

Green Party: Defra figures show government is leaving UK exposed to flood risk

28 September 2017

***Deputy leader Amelia Womack visits community group taking action on flooding**

***Party calls for Government focus on natural flood defences**

Responding to new figures [1] showing spending on flood management in England is expected to fall, the Green Party has warned that communities are being left “hopelessly exposed”.

In a visit to a community flood defence scheme in Hebden Bridge [2] Amelia Womack, Green Party deputy leader, also urged the government to “end its fixation with concrete” and invest in more sustainable and natural means of flood management.

Womack said that this means spending money on natural flood defences, sustainable urban drainage schemes, and action on climate change, not just concrete walls. Womack pointed to the work of Green councillors in Stroud who have demonstrated that natural flood defences are cheap, effective and have wide ranging benefits for local habitats and biodiversity.

Amelia Womack, Green Party deputy leader, says:

“Today’s figures show that total spending on flood management will have fallen below 2005 levels by 2020.

“For communities already affected by devastating flooding this news is totally unacceptable. But it also means that many more communities across the country are likely to be put hopelessly at risk.

“The problem this government has is its total fixation with concrete. While that has to play in some elements of flood management it should never be the be-all and end-all. Cheaper, less intrusive, and more environmentally friendly forms of flood management are being trialled across the country. The government needs to sit up and take notice.

“We need a commitment to natural flood management from our Government – empowering local authorities to work with landowners in the uplands of catchment areas. Cheap and ecologically sound methods of natural flood management can slow the flow before reaching settlements in the lowlands, saving homes and lives from the misery of flooding.”

Notes:

1. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/647580/Funding_for_Flood_and_Coastal_Erosion_in_England_Sep_2017.pdf

2. Today Amelia Womack is visiting Treesponsibility – a community group in Hebden Bridge, one of the communities affected by the severe Boxing Day floods of 2015. Since 1998, Treesponsibility has planted an average of over 12 acres of new woodland per year as a form of flood mitigation.

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Green Party leads calls for mediation in Spain



27 September 2017

The Green Party has called on the European Commission to step in and facilitate mediation between the Spanish government and Catalan authorities.

Their call, made in a letter [1] sent by Green Party politicians in the European Union to the Vice-President of the European Commission Frans Timmermans, comes just days before a referendum in Catalonia on independence. In an apparent attempt to prevent the referendum the Spanish government has arrested Catalan officials and stormed the offices of local media outlets.

The Greens/EFA group has also requested that a debate on the situation be held in next week's plenary session of the European Parliament. The decision will be made in the Conference of Presidents tomorrow (September 28).

Ska Keller, co-president of the Greens/EFA group, said:

“There is an urgent need for dialogue between the Spanish and Catalan authorities. The European Commission should promote dialogue and offer to mediate between the actors. It is in the best interests of those on all sides that a political solution is found to end the current deadlock.”

Caroline Lucas MP, co-leader of the Green Party said:

“The clock is ticking in Spain and with every hour that passes the need for

action grows ever stronger. I am proud that Greens in Europe are leading the way towards a resolution and I hope that in the interests of Spain and its people their government listens to calls coming from the EU, sits down, and deals with this in a measured, democratic, and constructive manner.”

Notes:

1. <https://www.greens-efa.eu/files/doc/docs/fe4cf2a7d961b813fd12935622e3d436.pdf>

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Greens welcome reinstatement of protection for huge Amazon reserve



26 September 2017

Green MEP, Molly Scott Cato, has welcomed a decision by the Brazilian government to reinstate a mining ban in the Renca Amazonian nature reserve [1]. In August, President Temer announced that an area the size of Denmark would be opened for exploitation, a decision which led to an international outcry.

Molly Scott Cato strongly condemned the decision at the time and called for the EU Commission to block all imports extracted from Amazonian reserves in Brazil [2]. She has given the decision to restore protective measures for the reserve a cautious welcome:

“Opening up the Amazon for exploitation by large mining companies would be catastrophic for the earth’s climate, for biodiversity and for local indigenous communities, so I am delighted the Brazilian government has responded to international pressure and overturned what would have been a hugely destructive act.

“We need to remain on our guard however. President Temer is a friend of big business and will continue to be lobbied by those who would happily tear up the Amazon for profit. We must match that lobbying, tirelessly repeating the important message that the Amazon is not for sale.”

Notes

[1]

<http://www.dw.com/en/brazil-backs-off-mining-bid-in-amazon-nature-reserve/a-40681274>

[2]

<http://mollymep.org.uk/2017/09/05/eu-must-block-imports-from-amazon-forest-reserve/>

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Caroline Lucas responds to Florence speech



22 September 2017

Caroline Lucas MP, co-leader of the Green Party, has responded to the Prime Minister's Florence speech on Britain's departure from the European Union.

Caroline Lucas said:

"After days of speculation Theresa May's speech was extremely underwhelming. Though she has finally started to face the fact the Britain will need to contribute to EU bill in order to unlock a decent trade deal, she still hasn't been honest about how much we'll need to pay. She should be less afraid of the hardliners in her own cabinet, and more truthful to the British people.

"When it comes to the transition period it is welcome news the Prime Minister finally has recognised this will be needed. But a cliff edge doesn't become less treacherous because it's two years away in the future.

"Continued membership of the single market and freedom of movement will be essential pillars of a successful transition and it's good to see the Government acknowledge this – but the Prime Minister should have laid down a real plan for the long term protection of the rights of EU citizens in Britain, instead of simply offering warm words.

"The Prime Minister also, spectacularly, failed to give any more details about the kind of Brexit she's leading us towards. The noises from some in the cabinet suggest we'll be cast out into the Atlantic begging Trump for a trade deal, while more moderate ministers reject this economic catastrophe.

"Theresa May is, in theory at least, this country's leader – yet like so many

Tory Prime Ministers before her she's hamstrung by a group of ministers with ambitions, all of whom put furthering their views on Europe above the national interest, while at least one seems far more intent on his own prime ministerial aspirations than with standing up for what's best for Britain."

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Green MEP: May must show moral leadership and condemn Spanish PM



21 September 2017

Green Party MEP Molly Scott Cato has called on Theresa May to condemn the actions of the Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy after his government arrested Catalan officials and used police forces to inspect the offices of newspapers and politicians. The move comes as Rajoy stepped up efforts to prevent Catalonia from holding a referendum on independence.

Green Party MEP for the South West Molly Scott Cato said:

"Spain feels like a powder keg ready to go off and it is up to those of us who believe in democracy to claw the Madrid government back from the brink. Theresa May needs to show moral leadership, condemn the unjust actions of Rajoy's government, and call on him to release the Catalan officials he has arrested, pull his troops off Barcelona's streets, and engage in constructive dialogue with the region's politicians. It's ten days until the planned referendum in but it feels like we have just ten hours to save Spanish democracy."

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