

Sian Berry responds to Chancellor's statement on coronavirus



17 March 2020

Chancellor Rishi Sunak has today announced further economic measures to help support those affected by the coronavirus outbreak.

Sian Berry, co-leader of the Green Party, said: "The Chancellor has set some of the right economic and social security goals in response to this crisis but the government needs to go much further and faster in its actions to meet them and ensure people's livelihoods will be protected.

"The Chancellor now needs to urgently work on a plan for a temporary universal basic income for all citizens. This would be the simplest and best way to make sure everyone has security and does not slip through the net.

"With the public facing so much uncertainty it is vital that the government follows up this financial package with new laws to suspend no-fault evictions and freeze rental payments for those affected by coronavirus.

"Earlier today, the Green Party's Molly Scott Cato put forward a full plan for weathering the economic storm and providing security for all our citizens, and the chancellor should be looking at the rest of our ideas too."
[1]

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/2020/03/17/green-party-fighting-coronavirus-needs-an-economy-that-works-for-everybody/>

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[Green Party: Fighting coronavirus needs an economy that works for everybody](#)



17 March 2020

The Green Party has called for the immediate suspension of all mortgages and rents on property as part of a package of bold proposals to support the economy in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic

As the government struggles to provide reassurance to those who face losing their livelihoods due to the impact of coronavirus, Green Party finance spokesperson Molly Scott Cato has laid out a series of policies [1] which would see a fundamental shift towards an economy that prioritises public health and resilience.

Scott Cato, who is also a professor of economics, said: "The Prime Minister yesterday said that this is like entering a war, and so we are proposing a wartime-style policy for economic management.

"To address the challenge of this highly contagious virus we must all work together, and everybody must be protected. More importantly, they must believe that our society is working for them.

“This crisis is exposing the weaknesses in the UK economy and accentuates the longstanding need for a fundamental shift towards an economy that priorities public health and resilience.”

Key policies in the package include:

- The public administration of key public utilities for the next six months, with a possible extension to 12 months.
- The suspension of mortgages and rents on property, including mortgages on buy-to-let properties.
- The introduction of a per-household credit against utility bills, internet and mobile phone contracts
- The introduction of a basic income scheme to cover essential needs, primarily for food.
- A system of ‘economic triage’ to ensure that state finance is directed towards businesses that have a future in the zero carbon world beyond 2030 and are based in areas of lower depressed economic performance.

Scott Cato said: “The only way for our economy to get through this crisis is for the government to play a far more interventionist role than we have seen since the 1950s. But the crisis also offers us an opportunity to ensure that we emerge with an economy more prepared to tackle the longer and deeper crisis of climate change.”

ENDS

Notes

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<https://www.greenparty.org.uk/assets/files/Policy%20files/GPEconomicResponse.pdf>

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Green Party calls for Brexit negotiations to be extended amid coronavirus outbreak



16 March 2020

The Green Party has called on the UK government and the EU to agree to extend the Brexit transition period for a year as countries tackle the coronavirus outbreak.

Green Party deputy leader Amelia Womack said: "At a time of national emergency it is vital that the government puts every ounce of its time and energy into protecting the public.

"The urgency with which the government wanted to leave the EU was for a period of relative stability. During a time of global crisis we need to be working as closely as possible with our closest allies rather than being at loggerheads over a trade deal.

"If we are delaying elections then we are acknowledging we need to work to protect the public first and foremost rather than stick to political timetables, and Brexit is no exception."

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Greens call for Coronavirus Solidarity Pact



14 March 2020

The Green parties of the United Kingdom have called for the Westminster government's forthcoming emergency coronavirus legislation to a Coronavirus Solidarity Pact to ensure that vulnerable people are offered extensive protections and security.

They added that the Pact, and other actions, must follow extensive consultation with the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland governments.

The Green parties called for the Solidarity Pact to include measures (with sufficient funding for the devolved administration to provide similar arrangements under their responsibilities) including:

- * Funding and arrangements for free deliveries of food and essentials for people over the age of 64 and people with disabilities
- * Funding for families with children receiving free school meals to cover the cost of replacement meals should schools be closed
- * Acting to ensure essential hygiene supplies are available at reasonable prices
- * A holiday from council tax for each household affected by the coronavirus, with compensation to councils for the lost revenue
- * A suspension of no-fault evictions or the eviction of anyone affected by the coronavirus crisis and a freeze on rental payments for those affected (with compensation for landlords for the lost rent)
- * An end to the five-week delay in claiming housing benefit

- * An end to all benefit sanctions for at least the length of the crisis
- * A ban on the cut-off of electricity, gas and water supplies to residential properties and small businesses during the crisis
- * Support for small businesses affected by the coronavirus, including a business rates freeze for those affected
- * Funding for special provision to assist homeless people off the streets, with facilities provided for any homeless person needing to self-isolate and/or suffering from illness
- * Giving asylum-seekers the right to work and providing financial support when needed to individuals with “no recourse to public funds” visa status
- * Provisions to ensure that prisoners and others in detention receive the best possible protection and medical support

Sian Berry, co-leader of the Green Party of England and Wales, said: “The coronavirus threat is a time for national solidarity. There is great fear and anxiety about the pandemic. Individual security – the confidence that you won’t be made homeless, lose your utilities, or go hungry – will provide a crucial bedrock.”

She added: “The government also needs to stress that there is only so much it can do. Personal and community solidarity – people checking on vulnerable neighbours, setting up systems to ensure vulnerable friends and relatives get regular phone contact – is going to be crucial in the coming months.”

Patrick Harvie, co-leader of the Scottish Green Party, said: “That solidarity has to extend to between Westminster and the national governments. Scotland urgently needs clarity over the implications of last week’s budget. The relationship between Holyrood and Westminster has to be reforged, which means Westminster acknowledging its responsibilities to act as an open, cooperative partner as we face up to this great challenge.”

Clare Bailey, leader of the Northern Ireland Green Party, said: “The situation of Northern Ireland is different to the rest of the United Kingdom. We need to work in tight cooperation with the Irish government with an all-island approach. That means Westminster has to provide the funds we need, but also be flexible in understanding our approach is different to the rest of the UK.”

Anthony Slaughter, Wales Green Party leader, said: “Meaningful input from Wales into Westminster decision making is crucial. We also need strong support for small independent businesses. Without that, we risk emerging from this crisis with our communities hollowed out and our economy even more concentrated in the hands of the few.”

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Green Party reacts to postponement of May elections



13 March 2020

The Green Party has reacted to the news today that the local council and elections for Mayors scheduled for May, will be postponed for a year.

Co-leader of the Green Party Jonathan Bartley said: "The health and welfare of our members, activists and the wider community absolutely must be top priority. So despite being on course to make significant gains in May off the back of our 60% increase in vote share at the General Election in December, we are supportive of a postponement.

"The situation with Covid-19 is changing all the time and we hope that if this health crisis allows, the elections can happen sooner than May next year. We wouldn't like to see an arbitrary delay followed through without good reason."

Sian Berry, Co-leader of the party and Green candidate for London Mayor said: "The decision to postpone the elections is the right one. I hope they will be held as soon as practicable, and meanwhile all of us on the Assembly will focus on taking care of Londoners.

"The campaign for a Green Mayor and more Assembly Members will continue in good time.

"There is so much good work that new Greens could be doing in City Hall and across the country so it is important that democracy is not delayed any longer than absolutely necessary and, if we can go ahead sooner, we definitely should."

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