

Caroline Lucas: NAO report on Hinkley is 'damning'



23 June 2017

* Lucas: "Consumers and taxpayers are going to be ripped off by this absurd project"

Caroline Lucas, the co-leader of the Green Party, has responded to a report by the National Audit Office on Hinkley Power Station. The report says that the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy's deal for Hinkley Point C has locked consumers into a 'risky and expensive project' with uncertain strategic and economic benefits.[1]

The multibillion pound project at Hinkley is currently supported by both Labour and the Conservatives, but opposition to the plans is expected to grow as the costs soar.

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

"The National Audit Office's damning report confirms what many of us have been saying for a long time: the Hinkley deal is overpriced and risky. Not only are consumers and taxpayers going to be ripped off by this absurd project but it will also divert resources away from building the clean energy infrastructure we need, and threaten our climate change targets because of the snail's pace at which it will be built.

"The fight against Hinkley isn't over – and we will be joining campaigners in continuing to highlight the major shortcomings of this project. This is a crossroads for Britain – and the signing of this deal has seen us swerve down the wrong path. By reversing this decision we can put the resources needed into building a decentralized energy system where Britain puts to use its most abundant resources: the sun, sea and wind."

[1] Report available from the National Audit Office

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Green Party says government amnesty for Grenfell victims does not go far enough

22 June 2017

The Green Party has welcomed the government's amnesty for undocumented migrants affected by the fire at Grenfell Tower but says the reprieve does not go far enough.

The party says that it has spoken to victims of the fire who are worried that they were in breach of their tenancy and as a result do not want to come forwards to ask for information about missing friends and family.

The discovery may help to explain why the death toll remains so uncertain as it appears some tenants were subletting their flats or had more people living in them than they had officially declared.

The Green Party has called on the government to extend its amnesty for undocumented migrants to survivors who were in breach of their tenancy and any welfare or benefits related claims.

The party has also asked the government to confirm exactly what legal costs they intend to cover for survivors. Cuts to legal aid mean many residents will struggle to get advice and representation on issues like the replacement of lost documents, seeking insurance compensation, and negotiating time off work with employers. Many lawyers have also raised concerns that residents' views will not be fully taken into account in any public inquiry if they cannot get legal advice [1].

In a letter [2] to Sajid Javid, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Co-Leader of the Green Party Caroline Lucas said:

"In the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire, I am hearing reports from volunteers in the community that some survivors are reluctant to officially report friends and family members as missing because they fear the consequences of revealing that eg flats were being sublet or lived in by people not on their tenancy. I hope you will agree with me that knowing the identities of all those who might have been killed is critical and that all necessary assurances should be given to residents of Grenfell Tower that any information they provide will be for reporting purposes only.

"The victims of the fire are already facing enormous personal and practical challenges and do not need any additional worry and stress. This situation is compounded by an ongoing sense that the authorities are not there to help them and I am sure you will agree that the Government needs to work as hard as possible to overcome this impression going forward. I hope you will therefore announce an amnesty for any residents worried that they have might

have breached housing, benefit, or immigration rules."

Notes

The latest estimate suggests 79 people have died in the fire that engulfed Grenfell Tower on 14 June. The Green Party's Sian Berry, Caroline Russell, and Amelia Womack have all visited the tower and helped residents with their concerns and queries.

[1]

<http://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/lawyers-rally-to-help-grenfell-tower-residents-facing-looming-mountain-of-paperwork-a3566356.html>

[2] Full text of the letter:

To Rt Hon Sajid Javid,

In the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire, I am hearing reports from volunteers in the community that some survivors are reluctant to officially report friends and family members as missing because they fear the consequences of revealing that eg flats were being sublet or lived in by people not on their tenancy. I hope you will agree with me that knowing the identities of all those who might have been killed is critical and that all necessary assurances should be given to residents of Grenfell Tower that any information they provide will be for reporting purposes only.

The victims of the fire are already facing enormous personal and practical challenges and do not need any additional worry and stress. This situation is compounded by an ongoing sense that the authorities are not there to help them and I am sure you will agree that the Government needs to work as hard as possible to overcome this impression going forward. I hope you will therefore announce an amnesty for any residents worried that they have might have breached housing, benefit, or immigration rules.

This amnesty should also extend to undocumented migrants who had been living in the tower block, and to private owners who may have known that subletting practices were going on. The latter may hold crucial information on the whereabouts of people missing following the fire.

It's also critical that there is a clear and flexible package of support for individuals who may have cases with government authorities pending and are worried about the impact of eg the loss of documentation. For example, if someone is in the process of claiming asylum and is now unable to provide evidence, there should be an assumption in favour.

I welcome the announcement that there will be state funding to cover the costs of legal representation at the inquiry. In addition to seeking legal advice ahead of the public inquiry, residents will need support on a range of issues including the replacement of documents lost in the fire, how to make insurance claims, and how to negotiate time off work with their employers. Please can you confirm which costs will be met and what support will be put in place to ensure victims are able to fully access the support they need.

I appreciate that this letter touches on matters which are the responsibility of a number of Government departments but trust you will liaise to provide a response as the coordinating Minister. I look forward to a timely reply that can go some way towards providing the victims of the fire with critical assurances about their security and wellbeing.

Yours sincerely,

Caroline Lucas MP

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Green Party's Sian Berry responds to news 600 buildings may have Grenfell cladding



22 June 2017

Responding to the news that 600 buildings in Britain may have the same cladding used at Grenfell [1], the Green Party's Assembly Member for London Sian Berry said:

“I am deeply concerned by the news that so many residents have been making their homes in tower blocks with the same cladding that was on Grenfell Tower.

“I am also extremely worried by just how long it has taken the government to get this information. Surely after a disaster of the kind we saw at Grenfell finding out where else it could occur should have been one of the main priorities? It’s good to finally have an answer and action being taken but the wait was too long and information on fire risks must be dealt with more transparently and clearly in future.

“We also need a cast iron guarantee that any resident who wishes to move out while these necessary works are done is given temporary accommodation, particularly vulnerable residents.”

Ends

Notes:

1. <http://news.sky.com/story/government-tests-on-tower-blocks-reveal-combustible-cladding-10923147>
2. Green Party spokespeople are available for comment.
3. The latest estimate suggests 79 people have died in the fire that engulfed Grenfell Tower on 14 June. The Green Party's Sian Berry, Caroline Russell, Amelia Womack, and Jennifer Nadel have all visited the tower and helped residents with their concerns and queries.

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Green Party response to news of cyanide poisoning at Grenfell



22 June 2017

Responding to the news that residents of Grenfell may have been poisoned by hydrogen cyanide during the fire last Wednesday [1], Jennifer Nadel, the Green Party's candidate for Kensington in the recent general election, said:

“If this is shown to be true it’s yet another example of how the people at Grenfell were treated like second class citizens. What upsets and infuriates me in equal measure about this is that immediately after the fire our party contacted the council to ask what they had done to monitor air pollution in and around the tower after the blaze had taken hold. We were assured that there was little or no risk from dangerous air pollution.

“We need the council and the government to start being straight with us. We need them to swiftly carry out a full inspection to establish what damage survivors and those living close to the tower may have suffered from toxic air from the fire and then issue advice on the health care people should be seeking if it is deemed necessary. And we need them to ensure that monitoring of air pollution around the tower is now taking place and action will be taking if that monitoring gives us cause for alarm.”

Ends

Notes:

2. Green Party spokespeople are available for comment.
3. The latest estimate suggests 79 people have died in the fire that engulfed Grenfell Tower on 14 June. The Green Party's Sian Berry, Caroline Russell, Amelia Womack, and Jennifer Nadel have all visited the tower and helped residents with their concerns and queries.

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Caroline Lucas: A shell of a Queen's speech from a hollowed out Government



21 June 2017

***Lucas says failing to take meaningful action on climate is a 'near-criminal act of political vandalism'**

***Lucas:"The overall picture is one of a Government which has run out of steam, and a Prime Minister who has lost authority"**

Caroline Lucas, the co-leader of the Green Party, has slammed the 'hollowed out' Government's 'stunning lack of ambition' in their Queen's speech today.

In a Queen's Speech dominated by Brexit the Government failed to propose any meaningful plan on tackling climate change, refused to end the NHS pay cap and proposed a clampdown on migration.

Caroline Lucas has tabled two amendments to the Queen's Speech. The first calls for an Environmental Protection Act to strengthen green laws in the Brexit process, and the second seeks to immediately protect EU Nationals' rights.

Responding to the Queen's Speech, Lucas said:

"This hollowed out Government has produced a stunningly unambitious Queen's speech at a time when Britain desperately needs a change of direction. Failing to propose any meaningful plans to tackle climate change is a near-criminal act of political vandalism, and refusing to give our hard pressed NHS workers the pay rise they deserve reveals a Government utterly out of touch. The proposed immigration clampdown sees an increasingly hardline Government doubling down on plans they know will wreck our economy.

"Though climate-deniers in the DUP might be celebrating this Queen's Speech, it simply isn't a serious programme of Government. This speech should have included an Environmental Protection Act and a guarantee for EU Nationals that their rights would be protected, but these basic Brexit laws were nowhere to be seen.

"While some proposals in the Queen's speech deserve praise – in particular plans to help people suffering from mental health problems – the overall picture is one of a Government which has run out of steam, and a Prime Minister who has lost authority."

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