

Green Party welcomes US return to the Paris climate agreement



19 February 2021

- **Jonathan Bartley:** “As COP chair the UK government needs to get its own house in order when it comes to climate change and demonstrate the global leadership required so that others can follow suit”

The Green Party has welcomed the US’ official return to the Paris Climate Agreement today. [1]

It has now warned the UK government that as chair it is responsible for ensuring this year’s crucial COP talks bring forth the necessary global commitments to prevent catastrophic climate change.

Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley said:

“The return of the US to the Paris climate agreement is vital if we are to secure any meaningful climate action at this year’s COP summit.

“As one of the world’s biggest carbon emitters, the US’ involvement in such a crucial international agreement should never have been put in doubt by the Trump administration, and today is a significant reminder of how grateful we should all be that his presidency is over.

“This year’s COP is the most crucial ever. Unfortunately, it is clear that we have left it far too late to stop damaging climate change from happening, but if we are to stand any chance of staying within the 1.5 degree warming limit and preventing the most extreme outcomes, all countries must act with great urgency.

“As COP chair the UK government needs to get its own house in order when it comes to climate change and demonstrate the global leadership required so that others can follow suit. As long as it keeps opening new coal mines, expanding airports and building new roads its climate commitments cannot be taken seriously.

“The US’ official return to the Paris agreement today has made it possible for the world to take the necessary action to prevent runaway climate change. It is now up to the UK government to step up and make sure this happens.”

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/feb/19/us-official-return-paris->

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[Greens welcome High Court ruling on Manston Airport](#)



16 February 2021

The Green Party has welcomed the High Court's decision to quash the government's order to reopen Manston Airport, in Kent, as a global freight hub [1].

The High Court ruling is the first time a government Development Consent Order has been quashed by the courts. It means a decision on the future of the airport will need to be taken again at a future date.

Members of Thanet Green Party have been campaigning against the development of the airport, warning reopening it as a freight hub would be in conflict with the government's commitment to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

Green Party peer Natalie Bennett has now welcomed the High Court ruling but warned the government must start taking its climate commitments seriously.

Bennett said:

"This High Court decision to quash the government's order to reopen Manston Airport is of course welcome, but it is not the end of the line yet for this disastrous plan.

"There is simply no excuse for reopening old airports in a climate emergency. Yet time and again, from opening new coal mines to building new roads, this government shows that, despite talking of a green recovery, it does not care about its own climate commitments.

"As the chair of this year's COP, it is extremely worrying that the Conservatives are willing to hold their promises, including to reach net zero by 2050, in such low regard.

"The Prime Minister would do well to learn from the campaigners and Thanet Green Party members who have made it clear that we cannot go back to the old ways of doing things, which rely on prioritising polluting and dirty

businesses over the health of people and planet.

“If Boris Johnson was able to understand this, it would be clear to him that reopening old airports makes no sense whatsoever.”

Deb Shotton, vice chair of Thanet Green Party, said there was increasing interest in the development of the former airfield for clean energies:

“The imposition of a new cargo hub would bring terrible harm to Thanet, East Kent and the planet. The promised jobs are, by the developer’s own admission, diminishing by the minute.

“In the face of the devastation of the air industry by Covid, this proposed hub becomes nothing more than a vanity project for the egos involved. Its long-term failure is inevitable.

“It needs to be put to bed now, once and for all, and the land used for the promotion of clean energies. Green jobs in a growth industry would be far more beneficial for Thanet and beyond.”

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Notes

1

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-56076770>

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Cumbrian Greens welcome County Council decision to reconsider coal mine decision



12 February 2021

Penrith and Eden Green Party are cautiously celebrating the news that Cumbria County Council will reconsider the application for a new deep coal mine on the Copeland coast near Whitehaven.

Green Party Councillor and campaigner Ali Ross said:

“We are outraged that the Government has failed to intervene in this case – which is clearly of national and global importance – and at a time when the UK is supposed to be leading on climate action as chair of COP26.

“It is abundantly clear that the grounds on which Cumbria County Council approved this planning application are totally flawed. The mine will not be ‘carbon neutral’ as claimed by the developers. Far from it, it will result in massive carbon emissions that will further destabilise our already dangerously unbalanced climate.”

Cllr Ross also refuted the commonly cited argument that the coking coal from this mine is essential to the future of steel production in the UK:

“Less than 15% of the coal from this mine is actually destined for the UK market; the rest will be exported. Steel production is currently one of our most carbon intensive industries and that has to change. Low carbon production technology exists and is well on its way to commercial use. The UK should be speeding up that process, not slowing it down by investing in more outdated coal sources.”

Cllr Ross also challenged the suggestion that the coal mine was necessary to protect local jobs:

“Of course we are all sympathetic to County Councillors’ desire to create jobs in West Cumbria, but this project never looked likely to deliver the massive opportunities that were promised.

“Coking coal is a climate destroying fuel that would inevitably result in the community being let down again. The Government should be providing jobs in green technologies instead.

“Cumbria has enormous potential for renewable energy, green transport infrastructure and retrofitting homes to bring them up to good energy efficiency standards – to name but a few. What West Cumbria needs is investment and training that will create long-term jobs for a sustainable future.”

The Council stated that its decision was made in light of the recommendations from the Government’s Climate Change Committee [1], issued in December, regarding the UK’s future greenhouse gas emissions. The application will now go back to Committee for a fourth time.

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Notes

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<https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/sixth-carbon-budget/>

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[Greens call for greater ambition on environmental taxes in response to NAO report](#)



12 February 2021

- **Party commends National Audit Office emphasis on the need for strategic use of tax system to support pro-environment action**

Responding to today's National Audit Office report on environmental tax measures [1], Green Party finance spokesperson Molly Scott Cato said:

"We support the National Audit Office's conclusions that the government is failing to understand the role of environmental taxes in shifting our economy towards a more sustainable future.

"Environmental taxes have been at the heart of our policy agenda since our foundation and, while some have been adopted by government, it has been in an apologetic and piecemeal way that has failed to realise their full potential.

"However, we regret that the NAO has not gone further in recommending a high and rising rate of carbon tax, which would represent the strongest signal to business that the government is serious about making rapid progress towards our net zero carbon targets.

"Our policy of a carbon tax of £100 per tonne rising to £500 by 2030 is commensurate with the urgency of the situation we are facing. [2] As an upstream tax charged when fossil fuels come out of the ground or are imported it is also efficient to levy. We would match it with a universal basic income to offset increases in consumer prices.

"We welcome the NAO's suggestion that Air Passenger Duty should be seen as a strategic environmental tax and call on the government to adopt our longstanding policy of a Frequent Flyer Levy. This could be used to shift long-distance journeys from air to rail when journeys resume after the pandemic.

"We would also encourage the government to use the powerful VAT regime as a tool to address the climate emergency. One example is the need to reverse the presumption in favour of new build over retrofit, which works counter to the government's stated objective of rapid reductions in CO2 emissions." [3]

ENDS

Notes

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<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/environmental-tax-measures/?slide=1>

2

The Green Party's 10 point plan for real climate ambition can be seen here: https://www.greenparty.org.uk/assets/files/Communications/10_Point_Climate_Plan.pdf

3

The Green Party recently launched this petition to shift the VAT incentive away from new build homes and towards retrofit: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/573207>

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[Greens criticise decision to allow Leeds Bradford Airport expansion](#)



11 February 2021

The Green Party candidate for Mayor of West Yorkshire has criticised Leeds City Council's decision to approve Leeds Bradford Airport's expansion plans [1], warning it does not make sense in a climate emergency.

Despite a significant amount of opposition from across West Yorkshire due to negative environmental damage airport expansion would cause, planning officers had recommended approving the controversial application.

Councillor Andrew Cooper, Green Party Candidate for West Yorkshire Mayor and a Kirklees Councillor, has now criticised the decision by councillors to approve the expansion plans subject to renegotiation.

Coun Cooper said:

"This is incredibly disappointing news and takes us backwards in our response to the climate crisis.

"This ruling today just makes a mockery of how our councils here in West Yorkshire are responding to their climate commitments. There is simply no room for airport expansion in a climate emergency. It just does not make sense when the UK as a whole has to reduce its carbon emissions as quickly as possible.

"While France has taken a principled position and given a lead on climate change today by scrapping plans to expand Paris Charles de Gaulle airport, Leeds City Council has been derelict in its duty in addressing the climate emergency.

"This has been a real 'David and Goliath' story as, on the one side is a large global pension fund who own the airport, and on the other is a crowd-funded campaign and lots of hard work by ordinary but committed people, including many Green Party members.

"Leeds City Council has sent a clear message that commercial interests are more important than the views of local people, the protection of our environment and the wellbeing of future generations."

Bradford Council in particular came under fire after it told Leeds City Council that it has 'no objection' to the airport's planning application. Campaigners have accused the Labour-run authority of ignoring its own Climate Emergency declaration.

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/news/politics/council/live-leeds-bradford-airport-ps150m-expansion-approved-council-subject-renegotiations-3131602>

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