

Greens Urge Covid Caution Ahead of Return to School



31 August 2021

As the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF call on educational settings to be made safer for students and staff [1], the Green Party is demanding the government follow international, scientific advice and ensure effective classroom ventilation, social distancing and, in addition, offer vaccinations to all 12-15 year olds in schools.

Vix Lowthion, Green Party education spokesperson and a secondary school teacher on the Isle of Wight, said:

“The government propaganda machine is being rolled out in an effort to reassure parents that schools are safe. But promising students and families that they can look forward to a more normal year by merely taking regular voluntary COVID-19 lateral flow tests is extremely naive, as teaching unions have rightly highlighted [2].

“The reality is, that in the UK infection rates are highest among those under the age of 30. Back in June, Public Health England demonstrated outbreaks of the Delta variant in schools exceeded those in any other setting, and that cases among secondary school children were the highest across all age groups.

“As students return to educational settings after a 6 week break, we must see proper ventilation, social distancing, face coverings worn in busy areas and the offer of vaccinations for older school children. Yet the best our Education Secretary Gavin Williamson can do is brandish false and hollow reassurances about a return to normality, and put the onus on parents and children to ‘not throw caution to the wind’ [3].”

With Covid-19 cases and deaths climbing in many parts of England, and evidence suggesting protection offered by Covid vaccines may be waning [4], the Green Party is also repeating calls for the mandatory wearing of face coverings on public transport and in shops, and adequate financial support for those who need to self isolate.

Peter Cranie, Green Party Health, Social Care and Public Health spokesperson, said:

“The government has accepted, as a price worth paying, Covid-19 infection rates around 30 times higher than this time last year [5] and an average 100 deaths a day. This compares to just 26 deaths in New Zealand, over the whole course of the pandemic.

“Instead of the childish reluctance of some Tory backbenchers to wear masks and maintain social distance, we need a responsible and compassionate approach from government. That means mandatory wearing of face coverings on

public transport and in shops and adequate financial support for those who need to self isolate.”

“The Covid-19 pandemic is an ongoing health emergency. We must approach this autumn with extreme caution.”

Notes

[1]

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/30/call-for-schools-across-europe-to-stay-open-and-be-made-safer-covid>

[2]

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/aug/26/unions-criticise-english-schools-more-normal-year-campaign-as-naive>

[3]

<https://www.lbc.co.uk/news/gavin-williamson-warns-pupils-not-to-get-carried-away-ahead-of-schools-return/>

[4]

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/health/medical/coronavirus-vaccine-protection-waning-in-those-first-jabbed-study-suggests/ar-AANIXrN>

[5] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-58281664>

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Delight and excitement – Greens at the heart of new government in Scotland



28 August 2021

The Green Party of England and Wales has expressed delight and excitement at the news that their sister Party, the Scottish Greens, are to enter into a cooperation agreement with the SNP. The arrangement – which will see Partick Harvie and Lorna Slater take up ministerial positions in the new Scottish government – has been confirmed following a substantial vote in favour by Scottish Green members.

Sian Berry, acting leader of the Green Party of England and Wales, said:

"This is a hugely exciting moment in British politics. It will be the first time Green politicians have taken a role in government anywhere in any of the UK nations. Just at a time when we urgently need more Greens in power.

"With Patrick Harvie and Lorna Stater both taking on ministerial roles, green priorities and policies on social and economic justice will be at the heart of the new Scottish government. They will be empowered to deliver bold plans on decarbonising transport, homes and buildings, restoring the natural environment, creating a fair deal for tenants, and focusing on equipping people with the green skills they need for jobs in a green economy [1].

"Cooperative arrangements of this nature are common in countries with a fair and proportional electoral system. And despite our unjust and unrepresentative first-past-the-post electoral system at Westminster, Greens are working cross-party at all levels, reflecting a growing appetite for cooperation."

Notes

[1] The agreement between the Scottish Greens and the SNP will aim to deliver a shared broad policy agenda that will tackle the climate crisis, create thousands of quality jobs and make Scotland fairer. Priorities will include:

- Decarbonising the transport network and investing in active travel and public transport
- Expanding and creating thousands of new jobs in Scotland's renewable energy industry
- Legislation to grow onshore wind, and a green industrial fund
- Bringing in new protections for nature, including the establishment of at least one new national park
- Providing a new deal for tenants, including a national rent control system and better rights for tenants in the private rented sector
- Bringing forward overdue equalities and land reform legislation
- Preparing a joint bill on a new referendum on independence for Scotland.

Further details:

<https://greens.scot/news/climate-action-central-to-greens-and-government-deal>

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Market-driven approach cannot decarbonise homes – Greens call for publicly funded retrofit scheme



25 August 2021

The Green Party has backed a letter to Boris Johnson from consumer and construction industry bodies that says decarbonising homes is currently too expensive, complicated and risky [1]. Greens argue that decarbonising the UK's housing stock cannot be left to the market, and call for a publicly funded retrofit scheme, especially for those less able to afford the changes.

Carla Denyer, Green Party spokesperson on housing and communities, said:

"The government's market-driven approach to decarbonise homes is leaving households confused and stressed, and will not deliver results fast enough. What is needed is a publicly-funded scheme that will retrofit 10 million homes, making them warm and cheap to heat, by 2030.

"With around 14% of the UK's carbon emissions coming from heating our homes, we cannot tackle the climate emergency without decarbonising our housing stock [2]. And those who are fuel-poor, in vulnerable circumstances or on low incomes will need particular support.

"We need to ensure that householders and tenants benefit rather than just private companies. This means homes will need to undergo a deep retrofit and have solar panels and other forms of renewable energy and heating installed. This way households will have warmer and more comfortable homes, cut their energy bills and benefit from generating a proportion of the energy they use."

"The government must ensure an approach that is a win-win, for the climate and for residents."

The government is soon expected to release its long-awaited Heat and Building Strategy [3] which will aim to incentivise homeowners to transition to emission-free homes by installing low carbon and renewable technologies.

ENDS

Notes

1. <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/CitizensAdvice/Energy/Net%20zero%20joint%20letter%20to%20the%20Prime%20Minister%20-%202021-08-25.pdf>
2. <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/uk-housing-fit-for-the-future/>
3. <https://www.homebuilding.co.uk/advice/heat-and-buildings-strategy>

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Peaceful protests are valid and important, but lasting change will come through genuine democracy, say Green Party



23 August 2021

The Green Party says planned peaceful protests by Extinction Rebellion against the billions poured into fossil fuels [1] are an important part of a democratic society, but that genuine democracy, with a fair electoral system, is needed to deliver lasting change. Greens have also repeated calls for a carbon tax to move funding away from damaging climate wrecking activities towards a green transition.

Zack Polanski, Democracy and Citizen Engagement spokesperson for the Green Party, said:

“Peaceful protests by campaigners against the damage being inflicted on our planet by destructive fossil fuel investments are both valid and important. But real and lasting change must be political.

“We’ve seen what genuine democracy can achieve. In countries with a fair and proportional electoral system, Green politicians have their fair share of seats in government. In Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands and now Scotland, Greens can take our policies into government and deliver the green policies that are so urgently needed in this climate emergency [2].

“Here in the UK, we’ve seen what can be achieved when citizens engage in participatory processes. The first UK-wide citizens’ assembly on climate change saw participants make far bolder recommendations on reaching net zero than those proposed by government [3].

“For Greens, the most powerful policy needed right now, to rapidly eliminate fossil fuels from our economies and fund a green transition is a global carbon tax [4]. This is a policy that Greens in government would push for.”

ENDS

Notes

[1]

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/aug/19/extinction-rebellion-targets-city-of-london-over-climate-role>

[2] The achievements of Greens in government in Finland:

<https://greennbvert.ca/green-party-accomplishments/>

[3] Climate Assembly Executive Summary:

<https://www.climateassembly.uk/report/read/final-report-exec-summary.pdf>

[4] Green Party response to IPCC report – a call for a global carbon tax:

<https://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/2021/08/09/green-party-responds-to-latest-ipcc-report/>

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Candidates for Green Party leadership announced



18 August 2021

The Green Party can now confirm the candidates running in the upcoming leadership elections.

Nominations closed on Tuesday at midday with three co leader teams and two individuals putting themselves forward in the race. They are:

Shahrar Ali

Ashley Gunstock

Carla Denyer and Adrian Ramsay

Martin Hemingway and Tina Rothery

Amelia Womack and Tamsin Omond

Co-leader Jonathan Bartley stood down last month which triggered an election for new leadership. [1]

In line with the party's constitution, individuals can put themselves forward or two people can stand together in a bid to be co-leaders.

Members will have the opportunity to vote for their next generation of leadership from 2 September until the ballot closes on 23 September with results set to be announced soon after.

Acting party leader Sian Berry said: "The Green Party is so proud of its democratic roots and the election for who leads and represents us is one of the biggest choices our members make. This is a crucial moment for the party with elections that can put more Greens into positions of power on the horizon.

"I say to every member that your voice is absolutely essential during this election. New members who join before 27 August can also vote, so if you are thinking of joining us at this huge moment for Green politics around the world, now is the time."

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/2021/07/05/jonathan-bartley-to-stand-down-as-co-leader-of-the-green-party/>

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