

Green Party calls for emergency fuel duty rise to invest in walking, cycling and public transport



8 May 2020

- **Crash in oil prices and concerns over the safety of public transport could see spike in number of people using cars**
- **Extra revenue from 25p/litre rise to be given to local authorities to spend on, walking, cycling and public transport to enable social distancing**
- **Caroline Russell: "If we don't act now the fall in global oil prices could mean more driving, traffic jams and filthy air as lockdown is gradually eased and more people begin to travel"**

The Green Party has called for an emergency fuel duty rise on petrol and diesel to allow local authorities to support social distancing by improving conditions for walking and cycling and investing in public transport in response to the coronavirus crisis.

The Greens have warned that a crash in oil prices could undermine moves in towns and cities across the country to enable more people to walk and cycle, if it means the price at the pump continues to fall and encourages people to drive more. [1]

Since 2010, successive governments have frozen fuel duty rises year on year. Fuel duty stands at 57.95p/litre, earning the treasury some £28bn a year in revenue [2]. On this basis an extra 25p/litre could raise in the region of £12bn for public transport and active travel.

Green Party transport spokesperson Caroline Russell said the extra revenue could then be allocated to local authorities to invest in measures needed to support social distancing on public transport and on our streets with street space reallocated from vehicles to people walking and cycling.

Russell said:

"If we don't act now the fall in global oil prices and concerns about social distancing on public transport could mean more driving, traffic jams and filthy air as lockdown is gradually eased and more people begin to travel.

"It is vital we act to create a healthier future as the ongoing coronavirus crisis makes our lives much more local and the climate emergency needs us to shift to low carbon options.

"An increase in fuel duty after the ten year freeze would generate billions of pounds for local authorities to invest in public transport for essential workers and healthier streets for walking and cycling so people can get to

work, take daily exercise and make their local journeys safely while maintaining social distance.”

ENDS

Notes

1

UK petrol prices fell by their largest margin in 12 years in March, triggered by a collapse in the world oil price. In April, the price of Brent Crude dipped below \$20 a barrel and is currently trading at around \$25 a barrel.
<https://www.oilcrudeprice.com/brent-oil-price/>

As the price of crude oil has slumped, the price paid at the pumps has declined drastically and has fallen since early March from around £1.23/litre to £1.05/litre for petrol and from around £1.26p/litre to £1.15/litre for diesel.
<https://media.rac.co.uk/pressreleases/low-oil-price-leads-to-sharpest-drop-in-petrol-and-diesel-prices-in-12-years-2988585>

2

<https://obr.uk/forecasts-in-depth/tax-by-tax-spend-by-spend/fuel-duties/>

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[“Still too soon” to lift lockdown – Sian Berry urges government not to ease measures before it is safe](#)



7 May 2020

Responding to coverage suggesting measures may soon be put in place to ease lockdown, Green Party co-leader Sian Berry said:

“We know people are anxious to get the country moving. Businesses are losing out, families and friends are missing each other and there are very real challenges being faced daily. But easing this lockdown too soon could have really serious consequences, and it is still too soon.

“Government policy is not yet in line with the World Health Organisation’s guidelines on tracing and tracking. The Government has so far ignored calls for a ‘Community Shields’ approach, a network of community-based protection schemes which can respond quickly to any re-emergence of Covid-19. Instead it favours a centralised app which is the subject of concern to monitor infection rates and even that isn’t properly up and running yet.

“It just isn’t fair on the public to give the impression this crisis is over when it’s not. Dealing with it requires everyone to do their bit and that the Government recognises those efforts by making sure everyone has the financial support they need.

“We’d much rather see the Government standing firm on its lockdown decision until there is certainty a second peak is not being risked, one of the Government’s own five tests, and that there is a trace and track system in place that actually works.”

ENDS

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[Councils must be compelled to meet online to avoid Covid-19 power grab, say Greens](#)



7 May 2020

The Green Party is calling on the Government to ensure local democracy is not further disrupted by the Covid-19 crisis by compelling local councils to meet virtually.

A petition launched this morning [1] – on what would have been election day in thousands of local communities – calls for online meetings to be mandatory for Parish, Town and District Councils to avoid decisions being pushed through without proper discussion and scrutiny.

Green Party Co-leader Jonathan Bartley said: “Today would have been the opportunity for people across England to exercise their democratic choice – the chance for them to have their voices heard about what happens on their doorstep.

“But instead what they’re experiencing is decisions made under the radar, more power being put into the hands of a few people and the representatives they voted for being shut out of debate.

“That might mean a massive shopping centre gets the go ahead, or the demolition of a whole estate, it might mean cuts to services.

“We’ve been calling out the cases from individual councils for weeks and examples continue to flood in from our Councillors but the Government is doing nothing.

“That’s why we’re making this specific call today, that councils must be compelled to meet online during this crisis period and stop being given free-reign to hide behind a lack of technical skills.”

ENDS

Notes

1

The Green Party petition calls for all councils to be compelled to hold virtual meetings.

There are serious concerns over scrutiny and decision making in Lambeth where Jonathan Bartley is co-leader of the opposition. [See release for details.](#)

Notable examples of councils resisting virtual meetings have been received from Green Party Councillors in Oxford City Council and Norwich City Council.

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[“Serious concerns” over testing of tracing app on Isle of Wight – Green Party’s Vix Lowthion](#)



3 May 2020

The government has today [Sunday, 3 May] announced it will be trialling a

contact-tracing app on the Isle of Wight starting from tomorrow.

Vix Lowthion, Isle of Wight Green Party spokesperson, said:

“Everybody wants to see the end of this lockdown which is causing immense stress and pressure to both individuals and businesses, but it is vital that people’s health is put first and foremost.

“The Isle of Wight has a significantly older and more vulnerable population with limited access to medical support. There are serious concerns that the island’s one hospital could become overwhelmed if we see a significant increase in coronavirus cases because people feel they do not need to stick to lockdown measures due to the rolling out of this app.

“It is vital that before lockdown measures start to be lifted in any part of the UK we have a network of ‘community shields’ in place to ensure we can prevent the spread of Covid-19 through a strict test, trace and isolate strategy, in line with World Health Organisation guidance. [1]

“A single app is absolutely no substitute for a fully-resourced community-based protection scheme, as we have seen used so effectively in other countries.”

ENDS

Notes

1

The Green Party has proposed a policy of “community shields”, which would be coordinated by Public Health England’s regional Outbreak Management Teams. The “shields” would use systems including the NHS 111 phone service, GP surgeries and local authority public health teams to identify those with symptoms, arrange for their testing and then trace all their contacts in order to stamp out outbreaks of the virus in the communities where it’s happening.

<https://coronavirus.greenparty.org.uk/>

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[Government must act now to protect](#)

deprived areas with “community shields”



1 May 2020

The Green Party has urged the government to protect the poorest areas of the country through a strategy of “test, trace and isolate” to stop the spread of coronavirus.

Responding to the latest Office for National Statistics figures, which shows Covid-19 deaths are twice as high in the most deprived parts of England and Wales [1], the Greens have said it is vital to develop a network of community-based protection schemes, or “community shields”, to detect, test, isolate and treat every case and trace every contact. [2]

Green Party deputy leader Amelia Womack said:

“The latest figures from the ONS are an awful reminder of the impact of inequality in our society and comes on top of shocking data on the high proportion of health and care workers who have died coming from BAME communities.

“We have seen in other countries how effective a strategy based on testing, isolating and tracing contacts can be and it is not too late for the UK government to adopt this policy also.

“We have set out a comprehensive plan for how this can be achieved, in line with the World Health Organisation’s recommendations. The government has already squandered vital time and it would be criminally negligent if this error was compounded by not following the best advice.

“We need to prepare now to have the proper structures in place before we see any lifting of the lockdown and these efforts must be focused in the communities that need it most.”

Notes

1

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/coronavirus-death-rate-uk-deprived-inequality-ons-latest-a9493716.html>

2

These “shields”, coordinated by Public Health England’s regional Outbreak Management Teams, would use systems including the NHS 111 phone service, GP surgeries and local authority public health teams to identify those with symptoms, arrange for their testing and then trace all their contacts in order to stamp out outbreaks of the virus in the communities where it’s

happening.

<https://coronavirus.greenparty.org.uk/>

For more information or to arrange an interview please contact:
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