

House of Lords Committee report echoes Green concerns on protecting environment post-Brexit

14 February 2017

Greens have reasserted demands for an Environmental Protection Act in the wake of a new House of Lords Select Committee report on the impact of Brexit on the environment and tackling climate change [1].

The report says the importance of the role of EU institutions in ensuring effective enforcement of environmental protection and standards 'cannot be over-stated' and warns the government that it faces 'a considerable challenge in maintaining environmental legislation through the Great Repeal Bill [2].'

The report also raises concerns about the watering down of the UK's international commitments on, for example, climate change. The committee calls on the government to clarify whether and how EU funding for environmental measures will be replaced by domestic funds post-Brexit.

The concerns and recommendations from the House of Lords committee echo the 'cocktail of risks' to the environment highlighted by Green Party MP, Caroline Lucas, in a report she launched earlier this week [3]. In the report, she calls for a new 'Environmental Protection Act' to ensure that environmental protections will not be lost, watered-down, or ignored.

Keith Taylor, Green MEP for the South East, said:

"This report reaffirms what we have long suspected: the government is largely unprepared for and, worse still, uninterested in dealing with the peril Theresa May's plan to pursue an extreme Brexit would leave Britain's environment in.

"Ministers confirmed just this week that since the EU referendum almost eight months ago, there has been no research into the environmental impacts of Brexit nor has there been any research commissioned to help develop environmental policy post-Brexit. Yet the Conservatives made a manifesto promise to be "the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it". We must hold them to account and start work immediately on ensuring vital EU environmental protections are made legally binding and enforceable in the UK post-Brexit."

Jean Lambert, Green MEP for London, said:

"It's no accident that environmental standards and legislation are some of the most important features of the European Union. The impacts of climate change, pollution and resource depletion don't stop at national borders. When it comes to the environment countries need to work together. But the UK

Government's go-it-alone Brexit mantra risks throwing away important environmental protections. If the Government truly wants to protect the UK's environment it will act to enshrine EU environmental laws in an Environmental Protection Act for the UK."

Molly Scott Cato, Green MEP for the South West, said:

"It is clear how much British environmentalists rely both on EU law and EU courts to prevent damage to our special places, wildlife, water and beaches. Outside the EU we need to strengthen our domestic protections which is why we need a specific law and a court to enforce it."

Notes

[1]

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/lords-select/eu-energy-environment-subcommittee/news-parliament-2015/brexit-env-cc-rpt/>

[2] <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7793>

[3]

<https://www.carolinelucas.com/sites/carolinelucas.com/files/Safe%20Guarding%20Environment%20after%20Brexit.pdf>

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Housing numbers

During my last meeting with Wokingham Borough I was reminded that Wokingham has a target to build 856 new homes a year from 2013. (LEP study of housing need Feb 2016) That makes Wokingham's share of the West Berkshire total 30%, with the other Councils providing the rest of the 2855. Reading itself has a lower target of 699, despite having substantial brownfield redevelopment potential, the coming of Crossrail and the possibility of more starter home and smaller flats in the centre. Bracknell has to build just 635 a year. Going forward there needs to be a fair division of the requirement.

The total numbers needed in the future also should take into account any change of migration policy designed to lower the numbers of additional people coming to live and work in the country as a whole. The current high numbers of new home sis partly the result of adding 330,000 extra people each year to our population, as we wish anyone coming to live and work here to have access to decent housing. If the government sticks to its target of a substantial reduction and takes the necessary measures on leaving the EU, could the

targets be lowered.

Were the Council to agree to a new settlement at Grazeley of 15,000 homes that would on its own provide 17.5 years worth of housing against targets. Would the development be spaced out over such a time period? Is it feasible to say no to building on any other large sites throughout such a long time period? Or might Grazeley add to the build rate? If other sites are granted on appeal or run over from past grants of planning, then we need to build even more infrastructure to take care of a faster build rate than present plans.

I am writing to the authorities to ask what thought is going in to future targets in the light of these issues.

Green Party responds to Trump state visit announcement



14 February 2017

The Green Party has responded to news the Government has said it will press ahead with plans to give President Trump a state visit despite public opposition. [1]

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

“It is deeply disappointing that in its desperation to pander to the new US President the Government has ignored almost 2 million British people who made it clear they do not want to give a racist misogynist the highest honour our country has to offer.

“Donald Trump’s presidency has already been marked by an utterly disgraceful travel ban, while his apparent intent to withdraw from the Paris Agreement highlights his contempt for environmental protection.

“We should be showing backbone and leadership by taking a stand against the President’s damaging policies – not rolling out a red carpet.”

ENDS.

For more information contact: press@greenparty.org.uk / 0203 691 9401

Notes:

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/feb/14/government-says-trump-receive-full-courtesy-state-visit-petition>

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- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- Teaching fund a step in right direction, but more needed

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The announcement of a new teacher-training fund is a step in the right direction, the Scottish Conservatives have said, but more needs to be done.

The Scottish Government's investment for new teachers has been welcomed by shadow education secretary Liz Smith, but she warned it would not make up for a decade of educational neglect.

Just one of the many issues local authorities have faced under SNP leadership is the recruitment process for schools and maintaining the services of specialist teachers.

Figures have shown that schools have struggled over the years to attract the necessary number of teachers, with some councils even being forced to offer financial incentives.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

“This will be welcome news for Scotland’s teaching profession which has had to bear the full brunt of the SNP’s successive cuts to teacher numbers since 2007.

“It has been abundantly clear for some time that Scotland has too few professionally trained teachers particularly in some core subject areas and we know that several local authorities have found it impossible to fill key vacancies with the obvious costs to education in the classroom.

“The key test is not only the provision of more teacher training places but an improvement in the employment rates for newly qualified teachers.

“Scotland cannot afford to lose its talented pool of teacher trainees nor can

it allow the SNP to fail again in its workforce planning."

For more on the story, visit:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-38969970>

Press release: Rugeley Flood Risk Management Scheme well under way

The Environment Agency's Rugeley Flood Risk Management Scheme that began in December is progressing well. Preparations for the construction of the embankment have now started.

To make sure that the public stay safe while the work is being carried out, the Hagley playing fields will remain closed to the public until 2018, once the scheme has been completed.

During a flood, the embankment will hold water from the Rising Brook and help to reduce the risk of flooding for over 114 homes and 159 businesses. Other benefits of the £3.8 million scheme include improving habitat, restoring heritage features and reconnecting footpaths and improving accessibility. It also forms an integral part of Cannock Chase council's plans to regenerate parts of the town centre.

Environment Agency Project Manager Matt Griffin said:

We're working hard to get the scheme completed as soon as possible so we can minimise any disruption and inconvenience. However, keeping people and the community safe during the work remains our priority which means closing the playing fields is essential.

The works are a partnership with Staffordshire County Council, Cannock Chase District Council and Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership.