

[Greens denounce Ministers' pandering to industry lobbyists on plastic pollution](#)



18 February 2017

Keith Taylor MEP: 'These latest revelations expose the Government's shameful decision to kowtow to industry lobbyists and roll back important recycling progress.'

Keith Taylor, Green MEP for the South East, has issued a stinging criticism of government Ministers as documents reveal the [influence of plastics industry lobbying](#) on the decision to cut UK recycling targets. The revelations come as the latest 'Great Winter Nurdle Hunt' uncovers [widespread plastic pollution](#) on Britain's beaches.

The UK government quietly reduced recycling targets for plastic waste last year, after dozens of lobby groups and plastic producers pushed for lower rates, according to documents obtained by Energydesk.

Energydesk obtained 62 of the 63 responses to a government consultation on recycling targets.

The majority of respondents to the consultation were plastic producers or industry groups. Of those, all pushed for a reduction in the targets.

Keith, a member of the European Parliament's Environment Committee, said:

"Plastic pollution is choking our oceans and our beaches, but the documents obtained this week demonstrate the UK Government appears more concerned with protecting the profit margins of multinational corporations and industry lobbyists than safeguarding Britain's natural environment."

"It is extremely concerning that almost three-quarters of UK beaches are blighted by the raw materials of the plastic industry. These plastic pellets pose a significant threat to our precious wildlife and damage the health of our oceans and seas."

"These latest revelations expose the Government's shameful decision to kowtow to industry lobbyists and roll back important recycling progress. Far from being a party working for the many, the Conservatives prove, once again, they are the party of powerful and privileged vested interests."

"We cannot let the Government use the EU referendum as an excuse further water down essential recycling targets. The [EU Circular Economy Package](#) sets an ambitious and common EU-wide target for recycling 75% of packaging waste by 2030. Ministers must make a firm commitment to maintaining and implementing these ambitious targets post-Brexit."

“Plastic pollution does not respect borders nor national sovereignty. For the sake of the health of our oceans and our beaches, to protect our precious environment and our beloved wildlife, Theresa May must also commit to maintaining a close relationship with our European neighbours to combat the problem.”

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[Green Party condemns UKIP proposal to spend foreign aid cash on NHS](#)



17 February 2017

***Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader: “There’s nothing anti-establishment about scrapping help for those in need”**

The Green Party has responded to UKIP leader Paul Nuttall’s plan to divert foreign aid spending to the NHS, which he raised during a speech at UKIP’s spring conference in Bolton.

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

“There’s no denying the NHS is in crisis but snatching money away from poorer countries is not the answer. There’s nothing anti-establishment about scrapping help for those in need.

“Nuttall is trying to pretend this is a silver bullet solution but we need to be honest – there’s a simple way to ease the pressure on our overburdened NHS and that’s to make the richest pay more tax. Our foreign aid spending is crucial to help stamp out inequalities around the world. A solution that simply creates another problem elsewhere is no solution at all.”

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[Green Party: List of employers named and shamed for underpaying workers is just the tip of the iceberg](#)



16 February 2017

The Green Party is appalled by the revelation 360 employers underpaid thousands of workers almost £1 million [1] but believes it is just the tip of the iceberg as the Government process for naming and shaming employers is extremely flawed [2].

The current system means that large, profitable companies are only being named and paying penalties for a small part of all the arrears identified by HMRC [3].

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

“Employers must be held to account if they fail to pay their workers properly. It might seem like an insignificant amount of money to the businesses but to the individual workers who need it to pay their rent or buy food it has a huge impact. In this age of insecurity everyone deserves to be able to make a living to support themselves and their families.

“It’s absolutely right these employers are being named and shamed but the Government needs to make sure this is not the only action it takes to prevent the exploitation of workers. There is still a lack of transparency in the process as errors that are self-corrected by businesses are not included in the list. It means most of the back payments remain a secret and the public might never find out the true scale of the problem.

“The Green Party believes the introduction of a minimum wage of £10 by 2020 is a necessary step towards tackling inequality and poverty and we have long campaigned for the minimum wage to be raised to the living wage level.”

Notes:

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-38979368>
2. <https://www.carolinelucas.com/latest/minimum-wage-enforcement-ministers-making-a-mockery-of-%E2%80%98naming-shaming%E2%80%99-scheme>
3. For example, if two workers owed £500 each bring a complaint, HMRC will investigate and decide the employer owes total of £1,000. The employer will be named and shamed for that amount and pay a penalty of £2,000. However, if the employer reveals it actually has 200 workers in the same position and HMRC agrees, HMRC will allow the employer to self-correct in those 200 cases. But the employer does not get named and shamed for this £100,000 error and no penalty is imposed – because the employer self-corrected.

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[Keith Taylor MEP: European Commission 'final warning' reveals the need for a new UK Clean Air Act](#)



15 February 2017

Keith Taylor MEP: 'The government has been exposed, yet again, as failing in its duty to take even the most basic action to combat an air pollution crisis that needlessly claims the lives of more than 50,000 people in Britain every year.'

Keith Taylor, Green MEP for the South East, has slammed the Government's 'repeated failures' on air pollution as the European Commission issues a '[final warning](#)' to the UK over air quality breaches.

The European Commission has sent a "final warning" to the UK for failing to address repeated breaches of legal air pollution limits in 16 areas including London, Birmingham, Leeds, and Glasgow.

The notice is being served just 24 hours after a [new poll](#) revealed 58% of Britons believe air pollution levels across the UK are damaging to their health while 65% support ClientEarth's campaign for a new Clean Air Act.

Keith, a vocal air quality campaigner and a member of the European Parliament's Environment committee, said:

"The government has been exposed, yet again, as failing in its duty to take even the most basic action to combat an air pollution crisis that needlessly claims the lives of more than [50,000 people in Britain every year](#). It's no surprise that two-thirds of the public want the Prime Minister to do more to combat the toxic air they are forced to breathe."

"The failure highlighted by the European Commission is as much moral as it is legal; Ministers have displayed an extremely concerning attitude of indifference towards their duty to safeguard the health of British citizens."

"That the European Commission is having to hold to account this government for a public health crisis that costs the British public more than [£20bn a year](#) is a shameful indictment of the Conservatives' irresponsible and deadly

apathy.”

“Theresa May’s administration is failing to do the bare minimum, as required by EU laws the UK itself helped to set, to improve the quality of the air we all breathe. The bare minimum. Where embraced and enforced, EU air pollution limits are helping to [prevent thousands of deaths every year](#) and saving [billions of pounds in direct health costs](#). This government readily acknowledges that it is EU law that has been the [driver of positive air quality action](#) in the UK. But the Prime Minister’s plans for an extreme Brexit puts those vital EU safeguards at risk.”

“The government must finally face up to its moral and legal responsibility for tackling Britain’s air quality crisis. Ministers must now be forced to make a firm commitment to abiding by and fully implementing EU air quality laws. Theresa May must also make a new Clean Air Act a means to maintain and strengthen these vital protections as Britain prepares to leave the EU.”

Keith is a co-signatory of a motion which will be presented at the Greens’ Spring Conference in Liverpool which calls on the Party to formally back ClientEarth’s Clean Air Act proposal.

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[Greens warn Brexit is no escape from toxic trade deals as CETA gets the green-light](#)



15 February 2017

Keith Taylor MEP: ‘CETA is a bad deal for the people of Britain, Europe, and even Canada, but a great deal for multinational corporations keen to escape the democratic oversight of national parliaments.’

Jean Lambert MEP: ‘To believe that CETA will bring more and better jobs to those who need them is pure wishful thinking.’

Molly Scott Cato MEP: ‘Conservatives in the European and UK Parliaments have been the biggest cheerleaders for CETA, and they are hoping the deal will still apply to Britain post-Brexit, and, most concerningly, the Minister for Trade, Liam Fox, has even put CETA forward as a model for future UK trade deals.’

Green MEPs are warning that Brexit will not free the UK from toxic trade deals as the European Parliament votes to [green-light CETA](#), the controversial EU-Canada trade deal.

The deal, which has been long opposed by trade justice campaigners, trade unions, European Green Parties and millions of citizens in the EU and Canada, was voted through by a majority of MEPs during a plenary session in Strasbourg today.

Greens/EFA MEPs were among the only UK representatives to vote against the deal. Conservative and Lib Dem MEPs are expected to have voted to support CETA* with a number of Labour MEPs expected to have joined them* despite pressure from [trade unions](#), the [Shadow Minister for International Trade](#), and even the Party's own [Head of Trade Policy](#).

Opposition to CETA has focused primarily on the provision to allow multinational corporations to sue democratically elected governments in ['extrajudicial' and 'secretive' courts](#) if they feel their financial interests are threatened by any policies enacted by those governments.

Greens have also argued that the trade deal will be bad for workers' rights, climate action, animal welfare, and chemical and product safety.

Keith Taylor, Green MEP for the South East and a member of the European Parliament's Environment committee, said:

"CETA is a bad deal for the people of Britain, Europe, and even Canada, but a great deal for multinational corporations keen to escape the democratic oversight of national parliaments. It is little wonder that it is citizens across Europe and in North America that are the loudest and more determined opponents of this toxic trade deal."

"Canada has a long track record of taking legal action against European countries' environmental laws and is fundamentally opposed to high chemical and pesticide safety legislation. Canada is also home to more than half of the world's mining companies and pursues an active policy of exporting fuels derived from highly polluting tar sands. In that context, it is extremely worrying that CETA's 'commitments' on environmental standards remain unenforceable. Greens will continue to oppose any agreements that lock us into fossil fuel dependence and damage our climate goals."

Jean Lambert, Green MEP for London and a member of the European Parliament's Employment and Social Affairs committee, said:

"To believe that CETA will bring more and better jobs to those who need them is pure wishful thinking. Research shows this proposed trade agreement is more likely to continue widening the gap between low and high-paid workers and offers no safeguards for existing labour standards. Many trade unions oppose CETA and so did the European Parliament's Employment Committee, of which I'm a member. We need to invest in quality jobs, not widening the gaps."

“There are many other problems too, which is why Green MEPs highlighted [12 Reasons to oppose CETA](#), and why we voted against it today in the European Parliament. It’s extremely regrettable that a majority of MEPs didn’t heed our concerns, and have instead today voted for CETA to go ahead. It’s now up to national parliaments across Europe to take action to block this damaging deal.”

Molly Scott Cato, Green MEP for the South West and the Green Party’s Brexit Spokesperson, drew attention to divisions within Labour, an issue she highlighted in a News Statesman [article today](#). She said

“With trade, as with Brexit, Labour are exposing how weak they are as an opposition. The Party is hopelessly split between backing the citizens of Europe and caving into corporate power.

“Their long-time Trade coordinator in the European Parliament, David Martin, has been a forceful supporter of CETA and has strenuously opposed the Greens for their opposition to the anti-democratic aspects of this treaty. No wonder their shadow trade minister can only persuade half his MPs to vote against this toxic deal.”

“The weakness of socialists across Europe to protect citizens against the worst aspects of corporate globalisation is driving people towards the forces of the Right, thereby fanning the flames of fascism.”

Conservative MEP Charles Tannock reiterated during the debate in Strasbourg that the UK Government sees CETA as a model for future UK trade deals. Molly continued:

“Conservatives in the European and UK Parliaments have been the biggest cheerleaders for CETA, and they are hoping the deal will still apply to Britain post-Brexit, and, most concerningly, the Minister for Trade, Liam Fox, has even put CETA forward as a model for future UK trade deals. It is clear that Brexit will not free Britain from toxic trade deals.”

Notes

* Roll call vote results are yet to be published.

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