

Green Party: Government failure to get a grip on gig economy hurts everyone



14 February 2017

The Green Party has responded to news this morning that the gig-economy is thought to cost the Government £4billion in lost taxes. [1]

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

“The news that insecure work is hurting public finances reinforces what we already knew – insecure work is bad for everyone.

“The gig-economy offers flexibility but in reality leaves workers without basic rights and vulnerable to exploitation. Add to this the lost tax revenue which could be supporting greater social security or the NHS, and it’s clear that the Government has been left standing by a rapidly changing world. It needs to get a grip on the gig-economy.”

The news comes just days after pressure from the Green Party saw the Government finally publish (on February 10) a report into employment status law which was completed more than a year ago. [2]

Bartley added:

“The extent of the Government’s apathy and inertia was revealed last week when it finally published the Coalition’s shelved review into employment status law, which warned back in 2015 that gig-economy workers were at risk.

“While Tory ministers shamefully sat on the findings of the report workers everywhere have been living with increasing insecurity. People need jobs they can build a life on, and they need them now.”

Notes:

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2017/feb/14/insecure-work-bad-uk-economy-tuc-zero-hours-contracts>
2. <https://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/2017/02/10/green-pressure-sees-government-finally-publish-shelved-employment-status-law-review/>

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Report: Environment faces 'cocktails of threats' from Brexit



13 February 2017

UK Environment faces a 'cocktail of threats' from Brexit, says report by MP

- Key environmental rules could become 'unenforceable'
- Desperation for trade deal with the US risks 'chlorine chickens' and 'hormone beef' coming to UK market
- Lucas: we urgently need a 'green guarantee' from the Government to ensure our environment is protected
- Over 1100 EU environmental laws need to be transposed in UK law

A new [report](#) [1] by the Green Party MP, Caroline Lucas, has highlighted what she calls a 'cocktail of risks' to the UK's environment from Brexit.

The report, which has been released just days after the House of Commons voted to trigger Article 50, notes that the EU has been an effective driver of environmental action, and that Britain is now entering a period of 'profound uncertainty' which could lead to the downgrading of many key protections.

As well as detailing the impacts of Brexit on the environment the report calls for a 'Green Guarantee' to ensure that current levels of environmental protection and funding are maintained and strengthened. It also called for a new 'Environment Act' to be put in place ahead of Britain's exit from the EU and for Britain to retain membership of key European agencies.

As part of her report Caroline Lucas revealed House of Commons Library research which finds that over 1100 EU environmental laws will need to be transposed into UK law and that 'the Government has yet to identify all of the EU environment legislation'.

The report spells out ten distinct ways in which Brexit threatens environmental policy in the UK including:

- A lack of oversight of compliance with environmental rules. At present the European Commission and ECJ monitor and act upon breaches of legislation – there is no similar system in place in the UK and laws could become unenforceable.
- Britain exiting key agencies like the European Environment Agency and the Chemicals Agency – which support implementation and development of environmental policies.
- Regulatory equivalencing in new trade deals leading to reduction in environmental protection.
- Potentially exiting from key schemes such as the Emissions Trading Scheme – where the UK has been a key player.
- Reduction in funding for the environment as EU spending on the UK stops.

Examples include ending CAP Pillar II payments and the LIFE+ fund.
Currently the EU is the major funder for agri-environmental schemes.

Caroline Lucas, a member of the Environmental Audit Committee and a former member of the International of the European Parliament's Trade Committee, said:

"Though we've hardly heard it mentioned by the Government it's clear that British environmental policy faces a cocktail of threats from Brexit. Just days after the Brexit vote in the Commons we can clearly see the huge risks of downgrading environmental protections as part of the post-referendum process. Key laws could become unenforceable, spending on crucial schemes could be cut and new trade deals could undermine existing regulations.

"Outside the EU, there will be much greater probability of legislative change in the UK, more exposure to the political cycle and a danger that investors will be wary of potentially higher risks. The relative attractiveness of the UK as a place for green investment is in danger of being further reduced.

"Theresa May's courting of the United States in pursuit of a new Free Trade Agreement, poses an even greater risk that Ministers may be tempted to water down regulations – such as those on GMOs, pesticides, and animal hormones. We could see chlorinated chickens and hormone beef on UK markets.

"As well as outlining many of the dangers we currently face, this report seeks to present solutions. We need a Green Guarantee that will deliver on Government's commitment to ensuring that "we become the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it. We also need to immediately begin work on introducing an Environment act to ensure that Britain crucial rules and enforcement don't drop off as Britain exits the EU."

Notes:

[1] A copy of the report is
here: <https://www.carolinelucas.com/sites/carolinelucas.com/files/Safe%20Guarding%20Environment%20after%20Brexit.pdf>

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[Green Party: Government has no viable](#)

plan for prisons crisis



13 February 2017

The Green Party is calling on the Government to tackle the growing prisons crisis after an undercover BBC investigation discovered chaos in HMP Northumberland, one of the country's largest prisons [1].

Justice Secretary Liz Truss is expected to call the plan to cut prison numbers a 'dangerous quick fix' in a speech to the Centre for Social Justice today [2].

A separate report published today highlighted the rising number of suicides in prisons, the impact of staff shortages and a 'toxic' working environment [3].

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

"The Justice Secretary appears to be caught like a rabbit in the headlights. A huge crisis in our prisons is bearing down but there is no viable plan to deal with it.

"Liz Truss has repeatedly ignored the calls for sensible moves to bring prison numbers down to manageable levels. Reducing overcrowding would ease the excessive workload of prison officers, ensure a focus on rehabilitation and help stop the riots, deaths and escapes that are becoming commonplace.

"We're not talking about turfing dangerous criminals out onto the street. We need a long term, common sense approach, including investment in education, youth services and anti-poverty measures to tackle crime at its root, as well as restorative measures to cut reoffending.

"The privatisation of prisons has proved disastrous and profit-focused companies should never have been allowed to take control of such a large part of our justice system. A complete overhaul of our failing prison system is necessary, with all prison services brought back into public hands."

Notes:

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38931580>
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/feb/13/liz-truss-rejects-calls-to-cut-sentences-to-reduce-prison-population>
3. <http://home.bt.com/news/uk-news/profound-shift-needed-to-change-trend-on-prison-suicides-11364150503382>

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Green pressure sees Government finally publish shelved employment status law review



10 February 2017

*** Greens condemn Department for Business, Innovation and Skills for not publishing employment status law review for more than a year**

*** Jonathan Bartley, Green co-leader: "As Tory ministers sat on the review's findings workers everywhere have been left to fend for themselves"**

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has finally published a review into employment status law [1] which was launched and then shelved under the Coalition Government.

The publication, more than two years after the review's launch in October 2014, and more than 13 months after the report was seemingly ready for publication in December 2015, came after repeated calls from Green co-leader Jonathan Bartley for the Government to stop "sitting on the findings" [2].

The report's belated publication coincides with a court ruling today (February 10) which found a plumber working on a self-employed contract is in fact entitled to the rights of a worker [3].

Bartley wrote an open letter to the Prime Minister in October last year [2] calling for the review to be published after a similar ruling found two Uber drivers were not self-employed but entitled to workers' rights.

Bartley said:

"It is shameful that Tory ministers have sat on the findings of the Coalition's review into employment status. As they did so workers everywhere have been living in increasing insecurity and left to fend for themselves.

"Without legislation which adequately safeguards their rights these workers have been badly let down and it is clear this review should have been published at the earliest opportunity – in 2015.

"More and more court rulings are showing what can be achieved when people take control and stand up against exploitation and demonstrating how woefully insufficient our employment status law it is for dealing with modern employment practices.

“It is welcome that these issues are now being addressed by the ongoing review led by Matthew Taylor of the RSA, but the substantial and important findings of the report just published should have been put in the public domain long before now, so as to inform debate and help formulate ideas for law reform.”

Notes:

1. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/585383/employment-status-review-2015.pdf
2. <https://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/2016/10/28/green-party-open-letter-to-theresa-may-landmark-uber-ruling-means-government-must-reveal-findings-of-shelved-employment-status-law-review/>
3. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-38931211>

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Green Party condemns Boris Johnson's push to keep selling arms to Saudi Arabia after bombing



10 February 2017

The Green Party is horrified by the revelation Boris Johnson urged the UK to continue selling weapons to Saudi Arabia after a funeral bombing in Yemen last October [1].

The airstrike, on October 8 last year, claimed the lives of 140 people. A UN report concluded the attack had breached international humanitarian law [2].

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

“These letters reveal Boris Johnson’s stunning disregard for human rights. He went out of his way to ensure arms were sold to a brutal, oppressive regime knowing full well such weapons had previously been used to kill innocent Yemenis and could be again. Johnson has shown utter contempt not just for the 140 people who lost their lives in the Sana’a bombing but also for the people whose lives he put at risk with this terrible decision.

“Britain should stop selling arms to Saudi Arabia immediately. UK weapons must not be used to violate international law and human rights.”

Notes:

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/feb/10/boris-johnson-urged-uk-to-continue-saudi-arms-sales-after-funeral-bombing>
2. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-saudi-un-idUSKCN12K2F1>

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