

Greens: Start of fracking puts sledgehammer through climate targets



15 October 2018

The Green Party has responded to news Cuadrilla has started fracking at its site in Preston New Road, Lancashire, today (Monday 15 October). The move marks the first fracking to take place in Britain in seven years [1].

Jonathan Bartley, co-leader of the Green Party, said the start of fracking on the first day of the Conservative's Green GB Week [2], and just days after the UN's IPCC report [3], revealed the "rank hypocrisy" of a Government which has "backed frackers to put a sledgehammer through our climate targets".

Bartley said:

"The Government is backing frackers to put a sledgehammer through our climate targets. Just days after the UN warned we have 12 years to face climate catastrophe fracking has started in Britain for the first time in seven years. Marking the start of Green GB Week with the start of fracking is rank hypocrisy.

"This proves just how deeply the filth of fossil fuels runs through our political establishment. The Government has forced fracking on Lancashire after the community said no and now drilling has started before all their concerns have been fully heard or answered.

"Public support for fracking is in freefall and the anti-fracking movement will continue to go from strength to strength. To tackle the scale of climate breakdown ministers must commit to keeping fossil fuels in the ground where they belong, and investing instead in a renewable revolution for the future."

Notes:

1. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-fracking/gas-fracking-to-start-in-england-next-week-after-seven-year-halt-idUSKCN1MF0WK>
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/landmark-week-of-action-to-celebrate-clean-growth>
3. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-fracking/gas-fracking-to-start-in-england-next-week-after-seven-year-halt-idUSKCN1MF0WK>

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Greens: Fracking ruling opens new fossil fuel frontier



12 October 2018

The Green Party has responded to a High Court ruling which has rejected an injunction which would stop fracking taking place at Cuadrilla's site in Preston New Road, Lancashire. [1]

Local resident Bob Dennett had applied for the injunction over emergency planning procedures at the site.

Jonathan Bartley, co-leader of the Green Party, joined campaigners at the court today and said the ruling was "bitterly disappointing" but that the anti-fracking movement is still "stronger than ever".

Bartley said:

"A new fossil fuel frontier has been opened in Britain. In the same week the UN warned we have little more than a decade to tackle climate change, this ruling has paved the way for the first fracking in seven years.

"To stand any chance of hitting climate targets we must keep all fossil fuels in the ground where they belong. Fracking is a dirty, dangerous industry and I stand shoulder to shoulder with the brave residents standing up for the safety of their community today.

"We are deeply disappointed by this ruling, but the anti-fracking movement is stronger than ever and we will not give up this fight until Britain is frack free. It's time the Government ditched its reckless dash for gas and invested instead in a renewable revolution of solar, wind and tidal power." [2]

Notes:

1. https://twitter.com/adamvaughan_uk/status/1050707549396357120
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-45775309>

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Caroline Lucas responds to IPCC report



8 October 2018

Responding to the IPCC's Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5C, Green Party MP Caroline Lucas said:

"This report couldn't be written in stronger terms: we are at a tipping point on the edge of complete climate breakdown, and governments around the world are failing to prevent it.

"Our own government is pushing us towards that tipping point with carbon intensive and ecologically destructive projects like airport expansion, fracking and HS2 – while slashing support for renewables and continuing to subsidise fossil fuels.

"Ministers have a choice: they can keep coating business-as-usual policies in a green veneer and watch as floods and heatwaves become the norm. Or they can embrace the opportunities to create a fairer, healthier, safer society that come with the economic overhaul we need."

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Green Party announces policy of living wage for apprentices



6 October 2018

- * Deputy leader announces commitment at Autumn Conference in Bristol
- * Move coupled with policy to end pay discrimination for under 21s
- * Amelia Womack: "If we want to build a working environment that is fair for everyone, we have to make things fair from your very first job onwards"

In her first Conference speech since her re-election last month, Green Party of England and Wales deputy leader Amelia Womack has announced a policy to provide a living wage for apprenticeships.

The policy, part of a wider plan to revolutionise the world of work, seeks to alleviate the UK's skills shortage by encouraging more young people to seek apprenticeships.

Womack also announced the party's intention to deliver an equal pay for under 21s. Currently, the minimum wage for an 18 to 21-year-old is £5.90. The Green Party has called for under 21s to be given a Real Living Wage.

Amelia Womack said:

"A fair workplace has to be fair for apprentices as well. So today we are also pledging our official support a living wage for apprentices. The current minimum wage for apprentices is £3.70 per hour.

"Meanwhile, three quarters of young people polled this year have said that low pay would put them off taking up an apprenticeship.

"It is no wonder that we have a skills shortage in this country. It is time that the political class woke up to the value of investing in training and apprenticeships, to the hardships facing young people today and to the realities of pay inequality in Britain."

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Amelia Womack speech to Autumn Conference



6 October 2018

Check against delivery

Conference, it's an honour to be here in Bristol. A city that back in 1821 gave us the first woman to qualify as a doctor, and whose 1963 bus boycott inspired the UK's First Race Relations Act.

A city with a history of making change – and a future being created now, by our Green councillors and Green Lord Mayor.

It's an honour and privilege too that I stand before you having already

served as your deputy leader for the last four years – and am ready to do so for another term. Thank you for putting your faith in me once again.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Jonathan and Sian on their election – two formidable Greens who I've already worked with to achieve so much – and I look forward to what we can deliver working together over the next two years.

I am incredibly proud of our dynamic and fearless Party. Of what we achieve against the odds. And I am incredibly proud of the difference each of you makes.

In the Green Party, it's dynamic activists on doorsteps who go out and share the passion and principle behind our unique message.

In the Green Party, it's members who make policy and who live that policy by our actions. Whether that's fearlessly laying our bodies on the line to stop fracking or challenging injustice within our communities.

It's your work in the party that sets the agenda – and your tireless campaigning and drive that inspires and makes me proud every day.

Conference, I want to let you in on a secret.

I am not here to just get a few more Green votes,

I am not here to enable other parties to look progressive by adopting our policies,

I am here to work with you to build the foundations of the first Green government.

It's a big and bold goal but we are part of a big and bold movement, with a thirst for change.

A movement that knows we must radically overhaul our broken economic order – putting the environment at the heart of everything we do.

We are the pioneers with the only possible vision of the future. Who boldly go where others dare not tread. No wonder the ultimate pioneer, Patrick Stewart, Captain of the Starship Enterprise, has recently given us his support. Although I am not sure he realises how we feel about long distance travel!

The spirit of who we are as Green pioneers is unbreakable, immeasurable and tenacious.

Our task is building a politics, not only "for the many" of today – but also for future generations. A politics for humankind, and for the natural world too. That will be achieved by working internationally and collaboratively.

Our task is rebalancing and redefining politics – because the environmental

and social crises we face demand nothing less.

I dream of a dynamic, fearless Green government because I cannot tolerate injustice.

Whether that's people without a home forced to sleep on the streets tonight. The Windrush generation who gave their lives to the UK and got threatened with deportation in return. And a generation of young people who still do not receive equal pay.

Right now if you are under 18, you receive £1.70 less minimum wage than someone between the ages of 18 and 21.

So today I am proud to announce our policy of equal pay for everyone under 21.

If we want to build a working environment that is fair for everyone, we have to make things fair from your very first job onwards. So if you are under 21, the Green Party promises you won't lose out because of your age and we promise you equal pay for equal work.

It doesn't stop there though.

A fair workplace has to be fair for apprentices as well. So today we are pledging official support for a living wage for apprentices.

The current minimum wage for apprentices is £3.70 an hour. An unfair sum, we can all agree.

Meanwhile, three quarters of young people polled this year have said that low pay would put them off taking an apprenticeship. It is no wonder that we have a skills shortage in this country.

It is time that the political class woke up:

To the value of investing in training and apprenticeships.

To the hardships facing young people today.

And to the realities of pay inequality in Britain.

While other politicians seem to have recently discovered the looming climate crisis, we have long known that you cannot separate social, economic and environmental injustice.

The climate catastrophe is affecting everyone, even the rich, but those causing most of the emissions are outsourcing the damage. To poorer countries and future generations.

This summer – fires were burning in the arctic circle. Floods washed away homes and lives in India. Storms raged all across the world.

You'd have to be wilfully ignorant to not see that climate chaos is upon us.

I'd like to think people have woken up to the climate emergency.

That Caroline Lucas will never again have to walk around Westminster, with a big green question mark to challenge the total absence of the environment in the media's election coverage.

I'd like to think that Rupert Reed won't ever again have to explain to the BBC and other media why giving air time to climate deniers isn't balanced debate – it is dangerous.

But conference, whilst together we have already achieved remarkable things, we need to do more.

Although they are welcome – commitments on everything from reducing plastic and food waste, to investment in green energy, simply do not add up to the transformation we need to secure a future for our planet.

On the one hand – we are facing an ecological crisis.

On the other – we have Michael Gove acting all super hero because he's carrying a keepcup to cabinet meetings.

Conference, the Green Party is needed more than ever before.

Because only we truly recognise that whilst our individual choices make a difference, it's deep seated structural change that will deliver a safe, green and just future.

The change we need is about looking forward. Not into the rearview mirror.

Looking towards a resilient, diverse economic system.

Be a party that is pro-business – because business, like all of us, needs a planet.

Where would we be today, if those who profited from investment in Deepwater Horizon had been made responsible from the very start for the colossal public risk they were creating?

That disaster took the lives of eleven workers, killed off fishing and tourism industries, and as we now know, altered the very building blocks of ocean life.

Corporate social responsibility has to mean more than a glossy brochure and good intentions.

That's why today I am committing to work with business to bring forward policies that will reward green investment and innovation, outlaw the environmental pirates and build a future for pioneers.

A radical Green economy isn't just about the state and the individual.

It embraces start-ups and co-operatives, land trusts and community interest companies, social enterprises, enterprising communities, new models of worker ownership and things we haven't even begun to imagine.

It fearlessly reimagines business as a force for good, for creativity, with a positive role to play – in an economy where wealth is shared and our environment enhanced.

Politics needs the Green Party because we are always pushing the boundaries of what it means to be radical and forward facing. And we will continue to do so, even as others cherry pick our ideas.

We will also continue to uniquely define politics as so much more than putting a cross on the ballot paper.

Greens are at the heart of communities pushing back against the construction of HS2. Against the Wylfa nuclear plant on Anglesey or, in my own community, the toxic sludge being dumped into Cardiff Bay from Hinkley Point.

Where abhorrent inequalities are in evidence – Greens will be there.

Where injustices are being perpetrated – Greens will be there.

Where our environment is under attack by powerful moneyed interests – you can bet that Greens will be there.

Speaking out.

Fighting back.

Leading the resistance.

Politics for us is inspiring people to hope.

Hope allows us to believe change is always possible. And Green changes everything.

The power of every small action reminds me of the regular trips I used to take as a child just down the road to Weston-Super-Mare to visit family. We'd spend our time scrambling over the rocks, eating ice cream at Anchor Head and wandering to the Pier to try our luck on the arcade machines.

I'd put my 2ps into the machine. Wait to see if it was my coin that would tip the balance. And watch as those couple of coins hung just over the edge.

You'd stare at it, knowing that the next person who came along could be in for that big win, and it might not be you.

I often see activism like those machines, it takes just one 2p piece for a win – but it's only made possible by all the people before you who did their part to tip the balance. That's what it's like to be a member of this party.

That's what it's like to create political change.

Every Green electoral win comes not just as a result of a single great campaign, but as a result of the hard work of people like you bringing others over to our way of thinking. It is that work that tips the balance.

And the balance is starting to tip well and truly in our favour. Conference we now have a record number of Green councillors and please join me in a round of applause for our newly elected councillors in Peterborough, in Lambeth, in Cannock Chase, in Trafford, in Knowsley, in Richmond upon Thames, in Burnley, Birmingham, Ryegate and Banstead, in Sheffield, Solihull and Worcester.

Small actions can change history.

2018 marks one hundred years after the vote was won for some women. The words of Christabel Pankhurst seem more poignant than ever:

"We are here to claim our right as women, not only to be free, but to fight for freedom. That is our right as well as our duty".

The Government marked this historic milestone by issuing a pardon to all the suffragettes imprisoned and force fed for fighting for their rights.

Then, just eleven days ago, three activists were imprisoned for taking on the destructive fracking industry.

I want to thank them for their fearless principled actions.

I want to thank the Greens up and down the country who have been at the heart of the anti-fracking movement.

And I want to tell the government that, like the suffragettes, these people are the heroes of this story.

That we cannot wait another 100 years before we recognise those on the front line of environmental destruction are freedom fighters not criminals.

That we must ban fracking and must Free the Three.

In the darkness, we need to light candles of hope.

And we must continue to make the case that democracy didn't end on 23rd June 2016. Whether you voted leave or remain, you have a right to still be heard.

We must do whatever we can to stop our country crashing out with no deal

because it's increasingly clear that this Tory Government, would rather wreck our economy and society than trust the people with their own future.

We must bring this question back to the people.

We must build a genuine People's Vote.

In the darkness we need to hold onto what we believe. And after what's been a tough summer for our party I take some inspiration from former President Obama, and I quote:

"The time has come to reaffirm our enduring spirit; to choose our better history; to carry forward that precious gift, that noble idea, passed on from generation to generation: the God-given promise that all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness."

The Green spirit that surges through each of us is enduring.

And as we lay the foundations for a future Green Government, as we stand on the shoulders of the giants that have achieved change before us – whether it be big or small, whether they realise it or not – we reaffirm our belief that tomorrow will be better because of what you, I, all of us – do today.

Thank you conference.

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