

Greens release air pollution challenge as Government unveils plan



5 May 2017

***Green plan includes a fine on cheating companies, a new Clean Air Act, and increased air pollution monitoring**

The Green Party today unveiled an 'air pollution challenge' ahead of the Government releasing its own plans to tackle the high levels of toxins in the air. Party co-leader, Caroline Lucas, was in Bristol to highlight what she calls a 'catastrophic failure' by a Government 'trying its best to shirk its responsibilities on air pollution'.

Lucas said that any air quality plan which fails her party's 'checklist' isn't 'worthy of the name'. She said:

"Any air quality plan which fails this test isn't worthy of the name. We've seen catastrophic failure on air pollution from a Government trying it's best to shirk its responsibilities. It's astonishing that today's plan had to be dragged out of the Government – as ministers tried their best to use the election as cover for their continuing refusal to take action.

"The Green Party's air pollution plan would tackle this emergency – and force car companies to pay their way for the damage they have done to people's health. Half measures are not good enough when 40,000 premature deaths are linked to air pollution every year – we need bold action now.

"Through a clean air act we would enshrine the right to breathe in the law – and ensure that Britain becomes a world leader in new technologies which help us clean up our air. The Government must also plough resources into decent public transport – reversing years of underinvestment and skyrocketing fare prices."

Lucas' intervention comes after it was revealed that the cost of public transport has skyrocketed in recent years, while motoring has become cheaper. According to the Government the cost of motoring has dropped 20% in the last 26 years, while the cost of travel by train and bus is up over 60%.

Real terms changes in the cost of travel:

Real terms change in cost of transport	Motoring, including the purchase of a vehicle	Bus and coach fares	Rail fares
(1) Between 1980 and 2016	-20%	+64%	+63%
(2) Between 1997 and 2016	-16%	+33%	+23%
(3) Between 2010 and 2016	-10%	+7%	+5%
(4) Between 2015 and 2016	-0.3%	+2%	-1%

Lucas will be joined by children at Fairfield School in Bristol to unveil her party's air pollution plans.

THE GREEN PARTY'S AIR QUALITY PLAN CHECKLIST

Over the last two years, the Government has lost two UK court cases about its plans to tackle the key pollutant nitrogen dioxide – NO₂. As it stands, a total of 37 out of 43 regions of the UK are in breach of legal limits for NO₂, and, according to the Royal College of Physicians, air pollution is associated with 40,000 early deaths each year, and the annual costs to the health service and society are more than £20bn.

In November 2016, the High Court ordered the Government to publish a draft new clean air plan to tackle NO₂ by 24 April with a final plan by 31 July. The Government attempted to delay the publication of that plan (again) after calling the General Election, citing Purdah rules. That application was rejected by the High Court last week.

The Government will publish its plan today, but leaks suggest it will not go anywhere near as far as it needs to.

Here is what a comprehensive Air Quality Plan should include.

Clean Air Act: It should rapidly introduce a new Clean Air Act to tackle the sources of modern day air pollution that are harming people's health, enshrine the right to breathe into UK law, and ensure the UK becomes a world leader in the new technologies and industries that will help us clean up our air.

Expand 'Clean Air Zones': It should expand and strengthen the network of Clean Air Zones across the country – limiting the most polluting vehicles, including cars, from entering air pollution hot-spots – creating funding for local authorities to invest in walking, cycling and clean public transport. These should be strong enough to ensure legal compliance on NO₂ by the end of 2018.

Increase VED: It should increase the first year Vehicle Excise Duty on new diesel vehicles (except vans) by around £800, to reflect the additional cost to society of dirty diesel engines, [raising £500m](#) to help fund a targeted diesel scrappage scheme.

Diesel Scrappage: It should introduce a targeted diesel scrappage scheme to take diesel vehicles off the road as soon as possible, and ensure that all those who live within Clean Air Zones can affordably replace polluting diesel vehicles. As well as offering replacement clean vehicles, these schemes should also offer alternatives such as car club membership and rail season tickets.

Note: Despite a \$10bn vehicle replacement programme in the United States, VW has only embarked upon an opaque programme of 'technical fixes' on its 1.2 million vehicles in the UK. The Greens, working through UK regulators, would

ensure that VW and others offer free vehicle replacement or retrofitting – as has happened in the United States.

Fine the Cheats: It should set out a plan for how companies who cheated emissions testing would be fined. Despite a \$14.7bn settlement in the US, Volkswagen, for example, has yet to pay any damages in the EU – an equivalent fine in the UK could raise more than £8 billion from VW alone.

Independent Regulation: It should guarantee the independence of the Vehicle Certification Agency – changing the way it is funded ensuring that the car industry doesn't have [a disproportionate influence](#) on its activities.

Monitor Pollution Hotspots: It should ensure there is a comprehensive network of air monitoring stations in pollution hotspots – ensuring that air quality is monitored around hospitals, health clinics, and schools, so that those who are most vulnerable to the impacts of air pollution, notably children, the elderly and infirm, are protected.

Active Transport: It should undertake a national review of transport system with serious investment in buses, trams and trains along with safe routes for walking and cycling. People need an alternative to car use and we must protect our towns, cities and countryside from the pollution and congestion that comes with new roads.

Clean Energy: It should scale-up investment in renewable energy – which, as it stands, is set to drop by 95% over next two years. Harnessing the clean energy that we have in abundance would be a win-win, both for tackling climate change and air pollution.

Ditch Coal: It should should bring forward the coal phaseout date to 2023 at the least, and gradually end the [£6bn a year subsidies](#) in the UK to dirty energy. Pollution from the UK's coal-fired fleet causes roughly [2,900 premature deaths](#) a year.

HOW SHOULD THIS BE FUNDED?

There are no cheap fixes when it comes to cleaning up the air we breathe: the long term solution is to completely change the way we travel to reduce the traffic on our roads. Further, any action we take now will relieve pressure on our health services in the future, and reduce the £20bn cost of dirty air – as calculated by the Royal College of Physicians. As note above, the Air Quality Plan should ensure that car companies who cheated emissions are appropriately fined, and that such levies are used to fund action on air quality. UK regulators – namely, the Competition and Markets Authority, the Vehicle Certification Agency, and the Serious Fraud Office – should force car manufacturers in the UK to replace or retrofit polluting diesel vehicles.

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Greens take second place in Isle of Wight



5 May 2017

The Green Party is celebrating becoming the second party on the Isle of Wight coming second to the Conservatives on vote share.

Jonathan Bartley, co-leader of the Green Party, will be on the island this afternoon [1] to celebrate the party's first councillor on the island – Michael Lilley.

The Green Party's total vote of 5,607 is a huge increase on 2013 when the party stood in one ward and got 297 votes. This time Greens left Labour in second place on 4,134 votes with the Lib Dems in third with 2,783. [2]

The combined Green, Labour, Liberal, Independent vote was more than 50%, from a turn-out of about 40%.

It's been a good night for the Greens nationwide with net gains of +7 nationwide including in Wales and first seats in the Isle of Wight and Orkney.

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

"There are still lots of results to come but so far these results look good for the Green Party. We're offering people a real alternative to business-as-usual politics.

"Across the country Greens have gained seats – with first seats in Orkney and the Isle of Wight, and a first win in Wales. People who believe things can change for the better, and that the next generation must be defined by fairness, not foodbanks, are choosing to back politicians they can trust.

"It's clear the Greens are challenging the Tory reign in the Isle of Wight – and are set to run our boldest ever General Election campaign in the coming weeks. "

Notes:

Isle of Wight stats:

- GREEN GAIN UKIP LOSS (+1/-1)
- Greens win first seat on Council (Ryde East, Michael Lilley)
- Greens came second to Conservatives in a significant 14/24 wards – the remainder second places were independent (loss of council control). No Labour second places where Greens stood.

- Greens beat Labour in 14 wards. Labour beat Greens in only 2.
- Greens total vote greater than both Labour and Lib Dem (5607 Green, 4134 Labour, 2783 Lib Dem)
- Combined Green, Labour, Liberal, Independent vote is greater than 50% with a turn-out of around 40%

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[Green Party slams UKIP aid proposal](#)



3 May 2017

The Green Party has condemned UKIP's proposal to cut aid spending from 0.7% of national income to 0.2% [1]. The Green Party is opposed to any cuts to the foreign aid budget and believes it should be increased to 1%.

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

"Cutting the aid budget will cost lives. Any move to rollback our commitment to international development would be a dereliction of this country's duty to the rest of the world.

"UKIP's little-Englander approach has no place in a global, interconnected world. We should be increasing our aid budget, not slashing it by billions of pounds. There's nothing anti-establishment about scrapping help for those in need.

"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.

"We know that aid alone isn't enough, and that it must come alongside fairer trading rules, but it is the bedrock of a credible foreign policy where Britain can play a positive role in world affairs. In the coming weeks the Green Party will put forward a bold plan to step up Britain's global commitments on aid, climate change and nuclear disarmament."

Notes:

1. <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/799256/Ukip-overseas-aid-spending-cut-ten-billion-year>

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[Greens call for emergency intervention into air pollution crisis](#)



3 May 2017

The Green Party is calling for an emergency intervention into the air pollution crisis ahead of the publication of the Government's draft air quality plan [1].

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, spoke at an assembly at a London school this morning and called on the Government to clean up the UK's filthy air, which is linked to 40,000 early deaths every year.

The demand comes as new figures reveal the cost of taking a bus, coach and train has soared while the cost of travelling by car has dropped dramatically between 1980 and 2016 [2].

The cost of motoring, including purchasing a vehicle, has fallen by 20% since 1980, while rail fares have risen by 63% and bus and coach fares are up by 64%.

The High Court ruled on Thursday (April 27) that the Government must publish its draft air pollution plan before May 9 [3].

Bartley said:

"It's astounding the Government had to be forced to reveal its plan for tackling air pollution and squandered taxpayers' money fighting to keep it a secret. Our filthy air is linked to the early deaths of 40,000 people every year and any delay in tackling this crisis is unacceptable.

"The stark difference between the cost of travelling by car and taking public transport lays bare how little this Government cares about tackling the problem at its root. If we keep pushing people into cars instead of promoting rail and public transport, our air is only going to get dirtier and harder for our children to breathe.

"The Green Party is the only party committed to taking immediate action on air pollution, with investment in cycling, walking, electric vehicles and public transport. We'd also properly fund and expand the Clean Air Zone network and introduce a Vehicle Excise Duty for new diesel vehicles alongside a diesel scrappage scheme."

Notes:

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/may/02/uk-government-publish-air-pollution-strategy>
2. <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-04-25/718544/>
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/apr/27/air-pollution-plan-election-campaign-bomb-court-government>

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Brexit announcement: Molly Scott Cato full speech



2 May 2017

Caroline Lucas today (May 2) gave voters the chance to remain in the EU as she announces the Green Party's new Brexit pledge.

Molly Scott Cato's full speech (check against delivery):

Firstly, as an MEP, working in the European Parliament; seeing firsthand the many positive things the EU is doing, I would like to congratulate Caroline for refusing to vote to trigger article 50.

I would also like to thank the 113 other MPs – from Labour, LibDems, SNP, and Plaid Cymru – for doing likewise. What we saw on Article 50 was a genuine progressive alliance against the government's plans for an extreme Brexit.

It is only a tragedy that so few Labour MPs followed their hearts and their minds and instead capitulated both to Theresa May and the whips within their own Party.

Since the 24th June last year, it seems to me that it has been the Tory government that has been moving us towards the hard Brexit cliff edge, but Labour that has stood ready to push us off.

The Party has shown itself hopelessly divided and the failure to oppose the government on this the most critical issue for generations has played

straight into the hands of the Tory Right.

By voting in such large numbers to trigger Article 50, without fighting for any conditions, Labour MPs have effectively handed Theresa May a blank cheque.

And we know what the small print on the back of this cheque is:

Invoking delegated powers, which would enable the government to make post-Brexit laws behind Parliament's back.

A Great Repeal Bill allowing the government to tear up EU legislation that has both improved and protected our environment, and defended workers' rights. This bonfire of regulation is a threat to everything we hold dear – clean air, clean water, landscapes where wildlife can flourish – and my meetings with businesses tell me that it is not what they want.

We have also seen the politics of consensus between EU nations replaced by the language of hostility, whether it be the threat of gunships to solve a dispute about Gibraltar or the threat of creating a tax haven if you cannot get your way on trade deals.

But wait. Didn't we hear Labour's Brexit spokesperson, Keir Starmer, say that Labour would rip up Theresa May's Brexit plan?

We should not be taken in by Labour's apparently softer more considered approach to Brexit. Their message is confused and contradictory and still has some uncomfortable hard edges.

They promise to guarantee existing rights to all EU nationals living in the UK, but say they will end free movement. Yet they also want to retain the benefits of the single market and the customs union.

Taking a tough stance on freedom of movement is incompatible with membership of the single market, something Keir Starmer himself acknowledged.

Greens believe that remaining in the single market is vital for protecting jobs and workers' rights. That in turn means defending free movement. In particular, we want young people to continue to enjoy the rights enjoyed by their parents and grandparents – the right to travel, study and work across Europe.

If Labour believe, like the Tories, that the fundamental rules of the club – such as the four freedoms – will be bent or watered down to accommodate a hardline UK, they clearly do not understand that the EU works by unity of purpose. Theresa May's attempt to portray the remaining 27 EU members as somehow ganging up on Britain shows that she shares her party's inability to understand how the EU works. Her approach to the negotiations demonstrates that she is constitutionally unable to cooperate and her confrontational stance is damaging our relationships with our closest neighbours for generations to come.

Like Labour, we will of course ditch the great repeal bill, but we would

replace this with a Great Reform Bill, to deliver a fair and proportional election system, reform the House of Lords and introduce a written constitution, so we know what our rights are.

Labour say they would prioritise jobs and the economy in negotiations with the EU. These are of course vital, which is why we say we should stay in the single market. But such a focus risks side-lining the environment. This is why the Green Party is committed to both a new Environmental Protection Act and a Clean Air Act to ensure environmental protections are maintained and enhanced.

Labour's call for parliament to be given a truly meaningful vote on the final Brexit deal is welcome, but their reluctance to give British people the same right shows a blatant disregard for democracy.

This brings us to our policy announcement today. Greens believe that the people of the UK must be given an opportunity to have their say through a ratification referendum. It is a democratic requirement that when we get to the end of the negotiating process, and we see what Brexit really means as opposed to a series of promises that cannot be fulfilled, we have a chance to decide whether that is better than continued EU membership.

Take back control was the strap line which persuaded many to vote Leave in the referendum last year. It's now clear what that meant. A power grab by the Tory right so they can make a bonfire of regulations which protect our rights and environment; and an opportunity to hand control to powerful corporations and wealthy elites and turn us into a tax haven.

A ratification referendum is the chance to *give back control*.

In two years time, we must give back control to the people, providing them with an opportunity to accept or reject the future that is on offer, or decidewhether actually we are better off remaining a full member of the EU.

So on June 8th:

Vote Green to block hard Brexit.

Vote Green to have a real say on our shared future.

Vote Green to Give Back Control.

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