

Greens warn banning campaigning hinders free and fair elections



26 January 2021

- **Jonathan Bartley:** “For any election to be free and fair then it is vital political parties have the ability to campaign so the public can engage with the choices on offer”

The Green Party has warned of the threat to democracy as a result of the Government’s advice that on the ground campaigns for this year’s local elections should stop

Cabinet Office Minister Chloe Smith has this week written to political parties saying door to door campaigning was “neither essential nor necessary”. [1]

The Green Party has followed public health and legal guidance in recent weeks in order to deliver community support and advice to residents who may be struggling or digitally excluded. The feedback has been exceptionally positive. Local councillors have helped residents in accessing hot meals, parents in need of laptops for home schooling and isolated residents have access to befriending opportunities.

Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley said:

“Democracy is a process, not a one off event. For any election to be free and fair then it is vital political parties have the ability to campaign so the public can engage with the choices on offer, but at the moment the Conservatives in Government are saying traditional campaigning at the grass roots level should effectively cease.

“There are serious questions about who is empowered to make such a decision in a democracy. To avoid conflicts of interest this should be decided by a body such as the Electoral Commission, not a party that stands to gain from the decision.

“Greens want elections to be held as soon as it is practically safe for the whole democratic process to take place, including community campaigning, which is a crucial part of allowing people to have a genuine choice of parties to vote for. That may mean we have to delay the May elections.”

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/political-parties-suspend-leafleting-door-c>

[ampaigning-covid-842152?fbclid=IwAR2jfXGI8Cd8JzXbB0ucL3b-N4z8lxpYSBVNs20V2jAmT_FTQ_OPG8z0yH8](https://www.facebook.com/ampaigning-covid-842152?fbclid=IwAR2jfXGI8Cd8JzXbB0ucL3b-N4z8lxpYSBVNs20V2jAmT_FTQ_OPG8z0yH8)

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[Greens condemn latest delay to Environment Bill](#)



26 January 2021

The Green Party has condemned the government's decision to delay the Environment Bill for the third time today. [1]

MPs will debate amendments to the Bill in the House of Commons this afternoon, but the government has said further discussions will not go ahead until the next Parliamentary session.

Sian Berry, Green Party co-leader and Mayor of London candidate, said:

"This government says it will prioritise the environment, but once again when it comes to taking action they delay and disappoint. Boris Johnson has spoken about building back better, yet his government cannot even be bothered to make sure this crucial piece of legislation goes ahead in a timely manner.

"As it stands, the Bill is too weak in a number of areas, but that is why it is absolutely vital that parliamentarians, including the Green Party's Caroline Lucas, are able to table amendments and debate it urgently.

"This Bill provides an opportunity for the government to enshrine into law policy that we desperately need to tackle the climate and nature emergencies. The environment can't wait and we need to see the government back up its rhetoric with legislation"

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-55799191>

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[Greens warn UK is “paying the price” for government failure on floods](#)



21 January 2021

- **Amelia Womack: “People are paying the price for decades of tokenistic action when it comes to flood risk management”**

The Green Party has accused the government of chronic failure over its inadequate response to flooding.

As Storm Christoph caused devastation in parts of England and Wales [1], Green Party Deputy Leader Amelia Womack has said the UK and Welsh governments must immediately implement a long-term plan to improve natural flood defences and reassess planning regulations which still allow for new buildings on flood plains.

Womack said:

“Every year, flooding across the UK impacts families and businesses. To add to this devastation, this year it comes 10 months into a global pandemic putting added strain on individuals and communities.

“Climate change increases our likelihood of extreme and damaging weather across the country. Yet, the government’s announcements of further funding for flood defences are more often than not too little, too late and lack a practical plan for the future.

“Concrete flood defences after an event won’t solve the impact the climate and ecological emergency is having on our flood risk. We need a long-term vision to reassess how we work with the land by improving natural flood defences, and working with our environment which has been proven to be far more effective.

“Given this happens every year we need to adapt our planning system to the climate changed world and recognise that we can no longer build homes and commercial premises on floodplains.

“People are paying the price for decades of tokenistic action when it comes to flood risk management. We need the UK government to start showing true global leadership by introducing the policies that will reduce our carbon emissions as soon as possible and restore our ecosystems. Taking real climate

action will not only help reduce the impact of climate change, but will also help us create thousands of good quality jobs in our communities.”

Greater Manchester is one of the areas hit hardest by the latest storm.

Melanie Horrocks, Green Party candidate for Mayor of Greater Manchester, said:

“My thoughts are with everyone affected by these floods, which have come at the worst possible time. A huge thanks to the staff of local councils, dealing with yet another front line emergency. Councils have been stretched more than ever over the past year, and now have to deal with this at the same time. It makes it all the more important that the government provides more support for councils, for businesses affected, and for those who will end up self-isolating as a result.

“The planning system makes it far too easy for flooding risks to be increased. This week should be a wake-up call for those wanting to build on vast swathes of the green belt across Greater Manchester. All public funds need to be divested away from fossil fuels investments, and the only responsible approach for the future of Greater Manchester is one which includes reduced airport use, not expansion.

“Yet again, records are being broken by the consequences of extreme weather. This is the new normal. Politicians at every level need to step up, urgently, to stop climate change spiralling beyond anything we can influence.”

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-55743246>

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[Greens condemn government failure to ensure free movement for musicians after Brexit](#)



20 January 2021

- **Amelia Womack backs letter from leading musicians and deplores loss of soft power and cultural influence**

The Green Party has backed a letter from leading musicians calling on the government to ensure musicians' continued ability to travel paperwork-free while they tour the EU in the post-Brexit era.

The open letter, signed by 110 musical artists including Radiohead and Ed Sheeran and addressed to the Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden, would ensure touring musicians would not have to go through the costly and bureaucratic process of gaining visas for each country they travelled through. [1]

Green Party deputy leader Amelia Womack said:

"The music industry is one of many that has been utterly failed by this government that has broken its promise to ensure they could move freely after Brexit..

"Not only is the music industry an essential sector of our economy, it is also a vital part of our cultural standing in the world and an important part of our soft power that is now more important than ever. Radiohead and Ed Sheeran have done more to enhance the reputation of Global Britain than a whole generation of politicians."

The Green Party supports the call from the Musicians' Union (MU) for a "musicians' passport" that would cover all 27 EU members' states, removing the need for multiple permits, and that would also cover road crew and technicians.

Womack said:

"The long, bureaucratic process musicians currently have to face, including domestic immigration checks and the possibility of having to pay for multiple visas across the continent, means that many will simply have to cease touring.

"This negotiating failure is another symptom of the Conservative government's xenophobic blind-spot when it comes to freedom of movement. Its refusal to see this as a reciprocal right and one that is vital to our economy is hitting musicians as it has already hit lawyers, doctors, academics and the many others who used to travel freely across a labour-market of half a billion people."

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/more-than-100-music-stars-attack-brexit-deal-687znfk66>

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[Green Party welcomes Conservative rebels' support for making trade conditional on human rights](#)



18 January 2021

- **Jonathan Bartley underlines universal nature of human rights**

The Green Party has welcomed statements from some 30 Conservative MPs that they will block a post-Brexit trade deal with China tomorrow [Tuesday 19 January] because of that country's attacks on the Uyghur community [1]

But Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley has warned that human rights must be universal, and therefore cannot be applied to just one country.

Bartley said:

"While we welcome Iain Duncan Smith's conversion to linking human rights with trade policy it is inconsistent and smacks of opportunism.

"It is a mere five years since George Osborne was rolling out the red carpet for President Xi, who was already trampling on the rights and freedoms of both Uyghurs and Tibetans. This genocide is not new and it is not confined to China."

Bartley agreed that trade agreements should be made conditional on the human rights records of the countries concerned but noted that human rights are universal and so such a stance cannot be used to isolate just one country.

He said:

"You cannot pick and choose whose rights you defend. If human rights are not universal then they are meaningless.

"Duncan Smith and other leading Tories need to adopt a similar stance towards those countries where clear breaches of human rights are taking place, such as Brazil, where Bolsonaro is actively encouraging both genocide and ecocide in the Amazon, and Saudi Arabia, where the government has ignored a high-court ruling that its export of arms used to kill civilians in Yemen are

illegal. [2]

“It is the necessity of upholding human rights and environmental standards in global trade that lies behind the UN’s binding treaty. Global Greens have supported this process for some time and we invite the British Conservatives to do the same to indicate that Global Britain will be a beacon for human rights across the world.” [3]

ENDS

Notes

1

FT[reports](#) some 30 Tory MPs are seeking to block a trade deal with China during the debate on the Trade Bill on Tuesday.

2

Ministry of Defence [log](#) of human rights violations in Yemen indicates at least 500 have taken place since 2015.

3

[RTE has reported](#) that the “UN efforts to develop a business and human rights treaty have been ongoing since 2014. These have been hampered by the opposition of key powerful states, often the home states of the largest multinational firms”

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