

Greens invite Michael Gove to fracking sites after tree felling intervention



11 August 2017

The Green Party has written to Environment Secretary Michael Gove to invite him to meet residents in Sheffield who are campaigning against fracking.

The letter follows Gove's intervention to oppose Sheffield Council's controversial tree felling programme [1]. On August 10 Gove wrote to council leader Julie Dore and chief executive John Mothersole to demand an end to the felling of healthy trees.

Whilst welcoming Mr Gove's sudden interest in local environmental concerns in Sheffield, the Green Party has invited the Secretary of State to take a stand against fracking too. Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, has invited Gove to join him on a visit to the region to meet local residents and protesters.

Bartley said:

"Michael Gove's condemnation of the tree felling programme is of course welcome. He should pay tribute to the hard work of local campaigners who have refused to let this issue be ignored. We're glad Gove is standing up for trees but now he needs to stand up against fracking. If he truly cares about the environment, and local residents being steamrollered by those in power, he should oppose the fracking which threatens the local area too.

"I'd be more than happy for Michael to come with me to meet the tireless campaigners who are standing up for their communities, whether it's over the senseless felling of healthy trees or the many risks posed by fracking."

In the letter, Bartley wrote:

"Tree felling isn't the only environmental issue which local residents and Green Party members are concerned about, and where politicians aren't listening to the strength of local feeling. Many of the activists who have rightly been campaigning to protect the trees of Sheffield have also been protesting the threat of fracking in a number of locations in the vicinity of the city, with many sites ready to begin test drilling very soon. The local community is similarly bitterly opposed to the plans.

"I'm sure you would agree that this will also 'damage our children's rightful inheritance', with fracking poised to industrialise the countryside and make a mockery of our commitment to the Paris Agreement. As such, I wonder if you would also comment on this issue, and express your support for people across Yorkshire who are equally concerned about this affront to 'green spaces and the local environment'?"

Notes:

1. <http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/our-region/south-yorkshire/sheffield/exclusive-michael-gove-demands-end-to-sheffield-tree-felling-1-8694453>
2. Full text of the letter:

Dear Mr. Gove

I was delighted to see your intervention in the ongoing campaign to protect trees in Sheffield. Like you, I am dismayed to see the council carrying out this senseless felling of trees, refusing to listen to the wishes of the local community.

As I'm sure you are aware, the Green Party has been heavily involved with this community campaign since its inception, from local party members, to former party leader Natalie Bennett, to our councillor Alison Teal, who was arrested and faces an injunction merely for taking part in a peaceful protest to protect Sheffield's trees. I am sure they are equally thrilled to see your willingness to stand alongside these residents.

However, tree felling isn't the only environmental issue which local residents and Green Party members are concerned about, and to which politicians aren't listening to the strength of local feeling. Many of the activists who have rightly been campaigning to protect the trees of Sheffield have also been protesting the threat of fracking in a number of locations in the vicinity of the city, with many sites ready to begin test drilling very soon. The local community is similarly bitterly opposed to the plans.

I'm sure you would agree that this will also "damage our children's rightful inheritance", with fracking poised to industrialise the countryside and make a mockery of our commitment to the Paris Agreement. As such, I wonder if you would also comment on this issue, and express your support for people across Yorkshire who are equally concerned about this affront to "green spaces and the local environment"?

To this end, I would like to invite you to accompany me on a visit to one or more of the local fracking sites, where I would be pleased to introduce you to Green Party members, activists and councillors who are passionately and bravely opposing fracking, many of whom are doubtless the same residents who expressed their concerns about tree felling during your recent trip to Yorkshire.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Bartley

Co-leader of the Green Party of England and Wales

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