

MEP warns of 'toxic' legacy for UK if government signs EU-Canada trade deal



7 February 2017

As MEPs prepare to vote on whether or not to ratify a controversial trade deal next week, Molly Scott Cato, Green MEP for the South West, has warned the UK could find itself in the 'worst of all possible worlds' if the UK sign up to the deal.

The Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement (CETA) [1] between Canada and the EU has always been opposed by Greens as it seeks to give more power to corporations while putting public services and workers' and consumer rights at risk and threaten environmental regulations.

But now Dr Scott Cato says that a new House of Commons briefing [2] confirms that when the UK leaves the EU, it could be forced to renegotiate its trade agreements with Canada yet still be bound by the treaty for 20 years. She said:

"One of the key reasons Greens have opposed CETA is because of the power this treaty gives to corporations to sue governments over legislation that threatens their profits. If CETA is ratified before the UK exits the EU, we will need to renegotiate our trade agreements with Canada but still be bound by the investor protection provision aspect of this treaty for 20 years. This would mean foreign investors would still have the right to sue the UK government if they feel their businesses have been impacted by new laws or regulations.

"Signing up to CETA is the worst of all possible worlds for the UK. It will take us back to square one on trade negotiations with Canada but trap us in a most toxic element of this treaty. With Brexit looming it is even more critical that all British MEPs vote this dodgy deal down next week in the European Parliament."

[1]

<http://ttip2017.eu/blog/id-12-reasons-the-greenefa-group-are-opposed-to-ceta.html>

[2] <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7492>

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Greens slam Government as EU prepares to take UK to court over air pollution failures



7 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 Conservative government for its consistent failure to tackle the air pollution crisis, as the EU prepares to [escalate action against the UK](#) for breaching air quality laws.

The latest EU review has revealed multiple failings by the UK Government in applying environmental law, with Britain being in breach of vital EU nitrogen dioxide (NO2) limits since 2010 and London overshooting its whole 2017 limit in the first five days of the year.

It is understood that the results of the review will be sent on 15 February to the UK. A court case at the European Court of Justice could follow if the UK Government fails to send a satisfactory response to the findings.

Keith Taylor MEP, a vocal air quality campaigner, is urging the UK government to finally take seriously its responsibility for the health of British citizens.

“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](#).”

“The failure highlighted by the European Commission review 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 even 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. In fact, this government [readily acknowledges](#) that it is EU law that has been the driver of any positive air quality action in the UK. For the sake of the health and prosperity of the British people, we cannot risk scrapping these safeguards."

"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 maintaining and strengthening these vital protections a priority as Britain prepares to leave the EU."

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[Green Party: Housing Minister's plans a slap in the face for people who can't afford a home](#)



7 February 2017

***Jonathan Bartley, co-leader: 'We must end our narrow obsession with home ownership and meet people where they are – by investing in social housing and improving the private rented sector'**

The Green Party has branded the Housing Minister's new housing strategy [1] a "slap in the face" for people struggling to afford the cost of their homes.

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said the Government should instead focus on:

- Setting up a Living Rent Commission to bring down rents
- Introducing a Land Value Tax to reduce property speculation
- Expand the use of community land trusts and co-operative home ownership
- End tax breaks for buy-to-let investors and use the money for social housing

Bartley said:

"The Housing Minister's plans are a slap in the face for the millions of people in this country desperate for bold plans to reduce rents and make

their housing affordable.

“People are living in desperate insecurity and we need to end our narrow obsession with home ownership and meet people where they are – by investing in social housing and improving the private rented sector. Any plan to help renters which doesn’t have at its heart a clear intention to reduce the amount tenants are paying is doomed to failure.

“It is scandalous that many people are paying up to two-thirds of their income on rent, and often living in sub-standard accommodation. The Government should immediately set up a Living Rent Commission to work out what rent is truly affordable and take action to bring down costs for tenants.

“With Britain suffering such an acute housing crisis – and with property developers earning such huge sums for simply holding onto land – it’s also clear that idea such as a Land Value Tax should be explored. Such a tax could reduce property speculation, revitalise inner city areas and raise revenue – there’s no excuse for failing to investigate it as an option.

“We need to start talking seriously about expanding the use of community land trusts and co-operative home ownership. If the Government wants to take the heat out of the housing market it must end tax breaks for buy-to-let investors, and use the money to create a new generation of social housing.

“Housing should not be a speculative commodity and we must move beyond piecemeal tinkering with a broken market to ensure that everyone has a place they can call home.”

Notes:

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-38884601>

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Green Party: Health tourism is not the real threat to our NHS, underinvestment is



6 February 2017

The Green Party believes the Government's plan to make NHS hospitals in England charge overseas patients upfront for treatment [1] is a distraction from the real source of the NHS crisis.

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

"Treating doctors and nurses like border guards and forcing patients to produce identity documents will only cause chaos and simply add more stress to an already struggling system.

"It was also revealed today that nine in 10 hospitals have reached unsafe levels of overcrowding so far this winter [2] and one in six A&Es may be closed or downgraded over the next few years [3]. It's clear our NHS is in a dire state but the Government seems more interesting in pushing the blame for this crisis onto foreign patients.

"Health tourism is not the real threat to our NHS, underinvestment is. The biggest impact that foreign born people have on our NHS is as doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals. It's time the Government owns up to its own failure rather than attempting to shift the blame elsewhere."

Notes:

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-38876527>
2. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-38853707>
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/feb/06/one-in-six-ae-department-s-at-risk-of-closure-or-downgrade>

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[Green Party: Government disability benefit cuts foster prejudice against disabled people](#)



3 February 2017

*** Jonathan Bartley, co-leader: Government policy based on false idea that sick and disabled are guilty until proven innocent**

The Green Party has condemned Government plans [1] to cut disability unemployment benefit in a bid to get more disabled people into work.

Jonathan Bartley, who co-leads the Green Party as a job share so he can care for his disabled son Samuel, said:

“These cuts are illogical, based on a false premise and clearly pernicious. Cutting a benefit designed to support sick and disabled people into employment, is no way to help them into work.

“Those at the receiving end are those that even the Government accepts are sick and disabled. But these cuts will drastically reduce the quality of life for many disabled people and is tantamount to kicking people when they are down.

“Government policy is increasingly based on the false idea that the sick and disabled are guilty until proven innocent, and that if they can be beaten hard enough by a weaponised welfare state they will be forced to find work.

“The Government should instead be focusing on removing the real barriers to finding work. This includes more support, not less, and working with employers to ensure that the world of work is accessible in every way through practices such as flexible working. It should also include tackling the widespread prejudice against disabled people which the Government is itself fostering.”

Notes:

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/feb/03/cut-to-disability-benefits-may-make-return-to-work-harder-claim-mps>

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