make sure this kind of cooperation happens across the board.

"First past the post seriously hinders the ability of parties to work

together. We cannot continue to allow our democracy to be warped by a system where votes do not match who gets elected.

“So I urge the new leader of Labour to do the right thing, by backing a fairer proportional representation system and strengthening our democracy.”

Modernising the system will remove hundreds of safe seats across the UK, and incentivise parties to be more representative in their choice of candidates and, crucially, policies.

Voters stand to gain from this no matter which party they support, as research from the University of Michigan shows countries using proportional representation outperform those using first past the post on measures of income inequality, quality of life, environmental protections, education and health. [2]

Berry outlined further benefits for voters, including that proportional representation can avoid situations where extreme views can be bulldozed through without proper scrutiny, because proportional representation creates a need for compromise and gives space to smaller voices.

Proportional representation offers stability from policy lurch, where a new Government spends time undoing the work of the previous party, as well as lessening the likelihood of quick-fix solutions to win temporary public support.

The letter states: “In Labour, as in our party, the majority of members support a proportional voting system [3], and no other socialist or social democratic party in any major developed country still supports first past the post.

“Whichever one of you is elected, we offer our support in the collegiate spirit these times deserve, and we would like to meet with you virtually as soon as you are able, to discuss both the immediate crisis and how we build a better politics for the future.”

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://www.greenparty.org.uk/assets/files/Letter-Labour-leadership-2020-04-02-SBJB.pdf>

2

Research cited is from University of Michigan lecturer Salomon Orellana's Electoral Systems and Governance: How Diversity Can Improve Policy-Making

3

Three-quarters of Labour members want party to back proportional

representation, Independent, 17 Dec 2019

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/labour-party-proportional-representation-corbyn-leader-pollsa9249196.html>

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[Green Party calls for better data sharing to tackle Covid-19 pandemic](#)



31 March 2020

The Green Party is supporting calls made by the public health directors for NHS England to immediately release data collected through NHS England's 111 service to enable local health and social care systems to identify coronavirus hotspots. [1]

While current confirmed cases are collated only through test results at hospital, earlier data of those with symptoms is collected through the use of NHS 111 phone and online services.

Larry Sanders, the Green Party's health spokesperson, said this would enable local health and social care systems to be able to prepare better.

He said: "In the absence of population testing, the next best measure of where centres of infection may be forming could be shown by the rates of calls to NHS England by people experiencing symptoms.

"Data sharing between the key national Covid-19 response organisations and local health and social care systems is essential for adequate planning. And

we are calling for the government to ensure that NHS England releases this geo-mapped data of symptomatic people to those working at the local level.

“The time gap between being infected and being tested could be at least two to three weeks, therefore symptomatic data at a local level would give an insight into likely health care and social care system demand.”

People in hospital due to coronavirus will have had a period of virus incubation between two and ten days before symptoms start and then a further week of symptoms, having been told to remain at home and self-isolate for seven days to see how symptoms progress.

Sanders said:

“Hospital testing of Covid-19 is giving us ‘out of date’ data on the actual infection rates present in local communities. Directors of public health working at a local level would be better armed to know what is coming down the line with earlier symptomatic data collected by the phone and online services.”

On a different data sharing issue for those working in two tier authorities – specifically the shires – Public Health England is providing the totals of reported coronavirus cases at a first tier local authority level only.

Gina Dowding, Lancashire County Councillor and former NHS Health promotion officer, said:

“It would be useful to have this data at district council level. It is essential that those people working flat out to plan the local response to the epidemic are given as much information as possible. This government has big data, it is now time to release it for the common good.”

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://www.hsj.co.uk/public-health/public-health-directors-plea-for-111-data-to-track-coronavirus/7027261.article>

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