

# Greens from across 120 councils demand urgent funding for local authorities to tackle the coronavirus crisis



17 April 2020

- Local authorities could lose up to half of spending power this year, letter warns
- Councillors call for more flexibility to decide on how to spend funding
- Sian Berry: “Our councils are stepping up but budgets are rapidly reaching breaking point”

Green councillors from across the country have signed an open letter to Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick to demand emergency and longer-term funding to enable local authorities to continue to support communities during the coronavirus crisis. [1]

The letter warns councils could lose up to half of their spending power this year if the lockdown were to last for just three months.

It also calls for local authorities to be given more flexibility to decide on how funds are spent, as they are best-placed to see where the real need is and how it can be tackled.

The letter has been sent by the Association of Green Councillors on behalf of councillors from across 120 councils, including Green Party co-leaders Sian Berry and Jonathan Bartley and Councillor Zoe Nicholson, the leader of Lewes District Council.

Berry, a Green Party councillor on Camden Council, said:

“Several weeks into the lockdown and with the increased demand caused by the crisis it is clear that the initial funding the government has already announced for local authorities is simply nowhere near enough.

“Councils are stepping up and providing vital services to our communities. Vulnerable people are relying upon them for a rapid increase in support. But, after a decade of cuts and in the face of lost income as a result of the crisis, budgets are rapidly reaching breaking point.

“We urge the government to act immediately so that we can continue to do this essential work and not add further strain to the NHS and other essential services.”

The letter highlights the level of resources already being committed to emergency support by Lewes District Council, where the Green Party are in co-operative administration. In that authority, food packs provided to those not covered by the medically shielded programme has already cost £1 per head of

population in the first three weeks.

Councillor Nicholson said:

“In Lewes, like every other district and borough council, we are facing serious financial problems due to the coronavirus crisis.

“We have been at the front line of the response within our community, paying out for additional food packs and housing the homeless, all amid a significant loss of income.

“Like lots of other district councils we received a measly 0.02% per cent of the additional money the government previously announced for local authorities. We have spent this money at least ten times over just this week. The long-term financial position looks bleak for councils like ourselves who are providing essential front line services.”

ENDS

## Notes

1

A copy of the letter can be viewed [here](#)

2

The Green Party saw its best ever local election results on 2 May 2019 when it more than doubled its number of councillors from 175 to 362 councillors on 122 councils.

Greens are also in administration in 17 councils across the country.

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**[Greens send cross-party letter calling for government to support victims of domestic abuse](#)**



16 April 2020

- Government urged to provide emergency funding to give all victims of domestic abuse a safe place to live
- Cross-party group including SNP, Lib Dems and Plaid Cymru signed letter
- Amelia Womack: "The lockdown conditions are putting victims of domestic abuse at even more risk than usual"

A cross-party group of politicians have signed a letter to the First Secretary of State asking for emergency funding to give all victims of domestic abuse a safe place to live. [1]

The Green's deputy leader Amelia Womack sent the letter to Dominic Raab today [Thursday 16 April] in a bid to ensure that the vital services which provide a lifeline to so many women do not become overwhelmed during the coronavirus crisis.

The letter has also been signed by representatives of the SNP, the Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru, the Green Party in Northern Ireland and the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland.

It points out that at least eight women are feared to have become victims of domestic killings since the lockdown was announced and there has been a 25% rise in calls to the National Domestic Abuse Helpline since 31 March. [2]

Womack said:

"The coronavirus crisis is extremely worrying for everybody, but the lockdown conditions are putting victims of domestic abuse at even more risk than usual.

"We know that there has been a spike in domestic abuse since the lockdown began and vital services are being overwhelmed by the surge in cases.

"The government has acknowledged there's an issue but it now needs to immediately provide emergency funding to local authorities so they can offer safe housing for victims of domestic abuse, as women's charities and organisations have already called for."

ENDS

## Notes

1

A copy of the letter and its signatories can be viewed [here](#)

2

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/mar/31/call-for-uk-domestic-violence-refuges-to-get-coronavirus-funding>

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## Virtual Parliament needed before decision can be made on ending lockdown, says Sian Berry



15 April 2020

The government's deadline for reviewing the lockdown measures is tomorrow [Thursday 16 April]

Green Party co-leader Sian Berry said:

"It is clear that before any decision can be taken on ending the lockdown we need to have mass testing, transparent data and robust democratic scrutiny from a virtually recalled Parliament.

"There is no substitute for cross-party debate and it is vital that MPs are able to represent the people who put them there during this time of crisis.

"Parliament not only ensures that the government is held to account but it also provides access to a wealth of knowledge and experience to help guide ministers to make the right decision at this crucial moment."

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## Government must urgently provide care homes with direction and support to prevent fatal spread of coronavirus,

# says Green Party



14 April 2020

- **Greens urge government to provide clear plan for quarantining and routine testing in care homes as a matter of urgency**
- **Party echoes charities' call for a daily update on deaths in care homes**
- **Co-leader Jonathan Bartley: "Ministers cannot be complacent about what is happening. Action must be taken today."**

The government must offer clear direction and guidance and set out plans for support today on how care homes can self-quarantine to prevent deaths, the Green Party has said.

The party has called for a comprehensive plan which could include allowing carers to voluntarily isolate in homes, ensure provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and provide care for the residents to reduce the risk of transmission.

Fears are growing that coronavirus could be spreading through care homes untracked, as the government's daily update does not include those who have died in care.

Care home providers have warned they have already seen hundreds of deaths in the care system. One provider alone said there had been more than 300 deaths with outbreaks in two thirds of its homes. [1]

The Greens have now also backed a call from leading charities for a daily update on deaths in the care system. [2]

Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley said: "The government has said vulnerable people must be cocooned from this terrible outbreak, yet we have not seen them take anywhere near sufficient action to protect those living in care homes.

"Ministers cannot be complacent about what is happening. Action must be taken today.

"Carers are being left to try and deal with this themselves, while the people who they have cared for years for are dying in front of their eyes.

"The government must come forward with a comprehensive plan of testing, provision of PPE and quarantine in order to slow the spread any further.

"The Government could allow carers and those with experience and appropriate checks to voluntarily self isolate within residential homes and provide care for the residents, while also safeguarding the jobs and livelihoods of care workers who are unable to.

"It is unconscionable that the government seems to be doing next to nothing

to prevent or even track the spread of coronavirus among older people in care homes, while leaving carers, who are often among the most poorly paid members of society, to risk their lives and deal with this growing crisis by themselves.”

ENDS

## Notes

1

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/14/uk-care-home-providers-report-521-coronavirus-deaths>

2

Representatives from Age UK, Marie Curie, Care England, Independent Age and the Alzheimer’s Society yesterday wrote to Health Secretary Matt Hancock to ask for a comprehensive plan to support social care through the coronavirus crisis

<https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/news/2020-04-13/our-letter-secretary-state-health-and-social-care>

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## [Green Party urges government to help local authorities keep parks open this Easter](#)



9 April 2020

- Greens say local authority staff should be redeployed to ensure social distancing is observed
- More green spaces should be opened such as 300,000 acres of golf courses
- Co-leader Jonathan Bartley asks: “Where are people with no gardens supposed to go for their exercise?”

The Green Party has urged the government to help local authorities redeploy staff from non-essential roles in order to keep parks and green spaces open this Easter bank holiday weekend. [1]

As families prepare to spend the weekend in continued isolation, the Greens have stressed the importance of keeping parks open so that those without a garden still have access to an outdoor space.

Last weekend saw Lambeth Council close Brockwell Park after people were seen sunbathing there [2], while Health Secretary Matt Hancock threatened to ban outdoor exercise altogether. [3]

Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley, and leader of the opposition on Lambeth Council, said such decisions would have an irresponsibly detrimental impact on everyone's physical and mental wellbeing.

He said: "Bank holiday weekend is coming up and it is absolutely vital that people continue to follow the public health advice on social distancing. However, it is also crucial that people have access to green spaces to go for their daily exercise.

"Many of these parks serve people who don't have any other access to an outdoor space. It is outrageous that government and local councils would discriminate against people who don't have any other choice than using their publicly owned park.

"There is an inherent inequality in the fact that people who do not have gardens are being told they can no longer even go to their parks to exercise over this Easter bank holiday weekend. Where are people with no gardens supposed to go for their exercise in urban areas where they cannot easily or safely socially distance on the streets?"

The Green Party is also calling on the government to make park maintenance a statutory duty for local authorities and ensure that funding is provided to reverse the cuts felt across 92% of parks departments. [4]

Bartley said that if overcrowdedness remained a concern of parks then other spaces should be opened, such as the 300,000 acres of golf courses in the UK as has already been called for. [5]

He said:

"Government should be working with councils to help them do everything they can to monitor parks and ensure people are keeping to the social distancing rules. This way, we can be sure to keep the parks open and protect people's health from coronavirus."

ENDS

## Notes

### 1

The Green Party calls on the government to work with local authorities to redeploy staff to monitor and enforce social distancing rules in green spaces and parks with the power to issue Fixed Penalty Notices using, where applicable, the existing byelaws for these areas.

2

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/brockwell-park-south-london-lockdown-lambeth-sunshine-a4407186.html>

3

<https://news.sky.com/story/coronavirus-follow-lockdown-rules-or-we-will-ban-outdoor-exercise-health-secretary-warns-11968783>

4

A [2016 Heritage Lottery Fund report](#) found that 92% of park managers had seen their budgets cut and 95% were facing more reductions.

5

<https://www.theargus.co.uk/news/18363824.coronavirus-lucas-calls-golf-courses-open-public/>

*For more information or to arrange an interview please contact [press@greenparty.org.uk](mailto:press@greenparty.org.uk) or 020 3691 9401*

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