

Greens demand further protections for schools to avoid another lockdown



22 February 2021

- **The call comes as Boris Johnson is set to address the nation this evening to announce a lift in lockdown restrictions from March**

The Green Party is urging the government to introduce additional measures to protect schools which could save lives and avoid another lockdown in the coming months.

The Green Party Education Spokesperson Vix Lowthion said:

“It is vital to stop transmission in schools by introducing effective protections to make them safer – such as masks in classrooms, adequate ventilation, a rota system and utilising outdoor and community spaces to allow social distancing as part of a phased return to school.

“These protections are commonplace in European nations, and a phased return is what is happening in Scotland and Wales. This government’s belief in English exceptionalism is incredibly dangerous.

“If new, additional protections are not introduced then we could face exactly the same issues as we did in December, and a fourth lockdown in the coming months.”

Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley added:

“It is essential that Boris Johnson carefully follows the science as the nation comes out of our third lockdown. In the past the government has lifted restrictions too quickly, causing thousands of people to tragically lose their lives, many more than should have been the case.

“The chancellor has a chance at the upcoming March budget to provide financial security for all those struggling to deal with the economic hardships the pandemic has brought. It is vital he acts with the interests of the most vulnerable at the centre of his attention.”

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Green Party welcomes US return to the Paris climate agreement



19 February 2021

- **Jonathan Bartley:** “As COP chair the UK government needs to get its own house in order when it comes to climate change and demonstrate the global leadership required so that others can follow suit”

The Green Party has welcomed the US’ official return to the Paris Climate Agreement today. [1]

It has now warned the UK government that as chair it is responsible for ensuring this year’s crucial COP talks bring forth the necessary global commitments to prevent catastrophic climate change.

Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley said:

“The return of the US to the Paris climate agreement is vital if we are to secure any meaningful climate action at this year’s COP summit.

“As one of the world’s biggest carbon emitters, the US’ involvement in such a crucial international agreement should never have been put in doubt by the Trump administration, and today is a significant reminder of how grateful we should all be that his presidency is over.

“This year’s COP is the most crucial ever. Unfortunately, it is clear that we have left it far too late to stop damaging climate change from happening, but if we are to stand any chance of staying within the 1.5 degree warming limit and preventing the most extreme outcomes, all countries must act with great urgency.

“As COP chair the UK government needs to get its own house in order when it comes to climate change and demonstrate the global leadership required so that others can follow suit. As long as it keeps opening new coal mines, expanding airports and building new roads its climate commitments cannot be taken seriously.

“The US’ official return to the Paris agreement today has made it possible for the world to take the necessary action to prevent runaway climate change. It is now up to the UK government to step up and make sure this happens.”

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Greens welcome High Court ruling on Manston Airport



16 February 2021

The Green Party has welcomed the High Court's decision to quash the government's order to reopen Manston Airport, in Kent, as a global freight hub [1].

The High Court ruling is the first time a government Development Consent Order has been quashed by the courts. It means a decision on the future of the airport will need to be taken again at a future date.

Members of Thanet Green Party have been campaigning against the development of the airport, warning reopening it as a freight hub would be in conflict with the government's commitment to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

Green Party peer Natalie Bennett has now welcomed the High Court ruling but warned the government must start taking its climate commitments seriously.

Bennett said:

"This High Court decision to quash the government's order to reopen Manston Airport is of course welcome, but it is not the end of the line yet for this disastrous plan.

"There is simply no excuse for reopening old airports in a climate emergency. Yet time and again, from opening new coal mines to building new roads, this government shows that, despite talking of a green recovery, it does not care about its own climate commitments.

"As the chair of this year's COP, it is extremely worrying that the Conservatives are willing to hold their promises, including to reach net zero by 2050, in such low regard.

"The Prime Minister would do well to learn from the campaigners and Thanet Green Party members who have made it clear that we cannot go back to the old

ways of doing things, which rely on prioritising polluting and dirty businesses over the health of people and planet.

“If Boris Johnson was able to understand this, it would be clear to him that reopening old airports makes no sense whatsoever.”

Deb Shotton, vice chair of Thanet Green Party, said there was increasing interest in the development of the former airfield for clean energies:

“The imposition of a new cargo hub would bring terrible harm to Thanet, East Kent and the planet. The promised jobs are, by the developer’s own admission, diminishing by the minute.

“In the face of the devastation of the air industry by Covid, this proposed hub becomes nothing more than a vanity project for the egos involved. Its long-term failure is inevitable.

“It needs to be put to bed now, once and for all, and the land used for the promotion of clean energies. Green jobs in a growth industry would be far more beneficial for Thanet and beyond.”

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<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-56076770>

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Cumbrian Greens welcome County Council decision to reconsider coal mine decision



12 February 2021

Penrith and Eden Green Party are cautiously celebrating the news that Cumbria County Council will reconsider the application for a new deep coal mine on the Copeland coast near Whitehaven.

Green Party Councillor and campaigner Ali Ross said:

“We are outraged that the Government has failed to intervene in this case – which is clearly of national and global importance – and at a time when the UK is supposed to be leading on climate action as chair of COP26.

“It is abundantly clear that the grounds on which Cumbria County Council approved this planning application are totally flawed. The mine will not be ‘carbon neutral’ as claimed by the developers. Far from it, it will result in massive carbon emissions that will further destabilise our already dangerously unbalanced climate.”

Cllr Ross also refuted the commonly cited argument that the coking coal from this mine is essential to the future of steel production in the UK:

“Less than 15% of the coal from this mine is actually destined for the UK market; the rest will be exported. Steel production is currently one of our most carbon intensive industries and that has to change. Low carbon production technology exists and is well on its way to commercial use. The UK should be speeding up that process, not slowing it down by investing in more outdated coal sources.”

Cllr Ross also challenged the suggestion that the coal mine was necessary to protect local jobs:

“Of course we are all sympathetic to County Councillors’ desire to create jobs in West Cumbria, but this project never looked likely to deliver the massive opportunities that were promised.

“Coking coal is a climate destroying fuel that would inevitably result in the community being let down again. The Government should be providing jobs in green technologies instead.

“Cumbria has enormous potential for renewable energy, green transport infrastructure and retrofitting homes to bring them up to good energy efficiency standards – to name but a few. What West Cumbria needs is investment and training that will create long-term jobs for a sustainable future.”

The Council stated that its decision was made in light of the recommendations from the Government’s Climate Change Committee [1], issued in December, regarding the UK’s future greenhouse gas emissions. The application will now go back to Committee for a fourth time.

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1

<https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/sixth-carbon-budget/>

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Greens call for greater ambition on environmental taxes in response to NAO report



12 February 2021

- **Party commends National Audit Office emphasis on the need for strategic use of tax system to support pro-environment action**

Responding to today's National Audit Office report on environmental tax measures [1], Green Party finance spokesperson Molly Scott Cato said:

"We support the National Audit Office's conclusions that the government is failing to understand the role of environmental taxes in shifting our economy towards a more sustainable future.

"Environmental taxes have been at the heart of our policy agenda since our foundation and, while some have been adopted by government, it has been in an apologetic and piecemeal way that has failed to realise their full potential.

"However, we regret that the NAO has not gone further in recommending a high and rising rate of carbon tax, which would represent the strongest signal to business that the government is serious about making rapid progress towards our net zero carbon targets.

"Our policy of a carbon tax of £100 per tonne rising to £500 by 2030 is commensurate with the urgency of the situation we are facing. [2] As an upstream tax charged when fossil fuels come out of the ground or are imported it is also efficient to levy. We would match it with a universal basic income to offset increases in consumer prices.

"We welcome the NAO's suggestion that Air Passenger Duty should be seen as a strategic environmental tax and call on the government to adopt our longstanding policy of a Frequent Flyer Levy. This could be used to shift long-distance journeys from air to rail when journeys resume after the pandemic.

"We would also encourage the government to use the powerful VAT regime as a tool to address the climate emergency. One example is the need to reverse the presumption in favour of new build over retrofit, which works counter to the government's stated objective of rapid reductions in CO2 emissions." [3]

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1

<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/environmental-tax-measures/?slide=1>

2

The Green Party's 10 point plan for real climate ambition can be seen here: https://www.greenparty.org.uk/assets/files/Communications/10_Point_Climate_Plan.pdf

3

The Green Party recently launched this petition to shift the VAT incentive away from new build homes and towards retrofit: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/573207>

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