

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-timetable-LGE%20election.doc>

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Green Party calls for return to customs union



5 February 2021

- **Jonathan Bartley: “The decision to leave the customs union was an ideological mistake by the Conservatives”**

The Green Party has called on the government to seek to negotiate readmission to the EU customs union to reduce pressure on business and ease tensions in Northern Ireland.

Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley said:

“Although being outside the single market will still mean health checks, rejoining the customs union would greatly reduce the paperwork required by exporters. It could also enable us to join the EU VAT area, thus removing the charges now facing consumers buying goods from EU suppliers.

“The decision to leave the customs union was an ideological mistake by the Conservatives, who always downplayed the impacts it would have on business. Now we see the chaotic reality unfolding. It is not too late to say we made a mistake and to explore options for rejoining the customs union without rejoining the EU’s political institutions.

“The country was divided down the middle during the referendum, and most people thought we would stay in the single market and customs union. A decision to leave the political institutions was not a mandate to choose the hardest possible Brexit.

“The Green Party maintains that Brexit was a mistake of historic proportions and that the government must do what it can to mitigate against the impacts that are already becoming clear. We also maintain our belief that our best long term future lies at the heart of Europe.”

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European Greens call for vaccine solidarity not vaccine nationalism



5 February 2021

As Greens in the UK and in the European Parliament we are clear that we need to be struggling together against Covid, not battling each other for vaccine supplies.

We welcome the fact that the UK has invested heavily in the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine and that its rollout programme is proceeding so well, protecting millions of citizens a week. We also welcome the EU investments in vaccine development and the bloc's commitment to solidarity across EU member states so that none will be left behind.

We need politicians to work together so that they are not subject to profiteering by pharmaceutical companies. To do this we need full transparency of negotiations and contracts for vaccine supplies. European citizens have invested in these vaccines and they have a right to know how their money has been used and the scale of profits made by drug companies. We must avoid a situation where those paying higher prices receive better treatment: the market can have no place in healthcare.

We would also argue for all Covid vaccines to be sold on the basis of open patents so that production can be rolled out at speed across the world. This is the sort of solidarity that a global pandemic demands and we call on the Commission and the UK government to cooperatively negotiate with pharmaceutical companies and the WHO to ensure IP restrictions do not limit availability of vaccines. Therefore we again call on the Commission to support the TRIPS waiver.

European healthcare is based on a European market for pharmaceutical products: we depend on each other for supplies of life-saving drugs. We deplore recent aggressive behaviour since a trade war over vaccines can only lead to some of the most vulnerable in our communities suffering.

Political leaders have been proud to say that until everybody is safe, nobody is safe, but they need to turn those words into practical action now by allocating European vaccine supplies based on need.

Signatories:

Amelia Womack, EWGP, Deputy Leader

Molly Scott Cato, EWGP, Brexit speaker

Larry Sanders, EWGP, Health speaker

Jutta Paulus, Greens/EFA, Member of Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

Tilly Metz, Greens/EFA, Member of Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

Rasmus Andresen, Greens/EFA, Spokesperson for Budgetary Affairs

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