

Caroline Lucas calls for Natural History GCSE ahead of People's Walk for Wildlife with Chris Packham



19 September 2018

The Green Party's Caroline Lucas MP has called on the Government to introduce a GCSE in Natural History ahead of the [People's Walk for Wildlife](#) being organised by Chris Packham this Saturday.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove agreed earlier this year to meet Caroline to discuss nature deficit disorder – young people's increasing alienation from the natural world.

The MP for Brighton Pavilion will this weekend join Chris and people from across the country on the Walk from Hyde Park to Whitehall, which is designed to demonstrate the public's concern at the decline of nature and wildlife in the UK.

With a [Government-funded study](#) finding in 2016 that more than one in nine children in England had not visited a park, forest, beach or any other natural environment for at least 12 months, Caroline believes introducing natural history lessons to schools is vital to ensuring the next generation understands and cares about the natural world.

The idea was originally conceived by the producer and writer [Mary Colwell](#), who has proposed that as part of the GCSE, children would:

- Observe plants, birds, mammals, insects and amphibians in various habitats (gardens, parks, woodlands, seashore, moorland, etc).
- Record and observe nature coherently and scientifically in words and sketches at different times of the day and year.
- Name the major plants and animals in any one habitat.
- Understand the basics of ecology (the relationships between individual species and their environment) in different habitats.
- Be able to produce a scientifically useful set of notes that can be used to contribute to national databases.
- Be able to identify native from non-native species and record their distribution in an area.
- Study the history of how nature has been depicted in art, music and literature and study the influence of nature on TV, radio and other media.
- Learn about the history of natural history recording.

Saturday's People's Walk for Wildlife will bring together people from all ages and backgrounds who care about reversing the rapid decline of many common wildlife species. Because of climate change, industrial agriculture

and the use of pesticides in farming, unnecessary mowing of roadside verges and many other harmful practices, there are:

Chris has today launched a [People's Manifesto for Wildlife](#), setting out 200 ideas for saving what's left of the UK's insects, birds, mammals and sealife.

For the day of the Walk, he has released a [recording of once familiar birdsong](#) – including sounds of blackbirds, chiff-chaffs, nightingales, robins and skylarks – and is urging all those attending to download it onto their phones and play it loudly on repeat to drown out the city with the voices of millions of missing birds.

Caroline Lucas MP said: “We are spending less time outdoors just as our wildlife and natural environment are being decimated by pesticides and industrial agriculture.

“Our children are growing up in a world with less life – but they aren't even being given a chance to know what they're missing.

“The People's Walk for Wildlife is a chance for everyone who cares about saving what's left of nature to take action.

“The Government needs to urgently put in place a strategy for far less intensification of agriculture and much more ambitious action to cut pesticide use. But unless we educate young people on the value of nature, the next generation won't be able to recognise the scale of the loss we're living through or do anything to reverse it.

“Creating a Natural History GCSE would get children back outside, instil them with a love of nature and give them tools they'll need to restore our land and replenish our seas.”

Chris Packham said: “If we wake up to the fact that we have somehow normalised living without wildlife, if we collectively realise that it's now or never, that our wildlife needs us, and needs us more than ever, then we can have our ‘little bits of bread and cheese’ back and a bright yellow bird will stir hearts from hedgerows again.

“So please, whoever you are, get off your arse and join us on Saturday in London and help us make the ground shake because we need to change the world now.”

Green Party co-leader Sian Berry, who will also be joining the Walk, said: “I was lucky to live on the edge of town and was taught about wildlife on our doorstep. For those of us joining the People's Walk for Wildlife, Britain's badgers, birds, and birchwood forests bring a bit of wonder into our everyday lives – but too many children aren't having those formative experiences in nature.

“Introducing a Natural History GCSE would get our teenagers outside again and send an important signal that understanding the environment is just as important as understanding maths or history. Ministers should get to work on it now.”

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“Such reckless disregard for the human rights of a community, whose only crime is living peacefully in the path of an illegal occupying force's expansion plans will not be tolerated” – Keith Taylor MEP



13 September 2018

Keith Taylor, Green MEP for the South East, has welcomed the European Parliament's vote [1] to condemn the Israeli government's actions in Khan al-Ahmar, in Area C of the West Bank, whereby forces moved in the early hours of the Thursday morning to demolish a number of buildings in advance of an expected full demolition of the Bedouin village [2].

Khan al-Ahmar has been a consistent target of the Israeli authorities who have made several attempts to demolish it over the years, driven by the government's expansion of its illegal settlement project in the occupied West Bank [3].

Following the European Parliament vote on a resolution which sees MEPs take a strongly condemn of the plans [4], Mr Taylor, a member of the European Parliament's Palestine Delegation, said:

“Today MEPs have united to call on the Israeli government to halt its plans to demolish a Bedouin village and displace its peoples, for no reason other than it stands in the way of a settlement programme. Such reckless disregard for the human rights of a community, whose only crime is living peacefully in the path of an illegal occupying force's expansion plans will not be tolerated.”

The joint resolution passed by the European Parliament follows an intervention made jointly by the EU, and a number of European government

including the UK [5]. The statement had called on Israeli authorities not to go ahead with its plan, noting the 'very serious consequences' it will have on any prospect for peace in the region.

Mr Taylor, who worked on the Greens/EFA amendments to the European Parliament's cross-party motion, continued:

"The UK and Israel's European allies must join the European Parliament by going further in their condemnation of both the action already taken and the proposed full demolition of the Khan al-Ahmar village. It is not controversial to call on the Israeli government to abide by international humanitarian law and protect the inalienable human rights of all people."

"If the Israeli government pushes ahead with its plans, in full view of the world's media, it would send a chilling statement about the current administration's already questionable commitment to peace. In fact, with the Nation State law [6], which codifies apartheid in Israel, and the rapid expansion of the illegal settlement project in the occupied Palestinian territories the two-state solution has never seemed so far away."

"It is the international community's responsibility to ensure that any prospect of peace is not allowed to evaporate into conflict. We cannot afford to be timid in discharging our duty."

Notes:

1. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=MOTION&reference=P8-R-C-2018-0384&language=EN>
2. <https://twitter.com/972mag/status/1040062825467727873>
3. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20170309IPR65801/delegation-eu-must-act-swiftly-to-prevent-the-demolition-of-khan-al-ahmar>
4. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-palestinians-village/israels-top-court-clears-way-for-razing-of-bedouin-village-in-west-bank-idUSKCN1LL0SW>
5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/khan-al-ahmar-france-germany-italy-spain-and-uk-joint-statement>
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/19/israel-adopts-controversial-jewish-nation-state-law>

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Caroline Lucas: Agriculture Bill “could end up accelerating destruction of nature”



12 September 2018

Responding to the Government's Agriculture Bill, published today, Green Party co-leader Caroline Lucas MP said:

“This Agriculture Bill has been injected with warm words about protecting our environment – but its failure to commit to long-term funding and strong enforcement powers means it reads more like a wish-list than a plan of action.

“While it's good to see an end to subsidies for wealthy landowners and ideas for encouraging farmers to improve our environment, promised payments for ‘improving productivity’ could end up accelerating industrial agriculture's destruction of nature.

“We need a robust and independent system for determining what farmers are paid for to ensure public money doesn't reward tokenistic gestures – such as having a wind turbine while continuing to drench fields in pesticides. This new system should be designed to dismantle the industrial agriculture that is destroying nature and wildlife, and encourage smaller-scale, sustainable farms with the highest animal welfare standards.

“With Michael Gove having already backed down on his promise to ban live animal exports, it's clear we can't rely on his word.”

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Greens: Gove's live exports U-turn further proof of Brexiteers “hollow” promises



12 September 2018

Speaking today in reaction to Michael Gove's decision to back off banning live animal exports, despite Vote Leave's claims during the referendum [1], Green Party of England and Wales Animal Rights Spokesperson Keith Taylor said:

"Time and again, leading Brexit campaigners like Michael Gove have shown that their promises are hollow. Reneging on the pledge to ban the cruel practice of live exports might not be surprising, but that doesn't make it acceptable.

"It has become blindingly clear that Gove, Johnson and their Brexiteer colleagues cannot be trusted. Greens will continue fighting alongside campaigners in the UK and across Europe for an immediate end to this barbaric industry."

[1] <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/tory-michael-gove-looks-like-13231152>

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[Agriculture Bill "could reverse decline of UK's countryside" – Caroline Lucas](#)



11 September 2018

Ahead of the publication of the Government's Agriculture Bill, expected tomorrow, Green Party co-leader Caroline Lucas MP said:

"This Agriculture Bill is an opportunity for the Government to back up its green veneer with much-needed substance.

"Industrial agriculture has decimated nature and wildlife for decades with toxic pesticides and aggressive farming techniques, while taxpayers have subsidised wealthy landowners and small-scale sustainable farmers have struggled.

"The Government could use this Bill to reverse this decline of the UK's countryside. It must include a clear commitment to sustaining current levels of funding for farmers and refocusing that support on measures that restore biodiversity, bolster flood protections, improve animal welfare, revitalise soil, and help tackle climate change."

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