

# 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 be 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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## [Green Party cancels Spring conference due to Covid-19](#)



12 March 2020

The Green Party has taken the decision to cancel its Spring Conference which was due to take place in Brighton on the weekend 20-22 March.

As a democratic party, conference plays an important role in determining policy and the overall direction of the party, as well as providing a space for training and discussion for members.

However it would not be responsible to continue with our plans given the ongoing situation.

In lieu of conference, plans are already underway to provide members with access to fringe sessions and interaction opportunities online throughout the course of the weekend.

We will be offering refunds of fees for those already booked. We hope that, given the party will face a significant financial loss as a result of this decision, those members that are able to consider foregoing this will do so.

Jonathan Bartley and Sian Berry, Co-leaders

Liz Reason, GPEX Chair

Mary Clegg, Chief Executive

Amelia Womack, Deputy Leader

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## [Chancellor must invest in Green New Deal to protect climate and communities](#)



10 March 2020

- Greens say budget must include the necessary investment in climate action to create thousands of jobs and protect the environment
- Party calls on government to end fuel duty freeze and introduce Frequent Flyer Levy to help fund public transport revolution
- Jonathan Bartley: “This is about making the transition to a low-carbon economy while putting more money into people’s pockets.”

The Chancellor must use this week’s budget [Wednesday 11 March] to announce

the rapid and deep investment necessary to tackle the climate crisis and rebuild our communities, the Green Party has said.

As coronavirus threatens an economic slowdown [1] and further damages public services already suffering from chronic under-investment, the Greens have set out two main asks for the budget.

The party is calling on the government to announce:

- An ambitious programme of investment in climate action, to be funded from borrowing, direct credit creation and changes to banking regulation and business incentives.
- The reversal of a decade of cuts that have left our communities vulnerable and our public services threadbare, to be funded through reducing tax exemptions for the wealthy and increasing the rate of environmental taxes.

At the last general election, the Greens pledged to invest £100 billion a year in climate action for the next ten years.

Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley said this is the level of investment needed to protect our climate and invest in our poorer regions.

He said: "This is about making the transition to a low-carbon economy while putting more money into people's pockets.

"We can no longer accept the same old business as usual approach, which just sees the most wealthy prosper while the environment and everybody else pays the price.

"Social and climate crises are all around us. We need to see real leadership from the Chancellor to address these through proper investment in green jobs and decarbonisation."

Green Party finance spokesperson Molly Scott Cato said: "Tax incentives which encourage the burning of more fossil fuels are simply wrong.

"That is why we want to see the return of the fuel duty escalator. We know that freezing fuel duty has cost the government £9 billion a year since 2010, while also damaging the environment. [3]

"The extra revenue should then be invested in developing a reliable and affordable public transport network across the UK.

"At the same time, air travel has to be taxed responsibly. We want to see the introduction of a frequent flyer levy and aviation fuel duty, the proceeds of which need to be invested in improving regional rail links."

## Notes

1 <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/coronavirus-uk-economy-bank-of-england-treasury-a9371656.html>

2 The current best estimates of the likely investment needed comes from the think tank [Common Weal](#) who calculate the likely total investment for a Scottish Green New Deal as £170bn. Extrapolating their calculations suggests the cost for the UK as a whole may be £100 billion a year, for a minimum of ten years. £100 billion is less than 5 per cent of UK GDP. The Green Party is committed to invest on the scale the science dictates to save our climate.

At the last general election the [Green Party pledged](#) to invest £100 billion a year for the next decade in climate action as part of the most ambitious Green New Deal of any political party. We proposed to borrow £91.2 billion a year, to pay for capital expenditure. A further £9 billion a year of operational spending will be met from tax changes, including increasing Corporation Tax to 24%

3 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/oct/03/theresa-may-pledges-to-freeze-fuel-duty-for-ninth-consecutive-year>

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## [Statement on the imprisonment of Muay in Laos](#)



9 March 2020

The Green Party of England and Wales calls for an immediate and unconditional release of Houayheuang Xayabouly (known as Muay), an environmental activist and social media influencer, whose bravery in defending the environment has now resulted in her imprisonment. She has inspired people in Laos to fight for their rights and has fought against corruption and the influence that foreign businesses have on the lives of Laotians. Muay is currently serving 5 years in prison, separated from her 4 year old daughter and denied bail.

The Green Party stands in solidarity with Muay and other activists who are engaged in the struggle for a just and democratic Laos.

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