

Lucas accuses government of 'ducking' opportunity to take action on environmental protection



22 November 2017

*** 'This could have been a Blue Planet Budget, but instead it's a missed opportunity'**

Caroline Lucas, the Green Party co-leader, has responded to the Budget. Lucas slammed the Government for failing to get to grips with the climate crisis – saying that this 'should have been a Blue Planet Budget' but ministers 'ducked' the opportunity to take action.

She said:

"This should have been the Blue Planet budget, but instead the action we're seeing on environmental protection is little more than a drop in the ocean. While the proposals on plastics are welcome, the Chancellor has ducked the opportunity to take bold action on climate change – the most pressing of all environmental threats. Indeed continued tax breaks for oil & gas and the lack of serious new for solar risk locking us into a fossil fuelled future at the exact moment when we need to be leaving dirty energy sources in the ground. A plastic tax will help – but in the context of warming oceans and rising sea levels it simply isn't enough.

"When it comes to air pollution and transport we're simply not seeing action that's commensurate with the scale of the crisis. We needed a hefty Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) and a fuel duty rise for diesel to take dangerously polluting cars off the road, but instead we saw just a tiny increase in VED for diesel cars – suggesting that the Government simply doesn't understand the threat posed by filthy air.

"The Government's obsession with electric cars isn't a panacea either – especially if they continue to be charged up with electricity from fossil fuelled power plants. Once again the Government has swerved at the chance to lower the cost of public transport for the majority – and ploughed ahead with its obsessive support for private cars.

"This Budget will lock in the pain of years of slashed budgets. Wave after wave of cuts have left our public services stretched to the limit and families up and down the country face poverty this Christmas – there's hardly a scrap of good news in this budget for those with the least. We needed a change in direction from this callous Government, but instead this budget will lock more people in poverty with a continuation of the benefits freeze – and add further pressure on our schools, hospitals and local councils.

"The Government's housing pledge doesn't go near what's needed to solve this

crisis. We needed a specific focus on building social housing, which is genuinely affordable. Instead we have a housing target which could see homes built that people can't afford to live in – and continued inaction on the spiraling rents we're seeing in Brighton and Hove."

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[Renewed challenge to South West MPs to reject 'folly' of Hinkley, as Commons Committee says deal fails to protect consumers](#)



22 November 2017

Green MEP, Molly Scott Cato, has accused government ministers of saddling consumers with higher energy bills because they have had their 'heads stuck in the radioactive sand' over Hinkley.

The accusation comes as MPs on the Commons public accounts committee concluded that the government had failed to protect consumers over the price it has promised to pay for electricity from the new nuclear power station and that the subsidy contract would hit poorest households hardest [1]. The latest negative assessment of Hinkley follows news in September that the drop in costs of off-shore wind power has made it much cheaper than nuclear [2].

Hinkley is expected to cost billpayers £30bn over the 35-year contract, adding £10-£15 to the average household energy bill. The government agreed a price of £92.50 per megawatt hour for electricity generated from Hinkley. Meanwhile, two firms confirmed in September that they can build offshore wind farms for a guaranteed price of £57.50 per megawatt hour.

Molly Scott Cato said:

"The economic illiteracy of this government on energy policy is reconfirmed again. They have had their heads stuck in the radioactive sand on Hinkley and this will cost consumers dear; particularly the poorest in society.

"This tragedy is all so unnecessary. The South West and other parts of the UK are richly endowed with a variety of renewable energy resources, chief amongst them off-shore wind. We can cut both energy bills and carbon

emissions by going all out for renewables.

“On the back of this new evidence I again challenge MPs in the South West to unite against the folly of Hinkley and back a renewable energy revolution. This would be good for consumers; good for jobs and good for the regional economy.”

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[Green councillor found guilty of obstruction after fracking protest](#)



17 November 2017

Green Party councillor Gina Dowding and 11 others have been found guilty of wilful obstruction today following a lock-on at Cuadrilla's Preston New Road fracking site in July [1].

The protesters were found guilty of wilful obstruction of the highway but other charges relating to the Trade Union Act and Labour (Consolidation) Act were dismissed.

Each defendant was each given a 12-month conditional discharge and ordered to pay court costs and victim surcharge totalling £270. There were no fines issued.

Dowding sits on Lancashire County Council. The 12 protesters also included two other independent councillors, Fylde borough councillor Julie Brickles and Kirkham town councillor Miranda Cox.

Dowding said:

“My fellow councillors and I have a mandate to represent the views of our constituents and now we've been criminalised for taking part in a peaceful protest against fracking, which residents are overwhelmingly opposed to. Shale gas is neither needed nor wanted in Lancashire.

“If anyone should have been on trial today it's the Government, for trampling over local democracy and allowing the shale gas industry to impose fracking on our communities.

“In a show of staggering hypocrisy, just this week UK representatives were in Bonn promising to meet our international obligations to prevent climate change, but at the same time offering carte blanche and financial support to

the shale gas industry.

“Allowing Cuadrilla to start fracking in Lancashire is opening up a whole new fossil fuel industry when we should be keeping fossil fuels where they belong – in the ground. Fracking is dirty, dangerous and unnecessary and we should never have been dragged through the courts for taking direct action against such a reckless and harmful industry.”

Notes:

1. <https://reclaimthepower.org.uk/press-releases/release-lancashire-council-lors-and-residents-lock-down-fracking-site/>

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Natalie Bennett to join fracking protest at Kirby Misperton



17 November 2017

Former Green Party leader Natalie Bennett is returning early from the United Nations COP23 climate talks in Bonn on Friday to support the Kirby Misperton protection camp as the struggle against fracking in Yorkshire continues.

She'll be supporting others taking part in what has become known as 'Green Friday' at the site, after last week Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley was dragged away [1] by police while making a speech to the protectors.

Bennett said:

“The isolation of the English position when it came to fossil fuels was glaringly obvious at the Bonn summit. France, Germany, Bulgaria, and of course Wales and Scotland, have all blocked fracking, but the British pavilion at COP was actually advertising the related extreme energy underground coal gasification.

“It is being left to the people of Yorkshire, and Lancashire, where I earlier this month visited the Preston New Road Protection Camp, to deliver the will of the English people not to have fracking. Opinion polls clearly show that they don't want it, and I know from my past visits to fracking sites just how many passing drivers indicate their support.

“The desperation of the industry to resist the will of the people has been demonstrated by the extreme injunction taken out by the firm Ineos that’s now subject to legal appeal. I recently joined a huge gathering in Woodsetts, Rotherham, where the community demonstrated its determination to resist fracking and protect democracy and the right to peaceful protest.

“The Green Party will continue to actively support communities around England who are peacefully rejecting fracking. This is an industry that threatens all of our safety and needs to be stopped.”

Notes:

1. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/green-party-joint-leader-jonathan-bartley-dragged-along-road-by-police-at-yorkshire-fracking-protest-a3688386.html>

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