

# Public health approach needed on harmful drug taking say Greens



6 December 2021

- Drug taking needs to be treated as public health issue, not tackled through more punitive measures
- Evidence based policy needed, not Tory and Labour 'war on drugs' rhetoric
- Wider causes of problematic drug use need addressing
- Legalised, regulated system of drug control needed to take power from criminals

Greens have accused the government of adopting a punitive approach to tackling drug use [1] and have called instead for harmful drug taking to be treated as a public health issue. They also call for evidence-based policy including education to raise public awareness of the criminal, health, environmental and international issues around the supply of drugs.

Co-leader Carla Denyer, who is a councillor in Bristol where a safe drug consumption room opened last week [2], said:

"Going after drug users with draconian measures won't address the harm that drug taking can cause. The most harmful drug use is underpinned by poverty, isolation, mental illness, abuse, physical illness and psychological trauma.

"While the Conservatives and Labour attempt to outcompete each other on who can look tougher in a war on drugs, their rhetoric does little to address the tragedy of the lives lost to harmful drug taking every year. This is the sixth drugs strategy in 23 years, and it follows a now familiar pattern of failure.

"Greens would follow a public health approach which tackles the wider causes of problematic drug use while being honest in communication with the public. We also need a policy that prevents profiteering from the supply of drugs. Greens favour a legalised, regulated system of drug control based on the specific risks posed to the individual, to society and to the environment. This is how to take power away from unscrupulous criminals.

"In Bristol, Green councillors have lobbied for years [3] for the introduction of a safer drug consumption room – a measure that would save lives. Such a room opened in Bristol last week on a trial basis, supervised

by staff who are trained to treat an overdose. This progressive approach, which is in operation in many other countries, has been shown to save lives and reduce health, social and crime problems associated with street drug use [4].”

## Notes

- [1] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-59540781>
- [2] <https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/britains-first-drug-consumption-space-6289925>
- [3] <https://www.bristol247.com/news-and-features/news/call-life-saving-drugs-consumption-room-bristol/>
- [4] <https://transformdrugs.org/drug-policy/uk-drug-policy/overdose-prevention-centres>

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## **Small Business Saturday: The ‘backbone of our local economy’ needs support in greening operations and improving employee welfare**



6 December 2021

Today, Small Business Saturday, the Green Party is calling on both national and local government to implement a series of measures to help small and independent businesses and social enterprises green their operations, improve employee welfare and make it easier for people to ‘shop local’ [1].

Green Party co-leader, Adrian Ramsay, said:

“Small and independent businesses and enterprises are the backbone of our local economy. They are vital for providing jobs and keeping money circulating in the local area. They also make our towns and cities diverse, distinctive and unique.

“We know many small businesses are committed to becoming more sustainable and to improving the welfare of their employees, but it is often made difficult and expensive for them to do so. That’s why, this Small Business Saturday,

Greens are calling on the government and local councils to introduce a series of measures to support small businesses do the right thing.”

“The Green Party has long championed business rates reform and extending and expanding business rates relief. We are proud to be the party of small business; we want to see them thrive, and provided support to do so.”

ENDS

Notes

[1] List of measures being proposed by the Green Party:

In addition to our on-going demands to reform business rates and extend and reform business rates to advantage small businesses and enterprises, we are calling for a series of measures to help small businesses green their operations and improve employee welfare:

1. No small business should pay higher business rates as a result of greening their business. The government must incentivise rather than penalise small businesses that are tackling their carbon emissions and making their operations more sustainable. There should be a clear list of items/actions that businesses can implement without fear of increasing their business rates including, but not limited to, fitting solar panels and insulation, introducing recycling facilities or schemes, building bike sheds and putting in employee showers and changing rooms.
2. Small business should be supported to improve employee wellbeing. Government must help businesses improve the wellbeing of their employees. Measures should include exempting all childcare providers in England from business rates, in line with Scotland and Wales; increasing employment allowance to at least £5000 to help the smallest employers; and ensuring no business is penalised by higher business rates when they implement Covid-safe measures such as ventilation systems.
3. Reform VAT to support small businesses. The VAT holiday until 2022 is a welcome break for small businesses but the government must use the time until this holiday to review our VAT system so that it differentially supports smaller shops and businesses compared to larger and online businesses.
4. Creation of Virtual High Streets. Councils should work with small and independent businesses and help create ‘Virtual High Streets’ so residents within a district can use an online portal to enable them to buy from participating local shops and have items delivered on the same or next day. Such schemes are operating in both Brighton and Lewes where Greens are in power. In Herefordshire, Green councillors have worked with local businesses to enable a prepaid card loaded with £15 to spend with local businesses – a great way to encourage people to shop local.

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# **Greens overtake Lib Dems in Old Bexley and Sidcup by-election**



3 December 2021

Greens say overtaking the Lib Dems and coming fourth in the Old Bexley and Sidcup by-election is a great boost for the Party ahead of next year's local elections. Co-leader, Adrian Ramsay, also said it was a bad result for both the Conservatives and Conservatives.

Ramsay said:

"The Green vote in Old Bexley and Sidcup held up well and we overtook the Lib Dems to come fourth. This reflects national polling which now regularly places us as the third party in British politics. Neither Conservatives or Labour can claim it was a good night for them. The Tories saw a steep drop in their vote but Labour failed to capitalise, showing they aren't representing people's concerns or adequately challenging the government.

"Our focus now is the local elections next May when we expect to boost our councillor numbers considerably. Greens already have 462 elected members on 145 principal authorities in England and are in power or power sharing arrangements in 14 Councils.

We know Greens can win anywhere and take seats off anyone. That is exactly what we are working hard to achieve next May."

The Green Party candidate in Bexley Hill and Sidcup, Jonathan Rooks, said:

"Coming fourth to overtake the Lib Dems is an encouraging result for the Greens here. I'm hugely grateful to the people who voted for me and who have made a clear statement that they believe in a Green future.

"The sharp drop in the vote for the Conservatives shows that people in this constituency have had their fill of Tory sleaze and are dismayed at government failure to tackle people's real concerns on the climate crisis, fuel poverty and the protection of green spaces."

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# Greens call for 'reset' of Covid preventative measures to help stem spread of infection

29 November 2021

Greens say the threats posed by the new Omicron variant should serve as a wakeup call to 'reset' preventative measures that will help reduce the spread of Covid this winter. These should include:

- Mask wearing and social distancing extended to all indoor public spaces
- Work from home where possible
- Financial support provided to those in self-isolation
- Fully funded ventilation systems for all schools
- Booster jabs offered immediately to all school staff
- A greater contribution by the UK to fighting the virus globally through vaccination sharing
- UK support for a TRIPS waiver – a temporary suspension of the intellectual property rights used by pharmaceutical corporations to protect their technologies

Green Party co-leader, Carla Denyer, said:

"Infection rates remain stubbornly high across the UK and now there is uncertainty about the threats posed by the new Omicron variant. It's time for a reset on preventative measures to help stem the spread of all variants this winter. A failure to take swift preventative measures could result in health services becoming overwhelmed and much more stringent measures down the line."

"The government has finally seen sense on mandatory mask wearing in shops and public transport, but this must go further and include all indoor public spaces. We also need to see the message on the importance of social distancing reinforced, people encouraged to work from home where they can, and financial support provided to those who are self-isolating.

"The emergence of new variants is also a sharp reminder that we can only put this virus behind us by vaccinating the world. Global justice requires rich nations sharing vaccine supplies with low-income countries and backing moves to prevent pharmaceutical corporations using intellectual property rights to block millions having access to vaccines [1]."

Greens are also calling for a particular focus on stronger preventative measures in educational establishments. Vix Lowthion, Green Party spokesperson on education, said:

"Research suggests that high Covid-19 infection rates are being driven by infection in school-aged children [2]. Greens have long called for improved ventilation in schools and colleges, and we now urgently need to see fully funded ventilation systems for all schools. We also need to ensure that all adults working in schools, colleges and Early Years are classed as frontline workers and are offered booster jabs with immediate effect.

"Covid-19 continues to cause chaos in schools with too many children and educators either suffering with the virus or in isolation. We owe it to our teachers, students and society at large, to take a precautionary response and increase protections in all educational establishments."

#### Notes

[1] [WTO TRIPS Waiver for COVID-19 Vaccines](#)

[2] [Covid: Infection among pupils leads to record high rate – TES](#)

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## **Response from Carla Denyer to Greens on brink of entering coalition government in Germany**



24 November 2021

Co-leader of the Green Party of England and Wales, Carla Denyer, welcomed news that the German Greens will enter into a new coalition government, should members vote to back the agreement [1]. She said:

"This is great news and it seems clear that the Greens in Germany have won some key policy demands as part of the coalition agreement, particularly on a massive boost for renewable energy and bringing forward the phase out of coal

to 2030.

"This is another example of what is becoming a familiar pattern across Europe, as Germany stands to become the 10th European country with Greens in government. From Scotland and Ireland to Finland and Portugal, Greens are in power and exerting a strong influence over policy.

"By ensuring the climate crisis takes centre stage and by pushing policies to tackle inequality such as increasing minimum wages, Greens in government are helping to deliver social and environmental justice.

"Voters here have a growing appetite for the Green Party of England and Wales to join that list of Greens in government. In England, Greens are already in power or power sharing arrangements in 14 local authorities, delivering policies on free bus travel, retrofitting homes to make them warm and tackle fuel poverty, ensuring developers build zero carbon homes, and protecting trees and green spaces. And with polls now consistently ranking us as the third most popular party in the UK, the prospect of Greens in government is becoming increasingly likely."

## Notes

[1]

<https://www.dw.com/en/germanys-spd-fdp-and-greens-unveil-their-governing-coalition-deal/a-59915201>

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