

Green Party urges government to help local authorities keep parks open this Easter



9 April 2020

- Greens say local authority staff should be redeployed to ensure social distancing is observed
- More green spaces should be opened such as 300,000 acres of golf courses
- Co-leader Jonathan Bartley asks: "Where are people with no gardens supposed to go for their exercise?"

The Green Party has urged the government to help local authorities redeploy staff from non-essential roles in order to keep parks and green spaces open this Easter bank holiday weekend. [1]

As families prepare to spend the weekend in continued isolation, the Greens have stressed the importance of keeping parks open so that those without a garden still have access to an outdoor space.

Last weekend saw Lambeth Council close Brockwell Park after people were seen sunbathing there [2], while Health Secretary Matt Hancock threatened to ban outdoor exercise altogether. [3]

Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley, and leader of the opposition on Lambeth Council, said such decisions would have an irresponsibly detrimental impact on everyone's physical and mental wellbeing.

He said: "Bank holiday weekend is coming up and it is absolutely vital that people continue to follow the public health advice on social distancing. However, it is also crucial that people have access to green spaces to go for their daily exercise.

"Many of these parks serve people who don't have any other access to an outdoor space. It is outrageous that government and local councils would discriminate against people who don't have any other choice than using their publicly owned park.

"There is an inherent inequality in the fact that people who do not have gardens are being told they can no longer even go to their parks to exercise over this Easter bank holiday weekend. Where are people with no gardens supposed to go for their exercise in urban areas where they cannot easily or safely socially distance on the streets?"

The Green Party is also calling on the government to make park maintenance a statutory duty for local authorities and ensure that funding is provided to reverse the cuts felt across 92% of parks departments. [4]

Bartley said that if overcrowdedness remained a concern of parks then other spaces should be opened, such as the 300,000 acres of golf courses in the UK as has already been called for. [5]

He said:

“Government should be working with councils to help them do everything they can to monitor parks and ensure people are keeping to the social distancing rules. This way, we can be sure to keep the parks open and protect people’s health from coronavirus.”

ENDS

Notes

1

The Green Party calls on the government to work with local authorities to redeploy staff to monitor and enforce social distancing rules in green spaces and parks with the power to issue Fixed Penalty Notices using, where applicable, the existing byelaws for these areas.

2

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/brockwell-park-south-london-lockdown-lambeth-sunshine-a4407186.html>

3

<https://news.sky.com/story/coronavirus-follow-lockdown-rules-or-we-will-ban-outdoor-exercise-health-secretary-warns-11968783>

4

A [2016 Heritage Lottery Fund report](#) found that 92% of park managers had seen their budgets cut and 95% were facing more reductions.

5

<https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/18363824.coronavirus-lucas-calls-golf-courses-open-public/>

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