

# Greens call for justice for students and an end to a working life of debt



2 February 2021

The Green Party has said all student debt should be wiped off following the call from vice chancellors to suspend interest payments on student loans for 15 months. [1].

Green Party finance speaker Molly Scott Cato responded to the call from vice chancellors in withering terms:

“The idea that students should be charged a slightly lower rate of interest on their loans is wildly inadequate at a time when they are bearing the brunt of the Covid lockdowns. Most people will be astonished to learn that the current interest rate is as high as 5.6% when market interest rates are close to zero.

“We are condemning many young people to a working life of debt bondage, since they will never be able to repay their loans but rather act as cash cows for wealthier and older people who hold investment portfolios. [2]

“Education is and always has been a public good and should be funded by public investment. The desperately misguided policy to privatise universities, begun under a Labour government, needs to be reversed and the government must step in to ensure students can receive a world-class education without the burden of debt. [3]

“The Green Party is committed to abolishing student fees and adding the debts accrued to the national debt to be paid back over the long term.”

Co-chair of the Young Greens, Rosie Rawle, added:

“The suggestion from vice chancellors to suspend interest accruing on student loans for just 15 months is well-meaning but frankly insulting. Many other countries in Europe offer free higher education, as does Scotland, and students in England and Wales should not be unfairly penalised by carrying a lifetime debt burden. The three parties that dominate at Westminster have all betrayed young people. Now is the time for them to make amends.”

Molly Scott Cato concluded:

“Our young people have stood by older generations through this pandemic, putting their lives on hold and sacrificing their educational opportunities. The least we can do in return is to remove this dreadful lifetime burden of debt from them.”

ENDS

## Notes

1

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-55895334>

2

House of Commons Library estimates the value of outstanding loans at the end of March 2020 at £140 billion:

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn01079/>

3

Timeline of betrayal of young people:

<https://www.channel4.com/news/factcheck/factcheck-how-students-have-been-misled-and-lied-to-for-20-years>

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# [Caroline Lucas responds to the Dasgupta Review on the Economics of Biodiversity](#)



2 February 2021

In response to Professor Dasgupta's review, published today [1], the Green Party MP Caroline Lucas said:

“Professor Dasgupta's report should send shockwaves through the Treasury. His conclusion is crystal clear: ministers need to replace GDP growth with environmental protection and human wellbeing as the country's overarching economic goals and apply this to all economic policy making – starting with next month's budget.

We cannot continue with our current approach to economic progress if we are to preserve the natural world we depend on and are part of – it can no longer be treated by peripheral to our lives. A focus on GDP growth above anything else is driving ecological as well as climate breakdown and no amount of Prime Ministerial rhetoric or 'investing in nature' will halt this catastrophe if we don't address the root cause.

We can enhance biodiversity and create a better society for everyone if we abandon an outdated, destructive way of thinking about the economy as separate from the environment and wellbeing and move to one focused on people's health, quality of life and the regeneration of nature. Two thirds of the public think that government should focus on health and wellbeing over GDP, and 2021 – the year of two critical UN summits – is the year to do it.”

ENDS

## Notes

1

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/nature-is-a-blind-spot-in-economics-that-we-ignore-at-our-peril-says-dasgupta-review>

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## [Green Party calls for robust international response to military coup in Myanmar](#)



1 February 2021

The Green Party is backing calls for a robust international response to the military coup in Myanmar. Co-leader Jonathan Bartley said:

“It’s unthinkable that off the back of a democratic election, a military led group should be able to shut down state media, arrest politicians and human rights activists and declare a state of emergency, all while the global community looks on.

“We’re calling for the release of these prisoners and respect for the result of the 2020 election. We also want to see the UK government impose sanctions against military owned companies in Myanmar.”

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# Green Party urges UK government to publish AstraZeneca contract



29 January 2021

- **Jonathan Bartley: “We need to be struggling together against Covid, not battling each other for vaccine supplies”**

The Green Party has called on the UK government to follow the EU [1] and make public its contract with AstraZeneca in order to stop the worrying battle over coronavirus vaccines.

Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley has called for solidarity across Europe in the allocation of vaccine supplies to ensure that the most vulnerable European citizens are protected.

Bartley said:

“The principle that we allocate medicines and health care based on need not based on power or ability to pay is the central principle of the NHS that we all value so highly.

“We need to be struggling together against Covid, not battling each other for vaccine supplies. A trade war over vaccines can only lead to some of the most vulnerable in our communities suffering.

“It’s clear that we need strong political action to prevent profiteering at the expense of public health. In such a vital area as Covid vaccination that means we need contracts to be made public, including the UK’s contract with AstraZeneca, to prevent pharmaceutical companies engaging governments in a bidding war for such a precious resource.

“We would also argue for all Covid vaccines to be sold on the basis of open patents so that manufactures can be rolled out at speed across the world, especially when the science behind the vaccine development was funded at public expense.

“While our appeal for vaccine sharing is based on a moral principle it is also rooted in enlightened self-interest. The European market has been our primarily pharmaceutical market for 40 years now and this means that we depend on European supplies of crucial drugs that we import from the EU.”

ENDS

**Notes**

**1**

2

The government [requested](#) drug suppliers to build up six-week stockpiles ahead of Brexit on 31 December, which may mean supplies need replenishing around the middle of February

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## [Greens warn banning campaigning hinders free and fair elections](#)



26 January 2021

- **Jonathan Bartley:** “For any election to be free and fair then it is vital political parties have the ability to campaign so the public can engage with the choices on offer”

The Green Party has warned of the threat to democracy as a result of the Government’s advice that on the ground campaigns for this year’s local elections should stop

Cabinet Office Minister Chloe Smith has this week written to political parties saying door to door campaigning was “neither essential nor necessary”. [1]

The Green Party has followed public health and legal guidance in recent weeks in order to deliver community support and advice to residents who may be struggling or digitally excluded. The feedback has been exceptionally positive. Local councillors have helped residents in accessing hot meals, parents in need of laptops for home schooling and isolated residents have access to befriending opportunities.

Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley said:

“Democracy is a process, not a one off event. For any election to be free and fair then it is vital political parties have the ability to campaign so the public can engage with the choices on offer, but at the moment the Conservatives in Government are saying traditional campaigning at the grass

roots level should effectively cease.

“There are serious questions about who is empowered to make such a decision in a democracy. To avoid conflicts of interest this should be decided by a body such as the Electoral Commission, not a party that stands to gain from the decision.

“Greens want elections to be held as soon as it is practically safe for the whole democratic process to take place, including community campaigning, which is a crucial part of allowing people to have a genuine choice of parties to vote for. That may mean we have to delay the May elections.”

ENDS

## Notes

1

[https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/political-parties-suspend-leafletting-door-campainging-covid-842152?fbclid=IwAR2jfXGI8Cd8JzXbB0ucL3b-N4z8lxpYSBVNs20V2jAmT\\_FTQ\\_OPG8z0yH8](https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/political-parties-suspend-leafletting-door-campainging-covid-842152?fbclid=IwAR2jfXGI8Cd8JzXbB0ucL3b-N4z8lxpYSBVNs20V2jAmT_FTQ_OPG8z0yH8)

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