

Amelia Womack says artists should be protected with a basic income



6 October 2020

- Green Party deputy leader responds to comments made by chancellor
- Womack: “Whether or not he was trying to make a point about all workers, this Government’s attitude towards the arts has been clear throughout this crisis”

The chancellor Rishi Sunak has today warned workers, including those in the arts, will need to find new opportunities and retrain as the coronavirus pandemic continues.[1]

Reacting to the comments, Green Party deputy leader Amelia Womack said:

“Today, thousands of musicians and performers, and all those behind the scenes, will have heard the chancellor write their careers off completely. Whether or not he was trying to make a point about all workers, this Government’s attitude towards the arts has been clear throughout this crisis.

“Lockdown has shown us how much we truly value the arts. We’ve tuned into TV, tucked into books and turned up the radio. To say all these people should just seek ‘new opportunities’ is ridiculous, when they bring joy, stimulation and sustenance to people everywhere.

“If we let this sector collapse, it won’t bounce back. The legends of the future will be lost and undiscovered. Imagine if Beyonce, Bowie and The Beatles had been told to seek ‘new opportunities’. Imagine how much poorer we would all have been in every sense of the word.

“Our artists deserve support, they deserve protection, and they deserve to know that they are valued. We need a universal basic income to protect them until we can all enjoy the arts to the fullest, safely, once again.” [2]

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://www.itv.com/news/2020-10-06/rishi-sunak-suggests-musicians-and-others-in-arts-should-retrain-and-find-other-jobs>

2

Earlier this year, Amelia Womack led a call alongside musicians such as The Libertines, The Charlatans and Reverend and the Makers asking the government

to introduce a universal basic income to support artists during the pandemic.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/musicians-union-artist-support-arts-government-universal-basic-income-a9625511.html>

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[Greens welcome Prime Minister's conversion to wind power but warn much more is needed](#)



6 October 2020

- **Green co-leader warns that level of investment must match rhetoric**

Green Co-Leader Jonathan Bartley has welcomed the confirmation that the long-running opposition to wind power by the Conservative Party has finally been reversed.

The Prime Minister is today due to promise to power every home in the UK with offshore wind energy by 2030.[1]

Reacting to the news, Bartley said:

“For decades, Greens have been arguing that the UK is ideally placed to become a world leader in onshore and offshore windpower.

“But we have battled opposition from Conservative MPs locally and nationally as they sheltered their fossil fuel friends. Johnson’s support for wind power suggests that the transition to green energy is now irreversible.

“However, the level of investment proposed by the Prime Minister is nowhere near matching his rhetoric. The £160m for wind power due to be announced today falls far short of the £48bn that analysts say is necessary [2]. The Government needs to set out where this investment will come from.

“Nor will it provide what we need to power every sector of the economy, most notably transport. The Green Party proposes that 70% of the country’s electricity should be provided by wind by 2030. The Government’s proposals fall far short of this.

“And we need to connect the support for wind farms with an industrial strategy that means the jobs making the blades and towers of the wind farms are made in the UK. An economic and industrial conversion on this scale is what Greens mean by building back better.”

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-54421489>

2

Analysis

source: <https://www.auroraer.com/insight/reaching-40gw-offshore-wind/>

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[AGC Chair Councillor Rosemary Sexton's speech to Autumn Conference 2020](#)



3 October 2020

I never meant to become a politician. That wasn't in my game plan.

I first joined the Green Party, perhaps like many of you, because I saw the urgency of the environmental crisis we were facing, and that this wasn't being prioritised by any of the other parties.

Then a few years ago, a local Green Party councillor knocked on our door.

One thing led to another, I got more involved in the local party, and soon I was persuaded to stand as a target candidate.

I was elected last year as part of the Green Wave that saw us more than double our number of councillors.

When I was first asked to stand, I didn't know much about local politics. Despite growing up in a household where politics was discussed around the

dinner table, I had no real idea what a local councillor did.

To go from there, to here, in the space of two years – it's been a steep learning curve.

What I want to share with you today is why I've become passionate about local politics, and why I think it is at the heart of what we do as a party.

As local councillors, we have the opportunity to do lots of things.

We can bring residents' concerns to meetings, and make sure their voices are considered.

We can scrutinise decision making and hold the establishment to account.

We can challenge unfair systems that aren't working and we can make sure that our priorities of environmental and social justice stay at the top of the agenda.

But what first made me fall in love with local politics was the opportunity to make a real difference to the lives of local people.

I remember my first piece of casework as a freshly elected councillor.

An elderly resident called me to tell me that the council's bushes were overhanging her driveway, and making it dangerous for her carers to get in and out.

In previous years, her husband had always cut these bushes, but he'd recently lost his sight and was unable to do it.

They'd tried to contact the council for months, but nothing had happened. Two emails later, and the bushes were cut and the problem solved.

It seems like such a small thing. After all, it's not saving the world or eliminating poverty.

But it made a big difference to that couple.

The woman told me that "this is the first time in my life I've contacted a politician and they've actually done something useful".

We can all see that trust in politics and politicians is at an all time low.

That's hardly surprising, looking at what's going on in the world and what we see on the news.

So when residents tell me "you're the first politician I've met who seems to really care", or "you've restored my faith in politics a little bit", that matters.

We talk in the Green Party about doing politics differently; and this is our opportunity to show people what different looks like.

We can be the human face of our local councils. We have the power to cut through the bureaucracy, to stand up for the people we represent, and to win over hearts and minds one at a time.

As Greens, we believe in the power of local decision making and local democracy.

We know that to tackle the challenge of the climate emergency, and the issues of equality, fairness and social justice that are so important to us, we have to bring people together to create solutions.

None of us can do this alone. We each represent only a small corner of the country; but together we can do amazing things.

Today the Green Party has 354 councillors on 123 district, county, borough and city councils, as well as many more town and parish councillors.

We form part of the ruling administration on 18 of those councils, most recently taking over the running of Brighton and Hove City Council in July this year.

The AGC is here to support all our councillors – whether they are lone Greens, or part of an opposition group, or in administration.

Every Green group faces its own unique challenges and political landscape.

Through the AGC we come together to share ideas, resources and inspiration, and to use our collective voice to lobby for change.

We're also here to shout about the great work that Green councillors are doing. Both to you as members, and to the wider world.

I want everyone to know that there are hundreds of elected Greens who are out there already delivering on our priorities and our values, supporting their communities and showing people what politics can be.

To give you just a few examples.

- It was a Green Councillor in Bristol, Carla Denyer, who proposed the first Climate Emergency motion in the UK. Since then, 69% of councils in the UK have followed.
- But we know that good intentions aren't enough – which is why we have been pushing for councils to adopt carbon management strategies, as Herefordshire council has done, thanks to Ellie Chowns, who is the cabinet member for the environment.
- Work commissioned by Lewes district council, where the Greens share power, has developed a plan to put the whole district on course for zero emissions. Our councillor Matthew Bird is leading on this.
- In Norwich, our councillors in opposition have been pushing the council to use Municipal Investment Bonds to raise money for sustainable energy investments.
- In Peterborough, one of our sole Green Councillors Nicola Day won a motion to create a food strategy to address the causes of food

inequality, and has been working with active travel campaigners to improve cycle infrastructure.

- In Solihull, we have been campaigning for more socially rented housing, and have pushed the council to provide support to social care workers who are struggling financially as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Our Green councillors in administration in Brighton and Hove have recently secured funding for their bid to provide housing and additional support to homeless people to help them find permanent accommodation.

At this point, I'm going to give a shout out to our brilliant Climate Change support officer, Julian Dean, who will be running a Fringe on Councils and Climate change later – so do go along to that to find out more.

If you're feeling inspired and want to get involved, there are lots of ways to do that.

Perhaps the easiest to help campaign for your local target candidate.

That can involve anything from stuffing envelopes and delivering leaflets to knocking on doors or helping to design newsletters.

Or you might be thinking about becoming a councillor yourself, and putting yourself forwards as a prospective target candidate.

This can seem daunting, but the AGC along with your local and regional parties can address any questions or concerns you might have and talk you through what's involved step by step.

We need candidates from all different backgrounds and walks of life – so if you don't think you're the kind of person who would fit in as a councillor, that's even more reason why we'd like to support you to stand.

Or if you can't commit to that, there are other opportunities to help with the background work, for example in drafting motions or consultation responses. The AGC can tell you more.

Together we can make a difference, and we can build the foundations for success at a national level.

We must be a party that represents every class, every colour and every community; a party that combines a bold vision of a better future with a clear understanding of what works; and a party that knows how to win elections, not to take power for its own sake, but to deliver the change our country desperately needs.

We will make this happen by engaging with our local communities, by earning their trust, and by proving that better is possible when Greens are elected.

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Green Party Deputy Leader Amelia Womack's speech to Autumn Conference 2020



3 October 2020

Welcome to the Green Party's Extraordinary Autumn Conference.

And this is an extraordinary conference because these extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures.

But when have we ever been anything other than extraordinary?

This is our first ever online conference, and while it is a huge shame that we can't be together enjoying one another's company, I am still very glad that we can come together online and feel the solidarity and mutual support that conference brings.

One of the extraordinary things about the Green Party is that we continue to form our policies through our conference rather than from the top down.

So I am thrilled that so many of you are joining-in to shape the future of our party.

Because everyone who takes part, takes on the responsibility of creating our future – as a party, as a country, and as a planet.

For some of you our conference will be a completely new experience and for others you will have fond memories of travels to Scarborough, Liverpool, Brighton and beyond.

Can you believe it was just a year ago that you were with me in Newport for Autumn conference 2019. You came to explore my fantastic home city.

But what a lot has changed since then.

We had a snap General Election – which itself seems such a long time ago

Brexit – which I still like to pretend didn't really happen

Australian wildfires and Arctic ice breaking up reminding us that we must do more to stop the irreversible decline of the health of the planet

Uprisings against police brutality including the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor among so many others

And, of course, the Coronavirus pandemic.

Who would have thought a year ago that all this was in our future?

Newport is now in its second lock down, and I am sure many of you are also in your second lock down, or wondering when it may come to where you live.

Proper lockdown measures are vital to reduce the loss of lives and the risk to workers, especially in the NHS – it's a blunt tool but one of the only ones we have as a society to protect people.

And during our lockdowns we have seen people struggle.

But we have also seen people embrace big ideas.

People reflecting on what a better version of our society might look like

And most of all, people's instincts for unity and compassion shine.

Meanwhile we have seen a UK government flip flop on big issues and give vague and confused messages about what people are meant to do.

Just a few weeks ago we were given the impression that if people didn't return to their offices the country would collapse.

Then when a second wave came, the furlough scheme was brought to an abrupt end.

In England, tenants are at risk after the eviction ban was terminated.

And the government was exposed as having no real plan to 'build back better', or support people's lives.

Well... we the extraordinary Greens have that real plan and we have had it for a long time. It begins with a Universal Basic Income.

As Greens we have been fighting for this transformative policy that could protect workers in all industries while keeping our economy alive.

This is why I put together a letter which was co-signed by many in the music and arts sector which we sent to the Chancellor insisting that he consider the benefits a UBI could have for the arts and culture.

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to ensure that, for both workers and audiences, the arts remain for everybody, not just the privileged.

So that they can flourish now when they are needed the most, to keep people entertained and to keep spirits up.

We understand the importance of the arts and culture, because we know a person's value is not measured by how much profit they can generate.

But this government has seemed to throw more effort at helping bland and overpriced sandwiches, and landlords of bland and overpriced student properties.

But Universal Basic Income is just the start.

As Greens we pride ourselves on our radical yet rational politics that work to tackle the climate and ecological emergency while addressing the vast inequalities across our society.

And it's easy to forget that before the pandemic, around the time of the general election, our media was taking our climate and ecology more seriously than ever before.

Some of that momentum has been lost over the last few months... but this is the time we need to bring it back to the top of the agenda, because we know that the solutions to all of these crises are one and the same.

I am proud that in Wales we have a pioneering policy that reflects our Green values called the Future Generations Act.

This law puts the rights and wellbeing of future generations, not just short-term interests, at the heart of all Welsh government decision making.

If we implement a Future Generations Act across the UK it could mean less focus on short term gains for landlords and sandwich chains and strengthen the movement for a better future for our economy, climate and society.

This is a policy we as Greens campaigned for in the 2019 General election, and fundamentally shifts a short-termist way of thinking that has deeply damaged our society.

From austerity and poverty to supporting fossil fuels and plastics, disregarding children and generations yet to be born has caused irreversible destruction to our communities, atmosphere and habitats.

As Greens, we value not just what we can deliver in an election cycle. We don't just promise something for tomorrow, the next five years, or even the next decade. Our vision is for a future of fairness, and our manifestoes are stepping stones towards it.

A Future Generations Act can be powerful. In Wales it helped us block the M4 Bypass Motorway from being created.

Let's face it – no government who cares about future generations would continue to build motorways and expand airports in the way we have seen the establishment parties attempt to do.

But also, as Johnson brings the M4 back on to the agenda, we see a Prime Minister who is willing to override not just common sense but also devolution

itself.

Next year we will have a bumper year for elections. London Mayoral and Assembly elections, elections for Mayors and councils across England, many delayed by-elections and in Wales we will have elections to the Senedd.

I am our lead candidate in our target region of South Wales East for the Welsh Parliament elections.

And this is already shaping up to be a very exciting election.

It will test how people feel about the incumbent Labour party who have effectively had control of Wales since devolution in 1999.

It will be a battle between those who want more devolution leading towards independence, and those who want to reduce or remove devolution completely.

The Tories in Westminster are attempting a power grab against devolution, prompted partly by the end of the transition arrangements with the EU.

We need to work with our colleagues in Scotland and Northern Ireland to ensure that our nations' democratic rights aren't trampled on by this delinquent government.

Because the truth is, Wales doesn't just need a brighter future.

It needs change, right here, right now.

We need real change today for the millions of people who have been let down by a political establishment happy to watch entire communities trapped in dead-end poverty.

We need real change today for people vulnerable to the lies of fascism because they haven't been offered any sort of future by the collapsing centre of neoliberal politics.

We need real change today for some of the most incredible habitats and landscapes anywhere in the world, from the coast of Pembrokeshire, to the rolling peaks of the Brecon Beacons, and the neverending views of Snowdonia.

We can get all that change by pouring our national efforts into the most important work of the century ahead – the mission to go net zero carbon by 2030.

We need a Green New Deal for Wales.

What does that mean?

It means renewables, everywhere.

It means a national effort to restore our natural world, to make Wales the most ecologically diverse and beautiful nation in the world.

It means insulating every single home so nobody ever has to decide between

feeding their kids and paying for heating, ever again.

And it means doing all this by paying people a decent living wage for the world's most important work.

Our Green New Deal for Wales will create a wave of good Green jobs, stimulating the economy in every corner of the country, and offering real opportunities for young people through decent apprenticeships, skills training and education.

Wales was once the powerhouse of Britain, and it can be again.

Obviously, we can never go back to coal.

But we can lead the world on renewables.

We can lead the world on wind energy.

We can lead the world on pioneering technology like the tidal lagoon.

Wales led the first industrial revolution and we can lead the second. And where we lead, the rest of Britain, the rest of Europe, and the rest of the world will follow.

—

Before I was stopped in my tracks by the pandemic, I spent half my life on trains, criss-crossing the country meeting Green activists in cities, towns and villages where they are working hard, knocking on doors, to get Greens into power.

So I know that the recent story of Wales is not unique to my nation, that story of economic decline, atomisation, destitution and hopelessness.

I see coastal towns abandoned, with tourism in freefall.

I see town after town with hollowed out high streets, nothing but boarded up doors, bookies and vape shops.

I see people living in worse and worse housing, on higher and higher rents, trying to make ends meet on lower and lower wages.

For too long, establishment politics has ripped the heart out of our communities, wrenching opportunities from the young, and putting public space in the hands of private profit.

So a Green New Deal for Wales could be a beacon for what we can do in every single community in the UK, unlocking a brighter, Greener future for everyone

Greens are standing up for local democracy. We are standing up for Wales. And I am standing to lead us into the Senedd for the very first time, to stand up for all our futures.

—

A key part of our work as Greens is scrutiny. Our sister party in Scotland consistently prove that, and show the great things that can be achieved when Greens are elected to a devolved parliament.

This summer, it was Green MSP Ross Greer who saw the coming disaster of the exam results algorithm, held the Scottish Government to account, exposed the injustice to the media and public and forced them to change course.

In budget talks with the minority SNP administration, the Greens have proven themselves tough and smart negotiators.

The Greens have secured an annual grant to young carers, free public transport for all young people from next year, and hundreds of millions of pounds in extra funding for local authorities facing cuts.

And it's because of the Greens that Scotland has the most progressive Income Tax system in the country, with low earners paying less and the better off paying more to fund public services.

And it remains the case that the only Green Party law in the UK is Patrick Harvie's 2009 Aggravation by Prejudice Act, which ensured homophobic and disability-related offences would be treated as hate crimes, and was the first trans-inclusive hate crime legislation in Europe.

We know the power of elected Greens, we see Caroline Lucas, Jenny Jones and Natalie Bennett hold the government and opposition to account every day.

We see our councillors making change that makes lives better for our friends, family and neighbours.

Every day I am thankful for the hard work of our elected officials, and the activists out there knocking on doors, delivering leaflets, running campaigns and ensuring that we get more Greens elected to deliver real change for our communities, towns, cities, and country.

It's been tough to pause campaigning, especially when we have such an opportunity to win big and build on incredible results in 2019.

But we will still be ready to win big when we finally get the chance next May.

If the last year has proved anything, it's that rapid change is possible in the face of a crisis, that people do not want to go back to normal because what the hell was normal about before?

What the hell was normal about children living in poverty, governments ignoring the climate and ecological emergency, refugees dying while seeking safety.

As Greens, we will never settle for normal, we will only accept extraordinary.

So keep campaigning for Greens to be elected, keep campaigning to create

something better.

We know we can make better possible and we know we can do it together.

Thank you to all of you for everything you do to make it happen, and I look forward to being there with you every step of the way.

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We know the power of elected Greens, we see Caroline Lucas, Jenny Jones and Natalie Bennett hold the government and opposition to account every day.

We see our councillors making change that makes lives better for our friends, family and neighbours.

Every day I am thankful for the hard work of our elected officials, and the activists out there knocking on doors, delivering leaflets, running campaigns and ensuring that we get more Greens elected to deliver real change for our communities, towns, cities, and country.

It's been tough to pause campaigning, especially when we have such an opportunity to win big and build on incredible results in 2019.

But we will still be ready to win big when we finally get the chance next May.

If the last year has proved anything, it's that rapid change is possible in the face of a crisis, that people do not want to go back to normal because what the hell was normal about before?

What the hell was normal about children living in poverty, governments ignoring the climate and ecological emergency, refugees dying while seeking safety.

As Greens, we will never settle for normal, we will only accept extraordinary.

So keep campaigning for Greens to be elected, keep campaigning to create something better.

We know we can make better possible and we know we can do it together.

Thank you to all of you for everything you do to make it happen, and I look forward to being there with you every step of the way.

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