

Green Party protest urges Labour to oppose Policing Bill as it reaches House of Lords

10 January 2022

The Green Party has urged Labour to oppose the dictatorial powers within the Policing Bill as it reaches the House of Lords this week.

Green Party parliamentarians Caroline Lucas, Jenny Jones and Natalie Bennett and London Assembly member Zack Polanski will be joining a socially-distanced protest in Parliament Square on Wednesday 12 January to defend the right to protest [1].

Crucial votes have started on amendments this week to defend the right to effective protest, this will culminate in a decisive showdown with the government next Monday (17 January).

The Green Party is calling on Labour and independent members of the House of Lords to stand up for the right to take part in peaceful protest, which they say will be removed by the government's Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill.

The protest will be a Covid-safe event where those attending will be expected to socially distance and masks will also be available. [2]

Baroness Jenny Jones, who has been leading opposition to the Policing Bill in the House of Lords, said: "The Government is trying to take away our democratic freedom to protest, but in the next few days we have a unique opportunity to stop some of the worst measures outright in the Lords. Laws that give the police the power to stop people attending demonstrations who have no criminal conviction and to stop and search without suspicion.

"Boris Johnson once promised to lay down in front of the bulldozers if they expanded Heathrow, now he wants a year in jail for anyone doing that. We need Labour and others to vote with us, in deleting these draconian laws from the Police Bill."

Caroline Lucas MP said: "Priti Patel has said that she intends to use the Bill to criminalise people taking part in climate-related protests. But the sweeping powers of this Bill could be used against anyone who falls foul of what the home secretary decides is acceptable.

"The threat to democracy goes way beyond party politics, and we are calling on MPs of all parties and members of the House of Lords to stand up for human rights and reject this extremely dangerous and anti-democratic Bill. Whatever the home secretary believes, protest is a fundamental right in our democracy, not a crime. It must be protected."

Baroness Natalie Bennett said: “Many of the rights we enjoy today would not have been achieved without protest, including women’s right to vote. The statue of Millicent Fawcett, where we will be gathering, commemorates the suffragists’ long struggle. Boris Johnson attended the unveiling of this statue in 2018, but his government is now planning to criminalise the very forms of protest used by these brave women.”

London Assembly member and Green Party spokesperson on Democracy and Citizenship, Zack Polanski AM, said: “The Policing Bill has been condemned by a wide range of civil rights organisations, including Amnesty International and Liberty. It clearly contradicts Article 11 of the Human Rights Act, which protects people’s right to protest by holding meetings and demonstrations. Even the Conservative MP David Davis has warned of the uses to which this dangerous legislation could be put.

“There is a clear distinction between peaceful protest and violent action – and there are plenty of laws already that can be used against anyone who crosses that line. The Green Party will always defend people’s right to peaceful protest, whether we agree with what they are saying or not.”

Baroness Jones said: “These draconian laws should be seen as part of the attack on our democracy designed to keep a corrupt government in power and minimise opposition.

“Ironically, it could be the government’s attempt to bypass parliamentary scrutiny by MPs that enables the Lords to defeat the 18 pages of new amendments that have been added to the Bill. If so, there is a good chance that the government will be forced to go back to the drawing board.”

Notes

1

The socially distanced protest starts at 10.15am in front of the statue of leading suffragist Millicent Fawcett where there will be speeches from Green Party representatives

2

Pictures will be available after the event.

Journalists wishing to attend the event or to arrange an interview with a Green Party representative should contact press@greenparty.org.uk or call 0203 691 9401

[Back to main news page](#)

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Armed Forces in hospitals shows additional Covid measures needed, Greens warn



7 January 2022

The Green Party has warned additional Covid measures are needed to stop the NHS from being overrun after the Armed Forces sent 200 personnel into hospitals in London to make up for staff shortages. [1]

After the Prime Minister earlier this week said he hoped England could “ride out” the Omicron wave of cases, Green Party co-leader Adrian Ramsay has urged the government to re-think its strategy and follow in Wales’ footsteps by introducing additional measures.

Ramsay said:

“It is a shocking state of affairs to see the army being drafted in to help hospitals in London deal with the latest wave of coronavirus.

“The prime minister has accepted the NHS is overwhelmed but is still refusing to take firm action to stop the spread of the Omicron variant which is on the rampage across the country. More than 3.5m people in the UK had coronavirus last week, with 1 person in 15 infected in England.

“So ratcheting up lateral flow testing, whilst welcome, won’t be enough to prevent thousands of key workers having to isolate – pushing our public services to breaking point and placing those still able to work under severe pressure.

“In addition, we fully support the emphasis on the vaccination programme to reduce serious illness – but it has become increasingly clear that it has not stopped the transmission of the virus.

“This is why, with the prospect of millions more Covid-19 cases in January, Greens believe additional measures need to be taken in relation to mass gatherings. We suggest England should look to Wales and limit indoor events to a maximum of 30 people and outdoor events limited to 50 people. Alongside this, it is vital that venues and businesses impacted by these measures are offered financial compensation.

“With so many people required to self-isolate in order to protect others, we also need to do the right thing and offer financial support to those unable to work.

“We were urged to be careful to save Christmas; now we need to be careful to save the NHS. That means, for a short time while we ride out this wave, we should put these safeguards in place.”

Notes

1

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-59902220>

2

<https://gov.wales/coronavirus>

[Back to main news page](#)

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Green Party calls for an end to gross CEO pay inequality on Fat Cat Friday



7 January 2022

- Greens call for a 10:1 pay ratio to be mandated in law
- Co-leader Adrian Ramsay: “There can be no justification for astronomical pay for a tiny elite while the majority of people are struggling to get by”

The Green Party has called for legislation to address the gross inequality in pay as “Fat Cat Friday” figures reveal that CEOs of FTSE 100 companies earned more in just four days than the median yearly salary for the rest of the country.

The Greens are calling for CEO salaries to be no more than 10 times the amount that their company’s lowest-paid workers receive, arguing that the Covid-19 pandemic has shown more than ever the harmful impacts of inequality.

Green Party co-leader Adrian Ramsay said: “The majority of people know that the salaries of corporate senior executives have massively outstripped average earnings growth even if they do not work any harder than key workers.

“There can be no justification for astronomical pay for a tiny elite while the majority of people are struggling to get by.

“The key workers who have put their lives on the line throughout the pandemic deserve to be paid fairly and not see the rewards of their work go to a tiny number of already hugely rich executives. A mandatory limit on the difference in pay across every organisation would begin to reverse this rising inequality.

"This appalling systemic inequality hits women and minority groups especially hard. [1] That is why the Green Party would not only institute a legally-binding requirement for fair pay, but would also require all large and medium size companies to carry out equal pay audits and redress gender and other pay gaps."

The median pay for FTSE 100 CEOs stands at over £800 per hour while many working families are facing a choice between eating or heating this winter. [2] The cost of living crisis for ordinary people has been worsened by pay cuts and redundancies brought on by the pandemic [3], yet FTSE 100 CEOs are seeing their pay rise according to the High Pay Centre.

Notes

1

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/29/gender-pay-gap-at-uks-biggest-firms-is-growing-data-suggests>

<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/black-asian-workers-wage-inequality-b1987822.html>

2

<https://inews.co.uk/news/households-facing-heat-or-eat-dilemma-energy-bill-surge-april-1381152>

3

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jan/11/poor-families-living-costs-have-surged-during-pandemic-uk-study-finds>

[Back to main news page](#)

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Green Party five point plan for warm homes, lower bills and a safer climate



6 January 2022

- Greens reject Conservative MPs damaging suggestion to remove environmental levies
- Proposes plan which includes emergency grants for insulation improvements
- Co-leader Carla Denyer: "This government seems perfectly happy to walk

straight into another national crisis, knowing full well that the people who will suffer most are already the most vulnerable in society”

As households face soaring energy bills in 2022, the Green Party has set out a five point plan to ensure everybody can have a warm home and lower bills, while protecting the climate at the same time.

Millions of people in England and Wales could be forced into choosing between heating their homes and eating if bills rise by 50% in April, when the energy price cap is updated by Ofgem, experts have warned. [1]

While Conservative MPs are calling for the backward and environmentally destructive step of removing vital environmental levies [2], the Green Party has set out clearly how households across the country can benefit from a raft of alternative measures.

Green Party co-leader Carla Denyer said:

“Everybody has the right to a warm home, yet this year could see millions of people in England and Wales being forced to choose between heating their homes and eating. This simply cannot be allowed to happen.

“And less than two months on from the Glasgow climate talks we cannot allow the Conservatives to deny their own words by undercutting support for renewable energy.

“This government seems perfectly happy to walk straight into another national crisis, knowing full well that the people who will suffer most are already the most vulnerable in society.

“Three months ago the Green Party called for emergency winter fuel payments; four months ago we called for insulation grants and have been campaigning for better insulation for years. If the Government had listened to the Green Party in the autumn it could have prevented this bleak situation where millions of people face falling into fuel poverty.

“Today we’re presenting this five point plan which would ensure that everybody could afford to heat their homes and would help reduce carbon emissions in the long run.

“This is the sort of positive and radical action we need to protect the most vulnerable in society and ensure that we can all live a more comfortable life, at the same time as taking real action on climate change to provide longer-term security.”

The Greens are now urging the government to adopt its five point plan in order to protect the most vulnerable and ensure warm homes for all:

- Provide an emergency grant to homeowners, landlords and councils to fund immediate insulation improvements to those at risk of fuel poverty [3]
- Extend winter fuel payments to all by providing each household with an additional £320 to help them pay for spiralling energy costs and avoid fuel poverty [4]

- Make the polluters pay by introducing an immediate windfall tax on oil and gas company profits and a longer term policy of a carbon tax [5]
- Invest in domestic energy security by massively ramping up onshore and offshore wind and solar and reintroduce the feed in tariff at a high rate for homes and community projects
- Scrap the National Insurance (NI) increase, abolish the lower rate of NI on higher earnings and temporarily remove VAT from domestic fuel

Notes

1

<https://inews.co.uk/news/households-facing-heat-or-eat-dilemma-energy-bill-surge-april-1381152>

2

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10362493/MPs-call-PM-tackle-cost-living-crisis-scrapping-taxes-fuel-bills-green-levies.html>

3

<https://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/2021/09/20/emergency-insulation-grants-fuel-poverty/>

4

<https://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/2021/10/22/greens-call-for-%C2%A3320-payment-to-every-household-to-pay-for-spiralling-energy-bills/>

5

<https://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/2021/10/13/greens-call-on-government-to-bring-in-carbon-tax-at-cop26/>

[Back to main news page](#)

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Greens warn of catastrophic consequences for small businesses from post-Brexit custom checks



21 December 2021

*Over one third of small businesses not ready for full post-Brexit customs checks

*Call for UK to immediately negotiate to re-join the customs union

*Demand for free business support from professional advisors

Greens are warning the weeks ahead could prove catastrophic for many small businesses as they face the introduction of full post-Brexit customs checks and changes to VAT on 1st January 2022 [1]. The grace period, allowing them to delay making customs declarations to HMRC and paying any tariffs, will end on 31st December, but more than a third of small businesses say they are not ready for the changes [2].

To prevent increased costs, paperwork and disruption to supply chains, the Green Party is calling for the UK to immediately negotiate to re-join the customs union and for small businesses to be offered free support from professional advisors.

Green Party deputy leader, Amelia Womack, said:

“The government won the last election on a false prospectus. They haven’t got Brexit done. Instead, businesses are being undone by Brexit. It’s clear that it isn’t possible to leave the EU in a way that doesn’t damage business.

“The new customs and VAT measures from January 1st will increase costs, paperwork and supply chain issues at a difficult time of year for many businesses. January will potentially be even more difficult than usual due to tougher covid restrictions and the possibility of a ‘circuit breaker’ lockdown.

“Businesses consider the UK’s new trading relationship with the EU to be their number one challenge [2], ahead of skills shortages and the economic climate. The UK’s trade deal with the EU is the first in modern history that creates more rather than fewer barriers to trade.

“Greens are clear that the problems facing small businesses could be reduced if the UK re-joined the customs union – including a unified VAT regime. We call on the government to negotiate immediately with the EU to make this happen. We also want to see small businesses offered free support from professional advisors. The paltry £20 million pot for such support has run dry [3], but businesses need support now more than ever.”

Notes

[1] [Less than a month until full customs controls are introduced – gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/less-than-a-month-until-full-customs-controls-are-introduced)

[2] [A third of UK importers not ready for full Brexit customs checks – survey](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/a-third-of-uk-importers-not-ready-for-full-brexit-customs-checks-survey)

[3] <https://www.customsintermediarygrant.co.uk/sme-brexit-support-fund>

[Back to main news page](#)

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