

Greens call for greater ambition on environmental taxes in response to NAO report



12 February 2021

- **Party commends National Audit Office emphasis on the need for strategic use of tax system to support pro-environment action**

Responding to today's National Audit Office report on environmental tax measures [1], Green Party finance spokesperson Molly Scott Cato said:

"We support the National Audit Office's conclusions that the government is failing to understand the role of environmental taxes in shifting our economy towards a more sustainable future.

"Environmental taxes have been at the heart of our policy agenda since our foundation and, while some have been adopted by government, it has been in an apologetic and piecemeal way that has failed to realise their full potential.

"However, we regret that the NAO has not gone further in recommending a high and rising rate of carbon tax, which would represent the strongest signal to business that the government is serious about making rapid progress towards our net zero carbon targets.

"Our policy of a carbon tax of £100 per tonne rising to £500 by 2030 is commensurate with the urgency of the situation we are facing. [2] As an upstream tax charged when fossil fuels come out of the ground or are imported it is also efficient to levy. We would match it with a universal basic income to offset increases in consumer prices.

"We welcome the NAO's suggestion that Air Passenger Duty should be seen as a strategic environmental tax and call on the government to adopt our longstanding policy of a Frequent Flyer Levy. This could be used to shift long-distance journeys from air to rail when journeys resume after the pandemic.

"We would also encourage the government to use the powerful VAT regime as a tool to address the climate emergency. One example is the need to reverse the presumption in favour of new build over retrofit, which works counter to the government's stated objective of rapid reductions in CO2 emissions." [3]

ENDS

Notes

<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/environmental-tax-measures/?slide=1>

2

The Green Party's 10 point plan for real climate ambition can be seen here: https://www.greenparty.org.uk/assets/files/Communications/10_Point_Climate_Plan.pdf

3

The Green Party recently launched this petition to shift the VAT incentive away from new build homes and towards retrofit: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/573207>

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[Greens criticise decision to allow Leeds Bradford Airport expansion](#)



11 February 2021

The Green Party candidate for Mayor of West Yorkshire has criticised Leeds City Council's decision to approve Leeds Bradford Airport's expansion plans [1], warning it does not make sense in a climate emergency.

Despite a significant amount of opposition from across West Yorkshire due to negative environmental damage airport expansion would cause, planning officers had recommended approving the controversial application.

Councillor Andrew Cooper, Green Party Candidate for West Yorkshire Mayor and a Kirklees Councillor, has now criticised the decision by councillors to approve the expansion plans subject to renegotiation.

Coun Cooper said:

"This is incredibly disappointing news and takes us backwards in our response to the climate crisis.

"This ruling today just makes a mockery of how our councils here in West Yorkshire are responding to their climate commitments. There is simply no room for airport expansion in a climate emergency. It just does not make sense when the UK as a whole has to reduce its carbon emissions as quickly as

possible.

“While France has taken a principled position and given a lead on climate change today by scrapping plans to expand Paris Charles de Gaulle airport, Leeds City Council has been derelict in its duty in addressing the climate emergency.

“This has been a real ‘David and Goliath’ story as, on the one side is a large global pension fund who own the airport, and on the other is a crowd-funded campaign and lots of hard work by ordinary but committed people, including many Green Party members.

“Leeds City Council has sent a clear message that commercial interests are more important than the views of local people, the protection of our environment and the wellbeing of future generations.”

Bradford Council in particular came under fire after it told Leeds City Council that it has ‘no objection’ to the airport’s planning application. Campaigners have accused the Labour-run authority of ignoring its own Climate Emergency declaration.

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/news/politics/council/live-leeds-bradford-airport-ps150m-expansion-approved-council-subject-renegotiations-3131602>

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[Greens call for greater local power in government's NHS shake up proposal](#)



11 February 2021

- **Jonathan Bartley: “The profit motive has no place in health care”**

The Green Party has called for an end to privatisation and greater power for local public health bodies as the government presents its plan to reform the NHS. [1]

Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley said:

“The first priority for any NHS reorganisation is to end the internal market and restore the principle that the profit motive has no place in health care. The 2012 reorganisation opened the door ever wider to the private market, and we must remove this disease from the heart of the system.

“Caroline Lucas’ NHS Reinstatement Bill – introduced to Parliament almost six years ago – sets out our blueprint to reverse the damage caused by both Labour and Conservative governments labouring under an ideological mistake that the market could solve all problems.”

Bartley also called for more power to be devolved local public health bodies who best know and understand the needs of their communities:

“The return to a more coordinated approach that would bring together all those concerned with the UK’s health would be a welcome move. However, the timing of the white paper suggests a central government power-grab in the midst of the greatest crisis ever faced by our NHS.

“We need to see devolution of more power over health to the local level. As we have seen throughout this pandemic, it is local public health experts who are best placed to serve their communities. It is these experts who should have been entrusted with the test and trace system, instead of the highly-centralised system based on private companies which has been a categorical failure.

“We will be closely scrutinising the proposals to ensure they address the issues of chronic underfunding to social care and address how the NHS will meet the growing needs of our older population.”

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-55985910>

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[UK government must lead way in](#)

shifting state investment away from fossil fuels



9 February 2021

The Green Party has called on the UK government to step up as chair of this year's UN climate talks and lead the transition away from fossil fuels in light of a report which suggests national oil companies are set to invest more than \$400 billion in costly oil and gas projects. [1]

Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley said:

"It's clear for us all to see that fossil fuels are an energy source of the past. That state-owned companies are willing to risk global climate goals in order for one last big payday is a shocking reminder of the greed that has driven this planet to the brink of catastrophe.

"As chair of this year's COP, the UK government has a huge role to play in showing there is a different way forward and how we can all benefit from a fairer, greener world, and enabling other countries to share in this.

"Unfortunately, by opening a new coal mine and investing billions into new roads, this Conservative government continues to undermine its own climate commitments and its ability to influence others at this year's crucial talks."

ENDS

Notes

1

Natural Resource Governance Institute's report "Risky Bet: National Oil Companies in the Energy Transition":

<https://resourcegovernance.org/analysis-tools/publications/risky-bet-national-oil-companies-energy-transition>

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Greens call for contingency plan to ensure free and fair elections amid pandemic



5 February 2021

- **Local elections should be delayed if there's any risk to democracy or public health say Greens**

This year's local elections must be postponed unless the whole country is back in the equivalent to tier 3 or below by the end of March in order to ensure a free, fair and safe election, the Green Party has warned.

Despite guidance from Cabinet Office minister Chloe Smith that the government will work with political parties to ensure the elections can take place [1], the Greens have not had any reassurances from government over how the elections can go ahead if parties are not allowed to campaign.

This follows previous government guidance that leafleting by political parties was not exempt from the current coronavirus restrictions. [2]

Now, amid increasing uncertainty over councils' ability to hold the May elections safely [3] and the ability for candidates to campaign, the Green Party has called on the Government to set out contingency plans to make sure we can hold free, fair and safe elections.

Green co-leader Jonathan Bartley has said in the interests of both people's health and the integrity of the UK's democratic values, the Government must prepare to move the elections to a new date if the current time frame is not safe or fair.

Bartley said:

"We expect elections in this country to be both free and fair. People have a right to vote in safety and candidates have a right to engage with their communities in order to put their case forward in calling for votes.

"The Government's dithering on the election date and their direct instruction on campaigning means serious questions have been raised over who is making such decisions when there is clearly a conflict of interest.

"Our democracy is too precious for the rules governing it to be determined by one political party. Any decision on campaigning should be decided by a body such as the Electoral Commission, in consultation with Public Health England, not a party that may stand to gain from such a decision."

The official election period starts on 29th March [4]. The Greens have said the government must now look at whether any part of the country is likely to

remain above tier 3 by the end of March, and if so the election has to be postponed. If the current restrictions continue beyond this time, then major concerns will be raised over how fair the election will be.

Bartley said:

“Unless the whole ‘official election period’ from late March can be conducted under open conditions, allowing free campaigning, and voters can vote in safety, then the elections should be delayed. And that decision should be taken as soon as possible to avoid any further damage to the integrity of the UK’s democratic system.”

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/uknews/local-elections-in-england-and-wales-are-given-green-light-for-may-6/ar-BB1dpD23>

2

<https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/local-elections-2021-campaigning-coronavirus-criticised-liberal-democrats-green-party-844145>

3

Report of Council CEOs and electoral returning officers: <https://lgiu.org/publication/free-fair-and-safe/>

4

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-11/Election-table-LGE%20election.doc>

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