

Greens call for inquiry into government's handling of Covid-19, one year on from start of lockdown



23 March 2021

The Green Party has called for a full public and judge-led inquiry into the government's handling of the coronavirus pandemic on the one year anniversary of the first national lockdown. [1]

In the wake of almost 150,000 Covid deaths [2] and as the successful vaccine rollout means pressure on public services is starting to lift, the Greens have said the government must be held accountable for past mistakes which have left their mark on everybody living in the UK and that we all need to learn lessons for the future.

Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley said:

"The government's mishandling of this pandemic has resulted in thousands of avoidable deaths and left many families grieving for loved ones who died before their time. We must ensure that we learn the truth about decisions made throughout the pandemic and to ensure that such mistakes are not repeated again.

"Now that the success of the vaccine rollout means we are no longer in the depths of the emergency, there is no reason to delay a public inquiry any further. As time passes, memories fade and the ability to understand exactly what went wrong diminishes.

"There are so many questions the government needs to be accountable for, not least why it took so long to lockdown in the first instance, why it spent billions on a failed test and trace system and why it decided it was safe to open up for Christmas, causing the deaths of thousands more people.

"It will take generations for us to come to terms with what has happened over the last 12 months and we need to begin now to plan a site for commemoration and reflection. We support the National Memorial Arboretum's proposal of a memorial of health workers who lost their lives to Covid [3] as well as the idea of local commemorative woodlands close to all our towns and cities."

The Greens are also calling for the government to start providing the resources now so that every local authority has an effective test and trace system in place, run by local public health authorities, ahead of the lifting of most lockdown restrictions. [4]

Bartley said:

"As we all look forward to the lifting of the lockdown restrictions after

Easter, it is vital that we have a functional contact-tracing system.

“While the vaccine will help in eliminating the risk of more people dying from coronavirus, we know that when lockdown lifts the chance of local outbreaks amongst the half of the population that has not been vaccinated increases. The government needs to be allocating funding now to enable local authorities to set up effective test and trace programmes. We’ve seen how effective our local public and community health teams have been with rolling out the vaccine, we now need to support them to make the vital contact tracing system work effectively.”

Notes

1

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-address-to-the-nation-on-coronaviruses-23-march-2020>

2

<https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/deaths>

3

<https://www.thenma.org.uk/visit-us/what%27s-here/the-memorials/memorial-to-covid-19-key-workers>

4

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/explainers-52530518>

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