

# Greens call for plan to ensure no cross-infection between schools and family gatherings



27 November 2020

The Green Party has called on Education Secretary Gavin Williamson to provide a plan for closing schools this Christmas that will ensure the spread of the coronavirus infection is kept to a minimum.

The latest figures from the Office of National Statistics suggest over the most recent week, the only group that has seen positive tests for coronavirus was secondary school-age children. [1]

Green Party Education Spokesperson Vix Lowthion has now called on the UK government to outline what its plans are to ensure there is as little risk of spreading the infection as possible once schools close for Christmas.

Lowthion, a secondary school teacher on the Isle of Wight, said:

“Families are desperate to see one another this Christmas and it is a tragic consequence of the pandemic that this brings with it an inevitable risk.

“However Gavin Williamson has so far not laid out any plans for protecting families this Christmas as they relax restrictions and schools close for the holiday.

“School-age children remain the only group that are still seeing a rise in infections, despite nearly four weeks of national lockdown. It was wrong to put children and their families in this position in the first place, but the government now has a duty of care to the country to ensure that it does all it can to mitigate the spread of infection over the Christmas period.”

In Wales, the UCAC teaching union has called on the Welsh Government to close schools early so pupils and teachers would not have to self-isolate on Christmas Day. [2]

Lowthion said:

“Closing schools early would allow staff and students to self-isolate before Christmas so they can feel more confident that they do not have coronavirus when they meet the rest of their family over the five days that restrictions have been relaxed.

“It is extremely worrying, yet no great surprise, that this education secretary appears to have done nothing to plan for this situation yet.”

ENDS

## Notes

1

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/bulletins/coronaviruscovid19infectionsurveyspilot/26november2020#age-analysis-of-the-number-of-people-in-england-who-had-covid-19>

2

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-55095175>

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## Greens welcome EU ban on lead shot



27 November 2020

- Amelia Womack: “We are determined to ensure that we offer wetland birds

## **the same protections that other EU countries do after Brexit”**

The Green Party has joined conservation groups across Europe in welcoming the passage of legislation to ban the use of lead shot in wetlands [1], something the party has long campaigned for. [2]

Green Party deputy leader Amelia Womack said:

“We are delighted that European wetland birds will now be protected from a slow and painful death from lead poisoning. We see this as a first step towards a total ban on lead ammunition.

“As much as 21 to 27,000 tonnes of highly toxic lead is dispersed into the EU environment per year by game shooters but much of it is swallowed by birds like ducks and swans that were not their original targets leading to the deaths of more than a million birds a year.” [2]

Since lead in petrol was banned, lead in shot is now the single biggest source of emission of lead to the environment every year.

Before the ban comes into force, the two motions will now need to be passed by the Council of the EU, a process which should only be a formality.

Womack said:

“Although the agreement of the EU Council is only a formality, if it does not occur before 31 December then this law will not automatically become UK law. We are determined to ensure that we offer wetland birds the same protections that other EU countries do after Brexit, especially when these birds are migratory and so not permanently resident in any particular European country.”

The Green Party is fundamentally opposed to all blood-sports. It opposes the killing of, or infliction of pain or suffering upon, animals in the name of sport or leisure, and will work to end all such practices.

ENDS

### **Notes**

1

<https://www.birdlife.org/europe-and-central-asia/news/press-release-european-parliament-ban-lead-ammunition-25Nov2020>

2

Green Party MP Caroline Lucas sponsored an EDM to ban the sale, possession and use of all lead ammunition across the UK in January 2019

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/52444/ban-on-the-sale-possession-and-use-of-lead-ammunition>

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## [Sian Berry celebrates step towards “right to repair”](#)



26 November 2020

The European Parliament has voted in favour of a report by Greens/EFA MEP David Cormand which calls for better “repairability of products” [1]

Green Party of England and Wales co-leader and candidate for London Mayor Sian Berry welcomes this vote, and has long championed a right to repair here in the UK.

In 2019, Sian signed the Manchester Declaration with co-leader Jonathan Bartley, a declaration published in 2018 by repair organisations calling on policymakers, manufacturers and designers to make it easier to repair consumer goods. [2] [3]

During the last General Election, Sian pledged to put a repair cafe in every community – a place where local experts can help anyone mend or upcycle an old item, with the help of specialist tools and equipment available for free use. [4]

Today, the Environmental Audit Committee has published a report on electronic waste and the circular economy, setting out a number of recommendations including a call for a right to repair and repairability scores on new products. [5] Caroline Lucas MP is a member of the EAC.

Sian said:

"I'm delighted to see the European Parliament championing the right to repair and proposals from a Green MEP. For a Green recovery and a more resilient future, our own Government must adopt these ideas and support the spaces and new businesses that we need to make repairs possible in every community.

"We've all experienced the frustration of having to throw away an expensive appliance for want of a small part or a glitch we can't fix. When things last a few years when they should be lasting for decades, the inevitable result is soaring levels of waste and pollution.

"Nobody wants to add to the mountain of junk choking our natural world. A right to repair would create real green jobs and help stop this treadmill of needless consumption and environmental destruction. This is the future, and Greens are leading the way."

ENDS

## Notes

1

<https://www.greens-efa.eu/en/article/press/towards-a-sustainable-single-market-focused-on-consumers/>

2

<https://greenworld.org.uk/article/greens-support-right-repair-movement>

3

<https://manchesterdeclaration.org/>

4

[Green Party announces end to "throwaway economy" and create a "Repair Cafe" in every community](#)

5

[https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5801/cmselect/cmenvaud/220/22003.htm#\\_idTextAnchor000](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5801/cmselect/cmenvaud/220/22003.htm#_idTextAnchor000)

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## Chancellor has let down local communities by not backing councils, Greens warn



25 November 2020

The Chancellor Rishi Sunak has failed to support local communities in his spending review today by refusing to announce proper funding for local authorities, the Green Party has said.

Responding to the spending review, Green Party deputy leader Amelia Womack said:

“The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted just how destructive this government has been in undermining local authorities.

“This spending review was an opportunity to rectify this costly mistake, yet once again we have seen nowhere near enough help for councils to take effective action on the ground.

“Local authorities must have control of their own finances, not have to take the begging bowl to Westminster.

“We don’t want a national fund to allow Conservative MPs in marginal seats to fund their favourite local bypass. What we need is a national strategy for low carbon transport and active travel.

“This sort of Green New Deal investment would mean hundreds of thousands of jobs in all our communities.

“The Chancellor’s wilful disregard of the essential work councils do means this government has once again let down communities up and down the country.

“For real change, the Chancellor should have restored council funding to sustainable levels, fulfilled the government’s guarantee to reimburse all Covid-related spending and announced a review into the balance of taxation

between national and local government.”

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## Chancellor must reverse cuts to local authorities in spending review, Greens warn



24 November 2020

The Chancellor must reverse the decade-long cuts and hand greater control over taxes to local authorities in the Autumn Spending Review on Wednesday, the Green Party has urged.

Ahead of Rishi Sunak’s announcement on Wednesday [November 25], the Greens have highlighted how the centralisation of power and funding has hampered the country’s response to the coronavirus and climate crises.

Phélim Mac Cafferty, Green Party leader of Brighton and Hove Council, said:

“The repeated failures of the Conservative government throughout the pandemic have made it clear it is local councils which are effectively responding on the ground to their communities.

“From running effective test and trace services, to providing food and personal protective equipment (PPE), councils have risen to the challenge where national government policy, and outsourcing to private contractors,

have clearly failed.

“Despite this, years of cuts to public services have now left many councils on the brink. Councils have lost one in two pounds in real-terms since relentless Conservative government cuts began in 2010. News that Croydon council filed for bankruptcy only weeks ago should come as a warning to Conservative ministers that public services are at breaking point – precisely at the point when they are needed most.

“From adult social care to children’s services, libraries and public health, the Covid-19 pandemic has underlined that for many these services are a lifeline. It’s also at a local level that real change is happening on critical issues like the climate emergency and the crisis in housing and homelessness. With proper funding, councils can continue to lead the way, but cuts hold our communities back.

“To steer us through this crisis we don’t just need emergency cash bungs, we need a complete rethink of how funding is provided to local communities, so they can not only survive but thrive in the world beyond Covid-19. Councils haven’t yet been offered ‘more’ money, they have been handed a sticking plaster for a broken bone.

“While we call for the greatest possible recognition of local public services in the spending review, we know that a decade of cuts to local services are not going to be swept away overnight. Most of all, it’s high time that the government put trust in our local communities and public services, who after years of cuts, deserve nothing less than genuine investment.”

Local authorities have seen a reduction in core funding of almost £16 billion over the last decade [1]. It has now been estimated that councils face a £2bn gap between the funding provided and the pressures faced as a result of Covid. [2]

At the same time, local authorities in England have extremely limited power to raise revenue compared to other countries. In 2014 every other G7 national collected more taxes at either a local or regional level.[3]

Green Party deputy leader Amelia Womack said:

“Over the past decade this government has done everything it can to undermine local authorities and concentrate power in Downing Street.

“We have now seen the disastrous impact this has had on our health, wellbeing and local economies.

“It is time for government to recognise just how damaging this approach is and start to reverse the huge cuts it has made to local authority budgets since 2010.

“From developing renewables and making homes energy efficient to building an effective test and trace system, it is local councils that know what their areas need and how to communicate with their communities.

“That’s why we are urging the Chancellor to restore council funding to sustainable levels that will protect communities and frontline services, fulfil the government’s guarantee to reimburse all Covid-related spending and announce a review into the balance of taxation between national and local government.”

ENDS

## Notes

1

[https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/5.40\\_01\\_Finance%20publication\\_WEB\\_0.pdf](https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/5.40_01_Finance%20publication_WEB_0.pdf)

2

<https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/15041>

3

<https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainers/tax-and-devolution>

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