

Greens call for Coronavirus Solidarity Pact



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The Green parties of the United Kingdom have called for the Westminster government's forthcoming emergency coronavirus legislation to a Coronavirus Solidarity Pact to ensure that vulnerable people are offered extensive protections and security.

They added that the Pact, and other actions, must follow extensive consultation with the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland governments.

The Green parties called for the Solidarity Pact to include measures (with sufficient funding for the devolved administration to provide similar arrangements under their responsibilities) including:

- * Funding and arrangements for free deliveries of food and essentials for people over the age of 64 and people with disabilities
- * Funding for families with children receiving free school meals to cover the cost of replacement meals should schools be closed
- * Acting to ensure essential hygiene supplies are available at reasonable prices
- * A holiday from council tax for each household affected by the coronavirus, with compensation to councils for the lost revenue
- * A suspension of no-fault evictions or the eviction of anyone affected by the coronavirus crisis and a freeze on rental payments for those affected (with compensation for landlords for the lost rent)
- * An end to the five-week delay in claiming housing benefit
- * An end to all benefit sanctions for at least the length of the crisis
- * A ban on the cut-off of electricity, gas and water supplies to residential properties and small businesses during the crisis
- * Support for small businesses affected by the coronavirus, including a business rates freeze for those affected
- * Funding for special provision to assist homeless people off the streets, with facilities provided for any homeless person needing to self-isolate and/or suffering from illness
- * Giving asylum-seekers the right to work and providing financial support when needed to individuals with "no recourse to public funds" visa status

* Provisions to ensure that prisoners and others in detention receive the best possible protection and medical support

Sian Berry, co-leader of the Green Party of England and Wales, said: “The coronavirus threat is a time for national solidarity. There is great fear and anxiety about the pandemic. Individual security – the confidence that you won’t be made homeless, lose your utilities, or go hungry – will provide a crucial bedrock.”

She added: “The government also needs to stress that there is only so much it can do. Personal and community solidarity – people checking on vulnerable neighbours, setting up systems to ensure vulnerable friends and relatives get regular phone contact – is going to be crucial in the coming months.”

Patrick Harvie, co-leader of the Scottish Green Party, said: “That solidarity has to extend to between Westminster and the national governments. Scotland urgently needs clarity over the implications of last week’s budget. The relationship between Holyrood and Westminster has to be reforged, which means Westminster acknowledging its responsibilities to act as an open, cooperative partner as we face up to this great challenge.”

Clare Bailey, leader of the Northern Ireland Green Party, said: “The situation of Northern Ireland is different to the rest of the United Kingdom. We need to work in tight cooperation with the Irish government with an all-island approach. That means Westminster has to provide the funds we need, but also be flexible in understanding our approach is different to the rest of the UK.”

Anthony Slaughter, Wales Green Party leader, said: “Meaningful input from Wales into Westminster decision making is crucial. We also need strong support for small independent businesses. Without that, we risk emerging from this crisis with our communities hollowed out and our economy even more concentrated in the hands of the few.”

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