

'Destructive' Investment Zones will fail to create fairer greener communities



6 October 2022

Green councillors across England and Wales are urging their councils to reject 'Investment Zones', which are a core element in the Conservatives' 'Growth Plan.[1]' Greens say the plans, which aim to accelerate housing and infrastructure through a new streamlined planning system, threaten both local democracy and the environment [2].

Green Party co-leader Adrian Ramsay said:

"Investment zones, as set out by the government, threaten to ride rough-shod over agreed local priorities, further damage the environment and nature, and reduce commitments to affordable homes and community facilities.

"By offering a liberalised planning process with tax breaks, this is a developers charter, that will mean local communities lose their rights to resist unsustainable development and allow developers to by-pass local objections entirely.

"The guidance wants to remove current legal requirements which provide the key tools for protecting nature during the planning process. Even worse, it suggests Investment Zones could be allowed in National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other protected environments. The legal requirement to achieve Net Zero by 2050 has also been completely ignored.

"As Greens we urge local councils to take a stand: to refuse to agree to a new streamlined overarching planning system; to make clear their commitment to local control of planning, and insist existing protections for the environment and for nature are retained.

"We do urgently need investment in our local communities. But Greens have a very different vision of how we can create prosperity.

"We desperately need to insulate our homes and workplaces, provide clean and cheap renewable energy, improve public transport, produce healthy local food and help nature thrive. We also need serious investment in our crumbling health and social care services. All of which will help create thousands of new jobs.

"We understand the desperate need many councils have for investment and funding. But we will resist harmful Investment Zones and continue to fight for fairer, greener communities."

Notes

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/investment-zones-in-england-expression-of-interest>
2. <https://www.wcl.org.uk/open-letter-to-pm-on-environmental-deregulation.aspx>

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“This government is determined to wreck the climate”: Green Party response to Liz Truss conference speech



5 October 2022

Responding to Prime Minister Liz Truss’ speech to the Conservative Party conference today, Green Party deputy leader Zack Polanski said:

“This government is determined to wreck the climate with a dangerous drive to growth that is based on greater investment in fossil fuels that are destroying the planet.

“Liz Truss used her speech today to try and build a coalition of ‘enemies’ that she claims are holding the country back. This is divisive and false.

“We stand for the planet and for the people. There is no climate justice without social justice, and no future for the planet with this dead-end government.

“We need to raise the funds needed to tackle rising poverty and inequality through a targeted wealth tax and to use these funds to drive massive investment in insulating peoples’ homes and rolling out renewable energy to lower bills, stabilise the economy and tackle climate change.”

ENDS

For more information or to arrange an interview contact the press office on press@greenparty.org.uk or call 0203 691 9401

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Greens condemn cruel blanket ban on asylum claims and call for compassionate welcome for refugees



5 October 2022

The Green Party has condemned the government over its planned blanket ban on asylum claims from people who arrive ‘illegally’ [1]. They have repeated their call for a kinder fairer process where the UK works together with European neighbours to open up safe routes to help all those in need.

Benali Hamdache, Green Party spokesperson on Migration and Refugee Support, said:

“This government is now committed to turning away nearly every refugee in need, at a time when the world is an increasingly less stable place. No one chooses to be a refugee, but conflict and the climate crisis are driving millions out of their homes.

“Rather than accept that fact, the Tories are scapegoating desperate people. They’re chasing populist headlines rather than creating a kinder fairer process that is so desperately needed.

“And in the face of the most draconian attack on refugee rights, Labour had nothing to say, merely parroting Tory lines on the legality of migration [2]. It’s clear only the Green Party will stand up for migrants and refugees.

“We will always welcome refugees. We’d work together with our European neighbours to open up safe routes to help all those in need.”

Green Party co-leader, Carla Denyer, added:

“Nine in every ten people who travel by boat across the Channel come from 10 countries where human rights abuses and persecution are common. What the government is proposing would essentially end the right to claim asylum for those who need it most. The choice is clear: a cruel ban on refugees by the Tories or a compassionate welcome from the Greens.”

Notes

[1] [Suella Braverman says Channel migrants will be banned from claiming asylum in UK | Evening Standard](#)

[2] [Sky News on Twitter: Shadow Chancellor Rachel Reeves MP](#)

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[Green councillors call on local Tories to join them in disowning government attack on nature](#)



3 October 2022

Hundreds of Green Party councillors have sent an open letter to local Conservative councillors in their area, calling on them to disown the government's 'attack on nature.' Greens have decried Kwasi Kwarteng's recent 'mini-budget' as a 'three-pronged assault'.

As the Conservative Party begins its conference in Birmingham, Green councillors are urging local Conservative councillors to say 'no' to their new leaders and stand up for their community and local environment.

Government plans include 'investment zones' which would make it easier to get planning permission; a 'sunset clause' on EU environmental protections; and scrapping the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS), which would have paid farmers to improve nature on their land, with plans to replace this with a payment-by acre not linked to any environmental measures.

Councillor Ellie Chowns, a cabinet member on Herefordshire Council, said:

"Conservative councillors represent many rural voters who will be up in arms about the government proposals. They should show courage and do the right thing by opposing these hugely damaging plans, which are almost the direct opposite of Conservative manifesto promises and have never been put to the British people.

"We need all our local politicians, whichever party they come from, to stand up for nature. We can have robust local economies whilst also helping nature to recover and thrive. Local Tories have a special responsibility to say no to their new leaders and defend the natural environment on behalf of our communities."

The full letter reads as follows:

Dear Conservative councillors,

"This Government has today launched an attack on nature" ~ RSPB England

There is widespread anger in response to government plans to remove fundamental legal protections for our environment. Opposition has come from many organisations ranging from the RSPB and National Trust through to the Wildlife Trusts and Friends of the Earth.

Alongside the reckless approach to the nation's finances, the government seems intent on tearing up protection for nature. In a three-pronged assault on nature Ms Truss and Mr Kwarteng plan to;

- Scrap planning rules that protect nature in new 'investment zones' covering huge areas of the country.[1] [2]
- Rip up environmental protections introduced by the EU, without plans for replacement.[3]
- Withdraw plans to help farmers to protect nature [4], with reports suggesting the 'Environmental Land Management Scheme' (ELMS) has been 'put on hold' whilst a return to a Common Agricultural Policy type per acre payment is expected, which will break a specific manifesto pledge [5].

Of course, just before these announcements we also saw Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg open the door to environmentally damaging fracking, a policy that is widely opposed, will do nothing to reduce energy bills and which the founder of Cuadrilla himself says is unviable [6].

The responses from those who care for nature have been overwhelming.

Joan Edwards, director of policy for The Wildlife Trusts, says these policies will mean "polluters can get away with poisoning our rivers and countryside – even more than they are doing already" [7/8].

Hilary McGrady of the National Trust says, "environmental protections are dismissed as 'burdens', while investment and growth are pitted against nature and climate action."

These proposals come as part of a 'dash for growth' package which is also spooking markets and ruining government finances. There is no mandate for these measures: they actually reverse the direction of travel on the environment in your 2019 manifesto and have never been put to the British people.

Yet we know people's livelihoods and local economies can be put on a sound footing with a three pronged approach to investment: in nature recovery, in renewable energy and in home insulation to reduce energy bills. Research has shown that "Protection and use of environmental assets is key to evening out economic imbalances between metropolitan and rural areas"[8]. In other words,

the recovery of nature and the revival of local living standards should and can go hand-in hand.

We call on you to make plain to your party leaders that these policies must be reversed. We ask for a public statement from your group leader on your group's views about these policies.

There is no case for staying silent, and every reason to stand up for your communities and for your local environment by making it plain that you will not support the tearing up of environmental protection and the reversal of attempts to help nature thrive.

[1]

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-growth-plan-2022-factsheet-on-investment-zones/the-growth-plan-2022-investment-zones-factsheet>

[2] Map of investment zones:

<https://twitter.com/RSPBEngland/status/1573366828222808064>

[3]

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/sep/23/uk-environment-laws-under-threat-in-deregulatory-free-for-all>

[4]

<https://www.edie.net/reports-defra-set-to-scrap-plans-to-pay-farmers-for-nature-restoration-and-creation/>

[5] ““in return for funding, [farmers] must farm in a way that protects and enhances our natural environment”

<https://www.conservatives.com/our-plan/conservative-party-manifesto-2019>

[6]

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/sep/21/fracking-wont-work-uk-founder-chris-cornelius-cuadrilla>

[7]

https://www.exeter.ac.uk/news/research/title_918714_en.html

[8]

<https://envirotecmagazine.com/2022/09/26/the-uk-governments-deregulation-agenda-is-dangerous/>

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Greens back return of appropriated cultural objects



2 October 2022

Green Party conference today called for objects obtained “during the period of imperial expansion and colonialism, and in other conflicts and periods” to be returned to their original owners. [1]

Museums and galleries around the world are beginning to ask deep-seated questions about how objects came to be in their collections, and it is time the government did so too, Greens declared.

Objects held in institutional and private collections should be referred to an expert Restitution of Cultural Objects Panel.

Where the expert committee finds, and a government Minister agrees, objects would be returned to their original owners, descendants or the state from where they were appropriated.

Green Party Culture spokesperson Jack Lenox said:

“This model worked well in relation to cultural objects stolen in the run up to the Second World War. It’s time for the same principles to be applied to other collections”.

“We recognise that each case will have to be considered on its merits. There will be issues about legal ownership, but also important moral arguments. This will involve discussion with the individuals and states from where objects were taken and the holding institution or collection.”

Martin Hemingway, who proposed the successful motion, said:

“This is as much a moral question as a legal one. The universities of Oxford and Aberdeen have already established ways of considering these issues. Other museums, like London’s Horniman, are returning objects taken from Africa. [2]

“We need a proper process in place that enables everyone with an interest to make their case and for objects to be returned to their rightful homes.”

ENDS

Notes

1

The full motion can be read here:

<https://greencoordinate.co.uk/agenda/motions/restitution-and-repatriation-of-cultural-objects/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/audio/2022/aug/30/the-benin-bronzes-return-to-nigeria-podcast>

For more information or to arrange an interview contact the press office on press@greenparty.org.uk or call 0203 691 9401

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