[Green Party Animal spokesperson welcomes vote to #EndTheCageAge for caged rabbits](#)

14 March 2017

Keith Taylor MEP: "This is great news for millions of rabbits across Europe and a great example of how the EU can take a lead on animal welfare. Greens have always opposed factory farming and I wholeheartedly welcome the result of today's vote."

Green Party Animals spokesperson Keith Taylor MEP is welcoming the vote to #EndTheCageAge for farmed rabbits across Europe. The MEP for the South East was among a majority of MEPs who voted to support a report calling for the practice to be outlawed at the European Parliament plenary session in [Strasbourg this afternoon](#). More than 4,000 people across the South East had contacted their MEPs calling for action.

Rabbits are the fourth most farmed animal in the world. An estimated 340 million rabbits are slaughtered annually after a life kept in barren wire cages where their natural behaviour is severely restricted. Many scientists have called for the cage system to be urgently replaced by one which allows for the natural needs of rabbits to be better taken into account.

The report adopted by MEPs calls for higher welfare standards for rabbits and concrete legislation that would ban the use of cages. Responding to the result, Keith said:

"This is great news for millions of rabbits across Europe and a great example of how the EU can take a lead on animal welfare. Greens have always opposed factory farming and as the Green Party's Animals spokesperson I wholeheartedly welcome the result of today's vote. The report prioritises putting an end to the inhumane conditions in which rabbits are kept and eradicating the other problems associated intensive rabbit rearing. The current system leads to the spread of disease and the subsequent overuse of antibiotics."

"Rabbit farming is relatively small-scale in the UK, but the fact that the European Parliament has voted to end the cage age serves to highlight the key role EU membership has played and continues to play in raising the welfare of millions of farm animals in Britain and across the EU."

"The closer the relationship the UK maintains with the EU, retaining animal welfare and wildlife protections through single market membership, the better the outcome for British animals. Animal advocates across the UK must continue lobbying the UK government to ensure the current legal protections, for all species, offered by European Union membership are maintained and

strengthened."

[Emergency intervention needed to steer Britain from the brink](#)

7 March 2017

The Green Party is calling for 'an emergency intervention' to steer Britain away from the brink of the crisis in the NHS and social care, and to clampdown on air pollution which is estimate to end 40,000 lives prematurely every year.

The Greens are also calling for the Government to protect small firms from the business rate hike, raise tax for the richest, stop corporation tax cuts and reverse a planned tax hike on solar panels.

The five demands [1] from the Green Party are:

1)   An emergency aid package to protect health and social care services

2)   Toughest ever action on air pollution

3)   Protection of small firms from Business Rate hikes

4)   Ensuring the richest people and biggest corporations pay more tax

5)   Reversing the [solar tax hike](#)

Jonathan Bartley said:

"This budget must be an emergency intervention to steer Britain away from the brink of multiple crises.

"After years of privatisation and underinvestment the future of the health service now hangs in the balance, and social care services are at risk of collapsing. If the Government is serious about working on behalf of the majority of people in this country then they will unveil an emergency aid package to protect health and social care services. We know that funding a world class healthcare service will cost more, which is why the Government should reverse their planned cuts to corporation tax and their tax giveaway

to high earners. Failing to properly fund health and social care would be a dereliction of duty from this Government – and would leave any claim they had to be standing up for working people in tatters."

Caroline Lucas MP said:

"There is an air pollution emergency happening in Britain – and the Government has to act now to tackle it. The Chancellor should immediately raise vehicle excise duty on new diesel cars, to send a signal to the market that this fuel must be phased out. The freeze on the fuel duty escalator should also end – thus freeing up billions of pounds which the Government should plough into public transport, walking and cycling. In recent years the cost of motoring has dropped considerably while the price of catching the bus or train has skyrocketed – if we're serious about reducing the amount of toxic fumes in our air we've got to shift people out of cars and onto affordable public alternatives.

"The Chancellor must also use this budget to get a proper grip on Britain's climate policy. At a very bare minimum that must mean reversing the solar tax hike that's set to hit community groups and schools – and it must mean more support for onshore wind too."

ENDS

[1] A Green Budget would include:

1)   An emergency aid package to protect health and social care services.

This means an additional £30bn per year on the NHS by 2020 (as estimated by [NHS England](#)) + at least £2.6bn to cover the social care [shortfall](#).

2)   The toughest ever action on air pollution.

VED of £800 on new diesel (would raise 500m per year)

Unfreeze the fuel duty escalator (£9bn per year by 2020)

3)   Protect small firms from the unfair business rate hike.

We are calling for an extension of Small Business Rate Relief for small businesses, including increasing the threshold for 100% relief to £15,000, tapering to at least £18,000.

4)   Ensuring the richest people and biggest corporations pay more tax

New taxes:

Top rate 60% income tax would raise 2.3bn

Robin Hood Tax could raise up to £2bn

Wealth tax could raise up to £25bn

+

Reverse the Corporation tax cut for larger firms — and raise level to 30% for big companies (G7 average is 32.3%): Would raise £12.5bn by 2020

Reverse the high rate tax change thus raising £600m by 2020.

Reverse the reduction in capital gains thus raising £670m by 2020.

5)   Reverse the solar tax hike

The changes to Business Rates from 1 April (see above) may lead to a six to eightfold increase in the Rateable Value on solar photovoltaics (PV) installed for self-generation. According to the Solar Trade Association, this may make installing and running solar PV economically unfeasible for thousands of businesses and organisations across the UK — indeed, some businesses with panels already installed may be forced to remove them.

Given the urgent need to decarbonise our economy and the important role that solar must play in that, this would be a worrying and deeply regressive development. It would further undermine the confidence of the business and investor community. At a time when the Government is considering its new Emissions Reduction Plan and a new industrial strategy, this move would send all the wrong signals.

As well as affecting businesses, the tax increase will also affect schools and community groups. It seems particularly unfair that the increase will affect state schools who have installed solar panels but not private schools, who are exempt due to their charitable status.

This indiscriminate and disproportionate tax increase comes at a time when solar continues to outperform all expectations. This year, the UK saw an estimated 6,964 gigawatt hours (GWh) generated by solar over the summer period: 5.4% of the UK's electricity demand. Indeed, solar power generated more electricity than coal in the six months running up to the end of September. On top of this success, a recent report by Aurora Energy Research found that the cost of integrating solar — set to be the cheapest form of electricity generation by the mid-2020s — into the national grid is "negligible".

To reverse this solar tax hike, the Green Party calls on the chancellor to extend the exemption on small-scale (less than 50KW) solar installations.

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[Looming Brexit bill defeat in the House of Lords highlights importance of 'Dublin Case'](#)

7 March 2017

Keith Taylor MEP: 'The ability to revoke Article 50 means that no option is off the table, including the option to remain in the EU if MPs, and the people they represent, believe the exit deal is not in Britain's best interests.'

Keith Taylor, Green MEP for the South East, is highlighting the importance of the so-called 'Dublin Case' as the Government looks set for [another Brexit bill defeat](#) by the House of Lords today on giving Parliament a meaningful vote on the terms of leaving the European Union.

The amendment likely to be passed by the Lords rejects Theresa May's plan to present MPs with a Hobson's choice: accept the Government's exit deal or crash out of the European Union without any deal. Instead, cross-party Lords are demanding MPs be given the ability to reject whatever deal Number 10 strikes with Brussels without the UK having to leave with no deal at all; a 'meaningful vote'.

The so-called '[Dublin case](#)' seeks legal clarity over the question of whether, once triggered, the UK can [unilaterally revoke Article 50](#). Mr Taylor is one of three Green politicians acting as a plaintiff in the case. Other plaintiffs include Green Party England and Wales Co-leader Jonathan Bartley, Green Party Northern Ireland Leader and [recently re-elected](#) MLA Steven Agnew and Director of the Good Law Project Jolyon Maugham QC.

Keith said:

"Today's looming defeat of the government by the House of Lords is entirely sensible and welcome. And it begs the same question that the Dublin Case seeks an answer to: can the UK unilaterally revoke Article 50 once it's been triggered?"

"Without an answer to the question, it is difficult to see how our sovereign Parliament can be given any hope of a meaningful vote. The ability to revoke Article 50 means that no option is off the table, including the option to remain in the EU if MPs, and the people they represent, believe the exit deal is not in Britain's best interests."

"As Greens, we are clear on the need for a ratification referendum at the end of the two-year negotiation process. The EU referendum should have been the start of a democratic process, not the end. The [people must have the final say](#) on the deal negotiated on their behalf."

"If 'taking back control' is to mean anything, it should mean we have a right to think again and change our minds when we see what Brexit really means as opposed to what we were told it meant during the referendum."

Green Party: Grammar school expansion is height of evidence-free policymaking

7 March 2017

* Jonathan Bartley: "Theresa May should be getting rid of current grammar schools – not paving the way for new ones."

The Green Party has accused the Government of "evidence-free policymaking" after the announcement that the budget will pave the way for new grammar schools.

Research from the Sutton Trust has found selective schools benefit those who are already advantaged the most, while failing to serve the needs of those who most need support. [2]

Jonathan Bartley, co-leader of the Green Party, said:

"This is the height of evidence-free policymaking that we know will entrench inequality in an already divided society.

"If Theresa May was serious about making sure every child has a good school place she would be getting rid of current grammar schools – not paving the way for new ones.

"The evidence shows grammars benefit the already advantaged and fail those who need the most help. Instead of ploughing money into selective education the Prime Minister should be investing in our state schools and creating far more places than this scheme will provide.

"We need education policy that gives every single child the best education possible – not just those whose family can afford a tutor."

Notes:

1. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-39183815
2. http://www.suttontrust.com/researcharchive/poor-grammar-entry-grammar-schools-disadvantaged-pupils-england/

[Grenville Ham to take on Wales Green Party leadership as Alice Hooker-Stroud steps down](#)

![x]

6 March 2017

Leader of the Wales Green Party Alice Hooker-Stroud today announced that she will be stepping down at the end of March. Grenville Ham, current deputy leader and expert in renewable energy, will take over.

Grenville Ham, said:

"I want to thank Alice for all her contributions to the Wales Green Party, and to build on this movement which genuinely represents the best interests of Welsh people, rather than one that panders to big business. I look forward to continuing the Wales Green Party's work of creating a society where people are more important than profit".

Talking about next steps for the Wales Green Party, Ham added: "It will be an immense privilege to lead the party into the Council elections in May. My priority will be to support all of the hardworking Wales Green Party candidates who offer their communities the chance to vote for fresh ideas and a positive future. I will be standing myself in Brecon, and I'm already seeing local people recognise that in order to get a meaningful change they can't keep voting for the same old parties".

Hooker-Stroud, who has led the Wales Green Party since the beginning of 2016, said in a statement today that the lack of funding for smaller parties in the UK has contributed to her position being untenable.

Hooker-Stroud said:

"I love Wales and I feel honoured to have represented the Wales Green Party's vision on behalf of our members. Though the decision to step down was not easy, it was made easier by the fact I knew I would be handing over to

Grenville, a committed, skilled, and experienced member of the Wales Green Party who will take us forward with confidence to the elections in May.

Speaking of her reasons for stepping down, Hooker-Stroud said:

"As a party that cares about who lines our pockets, we don't take funds from big business donors like other parties do. That means our members have the biggest say – not corporate lobbyists, but it has contributed to my role being effectively a voluntary one, which for me has sadly become untenable. I am proud that every person in our party has an equal say, and proud that when I speak on behalf of the party, that I know I speak on behalf of our members. However, the financing of political parties in general needs urgent reform so that politicians aren't just the mouthpieces for big business, and so that alternative voices are heard."

Hooker-Stroud added: "Parties that have a lot of money can do a lot, and those who have a smaller amount can do less. That is how contemporary politics works. We need to level the playing field financially for political parties in Wales, and in the UK. It would be a much fairer country all round for everyone."

Notes

[1] The Wales Green Party campaigns to make politics fairer, which includes fairer finances for political parties. The party call for a cap on large donations that mean wealthy individuals and organisations have a huge influence on politics, and for state funding to be available to parties who achieve more than 3% of a proportional national vote. Other countries, such as Sweden already give state funding to political parties to level the financial playing field.

[2] Ham was elected as a deputy leader in December in 2016. He gained over 50% of the Wales Green Party membership vote against two other candidates. He ran as a candidate on the regional list for Mid and West Wales in the Welsh Assembly elections last year and is currently standing in this May's council elections in his own ward, St Mary's in Brecon. He runs a not-for-profit engineering company in Powys and has been awarded the British Empire Medal for 'Services to the Renewable Energy in Wales'.

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