

Green Party deputy leader to visit flood project in Stroud

19 September 2017

***Green councillors instrumental in introducing natural flood defences**

***Amelia Womack, Green Party deputy leader: “Successful flood prevention means working with nature, not covering it in concrete”**

Green Party deputy leader Amelia Womack will visit Stroud today where natural flood defences [1] have helped reduce flood risk, 10 years after the severe summer floods of 2007 [2].

Green councillors Simon Pickering and Sarah Lunnon [3] have championed natural flood management and helped introduce the successful Stroud Rural Sustainable Drainage (RSuDS) project [4]. The council is working with farmers and landowners to restore natural drainage and increase water quality and biodiversity around the River Frome.

Womack’s visit is the first of a series across England, where she will highlight the link between flooding and climate change and campaign for investment in natural flood prevention measures.

Amelia Womack, Green Party deputy leader, said:

“Floods are devastating for communities – they destroy our homes and belongings, damage our economy and disrupt our daily lives. Without serious action to tackle climate change, the floods we face every winter are only going to get worse.

“I’m looking forward to visiting Stroud to see all the hard work our Green councillors have done to prevent the needless destruction caused by floods. Successful long-term flood prevention means working with nature, not covering it in concrete. As the Stroud Green Party have demonstrated, with the right approach we can save our communities from floods while helping wildlife and cleaning up our rivers too.

“What Stroud’s councillors have done offer us a blueprint for the future. The only way to create a truly resilient flood management system is to work with the natural world, not against it by building concrete defences. I’d invite any one of our ministers responsible for dealing with the rising threat Britain faces from flooding to visit Stroud and learn from their example.”

Notes:

1. <https://www.stroud.gov.uk/environment/flooding-and-drainage/stroud-rural-sustainable-drainage-rsuds-project/natural-flood-management>
2. <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/who/how/case-studies/summer-2007>

3. Simon Pickering is chair of the Environment Committee on Stroud District Council and Sarah Lunnon is a former Gloucestershire County councillor who now sits on Stroud Town Council.
4. <https://www.stroud.gov.uk/environment/flooding-and-drainage/stroud-rural-sustainable-drainage-rsuds-project>

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Brexit isn't the silver bullet that will end live exports – Keith Taylor MEP



18 September 2017

Keith Taylor MEP, Green Party animals spokesperson, has reiterated his call for an outright ban on live animal exports in response to an investigation by BBC's Victoria Derbyshire programme [1].

Taylor, the vice president of the European Parliament's Welfare Intergroup, joined campaigners from [across the world](#) who came together last week in [opposition to live animal exports](#) [2].

The 'Stop Live Exports' awareness day events were organised by Compassion in World Farming and supported by the RSPCA and other international animal welfare organisations.

Taylor has been a long-term campaigner against live exports and has written an article [3] urging his fellow campaigners not to be 'seduced' by the idea that Brexit will put an end to the cruel industry.

Commenting on the issue, he said:

"Live exports are barbaric and the latest heartbreaking exposé is shocking but, sadly, the practices uncovered are all too common. I continue to stand alongside the passionate and dedicated campaigners across Europe and the world calling for an outright ban on this cruel and unnecessary trade."

"Live exports treat beautiful and sentient animals as 'goods' as if they're no different from a bottle of whiskey or bar of chocolate. Greens want to see it banned outright."

“All this suffering is entirely unnecessary. And, following the tumultuous EU referendum last year, there has been a misplaced buzz of excitement amongst British animal welfare activists that leaving the EU might finally offer an opportunity to ban live exports outright.”

“Let’s not get ahead of ourselves. Brexit is unlikely to be the silver bullet that halts live exports.

“The Government is pursuing an extreme Brexit with Britain outside of the Single Market. Ignoring the disastrous economic consequences and the loss of vital environmental, workers’ rights and even animal welfare protections – if that comes to pass – Britain will become an independent member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).”

“As a member of the WTO, it’s as likely – if not more likely – that live animal exports will increase rather than decrease. The WTO governs the conditions, rules, and regulation of trade between countries and governments. There are currently no grounds to restrict trade, as a member of the WTO, based on animal welfare objections.”

“Other WTO member states, particularly those that profit from live exports, can challenge any proposed UK ban if they see it as a barrier to trade. Complicating this further is that it is entirely down to the UK government to explicitly include animal welfare standards in the language of future Free Trade Agreements (FTA).”

“We, therefore, as passionate, animal-loving Brits, need to continue fighting to strengthen animal welfare standards as members of the EU. We already have the necessary legislative tools at our disposal to help us in the fight – they were a gift from the EU, afforded to us by membership.”

“We are stronger working with our friends and neighbours, and we can – and should – continue to fight as part of the EU with the strength that our membership brings.”

Austria, Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands have all backed the [#StopTheTrucks](#) campaign calling on the European Commission to review and update EU transport regulations and, so far, the campaign’s online petition has garnered the signatures of [over one million EU citizens](#).

Notes:

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-41281570>
2. Keith also recorded a message in support of campaigners: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tfdeGpXvFlk>
3. http://www.theecologist.org/News/news_analysis/2989275/will_brexit_spell_the_end_for_live_animal_exports.html

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Green Party co-leaders to join fracking site protest



18 September 2017

The Green Party's co-leaders will join a protest outside Cuadrilla's fracking site on Preston New Road in Lancashire today.

Caroline Lucas and Jonathan Bartley will speak to protesters at 1.30pm [1].

The visit follows the arrests of Tina Rothery, Green Party life member and 'anti-fracking nana', at the fracking site on September 2 [2] and three other Green Party members who locked themselves together outside the site's entrance on August 30 [3].

Lucas said:

"I'm joining the protests on Monday because it's abundantly clear that fracking is a dirty, destructive industry that will wreck the UK's climate ambitions and leave us dependent on fossil fuels for years to come. We know that the price of renewables is dropping fast, and it's high time that the Government stop their reckless dash for gas and focus on making Britain into a world leader in modern, clean energy from the sun, wind and sea."

Bartley said:

"It's an honour to join activists on the front line of the fight against fracking on Monday. Fracking is dirty, dangerous and expensive. It contaminates local air, water and soil and the community in Lancashire said they didn't want it. Instead of overriding their wishes and destroying our climate commitments in the process by drilling for gas we should be investing in renewable energy for the future."

Notes:

1. Other speakers include Simon Pickering, Green Party councillor and Ecotricity ecologist, and Stephen Hall, Greater Manchester Association of Trades Unions Councils president and Unite the Union Greater Manchester Area Activists Committee chairperson. The fracking site is at Preston New Road, PR4 3PH.
2. <https://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/2017/09/02/green-party-responds-to-a-rest-of-life-member-and-activist-tina-rothery/>
3. <https://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/2017/08/31/green-party-women-take-direction-action-against-fracking-in-lancashire/>

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MEPs vote to ban arms sales to Saudi Arabia while the UK hosts its delegates at the world's largest arms fair



14 September 2017

Today cross-party MEPs voted in favour of a Greens/EFA resolution to place arms embargoes against all countries that fail to uphold international humanitarian law. This includes banning the sale of military equipment to states that abuse human rights. The vote sends a strong message to the European Commission – it's time to take action against irresponsible arms deals [1].

This resolution coincides with the Defence and Security Equipment International Exhibition (DSEI) arms fair in London, which is this week hosting 1,600 exhibitors from 54 countries including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey and Bahrain [2].

Jean Lambert, London's Green MEP, said:

“The world’s largest arms fair is currently underway in my constituency, London. As I write, UK ministers and civil servants are facilitating the sale of weapons to 56 countries, including many with records of using them to commit appalling human rights abuses – Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Bahrain and more.

“However, while the British Government has been busy promoting the global arms trade, Members of the European Parliament today voted in favour of a resolution asking Member States to take responsibility for the dreadful consequences of these deals.

“In an ideal world, we’d stop the sale of weapons altogether. However, if that’s not feasible we are morally and legally obliged to ensure they do as little harm as possible. We need to know where the arms we sell are going, who is using them, and why. If countries fail to uphold international humanitarian law, we should stop providing them with military equipment. If

Member States don't comply with this rule, they must face real consequences.

"It's time for the UK Government to recognise this direction of travel, and shut down the DSEI festival of violence for good. The event sends a clear message to the EU and the rest of the world that the UK is moving backwards – prioritising lucrative arms deals over defending human rights. For as long as this is allowed to continue, innocent people will pay with their lives."

Notes:

1. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20170911IPR83507/eu-arms-export-control-needs-a-face-lift>
2. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/dsei-2017-arms-fair-liam-fox-weapons-exports-defence-industry-protests-minister-saudi-arabia-yemen-a7943301.html>

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Emergency demonstration against deportation of Samim Bigzad



14 September 2017

The Green Party and Kent Anti-Racism Network have organised an emergency demonstration against the deportation of Samim Bigzad outside the Home Office at 5pm today [1].

The party has called the UK government "cruel and callous" and "shameless and undemocratic" after it sent Samim back to his home country Afghanistan yesterday despite the granting of a last minute injunction against his deportation [2]. Samim was at Istanbul airport when the injunction was announced but officials still put him on a plane bound for Kabul. The Green Party is demanding that Samim be returned to the UK and granted leave to stay.

Amelia Womack, Green Party deputy leader, will attend the demonstration. She is expected to say:

"It's a cruel and callous government that's willing to send a man to his death. It's a shameless and undemocratic one that would do so against the wishes of a court of law.

"We won't let them get away with it. We believe that Britain need not be a home to cruelty and division but a place of friendship and solidarity, a place where human life is respected and valued. We will fight this government until the end – until they bring Samim back."

Notes:

1. <https://www.facebook.com/events/421734468221274/>
2. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/samim-bigzad-deport-home-ofice-afghanistan-beheading-kabul-court-order-violate-taliban-a7944491.html>

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