

Green Party calls for Kensington and Chelsea council leader to be removed from post



29 June 2017

The Green Party has sent a letter to the prime minister urging her to remove the leader and deputy leader of Kensington and Chelsea Council from their posts [1].

Their intervention follows the news that it is unlikely the final death toll from the fire that engulfed Grenfell tower will be known until the end of the year [2] and that survivors and press will be banned from tonight's council meeting in which an update on the fire will be given. The update will be given orally without any written record [3].

Green Party politicians including Sian Berry and Caroline Russell, both members of the London Assembly, Amelia Womack, Deputy Leader, and Jennifer Nadel, the party's candidate for Kensington in the recent election, have been providing support to victims of the fire. As well as raising questions from survivors with the government and local council, the Green Party has already called for an amnesty for victims – allowing them to share personal information without fear of reprisal – and pressed the prime minister to clarify how much will be given in legal aid to help survivors [4].

In its letter to the prime minister, the party said it is “unconscionable” that the leader and deputy leader of Kensington and Chelsea council could continue in their post when it is roundly recognised that they failed to deliver an adequate response to the fire and to heed warnings from residents about safety in the tower before the incident. The party urges May to take “strong leadership” and reassure survivors that they are being listened to and that those who presided over this tragedy aren't allowed to carry on with business as usual. and the public that actions are being taken to ensure this “never happens again.”

The letter, signed by Jennifer Nadel, and Amelia Womack, says:

“It is insulting to the residents of this community to see Paget-Brown and Feilding-Mellen remain in post. Surviving residents and members of the public need to know that strong leadership is being taken to ensure this kind of disaster never happens again. That includes ensuring that those responsible for guaranteeing the safety of residents at Grenfell before and after the fire are held to account and do not remain in post. Paget-Brown and Fielding-Mellen could themselves be subject to criminal investigations. It is unconscionable given the scale of the tragedy and the multiple failings of the council before and after that its Leader and Deputy Leader should remain as Leader and Deputy Leader of the council.

"The families of those who died at Hillsborough have had to wait almost three decades for justice to be done. We cannot let the survivors of Grenfell wait that long. So I urge you: please take action, show that you are listening to the concerns of residents and survivors of Grenfell, and remove from post the council leader and deputy leader who have overseen this terrible episode in British history."

Joe Delaney, who was a resident of the tower, said:

"We are extremely disappointed that neither Paget-Brown or Fielding-Mellen have shown the courage and humility to resign in the wake of this unprecedented disaster that occurred on their watch and was a direct result of policies they are responsible for. Once again, they hide behind platitudes and false assertions that they are somehow victims because of the justifiable anger and resentment being directed towards them by victims in particular and the community as a whole. Neither is forced to stay in post, so even if their colleagues in the Conservative group have allegedly refused their resignations they should still do the right thing and leave these positions of responsibility immediately. Not only would that demonstrate their regret and satisfy local wishes, but also ensure that there can be no question of using their positions to influence the inquiry and police investigation."

Piers Thompson, member of the Save our Silchester campaigning aiming to protect the neighbouring Silchester Estate, said:

"It beggars belief that that Council leader Paget Brown and his Deputy, Feilding Mellen are clinging onto power behind locked doors at the Town Hall. This tragedy is a result of their incompetence and contempt for the ordinary people in their care. For decency's sake, go now."

Notes

[1] Full letter follows below.

[2] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-40434741>

[3]

http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/grenfell-tower-council-survivors-meeting_uk_595437c1e4b05c37bb7bdad6

[4]

<https://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/2017/06/22/green-party-says-government-amnesty-for-grenfell-victims-does-not-go-far-enough/>

To Rt Hon Theresa May,

On behalf of the Green Party of England and Wales I am writing to you to request that you remove from post the leader and deputy leader of Kensington and Chelsea Council, Nicholas Paget-Brown and Rock Fielding-Mellen.

The response launched by Paget-Brown and Fielding-Mellen to the fire at Grenfell Towers was, as you have described it, “not good enough”. We now know that in the hours immediately after the fire, the council failed to communicate with survivors and their families; did not put enough staff on the ground to give advice; did not distribute any of the money being donated to help survivors; did not find accommodation for surviving residents; and did not answer calls from neighbouring councils who wanted to offer support.

But the response to the fire itself is clearly only one part of this story. Kensington and Chelsea Council had initiated 16 investigations of Grenfell before the fire but none of these prevented the installation of flammable cladding onto the outside of the tower. The council also refused to listen to the concerns raised so consistently by residents about the safety of the tower and its susceptibility to the kind of disaster that occurred there on 14 June.

Lives have been lost and damaged by this dereliction of duty.

It is insulting to the residents of this community to see Paget-Brown and Fielding-Mellen remain in post. Surviving residents and members of the public need to know that strong leadership is being taken to ensure this kind of disaster never happens again. That includes ensuring that those responsible for guaranteeing the safety of residents at Grenfell before and after the fire are held to account and do not remain in post. Paget-Brown and Fielding-Mellen could themselves be subject to criminal investigations. It is unconscionable given the scale of the tragedy and the multiple failings of the council before and after that its Leader and Deputy Leader should remain as Leader and Deputy Leader of the council.

The families of those who died at Hillsborough have had to wait almost three decades for justice to be done. We cannot let the survivors of Grenfell wait that long. So I urge you: please take action, show that you are listening to the concerns of residents and survivors of Grenfell, and remove from post the council leader and deputy leader who have overseen this terrible episode in British history.

Yours,

Jennifer Nadel, Green Party candidate for Kensington at the 2017 election

Amelia Womack, Deputy Leader of the Green Party

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Green Party responds to Sheffield Council's injunction against Green councillor



28 June 2017

Responding to the news that Sheffield Council is to seek a civil injunction against Green Councillor Alison Teal who protested against their tree-felling programme [1], Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

“This is a heavy-handed attempt by an authoritarian Labour council to shut-down debate and gag any opposition to their environmental vandalism. Their plans have already been shown to be ill-considered, environmentally illiterate, and downright destructive to the green spaces that surround residents in Sheffield.

“The Green Party stands shoulder to shoulder with Alison and with the wider community who have peacefully protested against the ravaging of the perfectly healthy trees that line Sheffield’s streets. Greens are committed to standing up for local people who want to create healthy, vibrant communities that promote everyone’s wellbeing and Alison along with her fellow campaigners are leading that movement from the front.”

Notes

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-40417519>
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/nov/28/sheffield-trees-dispute-scenes-putin-russia-nick-clegg-arrests>

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Molly Scott Cato responds to European

Commission ruling against Google



27 June 2017

Commenting on the fact that Google has been fined 2.42bn euros (£2.1bn) by the European Commission after it ruled the company had abused its power by promoting its own shopping comparison service at the top of search results, Molly Scott Cato MEP, Green Party economics spokesperson, said:

“Rightly, the European Commission has come down heavily on one of the world’s most powerful corporations, which has been using its size and influence to achieve unfair competition. Attempts by Google to use its domination of the Search arena to favour its shopping comparison service represents a damaging extension of its monopoly power that must be resisted. The action by Commissioner Vestager is a good example of how the EU member states can act collectively to clamp down on corporate power; action an individual country may not feel able or willing to do on its own.

“Given previous scandals involving Google avoiding taxes in the UK and the powerlessness of tax authorities to tackle this [2], we must also remain focused on the risk that post-Brexit Britain will become a tax haven for corporations like Google.”

Molly Scott Cato went on to say:

“We also need the EU to stand up for digital start-ups that challenge the might of US digital monopolies and remain vigilant to prevent them using their market power to create barriers to entry.”

Notes

[1] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-40406542>

[2]

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/google-deal-hmrc-concedes-internet-giants-uk-tax-arrangements-are-legal-a6837881.html>

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Greens respond to Tory-DUP coalition of cruelty



26 June 2017

The Green Party [1] has responded to news the Conservatives have reached a deal with the DUP to prop up their minority Government [1].

Jonathan Bartley, co-leader of the Green Party, said:

“The coalition of cruelty deal has now been signed and the Tory Government stumbles on for another day.

“Theresa May’s claim her party shares many of the DUP’s values is alarming – which is she referring to? Their opposition to equal marriage, abortion or climate action? The Green Party will always stand up against the regressive values of the DUP and work with others to stop a lurch to the right under a Tory-DUP alliance.

“The length of time it has taken Theresa May to reach a deal is a sign of the chaos currently engulfing her Government. The Tories are utterly hamstrung – unable to implement their manifesto plans, derided in the rest of the EU and incapable of properly-Governing this country in these testing times.”

Notes:

1. The DUP has 10 MPs and received fewer than 300,000 votes in the General Election. The Green party returned just one MP – Caroline Lucas in Brighton Pavilion – despite getting more than 500,000 votes.

2. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/jun/26/tories-and-the-dup-reach-deal-to-prop-up-minority-government>

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Green Party responds to Environment Plan delay



26 June 2017

The Green Party has responded to news the Government's 25-Year Environment Plan is not guaranteed to be published this year. [1]

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

"This is another example of the recklessness that comes with Gove's appointment as Environment Secretary. He is clearly intent on playing fast and loose with the environment at a time when we need a safe pair of hands.

"The 25-Year Environment Plan is already long overdue and yet another delay compounds concerns that Gove will slash environmental protections and make the environment subservient to his wider political agenda. The Plan must be published as a matter of urgency. The need for a new Environment Protection Act is also clearly greater than ever."

Notes:

1. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/michael-gove-25-year-environment-plan-delay-government-climate-change-brexit-a7807781.html>

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